

**Resistance to state-driven land expropriation  
in northern Uganda:  
Counter-hegemonic imagination and the reconstruction of  
identity, authority, territory, and property**

Tessa Marianne Laing  
Murray Edwards College



Centre of Development Studies  
University of Cambridge

**September, 2023**

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

## **Preface**

### **Declaration**

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any work that has already been submitted before for any degree or other qualification except as declared in the preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the Politics and International Studies Degree Committee's prescribed word limit of 80,000 (including footnotes).

Tessa Marianne Laing, 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2023.

# **Resistance to state-driven land expropriation in northern Uganda: Counter-hegemonic imagination and the reconstruction of identity, authority, territory, and property**

Tessa Marianne Laing

## **Abstract**

This dissertation explores peasant political action in response to state-driven land expropriation in the Acholi-Madi border region of northern Uganda. Based on a two-year period of archival inquiry, interviews, activist research and participant observation, the dissertation examines the case of Apaa, where a large-scale struggle entangles peasant resistance to state enclosure of land for conservation, territorial disputes between local governments, and ethnic-based conflict over land access. The issues I explore intersect discussions on peasant resistance and African land regimes—institutional arrangements linking forms of public authority, identity, administrative territory, and property.

As war in northern Uganda began to subside in 2006, a surge of large-scale land struggles ensued. Two opposing narratives emerged around these conflicts: that they constitute peasant uprisings to defend ancestral land against state and commercial interests or that they reflect political manoeuvres inciting ethnic claims to vacant land. Such views either reify ethnic belonging to land or cast it as a product of elite manipulation; both foreclose analysis of how peasants navigate inherited discourses and forms linking identity, territory, and authority.

The dissertation argues that to understand the dynamics that enable resistance to forms of dispossession, peasant action must be viewed in light of the contested history of land regimes. My research in Apaa reveals that in contexts of institutional pluralism, peasants may mobilise a range of possible identities, authorities, spatial logics, and forms of property to contest state expropriation, all of which involve trade-offs.

Adopting a Gramsci-inspired lens, I argue that when peasants mirror the ‘hegemonic’ ethno-territorial logics and patterns of accumulation advanced by ruling classes, they gain

powerful tools for political mobilisation, but perpetuate conflict and erode the solidarity necessary for effective organising. By developing ‘counter-hegemonic’ forms of identity, authority, and property, peasant organisers can more effectively disrupt state enclosure of land. Although such processes remain unstable and incomplete, peasant organisers in Apaa have reinterpreted the past to reimagine new forms of belonging and land tenure, enabling them to defy state evictions and expand territorial control.

This dissertation contributes historically grounded, ethnographic evidence to emerging research melding critical approaches to resistance with the study of land regimes. It suggests that successful resistance to state enclosure of land is enabled by collective action that addresses internal inequalities within peasant communities and transcends social divisions and ethno-territorial logics exploited by ruling elites.

## Acknowledgements

In memory of Acan Lucy and Ali Clarke, who made the world a brighter place.

A deep thank you to my supervisor, Maha Abdelrahman, for your insight, high expectations, calm presence, and all you taught me about building arguments, structure, and the merits of ruthless editing. Many thanks to my advisor, Adam Branch, for helping me redefine the project at a critical juncture, for vital reading suggestions, for encouragement, and for great conversations.

My warm appreciation to many scholars, activists and friends for stimulating discussions and advice, including Tim Allen, Jacky Atingo, Ron Atkinson, Onen Charles, Komakech Denis, Julian Hopwood, Solava Ibrahim, Opiyo Dick Kinyera, Cherry Leonardi, Helena Pérez Nino, Simon Oryem, Dickens Otim, Jon Philips, Holly Porter, Sara Weschler, and Phil Wilmot & Patience Nitumwesiga. I am particularly grateful to Rebecca Tapscott, Ryan O’Byrne, Sophie Mylan, and Dustin Barter for providing helpful feedback on draft chapters, to Phoebe Wright for taming my commas and apostrophes, and to Bronwyn Matthews for referencing advice.

To my friends and fellow PhD cohort in Development studies at Cambridge, thank you for all your support, your ideas and much fun punting and picnicking.

For the scholarship that made this research possible, thank you to Gates Cambridge. My appreciation to Gulu Archdiocese’s Justice and Peace Commission for providing me with an institutional base and for all your work for peace. Thank you to the team at New Zealand CMS for your care and for giving me the time to pursue this research.

Thank you to my wonderful family and friends in New Zealand and Uganda whose love kept me going and who encouraged me in various ways: Pete & Ali, Bronwyn, Phoebe, Sharyn & Steuart, Emily, Alice, Kate & JL, Lydia & Innes, Ira & Hannah, Myriam, Holly, Jolyon, Angela, Jean & Ray, Erin & Kevin, Lyndon & Erin, St Tims, St Catherines, Greenhouse, Lucy, Emma & Barbara Ochola, Opiyo, Beatrice, Tibo, Pablo & Carlos. Thanks to dear friends in Gulu who provided serene writing spaces and daily boosts: Julian and family, and Jody, Dan & Myron. To Nick, thank you for your love and for being unfailingly supportive, interesting, and inspiring.

Last and first, to my activist friends in Apaa and northern Uganda: thank you for your struggle, your courage, and your wisdom. You have taught me so much.

Ethical approval for this research was granted by Gulu University Research Ethics Committee (GUREC), the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) and the University of Cambridge.

# Contents

<b>Figure 1. Map of the Apaa land struggle, northern Uganda.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1 Research contribution.....	14
1.2 Methodology.....	15
1.2.1 Methodological approach.....	15
1.2.2 Case study selection.....	16
1.2.3 Research methods.....	18
1.2.4 Positionality, reflexivity, and ethics.....	23
1.3 Dissertation structure.....	26
<b>2 Land regimes as hegemonic and counter-hegemonic processes .....</b>	<b>29</b>
2.1 Land regimes and rural struggle .....	31
2.1.1 Structuralist approaches.....	32
2.1.2 Process-based approaches.....	33
2.2 Land regimes as hegemonic processes.....	36
2.2.1 Rethinking ‘hegemony’ .....	37
2.2.2 Hegemonic land regimes.....	38
2.2.3 Oppositional identity politics.....	41
2.2.4 Territorialisation, social control and protected areas.....	43
2.2.5 Elite accumulation of property and wealth.....	45
2.3 Counter-hegemonic land movements.....	48
2.3.1 Peasant intellectuals.....	48
2.3.2 The shaping of resistance.....	50
2.3.3 Counter-hegemonic political imagination.....	53
2.4 Conclusion .....	57
<b>3 A history of land in northern Uganda’s east bank Nile region .....</b>	<b>59</b>
3.1 Precolonial forms of land organisation.....	61
3.1.1 Precolonial forms of identity, authority, and territory.....	62
3.1.2 Intertwining connections to Apaa land.....	66

3.2 Colonial encounter and rupture: c.1900 – 1945.....	70
3.2.1 Colonial forced displacement and state territorial control.....	70
3.2.2 The remaking of identity, authority and territory.....	73
3.3 A layering of competing claims: c.1946 – 1985.....	79
3.3.1 State land control vs. collective claims.....	79
3.3.2 The rise of ethno-territorial struggle.....	84
3.4 Conclusion.....	90
<b>4 Uganda’s hegemonic land regime and elite struggles over Apaa.....</b>	<b>92</b>
4.1 Uganda’s land regime 1986 – 2021.....	94
4.1.1 Decentralisation and ethno-territorial politics.....	95
4.1.2 Land tenure reform and elite accumulation.....	98
4.1.3 Customary land dynamics.....	102
4.2 State and elite interests in Apaa land.....	107
4.2.1 State-driven land expropriation for conservation.....	107
4.2.2 Elite accumulation and state patronage.....	110
4.2.3 Conflict over boundaries, votes, and territory.....	114
4.2.4 Ethno-territorial dynamics and central state power.....	119
4.3 Conclusion.....	124
<b>5 Collective Action in the Apaa land movement 2006 – 2021.....</b>	<b>126</b>
5.1 A culture of resistance.....	128
5.1.1 Rethinking approaches to peasant resistance.....	128
5.1.2 A culture of resistance: praxis and solidarity.....	131
5.2 Alliances with political elites.....	134
5.2.1 Ruling-party elites and the establishment of the occupation.....	134
5.2.2 A strategic compass to guide elite alliances.....	136
5.3 Tactical flexibility.....	139
5.4 Performative direct action.....	142
5.4.1 Apaa’s naked protest: The power of cultural symbolism.....	143
5.4.2 Apaa’s UN protest: Leveraging an international actor.....	146
5.5 The struggle for solidarity.....	149
5.6 Conclusion.....	151



<b>6 Framing the Apaa movement: Reconstructing identity, territory, and history.....</b>	<b>153</b>
6.1 Hegemonic processes and the shaping of resistance .....	155
6.1.1 Constructing Pabo clan belonging.....	155
6.1.2 On-stage narratives and the exclusion of ethnic others.....	159
6.1.3 The power and limits of ethno-territorial logics.....	163
6.2 Counter-hegemonic imagination.....	167
6.2.1 Redefining collective identity and belonging beyond clan.....	168
6.2.2 The struggle to transcend divisions based on tribe.....	173
6.3 Conclusion .....	178
 <b>7 Counter-hegemonic alternatives: New forms of authority and property</b>	
<b>in the Apaa occupation movement.....</b>	<b>180</b>
7.1 Public authority in the Apaa movement.....	182
7.1.1 Legitimacy through familiarity.....	183
7.1.2 Autonomy and subversive adaptation.....	186
7.1.3 Challenges facing new expressions of public authority.....	191
7.2 The Apaa movement's counter-hegemonic property system.....	195
7.2.1 The Apaa movement's property system.....	196
7.2.2 Challenges facing Apaa's property system.....	204
7.3 Conclusion.....	209
 <b>8 Conclusion .....</b>	<b>211</b>
8.1 Key arguments.....	212
8.1.1 How states and ruling elites use land to build power.....	212
8.1.2 How peasant political action over land is shaped by the past.....	215
8.1.3 Peasant land struggles and counter-hegemonic imagination.....	218
8.2 Limitations and further research.....	220
8.3 Land, the past, and political imagination.....	222
 <b>References.....</b>	<b>223</b>
Published sources.....	223
Primary sources.....	265

**Figure 1. Map of the Apaa land struggle, northern Uganda**



A map depicting district boundaries, key rivers, towns and cities, obtained from Google Maps. Apaa encompasses East Madi Wildlife Reserve (extracted from Plumtre et al, 2008, p. 4) and an additional area disputed between Amuru and Adjumani Districts to the east, south of the Zoka river.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Across many parts of Africa, peasants and pastoralists face mounting competition over access to rural land. Since the 1980s, rapid population growth, neoliberal reforms, political and economic volatility and shifting global market dynamics have hugely increased the commercial value, expanded demand for, and intensified struggles over land (Berry, 2017). These struggles spanned from intimate disputes within families to large-scale conflicts entwined in national politics (Boone, 2019). Africa's unfolding land crisis has multiple dimensions. First, African regimes have increasingly enabled foreign and domestic companies, state institutions and local elites to expropriate large tracts of unregistered communal land for development and private investment in agriculture, biofuels, timber and mining (Dell' Angelo et al, 2017; Le Billon & Sommerville, 2017; Engström et al, 2022). Concurrently, the rise of the global conservation agenda in the 1980s and more recent, market-orientated approaches have driven new enclosures for protected areas and 'green' ventures in eco-tourism and carbon-offsetting (Igoe & Brockington, 2007; Fairhead et al, 2012). As international agencies set targets to double Africa's protected area estate (Benjaminsen & Cavanagh, 2022), global pressure over climate change mounts, and demand for rare earth minerals accelerates, land expropriation and political mobilisation 'from below' in response are set to become increasingly pervasive (Borras, 2016, p. 19; Smith, 2022). New enclosures, however, often build upon much older precedents of state control over land, from colonial forced displacements to ease administrative rule and create conservation areas to the national titling reforms of the 1970s that enabled land accumulation by emerging elite classes across the continent (Peters, 2004, p. 293; Kelly & Peluso, 2015). Reflecting such historical patterns, African regimes continue to leverage land expropriation not only to drive capital accumulation but to consolidate political control and build state power (Boone, 2014).

Another key facet of Africa's land crisis is the proliferation of 'horizontal' struggles pitting indigenes and migrants, ethnic groups, clans, and family members against one another. As land becomes commodified, patriarchs, clan-heads and, in some contexts, 'traditional' chiefs wielding authority over communal land have begun to narrow the boundaries of belonging, provoking disputes with those with weaker social ties who face exclusion

(Amanor, 2001; Kuba & Lentz, 2006). Such rising social tensions over land are often entangled in broader struggles over power, territory, and political inclusion. In contexts such as Côte d'Ivoire (Chauveau, 2006; Boone, 2018) and Kenya (Klopp, 2002), successive regimes have built political bases by championing the land claims of autochthons over migrants or vice versa, fuelling large-scale expulsions, political rifts and conflict. Elsewhere, rival 'traditional' authorities vie for control over territory, land allocation and rents, driving farm seizures, legal wrangles and violence between constituents, as evident in Cameroon (Goheen, 1992), Ghana (Berry, 2001; Lentz, 2010), and Benin (Le Meur, 2006). Since the 1990s, state decentralisation reforms have also reignited jurisdictional disputes over administrative units, often conflated with 'ethnic' territories, leading to conflicts between descent-based groups seeking land access backed by local politicians seeking votes and access to state revenues (Lentz, 2006; Leonardi, 2020). As rural subjects and public authorities advance their interests in power and property through such struggles, they often draw on competing precedents and narratives of the past. Across much of Africa, land tenure remains, as Boone (2019, p. 394) observes, "unstable and built of conflicting claims", reflecting fraught legacies of colonial rule and conditions of institutional pluralism entrenched by successive regimes, compounded by cycles of conflict, displacement and return (Berry, 2002; Lund, 2008; Leonardi & Santschi, 2016).

Against the exploitation of corporate, state and domestic elite machinery, rural dwellers have continued to contest dispossession and elite accumulation. Peasants and pastoralists engage in subtle, 'everyday' forms of resistance (Scott, 1985), such as illicit hunting, 'guerrilla agriculture' (Cavanagh & Benjaminsen, 2015), and 'night grazing' (Pas & Cavanagh, 2022), undermining enclosures for protected areas. In some cases, peasant political action has compelled state agencies and investors to concede to better terms of inclusion in agricultural ventures and eco-tourism projects (Western, 1994; Holmes, 2007; Larder, 2015), or more dramatically stalled or thwarted processes of large-scale land enclosure for investment, as in the cases of Madagascar, Kenya, Tanzania, Niger, and Senegal (Gingembre, 2015; Temper, 2019, pp. 191–196; Prause & Le Billon, 2021). In rarer cases, rural movements have emerged to repossess expropriated land, as in the case of the reoccupation of a National Park in Togo in the 1990s (Lowry & Donahue, 1994).

To examine the dynamics and outcomes of such political reactions 'from below' to state-driven land expropriation, scholars have turned to theories of social movements,

contentious politics, Marxism and peasant resistance, highlighting, for instance, the importance of political opportunity structures, agrarian class politics, subtle, ‘everyday’ forms of struggle, alliance building, tactical repertoires, and framing narratives (Prause & Le Billon, 2021, pp. 1106–1107; Hall et al, 2015, pp. 469–470). Increasingly, scholars have responded to calls for fine-grained ethnographic research that moves beyond romanticised images of homogenous, resisting ‘local communities’ to examine how rural populations differentiated by descent, ethnicity, class, gender, and generation respond in distinct ways to processes of land expropriation (Borras & Franco, 2013; Edelman et al, 2013; Kandel, 2015; Moreda, 2015; Elamin, 2018). Less research, however, has drawn on critical approaches to resistance and the politics of place (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Hall, 1991; Keith & Piles, 1993) and historically grounded research on African land regimes and conflict (Berry, 1993; Boone, 2014) to explore how rural people construct and articulate forms of collective identity, territory, public authority, belonging to land, and claims to property in the course of political struggles against mass dispossession (Mamdani, 1996; Moore, 1998; Li, 2000, 2007; Pas & Cavanagh, 2022).

Taking up this challenge, this dissertation explores peasant political action in response to state-driven land expropriation and elite accumulation in the Acholi-Madi border region of northern Uganda. Based on participant observation, activist research, interviews and archival inquiry undertaken between 2019 and 2021, the dissertation examines the case of Apaa, a large-scale struggle entangling peasant resistance to state enclosure of land for conservation and private investment in game trophy-hunting, jurisdictional disputes over boundaries between local government administrations and political constituencies, and ethnic-based conflict over land access. This multi-dimensional struggle over the control of over 1000 km<sup>2</sup> of fertile land along the eastern bank of the Albert Nile exploded in 2006 as Acholi peasants from Amuru District dispersed from war-time displacement camps, launching an occupation movement. The roots of the conflict, however, can be traced to the ruptures of early 20th-century colonial forced displacements, the imposition of bounded administrative territories and the enclosure of vast depopulated conservation areas to more recent processes of state-building, land reform and political decentralisation unfolding since the mid 1980s.

Drawing on the case of Apaa in northern Uganda, the dissertation examines how peasant political action is both shaped by historical institutional forms and discourses linking

collective identity, public authority, administrative territory and property, and in turn, remoulds them, producing new political forms through the process of struggle. Through this analysis, the dissertation seeks to understand the dynamics that enable successful peasant resistance to state-driven land expropriation in light of the contested history of land regimes-institutional arrangements linking forms of public authority, identity, administrative territory, and property (Boone, 2013), exploring the dilemmas and trade-offs peasant organisers face as they navigate inherited discursive and structural fields of possibility for collective action.

This dissertation's main research question, therefore, is: How does peasant political action in response to state-driven land expropriation reproduce, renegotiate or transform inherited discourses and institutional forms linking authority, territory, identity and property? In turn, how do such strategic choices enable or inhibit peasant resistance to land expropriation?

The dissertation also aims to answer several sub-questions: How have states and ruling elites advanced control over Apaa land? What functions have such processes served for the state and ruling classes? Furthermore, the dissertation asks how peasant political action has been shaped by inherited discourses and political forms linking territory, identity, authority, and property advanced by the state and ruling classes. The final sub-question is: How does peasant political action reimagine and reconstruct forms of authority, territory, identity, and property?

## **1.1 Research contribution**

The issues the dissertation explores lie at the intersection of scholarly discussions on peasant resistance (Isaacman, 1990; Scott, 1990; Holmes, 2007), social movements (Tilly, 1993; Benford & Snow, 2000; Halvorsen et al, 2019), and political reactions to land-grabbing 'from below' (Borras & Franco, 2013; Hall et al, 2015) on one hand, and analysis of African land regimes in relation to historical dynamics of state-building and identity formation (Peters, 1994; Moore, 1998; Lund, 2008; MacArthur, 2016) on the other. The dissertation's focus on the case of Apaa integrates critical approaches and insights from both clusters of literature, illuminating the synergies that emerge when they are drawn into closer dialogue.

The research for this dissertation provides a critical way to engage with long-running debates between those who emphasise that the contested, pluralistic character of African land regimes and the fluidity of ‘customary’ tenure leaves room for the rural poor to manoeuvre (Berry, 1993, 2002; Odgaard, 2003; Lentz, 2007) and those insisting that ‘negotiability’ all too often favours the powerful, driving inequality deepening social division, and landlessness (Amanor, 1994; Peters, 2004; Leeuwen, 2015; Elamin, 2018). This dissertation contends that more attention needs to be given to *how* structurally disadvantaged groups sometimes do manage to ‘out-manoeuvre’ the powerful.

Conversely, the dissertation contributes to rapidly growing literature on political reactions ‘from below’ to land-grabbing by demonstrating that peasant mobilisation over land must be analysed in light of regionally-specific histories of land regimes. Few works consider how the contested history of land regimes in African contexts shapes the contours of peasant political action itself. The dissertation offers a more comprehensive analysis showing how articulation of identity, belonging, and property are contingent, contested, and strategic processes.

Weaving together insights from such diverging threads of literature and following scholars who observe how the concepts introduced by Antonio Gramsci illuminate key dynamics of subaltern land movements (Moore, 1998, pp. 352–353; Li, 2007; Karriem, 2009; Devine, 2018, p. 579; Nielsen & Nilsen, 2015), this dissertation contributes a Gramscian-inspired framework that understands struggles linking land, authority, and belonging as contested hegemonic and counter-hegemonic processes. The dissertation offers unique, historically grounded, ethnographic evidence that suggests that successful resistance to state enclosure of land is enabled by collective action that addresses social divisions, inequalities, and ethno-territorial logics propagated and exploited by ruling elites.

## **1.2 Methodology**

### *1.2.1 Methodological approach*

The research questions introduced above require an interpretive analysis of the evolution of institutional forms, discourses, political action, and lived experiences of subjects that is suited to a critical, qualitative research methodology. This dissertation accordingly adopts a broadly ‘post-positivist’ lens, which views subjects and researchers as continually

involved in constructing, reproducing, and transforming reality and knowledge. Given that disputes over territory, property, and authority over land across Africa often have complex roots and involve competing narratives of history, the dissertation takes up Lentz's (2000, p. 212) call for research that blends anthropological and historical approaches. Ethnographic methods paired with critical study of archival sources and oral traditions not only reveal how history shapes contemporary local politics but also how "the process of making and exercising claims on property," as Berry (2001, p. xxvii) expresses, "involves the production of history."

The dissertation draws on a single extended case study, a methodology that allows for the fine-grained, contextualised analysis that often eludes comparative research (Burawoy, 1998, 2009). As Levien (2018, p. 24) articulates, the extended case study approach is grounded in the logic that "large social forces" can be illuminated through detailed examination of processes in "small places." As Berry (2001, p. xxx) similarly observes, "localised cases," placed within their wider context, can "shed light on the history of a region."

### *1.2.2 Case study selection*

Since seizing power in 1986, Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) has, like many African regimes, wielded land as a tool of political control. Reflecting neoliberal policies touted by international agencies and donors, the Ugandan Government legally reinstated 'customary' land in 1995, but positioned it as an inferior form of tenure to be gradually replaced by individual, titled holdings (Okuku, 2006; Hopwood, 2015). Legal grey areas (Kjær, 2017) reflecting the complex history of land tenure regimes in Uganda remain largely unresolved, enabling the state and elite actors to expropriate swathes of land for conservation, private investment, or speculation. As such, many large-scale conflicts across the country involve disputes over what constitutes 'customary,' public or government land and which areas, therefore, can be availed to investors and eco-tourism operators via leaseholds or concessions (Nakayi, 2012). In a delicate political balancing act, NRM discourse swings between championing the provision of land access for investment and the protection of 'customary' land rights through official recognition and certification schemes.



Uganda's approach to territorial administration is also marked by contradictions: Museveni's government espouses nationalistic, non-sectarian principles, yet has pursued a divisive policy of decentralisation that serves ruling party interest in consolidating patronage networks while inflaming localised disputes over boundaries, political constituencies, jurisdiction, and land access, reawakening colonial-era spatial logics conflating ethnicity and administrative territory (Green, 2010; Sjögren, 2015; Leonardi, 2020). Rather than decisively advancing direct state authority over land or devolving power to 'customary' authorities in particular sub-territories (cf. Boone, 2014), Uganda's land regime often allows different public authorities—from district land boards and statutory courts, to clan heads and politicians—to vie to extend their authority over land. Such layered conflicts over control of territory, land use and property make Uganda, and the case of Apaa, a particularly interesting case for this study.

In northern Uganda, large-scale struggles over land took shape in the wake of decades of war and displacement. At the height of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) – NRM conflict in 1996, Museveni's regime forced large swathes of the population into internal displacement camps (Branch, 2011). As gradual settlement of bush frontiers was halted and expanses of land lay vacant, powerful actors began to stake claims and acquire leasehold titles. After the conflict subsided in 2006, the resettlement process became marked by a proliferation of disputes. While the frequency of small-scale land disputes amongst families has gradually receded (Atkinson & Hopwood, 2013), several large-scale, politicised conflicts have persisted, notably in Pader, Nwoya, and Amuru (Serwajja, 2014; Dokotho & Ojok, 2023), and the Teso–Karamoja border region (Kandel, 2017). Despite media scrutiny and scholarly research, such conflicts remain poorly understood, cast either as peasant uprisings to defend ancestral land against state interests (Martiniello, 2015), or elite-driven manoeuvres to incite ethnic claims to vacant public land (Sjögren, 2014). Too often, such approaches fall into the trap of presenting ethnic belonging and 'customary' land as timeless, unchanging realities or hollow constructs of elite manipulation.

Apaa has emerged as the largest-scale, most complex and volatile of northern Uganda's land conflicts. Encompassing over 1000 square kilometres of fertile land flanking the eastern bank of the Albert Nile, the area known as 'Apaa' lay fallow for over 60 years after colonial officials forcibly evicted populations in 1914 in the name of disease control and conservation. While the historical fault lines of the struggle can be traced over a century,

conflict erupted relatively recently: in 2006, as the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) began to re-establish a protected area spanning 831 km<sup>2</sup> of Apaa and secure an investor to manage a trophy-hunting park, several hundred Acholi peasants left war-time displacement camps to (re)settle the area, declaring they were returning to ancestral land reclaimed by their forefathers in the 1970s. Their action launched a radical land movement that claimed historically depopulated land as a frontier for marginalised, land-poor peasants. By 2021, despite cycles of violent state evictions, Apaa's peasant population had expanded from 300 to an estimated 20,000.

This story of resistance, however, is also entwined in politicised struggles over administrative jurisdiction, belonging, and ethnic claims to land. Apaa is a disputed territory. The central state and Adjumani local government authorities maintain that Apaa is part of the (predominantly Madi) Adjumani District, which approved the legal establishment of 'East Madi Wildlife Reserve' during the war. Conversely, Acholi politicians and Apaa's peasant occupiers claim that Apaa lies in the (predominantly Acholi) Amuru District, and constitutes their 'customary' land. Southern portions of Apaa have also been embroiled in a border dispute between sub-county administrations and rival Acholi clans. In recent years, politicians in Adjumani have promised voters they will reclaim parts of Apaa for Madi settlement, igniting interest amongst Madi elite and opportunists, as well as Madi clans and lineage groups that view Apaa as their ancestral land. Since 2017, various elite-backed Madi groups have led forays into Acholi-occupied Apaa, progressively seizing land and sporadically provoking violent clashes.

Apaa presents a particularly interesting case not just because of its complexity and regional political significance, but also because of how the movement has evolved since 2006. As will be seen, the Apaa case reveals how peasant organisers navigate, renegotiate and radically reconstruct forms of belonging to land, collective identity, and property over time.

### *1.2.3 Research methods*

This dissertation is based on fieldwork I undertook in northern Uganda between August 2019 and October 2021 in Amuru, Gulu, and Adjumani Districts. My experience living in northern Uganda since 2013 while working as a community organiser supporting local activists enabled me to draw upon a range of methods, including activist research,

participant observation, and ‘ethnographic commuting,’ as well as semi-structured interviews and archival research.

Most distinctively, my investigation of the Apaa land movement embraced an activist-research approach, broadly construed as epistemological inquiry that draws on the researcher’s active political engagement with movements seeking social change (Lind, 2017, p. 106; Hale, 2008; Lewis, 2012). Since the 1970s, ‘activist research’ and participatory methods have gained traction as scholars have confronted anthropology’s historical complicity in colonial power (Clifford & Marcus, 1986) and sought to transcend ethnographic methods that “observed people as discrete ‘others,’ as external ‘objects of study’” (Rodino-Colocino, 2012, p. 554) and too-often proved extractive and exploitative. Reflecting the rich legacies of 20th-century scholar-activists such as Antonio Gramsci, Franz Fanon, Paulo Freire, and Audrey Lorde (Hale, 2006, p. 108), activist research methods can provide a window into movements’ internal, organisational dynamics (Plows, 2008, p. 1524), distil protagonists’ vast experiential knowledge (Greenwood, 2008), and produce insights ‘relevant’ to social movements (Flacks, 2004). Although scholar-activists’ “dual loyalties” can certainly produce tensions and contradictions (Hale, 2008, p. 104) and activist research of more ‘militant’ (Juris, 2007) strains can descend into ‘uncritical adulation’ or reductive ‘cheer-leading’ (Bevington & Dixon, 2005, p. 191), I join scholars who argue that political engagement and critical research are mutually enriching: probing questions, uncomfortable dialogues and critique often prove most useful to social movements (Routledge, 1996; Edelman, 2009, pp. 257–261; Osterweil, 2013, p. 612), while a researcher’s active involvement provides unique ‘access’ to the movement and incentives to unearth more accurate, detailed findings (Hansen, 2021, p. 840; Bevington & Dixon, p. 192).

Before commencing fieldwork for this dissertation, I worked with the Apaa movement as an independent community organiser.<sup>1</sup> Like many activists who embark on research and scholars who become involved in the social movements they study (Fuller, 1999; Plow, 2008; Goldstein, 2014), my engagement in Apaa began by chance, after my husband, as Health Coordinator of the Diocese of Northern Uganda, launched a health centre in Pwunu Dyang Village in late 2017 at the request of Apaa’s local Anglican minister. After

---

<sup>1</sup> In 2018, I was a community organiser with the Anglican Diocese of northern Uganda and a policy advisor for Gulu District Local Government. My work with Apaa activists, however, was independent.

the centre's nurse alerted us to a rising wave of violent Government evictions in early 2018 and introduced me to Apaa's leaders, I worked with the movement for seven months before departing for Cambridge. During this period, I supported Apaa leaders and Amuru activists in documenting over 800 destroyed homes, building links with media and NGOs, intercepting UWA rangers in Apaa with a team of civil society leaders and journalists, and planning and executing a 35-day occupation of a UN office in Gulu city by over 230 activists from Apaa – a contentious direct action, as will be discussed, which compelled UN agents to engage the Ugandan government over Apaa. Through such embodied, shared experiences, I formed close relationships with Apaa's leaders and activists, which later proved crucial to my research.

From mid-2019, when I returned to northern Uganda, my PhD fieldwork integrated activist research methods. This arrangement was embraced by Apaa movement leaders, a group of whom unexpectedly arrived at my home in Gulu to welcome me back, their motorcycles laden with maize, beans, and a chicken. Over the following two years, I gained a deeper understanding of the movement: its emergence, history, collective identity, organisational structures, framing narratives, alliances, internal divisions, and experience of state manoeuvres, largely by participating in strategy meetings and informal discussions, and by assisting Apaa's activists in documenting state abuses, drafting petitions, interceding with NGOs, and troubleshooting tactics. Having become fluent in the Acholi language in 2013, I could participate freely without an interpreter.

As my research evolved, I began to probe beneath the movement's exclusive Acholi land claims and conflictual relationship with Madi groups: I shared archival sources and my experiences interacting with Madi elders with Apaa leaders, provoking dialogue within the movement and adding momentum to the emergence of fledgling 'peace' discussions with Madi clan leaders. As will be discussed in chapter six, this process cast light on the movement's potential to reinterpret the past to transcend division, but also its weaknesses. It failed to bring about immediate transformation, yet illuminated the possibility of an alternative path.

My fieldwork also drew on participant observation. In the broadest sense, my research has been informed by my experience living amongst the community in an Amuru-facing fringe of Gulu city since 2013, where land matters pervade everyday life. Our local

community borehole, for example, was recently appropriated by a wealthy family; nearby households have erected concrete pillars to strengthen land claims over disputed boundaries, cutting off communal paths; and I have observed friends with limited options struggle to secure land in the remote Nwoya-Amuru ‘bush frontier,’ including Apaa. Working for the Diocese, my husband has been involved in multiple court cases regarding land disputes affecting rural Anglican health centres. Everyday conversations about property, market prices, and the complex land disputes in which friends, neighbours and colleagues find themselves entangled have helped me to understand the Apaa conflict’s wider context.

Although security dynamics restricted me from living in Apaa, the process of travelling between Gulu and Apaa (50–80km on dirt roads), and within Apaa (over 1000 km<sup>2</sup> of rough terrain) proved invaluable, reflecting a method known as ‘ethnographic commuting’ (Jungnickel, 2014; Büscher et al, 2010). When I cycled to Apaa, shopkeepers, boda-boda (motorcycle taxi) drivers, farmers and idlers in rural centres I passed often expressed curiosity about my journey and volunteered opinions, anecdotes and personal experiences relating to Apaa’s history and politics. Taking different routes at a slow pace allowed me to access a wider range of perspectives and develop a mental map of Amuru’s political landscape. By traversing areas associated with Lamogi clans such as Keyo, Giragira, and Guru Guru, I encountered people who had experienced exclusion and remained critical of the Apaa movement’s historical claims and administrative affiliation. Travelling via Pabo town, Mt. Labala, Mt. Kilak, and Ocojo helped me understand Pabo clan members’ ties to Apaa, and the geography of their elders’ oral histories. Hitching rides with charcoal transporters provided perspectives on the forest-product trade; riding in trucks packed with Gulu traders bound for Apaa’s twice-weekly market day provided glimpses into Apaa’s economy.

My research drew on participant observation of everyday life within Apaa, conducted during 27 trips (a few days to a week) between mid-2019 and late 2021. During longer trips, I usually visited several villages, staying with families with whom I had developed mutual trust. Although I visited all of Apaa’s (then fifteen) villages, I spent the most time in six villages within the gazetted area that formed the epicentre of Apaa’s strategic organisation. It was often through interactions whilst cooking, sorting crops, eating, sitting around fires, attending routine village meetings (regarding path maintenance or neighbourly disputes) and accompanying people walking between villages that I learned the most about individuals’

distinct experiences in Apaa (including women) and the movement's evolution and land tenure system. In Apaa centre, I observed interactions in Apaa's single-room central office, helping me to understand Apaa's internal authority structures and micro-politics. To avoid inhibiting interactions by writing, I usually made detailed field notes from memory several times daily.

To complement such ethnographic methods, I conducted around 60 semi-structured interviews. The interview format proved apt for collecting oral histories, as voice recordings made investigating obscure phrases and references easier. In Adjumani District, where I lacked prior networks and Madi language skills, I relied almost exclusively on interviews, which I conducted in English or with an interpreter. Through my research in Adjumani town and Adropi, Itirikwa, Pakelle, and Ukusijoni Sub Counties (including areas near Apaa such as Ayiri and Mungula), I aimed to understand Madi-speakers' varied perspectives on the history of Apaa, the Acholi occupation, and local land politics. Drawing on 'snowballing' techniques, I identified respondents ranging from local journalists, chiefs, activists, sub-county politicians, elders, and clan-heads to peasant farmer members of land-claimant groups. In Gulu and Amuru Districts, I interviewed key politicians, a former UWA warden, sub-county officials, chiefs, and businessmen, providing insights into inter-administrative disputes and state-expropriation processes.

As is often the case in land matters across Africa, conflict over Apaa land has complex historical roots. My research drew on archival and oral sources to examine the history of the Apaa conflict, from the pre-20<sup>th</sup> century era and the ruptures of colonial rule to post-independence political shifts. In line with leading scholars of African land tenure (Lentz, 2000; Berry, 2001; Lund, 2008), I approached oral traditions as products of particular historical moments, shaped and reshaped by shifting political interests. As such, I endeavoured to collect and compare the oral traditions of different Acholi and Madi clans and lineages with ties to Apaa, contrast them with oral histories recorded in the colonial era, and consider the contexts in which they were produced and adapted (Lentz, 2000, p. 195). My analysis of pre-20<sup>th</sup>-century dynamics linking identity, territory and authority also drew on 19<sup>th</sup>-century European travelogues and diaries, early colonial records and secondary accounts.

To explore the colonial and post-independence history of Apaa, I examined sources in the Cambridge University archives, the British National Archives (BNA), the Uganda National Archives (UNA), and Gulu District Archives (GDA) relating to the eastern Nile bank region of northern Uganda and colonial sleeping sickness measures, population displacement, indirect rule, conservation areas, administrative territory, ‘native’ authorities, forestry, ‘tribal’ hunting, local encroachment, protest and resistance, border disputes, land conflict, and land policy. The UNA and BNA provided a wealth of sources from the period 1899 to 1963, while the GDA provided material from 1950 to the 2000s. During my fieldwork, many respondents generously allowed me to view and photograph their personal records, including hand-written meeting minutes, correspondence, memorandums, land documents, and court records. Such sources enriched my understanding of the evolution of the Apaa conflict between 2004 and 2021 and provided prompts to spark discussions with informants.

#### *1.2.4 Positionality, reflexivity, and ethics*

As Haraway (1991, p. 188) expresses, “There is no all-conquering gaze from nowhere”: Social science research is inevitably shaped by researchers’ relationship to their subjects, and their gender, class, ethnicity, religious beliefs, privilege, political experiences, and way of interacting with the world (Plows, 2008, p. 1530; McCurdy & Uldam, 2014, p. 46). I accordingly adopted a critical, self-reflexive approach, not as a post-hoc confessional, cathartic act of absolution (Pillow, 2003; Spivak, 1988, p. 6), but as a tool to continually identify, disrupt, and challenge my own lenses, assumptions, and biases, and to recognise the limitations and subjectively constructed character of my research (Hertz, 1997; Curtis, 2019, pp. 14–15).

Self-reflexivity is crucial to activist research (Plows, 2008; Petray, 2012; Rodino-Colocino, 2012). I came to recognise that I began my research naively hoping to unearth evidence of ancestral Pabo clan settlement in Apaa and ‘Acholi’ territorial authority that might bolster the movement’s struggle against state evictions, reflecting my earlier political sympathies and engagement. Self-reflection paired with insights derived from historically-grounded literatures on African land tenure and identity soon shattered my positivist assumptions. It enabled me to confront my Acholi-aligned political ‘positionality.’ This critical pivot led me to Adjumani to explore Madi oral traditions and political experiences: It

prompted me to ask different questions, refocusing my inquiry on the genealogy of rival narratives, opposing claims to belonging and administrative disputes along the Nile banks.

Over five week-long trips to Adjumani, I gained a deep respect for the perspectives of Madi elders, peasant farmers, and environmental activists I encountered. While I generally introduced myself as a PhD researcher, I also disclosed my engagement with the Acholi Apaa movement to a few respondents in Adjumani with whom I developed trust and a particular rapport. Far from provoking mistrust, sharing my experiences and evolving perspectives on Apaa with such respondents tended to elicit richer discussion and insights, particularly regarding politically sensitive subjects such as Adjumani's (semi-underground) land-claimant networks. Some respondents in Adjumani, however, remained wary of me as an unknown foreign researcher. By the time I made my last trip to Adjumani in late 2020, I also represented the Catholic Gulu Archdiocese's Justice and Peace Commission (JPC). At this point, my research dovetailed with JPC's interest in nurturing a preliminary Apaa peace process and helped to pave the way for the precursory dialogues noted above. My fieldwork in Adjumani thus drew (to a limited extent) on 'participatory' methods (Genat, 2009), although intermittent COVID-19 lockdowns and political tensions surrounding the 2021 elections, for the interim, stymied the dialogues.

Despite such efforts, my research inescapably reflects my relationship to the Apaa movement and my experience living amongst Acholi since 2013. In Amuru and Gulu, I could speak Acholi and draw on significant networks, cultural experience, and intimate access to the Apaa movement's internal workings. Given the time constraints of the PhD, I could not develop equivalent relationships or engage in participant observation in Adjumani. As such, my research focused on the Apaa occupation, while my investigation of Madi perspectives and counter-political action was critical but secondary. This dissertation is accordingly orientated around the story of the Acholi land movement rather than Madi exclusion and struggle.

My fieldwork was also shaped by my position as an educated, white foreigner connected to an elite university in a context where most of my interlocutors lacked the opportunity to complete primary school. Although unequal power relations were unavoidable, where possible, I sought to bridge the divide and cultivate an accessible, more vulnerable



presence, for instance, by speaking Acholi, travelling by bicycle, public means or on foot, staying in respondents' homes, hosting activists in our fenceless, un-plumbed, grass-thatched hut in Gulu, actively contributing, and as much as possible, remaining open to respondents' calls and visits throughout the research process. I also endeavoured to seek out overlooked perspectives and to prioritise the voices of those most marginalised (see also Hickey & Mohan, 2005; Platzky Miller, 2020, pp. 27–28; Curtis, 2019, p. 14). Being a privileged cultural outsider, however, no doubt limited my ability to grasp the subtleties of my respondents' experiences and conceptual landscapes.

Three other aspects of my identity affected my research process. My gender, I believe, was an advantage; as a woman, I could more easily gain trust amongst women, while state security agents appeared less inclined to view me with suspicion. As an educated 'foreigner,' I was not shut out of male-dominated spaces like local women unfortunately often are. Second, while my obvious links with Christian groups and personal faith created rapport with some respondents, I perceived it led others to initially shy away from sharing their distinct spiritual and cosmological beliefs, or to downplay violent aspects of their political actions. To mitigate this pattern, I actively cultivated an interested, open, non-judgmental approach and communication style. Finally, I remained cognizant of how my respondents perceived my organisational ties. As the wife of the Health Coordinator of the Anglican Diocese, for example, I was sometimes approached by Apaa leaders hoping to expand the services of the Diocese's existing health centre in Apaa or to establish a health centre in their own village. When I became affiliated with the Catholic Archdiocese's JPC in mid-2020, some Apaa occupiers suddenly perceived me as involved in an internal land dispute within Apaa between two extended families, one of whom had previously gifted land for a Catholic mission. I took care to reflect on how such dynamics shaped my interactions in Apaa.

Researchers drawing on ethnographic approaches can face ethical challenges relating to informed consent, particularly when they engage in participant observation amongst wider populations (McCurdy & Uldam, 2014, p. 46). Throughout my study, I took great care to explain my research and position as a researcher not only to prospective interviewees but also with people I encountered during my travels, those I worked alongside in Apaa, participants in meetings I joined, and the families with whom I stayed. In certain public, crowded contexts where I observed interactions or incidents (notably Apaa centre), however, it was not always

possible to inform everyone present regarding my project. With the exception of public figures who consented to be named, I have anonymised all respondents and removed any details by which they could be identified. It is my hope that this research will, in some small way, prove useful to my respondents. I have already discussed my arguments and historical insights with Apaa leaders and activists at length, including critiques of the movement, and will continue to do so as part of my ongoing engagement. I will also present my findings to key informants in Adjumani District, and, if possible, work with local organizations to reactivate cross-community dialogues.

### **1.3 Dissertation structure**

The dissertation's analysis of peasant political action in Apaa is divided into seven further chapters. Chapters two and three lay the conceptual and historical groundwork of the dissertation, while chapter four examines the contemporary political context in which peasant mobilisations arose. Chapters five, six, and seven explore key aspects of peasant political action in Apaa, while chapter eight concludes the dissertation. Throughout, the chapters demonstrate how discourses and institutional forms linking territory, identity, authority and property are wielded as instruments of elite political control and accumulation, but can also be re-appropriated, adapted and transformed to provide tools of resistance.

Drawing together insights from structural and process-based approaches to the study of African land regimes and critical approaches to subaltern resistance, chapter two develops a Gramscian-inspired lens which frames interlocking struggles over power, land, and belonging as contested 'hegemonic' and 'counter-hegemonic' processes. The concept of hegemonic land regime processes captures the shifting, sometimes contradictory ways in which state actors and ruling elites advance institutions, spatial structures, and discourses linking territory, identity, and property to build authority over land and people. The chapter details how 'counter-hegemonic' land movements not only resist ruling class control over land, but do so in ways that address social divisions and inequalities leveraged by ruling elites by constructing alternative forms of political authority, land tenure, and belonging to land.

Building on this framework, chapter three traces the historical roots of the Apaa struggle to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when colonial officials forcibly displaced interrelated lineage groups from the Nile banks and segregated them into administrative units, leading to

the emergence of ethnic political identities and introducing a spatial logic conflating ethnicity, territory, and property. Subsequent historical processes—from the colonial shifting of boundaries and mounting resistance to state control over the Nile banks to political ethnic rifts forged in the 1970s—created further competing precedents and claims over Apaa land that drive and give shape to the current conflict.

Chapter four examines the land regime crafted by Museveni's NRM Government since 1986 and explores how state agencies and rival elites have advanced control over Apaa land. The chapter argues that the concept of 'hegemonic land regime processes' encapsulates how African regimes sometimes opt to foster competition between rival elites and institutions seeking authority over territory and property as a strategy to maintain overarching control. It traces how the contradictory land reforms, state rhetoric, and decentralisation processes advanced by Museveni's Government precipitated the rise of multi-faceted conflict over Apaa land, and, in turn, how the regime has navigated such conflicts to advance its evolving political interests.

Drawing on theories of social movements, collective action and peasant resistance, chapter five examines the key practices, strategies and tactics that have enabled peasants in Apaa to evade state evictions and expand territorial control between 2006 and 2021. In contrast to scholars who have turned to Scott's (1985) model of 'everyday' resistance to understand peasant mobilisation in Amuru, the chapter argues that peasant action in Apaa must be read as an overt land occupation movement. The chapter explores how peasant leaders in Apaa have cultivated a spatial 'ethos of solidarity' and 'a culture of resistance' that have enabled the movement to navigate shifting political alliances, develop tactical flexibility, mitigate infiltration, and execute powerful, symbolic actions that have reshaped the political terrain in which their struggle continues.

Next, chapter six explores how peasant organisers constructed and reconstructed the Apaa movement's collective identity and historical framing narrative. Engaging with critical scholarship on the politics of place, belonging and identity formation, the chapter examines how hegemonic land processes advanced by ruling elites initially constricted the movement's emerging political identity, resulting in unsustainable conflict. The chapter traces how the Apaa movement has drawn on 'counter-hegemonic' processes to reimagine and transcend

divisions based on clan, but as yet has fallen short of overcoming structural and political divides based on ethnicity.

Chapter seven further develops the Gramscian-inspired concept of ‘counter-hegemonic’ land processes by examining how peasant occupiers of Apaa reproduced familiar forms of public authority and property and transformed them, forging creative political alternatives. The chapter reveals how the construction of autonomous institutions and inclusive land tenure systems can enable peasant movements to contest state control, counter patterns of elite accumulation and reinstate communal land ownership. It also explores how the emancipatory and strategic potential of peasant land movements are limited when they mirror hegemonic processes of accumulation.

Finally, chapter eight concludes the thesis by summarising the key arguments presented and their contribution to broader literatures. It notes limitations of the research, and reflects on the significance of the Apaa case for understanding peasant political action in response to processes of state-driven land expropriation.

## Chapter 2

### **Land regimes as hegemonic and counter-hegemonic processes**

Since the 2010s, a rapidly burgeoning literature has examined state-driven expropriation of land for agricultural investment, forestry, mining and conservation across Africa and beyond (Cotula, 2012; Kareem, 2018), and the collective responses of peasants and small-holders ‘from below’ (Borras & Franco, 2013; Hall et al, 2015; Dell’ Angelo et al, 2021; Prause & Le Billon, 2021). Along with studies of rural land movements (Moyo & Yeros, 2005; Wolford, 2010; Monjane, 2023), such scholarship has engaged with theories of resistance, social movements and political economy to explore how rural dwellers contest and renegotiate unjust land policies (Caouette & Turner, 2009; Schock, 2015; Gardner, 2012). While insightful, these literatures often adopt a narrow focus on the contemporary drivers and dynamics of large-scale struggles over land, such as population growth, neoliberal reforms, global fuel and financial crises and rising commercial demand. In many African contexts however, ongoing land conflicts and resistance movements are profoundly shaped by political processes and land governance structures with historical roots dating back to the pre-colonial era and ruptures of colonial rule (Lentz, 2007, 2010; Le Meur, 2006).

This chapter develops a new conceptual framework that views peasant struggles against dispossession in historical perspective, drawing from the work of scholars of African history and the contemporary politics of property and territory (Berry, 1993; Mamdani, 1996; Peters, 2004; Boone, 2013; Leonardi, 2020). Across the African continent, conflict over land is often enmeshed in broader struggles over authority, identity and political belonging: despite growing commodification, access to rural land remains tied to belonging to social groups, and mediated by public authorities (Goheen, 1992; Boone, 2014; Leonardi & Browne, 2018). As populations surge and competition for productive land increases, conflict over land has proliferated along multiple axes, variously pitting indigenes against migrants, ethnic groups and ‘traditional’ leaders against one another, rural populations against state regimes, and state institutions against rival authorities (Peters, 2012, pp. 10–11; Lund, 2008). Historically grounded studies of African ‘land regimes’ reveal the techniques that states wield to control land and the ways that residual forms of authority, identity, territory and property converge to mould the discursive and material field of possibility for peasant political action.

This perspective expands the study of rural protest around land beyond questions of tactics, repertoires and framing (Tarrow, 1993; Snow & Moss, 2014) to explore how peasant organisers navigate inherited discourses and structures interknitting land, power and belonging. Beyond eliciting richer empirical accounts, this framework provides theoretical insights into the dynamics that constrain and enable peasant resistance to expropriation.

Diverging approaches within literatures on African land regimes centre around questions of structure and agency. *Structuralist* approaches (Munro, 1998; Boone, 2014), examine how differences in state-crafted ‘land regimes’ produce varying forms of resistance, while *processual* perspectives (Berry, 1993; Lund, 2008) explore how land regimes are shaped through political struggle waged by rural communities and competing institutions. While some scholars argue that the contested, pluralistic character of African land systems provides peasants and small-holders with opportunities to negotiate, thereby “tempering exclusion” (Berry, 2002, pp. 663–4; Odgaard, 2003; Lentz, 2007, pp. 54–55), others emphasize that struggles over history, property and authority all too often favour states, ruling elites and the wealthy (Peters, 2004, 2012; Klopp, 2000; van Overbeek & Tamás, 2020). Accounts of rural dwellers’ capacity to “out-manoeuvre the powerful,” Peters (2004, p. 306) argues, must be weighed against entrenched patterns of “displacement and exclusion.” Often missing within such debates, however, is analysis of the dynamics which enable or inhibit successful negotiation. Beyond weighing cases of successful peasant negotiation against evidence of growing social inequality, there is a need for research that uncovers the framing narratives and forms of political organisation that render struggles against dispossession more or less effective.

This dissertation draws on a Gramscian lens to frame struggles over land, authority and belonging as contested hegemonic and counter-hegemonic processes. This approach avoids the twin leviathans Peters (2004, p. 297) describes as the Scylla of over-estimating state power and the Charybdis of overstating the agency of subordinate actors. The concept of ‘hegemonic land processes’ presented captures how state institutions and ruling elites advance structures and discourses linking identity, property and territory to consolidate authority whilst constantly adapting to contention from below. Such processes, in turn, shape the political landscapes in which ‘peasant intellectuals’ (Feierman, 1990) wage struggles over land. Peasant action that replicates ‘hegemonic’ ethno-territorial logics may gain powerful tools for political mobilization, yet reproduce the social divisions elite actors so often

leverage to fragment resistance (Mamdani, 1996). In contrast, ‘counter-hegemonic’ peasant movements that break out of this cycle of reproduction—for example by renegotiating or reimagining alternative forms of authority, identity, territory and property—are often more successful in disrupting state-driven processes of expropriation. Such movements face difficulties, however, when they fail to address internal divisions and inequalities within peasant communities or reproduce hegemonic patterns of elite accumulation.

The chapter begins by critically engaging with ‘structuralist’ and ‘processual’ approaches to the study of land regimes, then draws insights derived from such perspectives into a Gramscian-inspired framework, outlining the concepts of ‘hegemonic’ and ‘counter-hegemonic’ land regime processes.

## **2.1 Land regimes and rural struggle**

Both structural and processual approaches to the study of large-scale political struggles over land in African contexts centre around the concept of ‘land regimes:’ intersecting institutional arrangements connecting public authority, property rights, political identity and jurisdictional territory (Boone, 2013, p. 190). Land regimes concern the locus of authority and terms under which land as ‘property’ is owned, disputed and transferred (Lund, 2016, p. 1204), and the territories and rules within which public authorities govern, bestow rights, collect tax and regulate land use (Sack, 1986; Lund, 2013, p. 17). While structuralist models delineate ‘types’ of land regimes to compare their structuring effects on resistance, processual perspectives view land regimes as sites of political struggle and provide tools to untangle the processes by which authority over land, people, forms of identity, territory, and property are produced, reproduced, negotiated, contested, and remade. While such approaches are sometimes cast as rival analytical paths (Berry, 1993, p. 6; Ribot & Peluso, 2003; Klopp, 2001, p. 274), this dissertation views these approaches as complementary (Mamdani, 1996, pp. 10–12; Lund, 2008, pp. 4–6; Boone, 2015, p. 186). This approach illuminates how peasant action in Apaa, northern Uganda is profoundly shaped by the structural and discursive legacies of successive state-building projects yet has also given rise to new political forms linking territory, identity, authority and property through the process of struggle.

### *2.1.1 Structuralist approaches*

Building on the work of various scholars (Mamdani, 1996; Munro, 1998), Catherine Boone's (2013, 2014, 2015), prominent structural model of political struggles over land draws on a simplified distinction between 'statist' and 'customary' land regimes. Under customary land regimes, land access is mediated by descent-based authorities at the level of chiefs, clan-heads or extended households and tied to membership of ethnic, clan or lineage groups (Boone, 2014, p. 35); in some contexts, customary authorities also exercise jurisdiction over territory (Goheen, 1992; Amanor, 2009). Structuralist approaches emphasize the extent to which colonial officials and self-interested local agents 'rigidified' previously fluid precolonial social forms by imposing 'tribal' administrative structures and codifying 'customary' laws to cultivate rural submission (Chanock, 1985; Mamdani, 1996, pp. 117–124). As post-independence regimes often adapted or subordinated such structures rather than abolishing them, many states still exert indirect control through 'customary' authorities. States often extend patronage networks to such authorities, who in turn, are expected to secure rural electoral support (Boone, 2014, pp. 27–35, 48).

In particular regions, most African states have also employed 'statist' land regimes to control land (Mamdani, 1996, p. 17; Boone, 2014, pp. 30–43). Under statist regimes, land use and property rights are determined by the central state, decentralised state institutions or opened up to the market (Boone, 2014, p. 67); claims to ancestral homelands are 'extinguished,' along with state recognition of customary authorities (p. 40). Since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, colonial and post-independence states have drawn on 'statist' regimes to expropriate land for conservation, investment, or infrastructure and reallocate land to migrants to establish labour pools or procure political support (Berry, 2002, p. 641; Boone, 2014, p. 38).

While land regimes "in the real world," Boone acknowledges (2014, pp. 20–24) are often hybrid, the archetypal distinction between regime types nevertheless predicts key differences in the mode and scale of political resistance. The stronger the 'statist' form of a land regime, the greater the opportunity for local groups to gain a national political platform for their struggle, as it is the state that recognises, denies or restores claims to land (Boone, 2014, pp. 178–179). In contrast, under 'customary' regimes, political grievances over land are channelled through customary authorities, remaining 'bottled up' at the local level



(Boone, 2014, pp. 181–183). Land regime ‘types’ likewise correspond to differences in the electoral and ethnic dynamics of struggles over land (Boone, 2014, pp. 72–73; Boone & Nyeme, 2015).

Boone’s (2014, 2015) and various other comparative analyses (Camara, 2013; Boone & Nyeme, 2015; Berry, 2017) demonstrate that structural approaches wield considerable explanatory power. Structural perspectives draw attention to contrasting state strategies of rule, and how policies and laws become entrenched within institutions, generating, as Lund (2008, p. 4) expresses, “a structure of opportunities for the negotiation of rights and the distribution of resources.” This dissertation illustrates that even in contexts which prove a difficult fit with Boone’s land regime typology, structural perspectives nevertheless help to explain dynamics that shape and constrict peasant political struggle, such as the collective identities and historical narratives they mobilise to advance their claims.

Structuralist approaches, however, are limited in several key ways. First, structural models are not geared towards analysing social change nor understanding how land regimes originate or evolve over time (Boone, 2013, p. 189, 2015, p. 186). By treating land regimes as simplified, static types to gain comparative “analytical purchase” (Boone, 2013, p. 190), structural models obscure the pluralistic character of African political-institutional landscapes. For example, in the case of Gokwe District in Zimbabwe, Berry (2002, pp. 661–662) details how the central state and customary authorities engaged in a lengthy tug of war to govern land: at times, chiefs allocated land in Gokwe against state edicts. To analyse such struggles solely in terms of a ‘prevailing’ land regime glazes over the contested nature of land regimes. Structural approaches also offer few tools to explore why political projects to challenge land expropriation ultimately succeed or fail. The insights elicited through structural analysis can be complemented by examining land regimes as dynamic, contested processes (Berry, 2017, p. 106).

### *2.1.2 Process-based approaches*

Process-based approaches to the study of struggles over land take the complex histories and pluralistic, contested nature of African land regimes as a starting point of analysis. Challenging the view that colonial rule always rigidified prior political-social forms, Sara Berry (1993, p. 29) argues that by embedding the idea of ‘tradition’ within indirect rule, but failing to enforce a singular version, colonial officials set the stage for endless debate

over African customs and rival claims to property, territory and authority. Repeated colonial redrawing of administrative boundaries and revision of chiefly authority structures added room for dispute amongst competing claimants (Berry, 2001; Leonardi & Santschi, 2016). In turn, the contested legacies of colonial rule have been complicated by successive shifts in governance structures, laws and policies since independence. New state laws and institutions, as Lund (2008, p. 4) emphasizes, often do not simply erase old ones, creating layers of historical precedents that local actors draw upon to further their claims to authority, property and belonging (Peters, 1994; Berry, 2002, p. 663; Lentz, 2006; Pierce, 2013; MacArthur, 2016, p. 22).

The hybrid governance dynamics that accordingly characterize many African contexts are encapsulated in the concept of ‘public authority’ (Lund, 2006). Departing from the idea of ‘the state’ as a unified, coherent institution, the idea of ‘public authority’ captures the way that different government bodies and various other institutions collude and compete to exercise authority over public life (Lund, 2006, p. 685; Sikor & Lund, 2009; Hagmann & Péclard, 2010). Such institutions range from ‘customary’ authorities supported by varying degrees of state recognition to village associations, vigilantes, international NGOs, social movements, companies and cooperatives (Berry, 2002, p. 662; Hoffmann & Kirk, 2013; Lund, 2016, p. 1213). When such institutions allocate land, arbitrate property disputes or collect taxes beyond the scope of the law, they operate in a ‘grey’ zone between state and society (Lund, 2006, p. 686; Le Meur, 2006). Public authority, accordingly, amounts to the ‘amalgamation’ of institutions’ overlapping, sometimes conflicting attempts to exercise control; such attempts often reference the *idea* of the state to evoke legitimacy, even as state rule is challenged, flouted or rivalled (Lund, 2006, pp. 689–691, 2008, pp. 11–15; Tapscott, 2016). Even temporary or failed attempts to govern land form “part of the picture” (Lund, 2008, p. 5), shaping how people negotiate land access and seek recognition of their claims to property and political belonging in practice (Justin & Verkoren, 2022).

The concept of public authority provides an apt lens to examine the everyday political processes through which land regimes are produced, negotiated and reshaped. Building on rich literatures that explore the processual dynamics of land tenure (S. Moore, 1978, 1986; Rose, 1994; Berry, 1993), Christian Lund (2008, 2011b, 2016, pp. 1205–1207) untangles how public authority, property, territory and political identity are formed in tandem through the construction of relationships of “reciprocal recognition.” In brief, institutional authority to

exercise control over people and land is built up when people and organisations *recognise* and comply with their authority. Concurrently, forms of property, territory and political identity are consolidated when they are recognised by public authorities and observed by rival claimants (Sikor & Lund, 2009). To illustrate, the character of ‘customary’ authority over land in West Africa has been determined as much by local negotiation and political struggles for recognition as by state legislation (Le Meur, 2006, pp. 891–893; Amanor, 2009). Following Ghana’s constitutional shift of 1979, earth priests vied with chiefs to (re)exert ‘customary’ powers, claiming jurisdiction over ‘earth shrine’ areas and the right to endorse land leases (Lund, 2008, pp. 40–55, 2013; Lentz, 2010). Amidst prolonged disputes, earth priests’ authority gradually gained traction as people appealed to priest-authorised leases to advance property claims (Lund, 2008, pp. 59–62). Land regimes are not simply imposed from the ‘top’ down, but emerge and shift through political negotiation: people’s daily behaviour validates or erodes the authority of institutions and the rules of property they seek to enforce (S. Moore, 1978; Lund, 2008).

This perspective illuminates key dynamics of large-scale struggles over land in several ways. First, as unpacked below, examining how authority, identity, territory, and property are co-produced provides a window into processes of state formation (Lund, 2016, p. 1200), revealing how regimes and ruling elites build power. Second, process-based approaches illuminate that in contexts of institutional pluralism, rural populations may mobilise, appeal to or leverage a range of possible authorities, identities, territorial logics, forms of property and historic narratives in the course of advancing collective claims to land (Berry 1993, 2002). Such options for collective mobilisation present trade-offs with repercussions for the effectiveness of struggles against state expropriation of land, as will be seen in the dissertation’s study of how peasant organisers in Apaa strategically reconstructed historical discourses linking identity and belonging and adapted new forms of property as the movement evolved.

A processual perspective, finally, presents several key analytical tools. The first is to scrutinize processes by which different institutions and political subjects co-construct relationships of ‘reciprocal recognition’ (Lund, 2006, 2008). The strength or weakness of such social contracts affects the extent to which ‘alternative’ forms of public authority beyond the state can disrupt processes of land expropriation, as will be seen in the dissertation’s analysis of Apaa peasant’s internal authority structures. Second is to analyse

the ‘strategies of legitimation’ (Lund, 2008) that state bodies and rural groups employ as they compete to imbue forms of authority, identity, property, and territory with a sense of stability and validity (Goheen, 1992; Shipton, 2009). Legitimacy is evoked through discourses and historic narratives and given substance through material articles, from deed papers, mark-stones, and graves to symbols of authority such as stamps and titles, to markers of identity such as ID cards and voting rolls (Worby, 1994; Peluso & Lund, 2011; Leonardi & Browne, 2018). The ‘persuasiveness’ (Rose, 1994) of such strategies helps to explain the success or limitations of peasant struggles to confront state power, as will be seen in my analysis of how Apaa peasant organisers presented discursive and material evidence to justify their claims to belonging, and their use of recognisable structures, titles and symbols to build public authority within the movement.

## **2.2 Land regimes as hegemonic processes**

While some scholars emphasize how states can mould land regimes to serve their interests (Amanor, 1999; Peters, 2004; Boone, 2014), others stress the capacity of ordinary people to renegotiate or defy state land policies in practice (Berry, 1993, 2002, p. 64; S. Moore, 2013 [1998]). Bridging this debate, this section draws on a Gramscian lens to conceptualise the complex, changeable, and sometimes contradictory ‘hegemonic land regime processes’ advanced by state institutions and elite actors to exert control over land and rural dwellers. As elite actors advance discourses and structures linking property, territory, political identity, and authority, they often adapt their strategy in response to dissent ‘from below.’ Land regimes, accordingly, are always co-constructed and negotiated, even as the arena of contention too often favours the powerful.

This concept frames the dissertation’s analysis of how ruling classes have advanced control over Apaa in northern Uganda, from colonial forced evictions and the imposition of ethnic territories to ongoing contemporary struggles between rival elites and government institutions that have variously sought to enclose Apaa to profit from conservation, exploit forest products, accumulate property, extend administrative territory and build electoral support. As will be seen, the concept of land regimes as contested hegemonic processes also illuminates how Museveni’s regime has navigated such competing interests to consolidate power.

### 2.2.1 Rethinking 'hegemony'

The concept of 'hegemony' has played a central role in shaping theoretical approaches to rural struggle. Scholars of the 'subaltern studies' school of the 1970s-80s conceived of hegemony as a form of domination that secures the consent of the subordinate (Guha, 1988; Chakrabarty, 2015). Determined to remedy earlier literature that overlooked the political agency of subordinate classes, such authors dismissed the absolute hegemonic power of the elite. While the powerful wield tools of oppression, 'subaltern' actors retain an "autonomous domain" in which their perceptions are unconstrained by ruling class discourses (Guha, p. 40; O'Hanlon, 2002 [1988], p. 62), as evident in cases of overt peasant revolt (Alam, 2002).

Similarly, scholars of covert, 'everyday' forms of resistance (Scott, 1985; Kerkvliet, 1986; Cheru, 1997) drew on a narrow concept of hegemony to explain peasant agency. The absence of open defiance, such scholars contend, does not reveal that subordinate classes normalise their oppression: the disadvantaged, Scott argued (1985, p. 310) hardly find elite discourses "convincing let alone hegemonic." Rather, in repressive circumstances, peasants often maintain a strategic veneer of compliance in 'on-stage' public discourses while expressing dissent in private, 'off-stage' discourses and subversive practices such as absenteeism, illicit cultivation, and cultivating 'moral economies' of subsistence and reciprocity to avoid capitalist markets (Scott, 1985, pp. 39–41, 1990). The idea that peasants possess untainted clarity regarding their own subjugation continues to influence studies of rural struggles over land (Norgrove & Hulme, 2006, p. 1097; Walker, 2009, pp. 78–79; Cavanagh & Benjaminsen, 2015, p. 730).

A cascade of critiques, however, illuminates the conceptual problems underlying such approaches (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Ortner, 1995; Chandra, 2015). The concept of everyday resistance defined hegemony as a purely ideological form of power, excluding its structural and material elements (Mitchell, 1990). This narrow definition enabled scholars to claim that peasants were unaffected by elite dogma, yet led to incoherent analysis. In his ethnography, for instance, Scott (1985, p. 326) highlighted that kinship patronage ties inhibited class-based action and described villagers' perception that land tenure reform was impossible as "more or less rational." Scott cast such dynamics, however, as unfortunate contextual circumstances rather than effects of elite power (Mitchell, 1990; Moore, 1998): his conceptual framework

led him to overlook the ways that hegemonic processes advanced by ruling elites reproduce such societal structures, cultivating the perception they are unchangeable (Moore, 1998, p. 351). Such conceptions of hegemony therefore obscure rather than expose the workings of power (Haynes & Prakash, 1992; Gledhill, 2014).

To transcend such limits, scholars have re-engaged with the work of Gramsci (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Roseberry, 1996; Whitehead, 2015). In contrast to scholars of ‘subaltern studies,’ Gramsci did not envision the hegemony of ruling classes as static ideological dominance (Ekers & Loftus, 2008, p. 704), but rather as a disputed “political process of struggle” advanced by state and elite actors (Roseberry, p. 77). Advanced effectively, the hegemonic narratives of elite groups become embodied in the social, legal and material fabric of society. For example, the exclusion of displaced groups from National Parks across Africa is often justified by “constructions of history” that erase past struggles over land claims (Neumann, 1998, p. 154). States often cast conservation areas as immutable entities, delineated in maps, marked by pillars, and inscribed in legislation (Peluso & Lund, 2013, p. 674; Holmes, 2014). By appearing timeless, the effects and discourses of power may become more difficult to contest (Moore, 1998, p. 351).

The processes through which ruling classes seek to reproduce hegemonic institutions and forms of control, however, remain arenas of dispute. Hegemonic projects are never complete but constantly shifting in response to resistance by drawing from the language or ideas of the dominated to gain traction (Mouffe, 1979 cited in Feierman, 1990, p. 26) or making token concessions while advancing their own interests (Fontana, 2005; Ekers & Loftus, 2008). For example, amid a prolonged struggle over the 2014 land acquisition bill in India, state legislators conceded ground to pacify advocacy networks by strengthening rights to resettlement, while the bill’s wording ensured land expropriation for investment could proceed (Nielsen & Nilsen, 2015, pp. 211–214). To cement their rule and quell resistance, state actors and ruling elites constantly adapt hegemonic processes in response to dissent.

### *2.2.2 Hegemonic land regimes*

A Gramscian perspective provides a dynamic way to conceive of ‘hegemonic’ land regime processes that holds processual and structural perspectives in productive tension. This dissertation proposes that ‘hegemonic land regime processes’ are driven by state regimes and ruling elites as they exert control over land as a strategy to consolidate authority and serve

their own economic interests. Such processes involve ruling class efforts to classify groups of people, define where they belong, bestow or deny political entitlements and delineate how they access, dispute and transact property. The ability to govern such pivotal aspects of social life, as Lund argues (2016, p. 1201), is “constitutive of state power.” The recording of land holdings in the Domesday book following the Norman conquest of England, as Lund illustrates (Lund, 2016, p. 1203), established that “propertied classes were beholden to the new king.” As this historic blueprint of empire-building highlights, ruling regimes or aspiring elites build power by becoming recognised as the authority that bestows or denies rights of political belonging and property, whether directly or via intermediary institutions (Sikor & Lund, 2009; Lund, 2006). Not all state attempts to develop political orders linking property and citizenship should be defined as ‘hegemonic;’ rather, the term denotes processes that advance ruling class privilege and social control at a cost to subordinate groups.

Hegemonic land regimes can be advanced through violence, yet are usually also interwoven with tactics to garner legitimacy. Colonial rulers and post-independence regimes have often gained control over territory or imposed new property rules for instance, by forcefully relocating populations (Berry, 2002, p. 64; Peluso & Lund, 2011), thereby forging new realities ‘on the ground’ (Peluso & Watts, 2001; Sikor & Lund, 2009, p. 15). To justify forms of authority, territory, identity, and property as natural and valid however, state actors and elite classes also employ various material and discursive ‘strategies of legitimation,’ often evoking and performing the idea of state power (Lund, 2013, p. 30; Lund, 2016, p. 1218; Rose, 1994).

A Gramscian lens illuminates how ruling classes leverage land to consolidate power in several key ways. First, identifying particular land regime processes as ‘hegemonic’ focuses inquiry on the oppressive impact of strategies ruling elites pursue to cement authority and economic privilege, even when their efforts remain contested. Such threads of analysis, as Peters (2004, 2012) argues, are easily obscured by approaches that over-emphasize the inconclusive nature of successive state interventions and the resulting ‘negotiability’ of African land tenure (also Peluso, 1992). The idea of ‘hegemonic’ process highlights that as public authorities compete to classify people, categorize land and narrate history, the playing field is tilted in favour of actors with greater resources and power. A Gramscian perspective also avoids a static view of land regimes, drawing attention to the complex, shifting processes by which state and elite actors advance their interests in relation to voices of dissent. The

extent to which hegemonic processes linking authority, territory, property, and identity become embedded in societal structures, therefore, remains an empirical question to be examined in particular contexts (Lund, 2008, pp. 4–11, 2016, p. 1212).

To identify land regime processes as ‘hegemonic’ does not assume they are advanced in a cohesive, coordinated manner. Reflecting the ‘public authority’ lens introduced above, the hegemonic pursuits of different state institutions and domestic and transnational elite to extend control over property or territory often compete or conflict, as will be seen in the case of competition amongst contemporary elite to control Apaa land in northern Uganda. For example, Moore (1998) explores how a state-imposed ‘resettlement’ scheme and the contradictory, descent-based territorial claims of a government-salaried chief both impinged upon local livelihood strategies in eastern Zimbabwe during the 1990s: women, in particular, had to contend with “cross-cutting chiefly, patriarchal and state power” (p. 369). The hegemonic processes advanced by different ruling elites may reference the ‘idea of the state’ (Abrams, 1988; Lund, 2006) yet serve conflicting agendas.

Finally, hegemonic land regime processes pursued by ruling elites can be shaped by contradictory imperatives that shift over time. Colonial strategies of rule were riddled with dilemmas and incongruities (Berry, 1993; Nugent, 2019, p. 23). For example, British colonial officials wavered between exploiting supposedly ‘traditional’ land structures tied to social identity to prop up indirect rule and fostering the emergence of ‘modern’ property rights to spur commercial agriculture (see Lund, 2008, pp. 26–27; Worby, 1994, p. 388; Berry, 2002, pp. 647–8). Such conflicting compulsions, together with the ill-contrived nature of the colonial quest to define African ‘tradition,’ resulted in approaches to land that were “both oppressive and unstable” (Berry, 2002, p. 642). Although hegemonic land regime processes pursued by ruling classes may fall short of reproducing fixed, stable social identities, property systems or territories, this dissertation argues that they nevertheless perpetuate powerful discourses and structural imprints that elite actors continue to draw upon to exert control.

The subsections below identify three distinct hegemonic land regime processes that state regimes and ruling elites advance to build power, all of which have intersected to shape struggles over Apaa land in northern Uganda: (1) the (re)production of oppositional identity politics; (2), the extension of territorial control through the enclosure of conservation areas, and (3), the facilitation of elite accumulation of property and resources.



### *2.2.3 Oppositional identity politics*

Hegemonic land regime processes advanced by ruling elites often (re)produce and leverage oppositional identity politics. In broad terms, powerful actors seek to create or exploit “categorical inequalities” and divisions between political subjects in connection to their rights to property or political belonging in order to dissipate resistance or secure political support (Lund, 2016, pp. 1203, 1211). As structural perspectives illuminate, colonial and post-independence regimes have wielded this strategy in two distinct ways (Mamdani, 1996, p. 17). First, in some contexts, states attempt to extend direct control over land and citizenship as political resources to gain the support of migrants or national groups denied rights by rival parties (Boone, 2014; Berry, 1993, pp. 24–25). This approach typically engenders a ‘politics of indigeneity’ (Mamdani, 2001, p. 33), pitting ‘indigenous’ groups against state-favoured strangers or racially defined ‘others.’ For example, this pattern was exemplified by the Mobutu regime’s transfer of land to Rwandan settlers in eastern Congo to counter opposition support for ‘native’ local populations (see Mamdani, 2001, p. 244; Boone, 2014, p. 163), and the Amin regime’s seizure of property from residents of Asian descent to build political support amongst elite ‘native’ Ugandans in the 1970s.

A second way ruling powers leverage oppositional identity politics is by fostering ‘customary’ forms of land control that splinter opposition along ethnic lines and deflect dissent from central rulers onto local authorities (Mamdani, 1996; Boone, 2014). This politics of territorialized ethnicity emerged upon the trellis of colonial indirect rule. As will be explored in chapter three, in the early colonial era, officials often segregated African populations into nested administrative territories based upon ‘tribal,’ chiefdom and clan identities, governed under ‘traditional’ chiefly authorities and ‘native’ laws (Ambler, 1988; Chanock, 1985). Colonial rulers sought to harness what they perceived as ‘traditional’ systems of spatially-bound, homogenous social groups and chiefs to create a stable administrative order (Berry, 1993, chapter two; Peters, 1994, pp. 9–10), maintain control, collect taxes, and suppress resistance (Mamdani, 1996, p. 76; Worby, 1994, p. 380; Wright, 1999). Contrary to colonial perceptions, however, pre-colonial forms of identity, authority, and property were variable, contested, ever-evolving, and often orientated around authority over people rather than control over territory (Gray, 2002; Lentz, 2007; Nugent, 2008).

The hegemonic process of indirect rule thus disrupted diverse dynamics of African political belonging and relationships to land in ways that varied from place to place (Verweijen & Bockhaven, 2020, pp. 4–7). In some contexts, colonial governance was acutely violent, involving displacement, purging of defiant local authorities and heavy-handed enforcement (Young, 1967; Eggers, 2020). For example, Mamdani (2001) explores how Belgian officials in Rwanda legally enforced ‘Tutsi’ and ‘Hutu’ as racialised political identities: chiefly authority over land was concentrated in the hands of Tutsi (pp. 88–99), who were cast as privileged non-natives, and thus natural ‘sub-rulers’ (pp. 48–73). In other contexts, tribal identities, chiefly authorities and boundaries were more clearly co-produced through ongoing negotiations between colonial officials and the local agents they relied upon to define local ‘custom’ (Spear, 2003, p. 26; Nugent, 2008; cf. Vail, 1989). As colonial rulers rarely succeeded in cementing an unbending social-legal order grounded in an orthodox version of ‘custom,’ struggles over the meaning of tradition proliferated as Africans advanced claims in such terms amidst new opportunities to commercialise agriculture (Berry, 1993, pp. 9, 20–40; Lentz, 2007; cf. Chanock, 1985). As a Gramscian perspective highlights, however, even as the structures of indirect rule were shaped and reshaped through negotiation ‘from below,’ they were nevertheless advanced and adjusted to serve colonial interests.

Perhaps most profoundly, hegemonic processes of indirect rule gave rise to a new political language of ethnic territoriality. By basing early administration around tribal, chiefdom and clan units—even when such structures proved subject to negotiation and change—colonial officials instilled an enduring discursive framework that conflated, then entangled ethnicity, property rights, administrative territory and authority over land (Lonsdale, 1992; Lund, 2008, p. 16; Leonardi, 2020). As will be explored in the case of northern Uganda, colonial officials of the 1950s and post-independence regimes often denounced tribalism and ethnic-territoriality yet exploited their underlying logic to fragment communities and consolidate control. Until now, hegemonic strategies of ruling elites often rely on the way that ‘customary’ discourses and structural legacies of indirect rule, however disputed, tend to focus conflict along ethnic lines, thereby inhibiting the potential for class-based collective action (Mamdani, 1996, pp. 90–96; Boone, 2014, pp. 14, 50).

The territorial politics of ethnic difference materialized in new ways in the context of neoliberal decentralisation policies. Since the late 1980s, many African states have implemented wide-reaching political and economic devolution processes advocated by the

World Bank and other international agencies. As a result, processes of decentralisation and the multiplication of administrative units refocused political struggles on the control of territory, property and state resources at the local level (Lentz, 2006; Von Oppen, 2006; Boone, 2007; Leonardi & Santschi, 2016). As states fragmented existing districts and counties to forge new units, local political elites began to contest their boundaries, demand administrations in the name of their own tribes, and reassert ethnic claims over new settlement zones in disputed territories (Schomerus & Allen, 2010; Nsamba, 2013; Cormack, 2016). As such struggles unfolded, political elites began to leverage the logic that administrative boundaries align with ‘ancestral’ territories, wielding rival interpretations of oral narratives and colonial history to advance their interests (Lentz, 2006; Leonardi, 2020).

Counter-intuitively, decentralization strategies have typically strengthened the centralised control of African states and provided regimes with avenues to leverage ethnic differences for political benefit (Green, 2010; Sjögren, 2015, p. 270; Leonardi, 2020). The flow of government positions and revenue that stems from the creation of new administrations afforded central state regimes with means to co-opt local elites and foster ruling-party support across the country (Green, 2008; Kandel, 2018, p. 280; Awortwi & Helmsing, 2014). Regime-aligned elites and opposition alike have found numerous ways to exploit local, ethnically-framed struggles for political ends and personal gain. Notably, politicians have built electoral support by championing the territorial claims of their ‘ethnic’ constituents (Lund, 2008; Sjögren, 2014), and utilised disputes to stake out personal land holdings (Peters, 2004, p. 298). To advance expropriation processes for investment or conservation, as will be explored in the case of Apaa, states often play off rival administrations and ethnic constituencies against each other (Sharpe, 1998). As local groups, administrations and customary leaders jostle and ‘bargain’ for state support for their claims, they also bolster regime power by invoking state territorial logics (Leonardi, 2020), and recognising state authority to adjudicate and bestow favour (Boone, 2014, p. 50).

#### *2.2.4 Territorialisation, social control and protected areas.*

A second type of hegemonic land regime process advanced by states and ruling elites is the expansion of territorial control through the enclosure of land in the name of conservation. In the colonial era, the creation of forest reserves and national parks was intimately tied to the state-building process Vandergeest and Peluso (1995, pp. 385–388)

conceive as “internal territorialisation,” by which states demarcate space *within* national borders and extend control over land, natural resources and people (Corson, 2011, pp. 704–705; Cavanagh & Benjaminsen, 2015, p. 726). By violently displacing populations to forge protected areas, colonisers established themselves as rulers with authority to define where people belonged, and where they did not (Sikor & Lund, 2009; Neumann, 1998, pp. 34–35). States and post-independence regimes have often justified such spatial reordering with discourses that cast particular landscapes as pristine wildernesses and attributed environmental degradation to peasants and pastoralists, but defended state ‘managed’ timber extraction or elite trophy hunting (Peluso, 1992, pp. 44–69; Pochet, 2014). In many cases, however, such ‘wildernesses’ were not timeless, primordial landscapes, but rather products of colonial interventions that expelled human populations (Neumann, 2004, pp. 190–194; Fairhead & Leach, 1995).

The relocation of populations for conservation often doubled as a state strategy to extend social and territorial control (Beinart, 2000; Peluso & Vandergeest, 2011). During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, colonial officials forcibly relocated African peasants, nomadic pastoralists and ‘bushmen’ from newly demarcated conservation areas into sedentary, ‘civilised’ settlements (Neumann, 2004; Brockington & Igoe, 2006). In East Africa, British officials established conservation areas in areas that were first depopulated on the grounds of disease control. As will be explored in the case of Apaa, however, such forced relocations were often driven by colonial interests in easing administration, facilitating tax collection and imposing social order (Soff, 1971, p. 192; Allen 1993, pp. 123–124; Neumann, 2004). In many cases, local populations resisted forced resettlement, leading to colonial concessions (Hoppe, 1997, p. 91) limited implementation (Langlands & Obol-Owit, 1968, p. 12) and ongoing struggles over land access (Neumann, 1998). As a Gramscian lens highlights, elite actors advance control over territory in negotiation with those they seek to rule.

Since independence, global policy shifts have both reinforced and reformulated the links between conservation and state territorial control. In the 1980s, the rise of the global conservation agenda and African tourism industries prompted states—often funded by international donors—to reassert territorial control over protected areas, evicting populations that had encroached in prior decades (see Brockington & Igoe, 2006, pp. 443–445; Cavanagh 2012; Nel & Hill, 2013). As African states adopted donor-driven neoliberal policies in the 1990s, a wider array of non-state actors became involved in protected area management (see

Castree, 2008; Corson, 2011). In conflict-ridden regions, struggles between rebel militias, traditional authorities, NGOs and politicians to exert authority over protected areas can diminish central state territorial control (Lombard, 2016; Marijnen & Verweijen, 2020). In other contexts, however, the involvement of transnational actors in protected areas management can augment state territorialisation (Dunn, 2009), particularly when donors enable state-sanctioned armed violence against poachers and encroachers, extending state military presence into rural peripheries (Duffy, 2000; Lunstrum, 2014). States have also advanced central territorial control by directly regulating investment, as Gardner (2012, pp. 393–396), demonstrates in Lolilondo in Tanzania, where the state blocked eco-tourism companies from negotiating access with Maasai communities in the 2000s, instead authorising a larger hunting company to establish a state-protected area.

#### *2.2.5 Elite accumulation of property and wealth*

In a third type of hegemonic land regime process, states and ruling classes build power by facilitating elite accumulation of property and capital. This dynamic has manifested in various ways over time, reflecting wider global political-economic shifts. During the colonial era, as ruling officials alienated African peasants from fertile land, wild game, and forest resources to create conservation areas, they also often drew them into emerging capitalist economies (Corson, 2011, p. 706; cf. Kelly, 2011, p. 684). In settler colonies, colonial officers relocated populations to create labour reserves for white farms and government projects (Ramutsindela, 2003, p. 43; Neumann, 2004); in other regions, peasants were pushed into cash crop production to compensate for reduced access to natural resources, pay colonial taxes, and meet compulsory export quotas (Adams & Hutton, 2007; Cavanagh, 2012). As Cavanagh and Himmelfarb (2015, p. 69) demonstrate, expulsions to create forest reserves in Mount Elgon in Uganda dovetailed with colonial attempts to commodify peasant labour; the taxes and coffee exports that resulted helped to prop up the “economic apparatus” of the colonial state. Even as local populations resisted and undermined attempts to extract the surplus of their labour, such processes served to facilitate colonial rule.

In the 1970s and early 80s, many African state regimes pursued reforms that nationalised land and introduced titling programs spurred by international institutions that insisted that capitalist agricultural investment requires the security provided by formal land titles (Bassett & Crummey, 1993; Peters, 2004). Reflecting a global orthodoxy crystalized in

the last decade of colonial rule, institutions such as the World Bank cast ‘customary’ tenure as too poorly defined and insecure to enable productive land use. The land reforms that unfolded—albeit haphazard and incomplete—provided opportunities for states to cement patronage relationships with the emerging elite (Xavier, 1997; Peters, 2004). Land registration programs were often easily manipulated by those with political connections or wealth to secure titles to vast areas of ‘public’ land (cf. Berry, 1993, p. 128), as explored in Uganda (Mamdani, 1992), Cameroon (Goheen, 1992) and Somalia (Besteman, 1996). While peasant farmers resisted such processes, resulting in ongoing disputes over land holdings (see Berry, 1993, chapter five), titling reforms nevertheless facilitated the emergence of landed, ‘capitalist’ elites bound to the regimes that recognised their property titles (Mamdani, 1992; Shivji, 1976).

Distinct patterns of state-facilitated elite accumulation of property and wealth emerged in the context of global neoliberal and structural adjustment policies of the 1980s-90s (Peters, 2004, 2012; Berry, 2017). The neoliberal land reforms promoted by the World Bank and international donors in these decades reflected an ‘evolutionary’ view of property that envisioned a transition from customary tenure to a market-based freehold system as demand for titles rise with growing land scarcity and competition (see Deininger & Binswanger, 1999; Toulmin & Quan, 2000; Amanor, 2001). International institutions pushed ‘non-interventionist’ approaches, pressing governments to divest public land, abdicate the responsibility of land administration to local customary authorities or decentralised state bureaucracies, and allow the emergence of land markets. In response, many states reversed public land decrees and recognised ‘customary’ land tenure but also established various legal pathways for the acquisition of formal titles through sale or tenure conversion (Coldham, 2000; Peters, 2004).

Within such pluralistic policy environments, state regimes continued to craft channels for elite actors to accumulate property and wealth (Myers, 1994; Klopp, 2000; Berry, 2017). Since the 1990s, state patronage strategies have become increasingly integrated into the global political economy as state actors and elite intercessors—notably army generals, government officials and politicians—broker deals with domestic or transnational investors seeking access to land (Reno, 2001, p. 204; Geschiere, 2009, p. 89). Amid such dynamics, reinstated ‘customary’ authorities navigate the contradictions between tenure practices based on kinship belonging, and mounting commodification and privatisation of land (Goheen,

1992). In some instances, ‘customary’ authorities have defended the interests of peasants whose land access is threatened by expropriation for investment (Berry, 2017; Peters, 2012, pp. 8, 14). Frequently, however, ‘customary’ leaders feature within the ranks of emerging elite classes that accrue profit via their state-sanctioned roles as allocators of commercial leases or leverage their cultural status to advance personal land claims in return for political loyalty (Amanor, 1999; Ubink, 2008; Leonardi & Santschi, 2016, p. 96).

Finally, African states have also enabled elite accumulation via investment in conservation. Amidst the rise of neoliberal discourses in the 1990s, international agencies and donors increasingly linked the protection of nature to its commodification (Castree, 2008; Fairhead et al, 2012). Within this policy milieu, African states displaced populations from newly re-demarcated areas to allow a wide array of actors, from private companies, geo-tech firms and political elites to international conservation NGOs to profit from ‘green’ investments in eco-tourism, game park management and carbon-offsetting, as explored in Madagascar (Corson, 2011) eastern Uganda (Cavanagh, 2012; Nel, 2015), Tanzania (Benjaminsen & Bryceson, 2012), and South Africa (Snijders, 2012). In many cases, not only land and resources but conservation rents and revenues have been captured by elite private interests, amounting, as Harvey (2005, p. 158) conceptualised, to ‘accumulation by dispossession’ (also Cavanagh & Benjaminsen, 2015, p. 726). In some instances, states have gained political support and accrued new revenues (Gardner, 2012) by facilitating private ventures in protected areas while accommodating competing interests in mining, oil drilling or commercial agriculture on the same land (Child, 2009; Corson, p. 715; Marijnen, 2018, pp. 803–804).

As this survey highlights, hegemonic land regime processes manifest in variable ways that reflect the interaction of local, regional and national political trajectories and global political-economic processes and discourses. From the colonial era to the present, however, state institutions and ruling elites have sought to build power by leveraging territorial identity politics, extending territorial control, and exploiting authority over land to enable elite actors to accumulate property and wealth. As will be demonstrated in the case of Apaa, even when the hegemonic projects advanced by rival elites overlap or conflict, central state regimes seek to navigate their competing interests to maintain political control.

## 2.3 Counter-hegemonic land movements

*If the mode of rule introduces and builds on specific differences among the ruled, then the point of political activism must be both to recognize the starting point of resistance as shaped by the nature of power and to transcend its limits – Mamdani, 1996, p. 219*

Probing Mamdani's (1996) claim, this section unravels the ways in which peasant action to advance collective claims to land is both shaped by hegemonic land regime processes and structures, yet can also work to subvert, renegotiate or reshape forms of political identity, authority, property and territory through the process of political struggle. Building on the discussion above, I borrow from a Gramscian lens, complemented by Feierman's (1990) notion of the 'peasant intellectual,' to conceptualize such dynamics in terms of 'counter-hegemonic' land processes.

### 2.3.1 Peasant Intellectuals

This dissertation draws upon Feierman's (1990) notion of peasant intellectuals to conceptualise how rural dwellers' shifting engagement with inherited discourses, structures and practices linking authority, identity and territory has shaped and reshaped the Apaa land movement in northern Uganda. Peasant intellectuals, as Feierman (pp. 18, 24–25) conceives, have limited formal education, survive largely by farming, yet play a distinctly intellectual social role in shaping political movements. Feierman drew from Gramsci's idea of 'organic intellectuals' (1971), but rejected the idea that peasants rely upon the intellectual leadership of educated, 'proletariat' organisers (cf. Shivji, 1976). Peasant farmers, Feierman (pp. 23–48) emphasized, contested colonial power in Tanzania, in part because their interests were less bound to British rule than emerging bureaucrats and chiefs.

Whether the term 'peasant' aptly describes a distinct class of rural farmers since the rise of capitalism in the African countryside remains disputed (see Bernstein, 2003, 2014; O'Laughlin, 2016, pp. 392–399). This dissertation, however, follows Feierman's (1990, p. 24) argument that although 'peasants' are internally differentiated, have diverse interests, and often sell part of what they produce and engage in 'off-farm' petty trade or employment to supplement their livelihoods, they may still be broadly viewed as a relative socio-economic class that relies predominantly on subsistence farming (also Mamdani, 1996, pp. 203–204). The term 'peasantry' is useful, as Feierman (p. 25) observes, as long as it opens up



questions—rather than making assumptions—about the relationship between rural producers and elite classes, and how such households organise their labour and engage with markets. Peasant discourse and political action, accordingly, can be disentangled from those advanced by elite actors, and studied in relation to peasant experiences, interests and social positions (Feierman, p. 21).

In contrast to problematic views of ‘subaltern’ autonomy, Feierman understood peasant intellectuals as deeply influenced by dominant discourses, material structures and cultural practices, yet also capable of critically reworking them in a manner resembling the development of language (Feierman, 1990, pp. 13–14). Even as peasant intellectuals’ inherited discourses shape their thought world and political practice, they can nevertheless struggle to “escape the bonds of their own language” (Feierman, p. 40). A ‘competent speaker,’ while constrained by certain norms of grammar can still innovate new forms (Feierman, p. 13; also, Berry, 1993, p. 13). Through such “rule-governed creativity” (Giddens, 1979, p. 18 cited in Feierman, p. 13), peasant intellectuals reshape or even transcend the discourses and political practices of their inherited conceptual and material landscapes.

In this way, popular peasant discourses and practices appropriated by state actors or elite classes can be reclaimed (Mouffe, 1979; Mamdani, 2001, pp. 270–276). For example, just as British administrators in Tanzania co-opted peasant discourses linking legitimate chiefship, the ‘possession’ of rain, and the health of the land, peasant struggle against unjust colonial agricultural policies also drew upon such frameworks (Feierman, 1990). Although such terms of debate sometimes functioned as an “idiom of collaboration,” peasant intellectuals creatively leveraged ideas of ‘healing the land’ towards dissent (Feierman, pp. 40–44). This perspective illuminates the way that peasant intellectuals driving the Apaa land movement have been constrained by hegemonic appropriations of discourses linking identity, ‘custom’ and belonging to the land, yet have also creatively salvaged and reworked them.

Finally, Feierman’s (1990, p. 42) framework provides a critical perspective on the relationship between ‘off-stage’ and ‘on-stage’ peasant discourse and action. The idea of ‘off-stage’ refers to debates, discursive frameworks and political activity that take place away from the public gaze amongst those struggling to advance a common goal, while ‘on-stage’ denotes narratives and collective action performed publicly to garner allies or exert pressure

on ruling powers. The concepts of ‘off-stage’ discourse or ‘hidden scripts’ (Scott, 1990) have often been interwoven with portrayals of peasants as homogenous, autonomous ‘resisting subjects’ (Gledhill, 1994; Ortner, 1995; Theodossopoulos, 2014). Shed of such baggage however, such distinctions provide valuable insights (Forsyth, 2009, pp. 268–269; Lentz, 2010, p. 75). Probing peasant debates that take place ‘off-stage’ illuminates the diversity of peasant perspectives, providing a window into peasant politics.

These concepts also highlight how peasant intellectuals utilise diverging discourses to target distinct audiences, for different strategic purposes. In ‘on-stage’ contexts, for example, peasants of Feierman’s (1990) study drew on discourses of democracy and economic development to convey dissent in terms colonial administrators struggled to stifle. Similar to the notion of ‘rightful’ resistance’ (O’Brien & Li, 2006; O’Brien, 2013), peasant intellectuals can leverage “the language of hegemony” against “hegemonic power” (Feierman, p. 40). Offstage, however, debates amongst Tanzanian peasants in Feierman’s (p. 42) research focused on chiefly authority, enabling peasants to denounce exploitative colonially co-opted chiefs on the basis that they “had no rain”. These concepts set the stage for the dissertation’s analysis of the case of Apaa, which reveals that while peasant intellectuals’ ‘on-stage’ discourses have espoused ridged historic, ancestral claims to land, ‘off-stage’ they have continued to debate the links between history, identity and belonging, enabling them to “confront changing relations of power” (Isaacman, 1990, p. 51) by shifting the collective identity of the movement and developing novel forms of authority and property.

### *2.3.2 The shaping of resistance*

“Subaltern groups,” Gramsci pronounced (1971, p. 55), “are always subject to the activity of ruling groups, even as they rebel and rise up.” As this maxim captures, the daily lives, practices and conceptual worlds of peasant intellectuals inevitably become entangled in the hegemonic logics, discourses and institutions advanced by ruling classes (Gledhill, 2014).

Those challenging unjust land policies or state expropriation processes, accordingly, often mirror the forms of hegemonic power they seek to resist (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Nilsen, 2015, p. 593). Just as ethnic territorial divisions and ‘chiefly’ authority provided tools of indirect rule, colonial subjects often turned to ethnic identity to organise collective action and focused their resistance efforts against colonially-backed chiefs (Mamdani, 1996). In colonial South Africa, as Mamdani demonstrates (1996, pp. 190–6), revolts against forced

resettlement into ‘native reserves’ were often mobilised through tribal associations and targeted the ‘chiefs’ used to implement such measures. In contexts where states attempt to directly control land, the political action of ‘potential losers’ often targets state institutions and replicates the identity-based divisions leveraged by state actors, pitting ‘indigenous’ groups, as Boone argues (2014, chapter five) against strangers. For example, ethnically diverse ‘indigenous’ Tanzanians collectively mobilised against state allocation of land to domestic investors of Asian descent in Kiru valley during the 2010s by attacking the investors and petitioning the state (Boone, 2015, p. 184). From the collective identities that groups activate to the locus of authority they target, the mode of rule states exert over land often shapes the parameters of resistance.

Political action ‘from below,’ however, does not necessarily conform neatly to structuralist models, reflecting the messy, contested forms land tenure takes in practice. Peasant responses to ‘statist’ attempts to control land, as will be explored in the case of Apaa, may fracture along ethnic lines rather than indigene-stranger divisions (cf. Boone, 2014). Contexts in which ruling elites back ‘customary’ control may similarly elude structural predictions. To illustrate, indirect colonial rule often fell short of imposing the ‘decentralised despotism’ that Mamdani (1996) described (Willis, 2003; Leonardi, 2013, p. 63). Under indirect rule in Sudan, as Leonardi & Vaughan (2016, pp. 80–92) demonstrate, the population sometimes went above their ‘chiefs’ to petition colonial governors directly, sometimes succeeding in prompting officials to remove unpopular chiefs. In other instances, sympathetic chiefs provided a ‘platform’ for local groups to make collective demands (Leonardi & Vaughan, pp. 95–96). Such protest still centred, however, around chiefly accountability, while populations often adopted political identities that emerged through colonial rule to express collective demands. Although strategies of rule may not constrict the parameters of protest in the manner often assumed, hegemonic processes still shape expressions of dissent. It is thus in dynamic ways that hegemonic constructions of identity, authority and territory converge to mould the landscapes in which peasant intellectuals develop political action.

Such complexity is particularly evident in cases of contemporary boundary disputes. Reflecting the extent to which the “insecurities and ambitions” of ordinary Africans have become entangled in divisive ethno-territorial logics (Leonardi & Santschi, 2016, p. 56), in recent decades, rural dwellers have lobbied for new administrative units in the name of ethnic groups (Green, 2010), and become key protagonists in border struggles (Lund, 2008; Lentz,

2010; Sjögren, 2014). For instance, Cormack (2016, pp. 514–516, 523) demonstrates how a struggle between two ‘sub-tribal’ groups in South Sudan to control a key village straddling an administrative border reflected competitive attempts to gain state recognition and tap government resources. Community leaders on both sides evoked symbols of state authority and citizenship alongside older Dinka territorial logics. As this case illustrates, peasant intellectuals embroiled in border disputes turn to varied inherited registers and narratives of the past to justify their claims (Berry, 2002; Lentz, 2003). In such contexts, peasant political action is less dictated by state-imposed structures than it is animated by the hegemonic discursive frameworks advanced by ruling elites that link administrative territories with ethnicity and rights to property and belonging.

To a degree, the ethno-territorial logics exploited by ruling classes can provide peasant intellectuals with powerful tools to contest state land expropriation. With the rise of intersecting global discourses favouring decentralisation, ‘traditional’ land governance and ‘indigenous’ rights (Amanor, 2001; Lentz, 2007, pp. 44, 49), land claims articulated in such terms have gained renewed traction in courtrooms, parliamentary debates and NGO offices (Li, 2007, pp. 145–147; Anthias & Hoffmann, 2021). The advent of multi-party elections in many contexts has also allowed local groups contesting state expropriation to gain national political allies eager to represent ‘indigenous’ or ethnic constituencies (Geschiere, 2009, p. 87; Boone, 2014, p. 255). For example, in north-eastern Uganda (Kandel, 2017), opposition political backing for Iteso residents’ ‘ancestral’ land claims played a key role in their successful struggle against state expropriation of land for military barracks. Reflecting the partisan character of local identity politics, the historic narratives leveraged by Iteso residents and their political allies eschewed Karamojong ethnic claims to the disputed land. As this case highlights, local peasant groups can sometimes utilise territorial identity politics to win significant victories, albeit at the cost of ethnic rivals.

Political action ‘from below’ that conforms to the logics and categories leveraged by ruling elites, however, is often limited. When peasant collective action over land is channelled into ethnically charged struggles, all too often ruling elites gain political mileage, while populations are entangled in costly cycles of conflict. Such dynamics are evident in research on protracted legal cases over property and territory in the Senegambia (Nugent, 2019), administrative boundary struggles in Uganda and South Sudan (Sjögren, 2014; Kandel, 2018; Leonardi & Santschi, 2016, pp. 58–59), and conflict over chiefly jurisdiction

in Ghana (Lentz, 2010; Lund, 2008, chapter six). Peasant action refracted along ethno-territorial lines can quash opportunities for class-based alliances to challenge elite accumulation (cf. Lentz, 2007, p. 48). For example, when rich Hutu began taking over land from ‘indigenous’ Bahunde clans during the 1990s in northern DRC, displaced peasant groups and settlers organised along ethnic lines, rather than forming cross-ethnic alliances to resist the absentee landlords (Mamdani, 2001, pp. 252–253). The state army dispatched to suppress the ensuing violence favoured the rich Hutu, who could offer material support to sustain the troops. As will become clear in the case of Apaa, peasant intellectuals face alliance choice trade-offs: to leverage elite support based on descent or ethnic identity can engender ongoing conflict that pits peasant groups against one another.

Similar dynamics also emerge in peasant struggles against state-driven land expropriation. When peasant movements remain bound by ethno-territorial logics, they often prove vulnerable to manipulation by elite actors and prone to internal fragmentation that undermines effective organising. Karambiri and Brockhaus (2019), for instance, explore a case in Burkina Faso in which collective efforts to prevent state-backed evictions from forested land disintegrated—at least in part—because ‘indigenous’ groups, established migrants and ‘late-comers’ failed to overcome their divided interests to form a common political agenda. “What began as resistance against underlying structural problems,” the authors conclude (p. 30), “turned into a localised conflict between citizens and local authorities.” The emancipatory potential of resistance is restricted when peasant groups reproduce the hegemonic categories, political cultures, and discursive frameworks linking territory, property, and identity reproduced by ruling elites. These concepts frame the dissertation’s discussion of how the Apaa movement has been limited by its reproduction of hegemonic divisions based on clan and tribe.

### *2.3.3 Counter-hegemonic political imagination*

Although peasant intellectuals are inevitably influenced by the land regime processes advanced by ruling classes, through political struggle they may also reimagine and rework them. Drawing from a Gramscian lens, this process can be conceptualized as ‘counter-hegemonic’ (Jackson Lears, 1985; Fonseca, 2016). Far from an instinctive response, counter-hegemonic land regime processes involve critical analysis of the structures and logics

interweaving land, power and identity leveraged by ruling elites, and the development of practices and discourses that contest them. Such practices have the potential to disrupt the oppositional identities elite actors so often rely upon (Fontana, 2005; Mamdani, 1996). Through political struggle, peasant intellectuals may renegotiate, redefine or create new interlocking forms of political identity, authority, territory, and property. This process constitutes both a strategy of resistance and a source of emergent, alternative ideologies and political forms.

Peasant intellectuals' efforts to challenge land regime discourses and structures perpetuated by ruling elites have often drawn from critical reinterpretations of 'custom.' The colonial era did not mark a "catastrophic erasure" (MacArthur, 2016, p. 22) of more flexible precolonial geographies, identities and networks: cross-cutting clan relations were not extinguished, while narratives of intertwining histories, overlapping territories and the practice of welcoming outsiders retain salience (Allen, 1993; Schlee, 2010; Leonardi, 2020). During the colonial era, local groups sometimes managed to transcend divisive logics embedded in indirect rule by drawing from such inclusive precolonial practices (Worby, 1994; Willis, 1992; Bender, 2013). For example, the Luo-speaking 'Kager' clan of western Kenya struggled to redefine their political identity under customary law as 'non-indigenous' settlers (Holmes, 1997). In petitions to British officials, Kager clans asserted their status as legitimate 'owners' or 'fathers of the soil' by narrating their long-standing intertwined affinal and non-kinship relations with 'indigenous' Bantu-speaking clans. To contest their exclusion from 'customary' land ownership, the Kager recast their political identity as "part of a historically interconnected community of diverse populations" (Holmes, 1997, p. 83). Amid struggles for land access, peasants sometimes expand the boundaries of belonging (also Berry, 2001).

In some instances, colonial subjects constructed new, broader forms of 'ethnic' belonging to defend access to land. Revealing how ethnicity can emerge through a self-conscious, imaginative process (Anderson, 1983; MacArthur, 2013, p. 352), ethnic entrepreneurs in colonial Kenya strategically synthesized amalgamated 'tribal' identities such as the Kalenjin and Mijikenda to contest colonial enclosure of land (Lynch, 2011; Willis & Gona, 2013, pp. 458–460; cf. Klopp, 2002, p. 278). While such 'super tribes' were often based on the idea of a common ancestor, in some cases colonial subjects formed 'tribes' around geographic territory (MacArthur, 2016, p. 28). For example, it was the pluralistic,

geographically orientated character of Luyia identity that MacArthur (2013, 2016) argues enabled diverse groups to impede land expropriation by white miners during the 1930s gold rush. While the Kenyan Land Commission attempted to exploit ethnic division to fragment dissent, activists drew together scattered groups, suppressed internal competition, and articulated a “centralised political vision” of shared belonging to territory (MacArthur, 2013, p. 356). As this dissertation reveals, contemporary resistance movements may prove effective at least in part, as Mamdani (1996, pp. 209–219) suggests, because they disrupt exclusionary spatial logics reproduced by ruling classes. As will be seen in the case of Apaa, at a critical juncture, peasant intellectuals expanded the ideological “boundaries of political community” (Curtis & Sindre, 2019, p. 398) of the movement to transcend divisions based on clan.

Counter-hegemonic land movements can also construct political identity and land rights around residency, shedding the political language of autochthony altogether. Locality-based identities may develop through shared attachment to place, whether urban slums or rural frontier zones (Keith & Pile, 1993). Rather than grounding collective identity in the idea of ‘shared past,’ such movements gather diverse groups together to ‘forge a common future’ (Mamdani, 2001, p. 171; MacArthur, 2013, p. 354). It was such a radical redefinition of political community, Mamdani (1996, pp. 207–209, 2001, pp. 170–175) argues that initially gave Museveni’s movement traction in Uganda, although reforms proved “partial, tentative” and fleeting. The construction of collective identities grounded in shared residency has proven critical to land occupation movements in Latin America (Wolford, 2010) which build “spatialized arenas of solidarity” (Pahnke et al, 2015, p. 1076). As will be seen in the case of Apaa, to the extent that land movements articulate collective identities that transcend divides based on descent, they guard against internal fragmentation and external co-option.

Counter-hegemonic land movements sometimes involve the construction of emergent, contentious forms of public authority, property and territory (Mamdani, 1996, pp. 197–211; Lund, 2016; Chinigò, 2016). In order to sustain land occupations in defiance of the state, as will be explored in the case of Apaa, movements must create viable systems for allocating plots, handling land transfers, resolving disputes, and ordering public life. Research on land occupation movements—predominantly in Latin America and Asia—reveal cases in which peasants formed internal organising structures which have enabled them to resist eviction, including non-commodified forms of property, ‘citizen’ ID cards and even methods of tax collection (Routledge, 1995; Fernandes, 2005; Lund & Rachman, 2016). Scholars have

conceived such forms of collective action as ‘socio-territorial’ movements (Halvorsen et al, 2019), which form new institutions in the process of extending control over territory. While Bernstein (2014, pp. 14, 50) suggests that broad-based peasant mobilisation around land is less evident in recent African history, this dissertation draws on the case of Apaa to present evidence that African peasant political action can forge creative, alternative institutional forms and class-based forms of organisation, even as they remain enmeshed in ethnic politics.

As land movements exert control over land, they relate to state institutions in complex, shifting ways. Land movements may challenge the state and build autonomous territories, yet also work towards gaining state recognition and incorporation (Pahnke et al, 2015, p. 1976; Lund, 2006, 2016). The extent to which movements gain recognition, however, can fluctuate according to shifting political context. In Malawi, for instance, a land reclamation movement engaged in a struggle against tea plantation ‘owners’ initially enjoyed support from traditional authorities and district officials (Chinigò, 2016, pp. 292–293). Support was withdrawn, however, following an abrupt political shift, prompting activists to set aside its ‘institutional’ strategy in favour of defiant occupation. As this dissertation explores, paying attention to the changing relations between state institutions and peasant movements provides insight into the dynamics that enable—or inhibit—successful resistance to land expropriation.

Finally, beyond overcoming divisions based on ethnic identity, counter-hegemonic land processes often prove most effective when they respond to other internal tensions amongst peasant communities. It is critical to examine, as Mamdani (1996, p. 186) insists, the ways in which peasant movements amplify, replicate, or overcome internal divides based on age, gender and class. Do movements, Mamdani (1996, p. 203) interrogates, “tend towards realizing equality or crystalizing privilege”? In southwestern Uganda, the Rwenzuruzuru movement gained wider adherence in the 1980s by checking the bureaucratic power of local chiefs by instituting popular assemblies and elevating the role of youth (Mamdani, 1996, pp. 197–211). Likewise, Agarwal’s (1994, p. 312) work suggests that the advancement of women’s land rights within the Bodhgaya peasant movement in India contributed to the movement’s overall success in expanding land access for labourers during the 1980s. Peasant movements that successfully enact internal democratic reforms often gain an effective edge.



Peasant political action, however, does not always unfold in a progressive direction. In colonial Kenya, for example, the amalgamated ‘Mijikenda’ tribal identity and its ‘Union’ initially enabled efforts to contest unjust colonial land policies but disintegrated as its leaders exploited opportunities to accumulate resources and entrench the power of older men (Willis & Gonas, 2013, pp. 458–459). Studies of ‘hybridity’ in contemporary African contexts (Rolandsen, 2019; Justin & Verkoren, 2022, p. 22) highlight the way that authorities competing with state institutions to control land often “reinforce unequal power structures.” In eastern DRC, for example, urban associations’ that emerged to claim territorial control of city sectors left people vulnerable to abrupt loss of land access while leaders exploited opportunities for personal gain (van Overbeek & Tamás, 2020). Similarly, armed groups that succeed in seizing state power may fail to implement the progressive, inclusive ideologies they once espoused as internal factions focused on cementing power and privilege gain ascendancy (see Burihabwa & Curtis, 2019; Curtis & Sindre, 2019). Even land movements explicitly framed around equality may generate “new hegemonies” from within (Wolford, 2010, p. 13; also, Geschiere, 2009, pp. 88–94). As this dissertation demonstrates in the case of Apaa in northern Uganda, the emancipatory potential and organisational capacity of peasant political action can be limited by the extent to which it recreates internal hierarchies based on gender or ethnic identity, or mirrors hegemonic processes of elite accumulation.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has drawn on a critical Gramscian lens to integrate insights derived from structural and processual approaches to the study of African land regimes and the interlocking forms of authority, identity, property and territory they encode. The concepts of ‘hegemonic’ and ‘counter-hegemonic’ land regime processes provide a helpful framework to analyse large-scale land conflicts and struggles against state-driven expropriation from a historical perspective. To some extent, hegemonic processes advanced by states and elite actors to classify people and define and spatially order their rights to citizenship or property may become entrenched in institutional structures and political categories through constant reproduction. Often, however, these processes remain unstable, contradictory, and constantly renegotiated. Despite their incomplete, contested character, in many African contexts, such processes have led to rising inequality and exclusion from land.

Hegemonic land regime processes, in turn, mould the material and conceptual landscapes in which peasant intellectuals develop political action. “The form of rule,” as Mamdani (1996, p. 24) observed, often does “shape the form of revolt against it:” peasant struggles over land often mimic the very structures, categories and ethno-territorial logics wielded by states and ruling elites to consolidate control. Although peasant intellectuals can gain powerful ‘ethnic’ political allies, such approaches undermine the unity required for effective organizing and dissipate the potential for class-based solidarity. Through political struggle, however, peasant intellectuals may transcend such divisionary politics to renegotiate or construct alternative, ‘counter-hegemonic’ forms of public authority, political belonging, territory, and property. Narratives of the past and the language of ‘custom’ may be reclaimed to re-envision forms of political belonging to land. The potential for such political projects to disrupt the status quo is also affected by the persuasiveness of their ‘strategies of legitimation,’ the strength of their internal authority structures, and the degree to which they address internal inequalities and tensions within rural peasant populations.

The above framework provides conceptual scaffolding for this dissertation’s analysis of struggles over Apaa land in northern Uganda. The following chapter traces the origins of the Apaa land conflict by exploring how hegemonic land regime processes advanced by colonial rulers and post-independent regimes in northern Uganda reordered past modes of identity, authority, territory and property.

## Chapter 3

### **A history of land in northern Uganda's east bank Nile region**

Across the African continent, large-scale struggles over land often reflect complex histories of land regimes, moulded and remoulded by processes of state building and resistance ‘from below’ from the colonial era to the present (S. Moore, 1978; Lund, 2008). As such, contemporary conflicts over land often pivot around competing interpretations of the past (Lentz, 2007; Lund, 2013; Leonardi, 2020). As previously outlined, scholarship exploring African land regimes from a historical perspective engages in a number of long-running debates, encompassing the origins of ethnicity (Southall, 1997 [1970]; Vail, 1989; Spear, 2003; MacArthur, 2016), and the question of whether colonial rule rigidified certain pre-colonial forms of identity, authority, and territory, or provoked a proliferation of struggles over the meaning of ‘custom’ and its implications for rival claims to power and property (Chanock, 1985; cf. Berry, 1993). While points of consensus have emerged—notably that “African ethnicities” as Nugent (2008, p. 947) expressed, are “neither rooted in a timeless past nor simply colonial fabrications”—scholars continue to debate the extent to which colonial violence wrought profound ruptures, and the degree to which emergent forms of identity and territoriality were ‘co-produced,’ through negotiation between rulers and ruled (see Verweijen & Bockhaven, 2020, p. 7). Drawing from concepts outlined in chapter two, this chapter’s approach to such questions is guided by a Gramscian lens: as ruling regimes and elite actors advance hegemonic land regime processes to consolidate authority—sometimes in ways that contradict or conflict—they do so in evolving relationships to contestation from below.

Building on this framework, this chapter explores the historical roots of the Apaa land conflict in northern Uganda, examining how identity, authority, and territory have been produced, reproduced, and contested from the precolonial era to 1985. The analysis presented charts two distinct yet interwoven threads: the advancement of state territorial control over the eastern Nile region enveloping Apaa and the rise of ethnically-charged struggles over administrative jurisdiction and settlement rights. Key aspects of the current conflict over Apaa land can be traced to a moment of rupture in the early colonial period when British officers imposed ‘tribal’ administrative structures, then forcibly evicted and relocated clans

from the Nile area. With these acts, northern Uganda's colonial administrators advanced hegemonic territorial, political and economic control over northern populations and fostered a politics of ethnic difference by segregating previously intermingled, bi-lingual groups into bounded, tribally-defined administrative units. In turn, these processes led to the gradual co-construction of new ethnic identities as these emerging political communities invested in tribal forms of belonging. The sub-groups that made up such nascent Madi and Acholi identities, accordingly, all hold collective memories of being displaced from Apaa, setting the stage for the future emergence of exclusive ethnic claims to land. The 'tribal' yet distinctly bureaucratic form of colonial administration that evolved in northern Uganda instilled an enduring spatial politics linking ethnicity, territory, authority and property that continues to shape conflict over Apaa today.

Struggles over land and administrative territory during the later colonial and post-independence eras created further scope for competing claims over Apaa. After World War II, local populations increasingly resisted state attempts to prohibit access to the eastern Nile bank. While late colonial and post-independence regimes established conservation areas enclosing Apaa, Acholi Councils in the 1950s contested state control, while Acholi and Madi communities flouted hunting prohibitions. State control was further eroded as Acholi peasants encroached in the 1970s. The rise of ethno-territorial struggles over the eastern Nile bank reflected the contradictions of colonial administration: first, while colonial officials cast administrative units as 'traditional' ethnic territories, in practice, their boundaries and authority structures were frequently adjusted. Second, on the eve of independence, Protectorate officials attempted to reverse the policy of tribal administration altogether, generating enduring incongruities between the principle of impartial local governance and the residual ethnic character of local political structures. The emergence of Acholi-Madi hostility in the wake of Amin's regime, confusion over boundaries and the de-facto inclusion of Apaa settlements under 'Acholi' administration in the late 1970s–1990s further foregrounded dynamics of the current conflict, contributing to a layering of historic precedents regarding control over land in Apaa.

This chapter develops these arguments in three broadly chronological parts. The first focuses on the precolonial period, tracing ties of belonging of a multitude of interconnected lineage and clan identities to the eastern Nile bank. The second part explores the

reconfiguration of relationships between identity, territory, and authority during colonial rule before World War II (1900 – 1945), while the final part examines the proliferation of competing precedents relating Apaa land from the late colonial period to the early decades of independence (1946 – 1986).

### **3.1 Precolonial forms of land organisation**

‘Belonging’ can be understood as collectively constructed experience—and political claim—linking identity to place (Lund, 2011a, pp. 73–75). ‘Belonging’ denotes autochthony: it conjures the idea of an ‘ancestral’ or ‘ethnic’ homeland and claims to be first-comers or ‘sons of the soil’ (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992; Geschiere, 2009). Claims to ‘belong’ are often used to justify claims to property, territory or authority over land (Lentz, 2007). Although contemporary ethnic and descent-based groups often portray ‘belonging’ as deeply-rooted, exclusive, and unchanging, scholars and oral historians alike trace complex histories in which identities and their ties to landscapes are constructed, reconstructed, and renegotiated over time (Fontein, 2006; Lentz, 2007; Moore, 1998). Many accounts portray colonial rule as a key period of rupture in which identity and spatial imaginaries were radically reconfigured, both through top-down interventions and political struggle from below (Willis & Gona, 2013; MacArthur, 2016). To understand the impact of colonial rule, however, it is first necessary, as Reid emphasises (2011, p. 148), to investigate the precolonial past.

This section draws on oral histories collected between 2019 and 2021, narratives recorded in the 1930s-50s, and early colonial records, maps and travelogues to trace early patterns of authority, identity and territory, focusing on the eastern Nile bank region enveloping Apaa. Two key arguments are developed. First, as elsewhere across the continent (MacArthur, 2016, p. 17; Holmes, 1997; Leonardi, 2013, 2020), the fluid forms of authority, identity, and belonging to land that emerged in northern Uganda’s Nile region before c.1840 bore little resemblance to British colonial imaginaries of bounded tribal territories and chiefly socio-political order. Second, before the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the bi-lingual groups that intermittently cultivated, hunted, and inhabited the eastern Nile banks region eluded tribal categorization and comprised overlapping lineages. The analysis presented helps to explain the origins of current competing claims over Apaa land but also demonstrates that ‘the past’ presents a pliable “plural resource,” as Mamdani (2001, p. 276) put it, which contemporary peasant

groups continue to draw upon to reimagine the connection between land, identity and belonging.

### *3.1.1 Pre-colonial forms of identity, authority, and territory*

In contrast to scholars who underline the precolonial roots of Acholi ethnic belonging and territoriality (Onyango-ku-Odongo & Webster, 1976; Atkinson, 2010), a critical reading of oral histories and early texts reveals that interconnected lineage groups inhabiting the Nile region before 1900 defied categorization as Madi, Acholi or Lugbara. Rather, such tribal identities appear to have crystalized as salient categories of political and cultural belonging in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early colonial period (Allen, 1993; cf. Onyango-ku-Odongo & Webster). This is not to suggest that colonial rulers ‘invented’ such tribes, that the colonial period constituted a solely unique moment in the construction of ethnicity, or that Acholi and Madi identities are ‘artificial’ or less meaningful (cf. Vail, 1989; Ranger, 1983; Spear, 2003; Verweijen & Bockhaven, 2020). It is rather to emphasize—as many scholars tend to agree—that before the imposition of colonial administration, people of the Nile region primarily identified with lineages, clans, and in some cases, broader chiefdoms, rather than tribes (p’Bitek, 2019 [1971a], pp. 527–530; Atkinson, 2010, pp. 262–263; cf. Girling, 2019 [1960], pp. 63–64, 81; Dwyer, 1972, pp. 12–13).

Before outlining broad patterns of belonging, identity, and authority in the region, a note on terminology is important. In the following discussion, ‘clan’ refers to groups that collectively form, yet often cut across ‘chiefdom’ alliances, while ‘lineages’ refer to smaller groups that constitute clans. Reflecting the fluid, dynamic nature of categories of ethnic belonging (Mac Gaffey, 2005, pp. 198–200; Schlee, 1989), local terms do not distinguish between such layers; rather, all such identities can be referred to as *kaka* in Lwo, and *suru* in Ma’di (cf. Allen, 1993, p. 171). Extended family groups of varying sizes are also sometimes termed *dogola* in Lwo (see Hopwood, 2021, pp. 8–9), or *jo ti* in Ma’di—literally, ‘doors.’ While such identities are typically framed in terms of patrilineal descent and are often named after a common ‘founding’ patriarch, as elsewhere (Nugent, 2019, p. 297), identity in the upper Nile region has never been based exclusively on kinship.<sup>2</sup> Clans and lineages readily absorbed friends, allies and outsiders, thereby gaining security and expanding their collective

---

<sup>2</sup> Also Nugent, 2019, p. 297 Le Meur, 2006, p. 880 Southall, 1997 [1970], pp. 39–40; MacArthur, 2016, chapter one

skills and labour pool (Girling, 2019, p. 194; Allen, 1993, pp. 370–372). As will be seen, groups that formed through cohabitation also often convey shared identity through the language of common descent.

In the Nile region, a key political development that introduced new forms of identity and authority was the emergence of alliance structures often termed ‘chiefdoms.’ As Atkinson (2010, pp. 78–79) argues, political structures which loosely united clans under the chief of a ruling lineage likely filtered into the region from the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century through contact with Bunyoro societies (cf. Allen, 1991, pp. 88–89). This structure bore little resemblance to the authoritative form of chiefly rule colonial officials later envisioned and sought to impose. Where chiefs emerged, their ritual and political authority was typically shared with other elders and clan heads and was dependent upon their capacity to “command respect and allegiance” (Atkinson, 2010, p. 84; also, p’Bitek, 2019 [1971b], pp. 429, 448; Girling, 2019, p. 173). Reflecting such dynamics, in practice, succession was not necessarily hereditary: if a chief failed to retain a following, authority might pass to a stronger lineage or even a stranger believed to ‘possess rain;’<sup>3</sup> alternatively, the alliance might fracture (Girling, pp. 205, 209–210; Crazzolara, 1951). While certain groupings—notably Payera and Pabo—developed centralized power, particularly as they allied with 19th-century slave traders, others remained loosely united and prone to fragmentation (Girling, pp. 184–185, 207). Until the advent of colonial rule, many clans in the wider region likely remained independent, perhaps forming temporary alliances when necessary (cf. Allen, 1993, pp. 170–178; Leonardi, 2013, p. 24).

Although chiefdoms that eventually assumed an ‘Acholi’ identity in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century exemplified some of the strongest inter-clan alliances, Atkinson’s (1989, 2010) thesis that the chiefly political form distinguished emerging ‘Acholi’ communities from neighbouring groups appears overstated. Oral histories certainly attest that the idea of chiefship became associated with the Lwo language, from which Acholi speech emerged. As Atkinson (2010, pp. 63, 217) argues, although *people* of Lwo descent were “neither numerous nor widespread” in the region, many clans of Sudanic origin began to establish chiefdoms as they gradually integrated ‘Lwo’ language and associated ideas (also Crazzolara, 1954, pp. 348, 458). However, a number of groups that inclined towards Madi speech and

---

<sup>3</sup> Possess the ability to intercede with spiritual forces to bring rain. See also Leonardi, 2013, p. 26

eventually embraced a Madi identity also formed chiefdom alliances, including the Ali, and the Palaro. Reflecting long histories of cultural and linguistic exchange, Madi and Lwo languages acquired comparable concepts relating to chiefly order. For instance, the Lwo idea of ruling clans known as *Kal*, corresponds to the Madi *opii*, while subsidiary clans *lobong* are equivalent to the Madi *laki* (Allen, 1993, pp. 166–179; Girling, 2019, p. 171). The Madi term ‘*opi*’ bears similarities to the Lwo ‘*rwot*’: both denote figures of patrilineal descent, buried in sacred places signifying their role as spiritual interlocutors (Allen, 1993, p. 410).<sup>4</sup>

Accordingly, Atkinson’s (2010) claim that the adoption of the chiefly socio-political order laid the “foundation” for the later emergence of the Acholi identity (p. 75), distinct from their “differently organized brothers” to the west (pp. 30–31), is over-played. As argued below, the dynamics of colonial encounters played a more decisive role in the shaping of Madi and Acholi ethnic identities.

Little can be certain about the ways that Madi and Lwo-speaking people of the Nile region organized the use of land and resources before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Regarding clans and lineages, Colonial-era scholars such as Bere (1955), Crazzolara (1954) and Girling [1960] paint a fairly structured spatial picture, depicting enclosed settlements, distinct tracts for household cultivation and communal farming, and hunting grounds managed by lineage or clan heads. My own informants, including Madi and Acholi elders born in the 1930s to 50s from a range of different clans associated with the area offered varying details, likely reflecting that practice differed across the region and shifted over time. Broadly, normative regulations related to the management of labour and resources, rather than land per se: compensation could be demanded for illicit burning of fields (Pabo elder, Jeng-gari, 2019 October; Bere, 1955) while poaching within clan hunting grounds could trigger conflict (Oyuwi elder, Mungula, 2020 January; Girling, 2019, pp. 141, 197). As often observed (Berry, 1993; Lonsdale, 2016, p. 22), in the context of low populations and abundant land, land access was likely taken for granted.

Most sources indicate that spiritual stewardship of land was vested in lineages perceived as ‘firstcomers’ of a particular area. According to Madi language histories, *vudipi* could be summoned to conduct rituals to appease spirits or invoke blessing, even after their

---

<sup>4</sup> Madi and Lwo are linguistically unrelated, yet hold certain terms in common: *abila* (ancestral shrines), *kaka* (familial relations), the followers of a prominent ancestor (the prefix, ‘*pa*’) Atkinson, 2010, p. 87; Williams, 1949 p. 203; p’Bitek, 2019 [1971b], p. 454.



lineage group relocated (Palaro elder, Pakelle, 2020 December; Williams, 1949, p. 202; Middleton, 1955, p. 30; Allen, 1993, pp. 173, 421–422). Lwo narratives similarly speak of the *wegi ngom* ('fathers' or 'owners' of the soil) of lineages responsible for conducting ritual offerings to spirits associated with particular mountains (Pabo Pugwang elder, Apaa, 2020 February; Girling, 2019, p. 171; Crazzolaro, 1954, p. 455). When 'first-comer' clans were absorbed by larger chiefdoms, ruling lineages typically respected their status as spiritual guardians (Boro elder, Parabongo, 2019 September). Over time, however, ritual responsibilities sometimes transitioned from one *kaka* to another when clans or sub-clan groups relocated (Crazzolaro, 1954, p. 454), suggesting a fluid relationship between land, ritual authority, and identity.

Spatially, 'chiefdoms' are best conceived as shifting networks of component clans. Colonial-era scholars' (Bere, 1955) portrayals of chiefdoms as bounded territorial units in which land was vested in the *rwot* largely reflected the assumptions of British administrators. Rather, as Crazzolaro demonstrates (1951, p. 277), chiefdoms in the Nile region were not always "geographically knit together;" their constituent clans were sometimes separated by differently aligned groups. Such intermingling reflected practices of mobility: clans abandoned settlements if numerous children fell ill (Langlands & Obol-Owit, 1968, p. 3), lineages practised shifting cultivation, and new headmen usually relocated from the site of their predecessors (Girling, 2019, p. 171). Reflecting often observed frontier dynamics (Kopytoff, 1987) beyond small-scale movements, oral histories are peppered with tales of lineages and segments that broke away from chiefdoms following conflict or to search for better conditions (Crazzolaro, 1951, pp. 256, 290). Such patterns of fragmentation led to the diffusion of smaller identity groups throughout the region (Pabo Kal elder, Pabo, 2019 October; Girling, p. 150). Accordingly, although chiefdoms often became associated with particular areas, they must be viewed primarily as networks of *people* rather than contiguous, bordered territories; the lands they encompassed depended on the changeable make-up of their sub-groups.

Clan settlement patterns and chiefly alliances were further disrupted and fragmented during the tumultuous 19<sup>th</sup> century. Well documented intrusions of slave traders from the north and the rise and fall of Turco-Egyptian military occupation inflicted turmoil in the wider upper Nile region, triggering rapid social change (Dwyer, 1972; Allen, 1993; Leopold,

2005, 2009; Leonardi, 2013). Inhabitants of the eastern Nile banks near slave-trading posts such as ‘Faloro,’ just north-east of Apaa were particularly affected (Langlands, 1971, pp. 23–24; Gray, 1952, p. 34). Writings from the 1860s to 1880s describe accounts of fleeing populations, abandoned lands and the “charred remains” of desolated villages (Baker, 1895, p. 251; Emin Pasha, 1964 [1887], p. 80). During this period, local power dynamics shifted as particular clan heads and chiefs struck alliances with foreign traders, clan sections realigned themselves in search of security, and populations were uprooted (Gray, 1952; Allen, 1993, pp. 105, 145–146). Such upheavals resulted in an accelerated reconfiguration of clan and chiefdom groupings in the vicinity of Apaa along the Nile banks.

### *3.1.2 Intertwining connections to Apaa land*

This sub-section argues that the contemporary ‘Madi’ and ‘Acholi’ chiefdoms that assert exclusive ancestral claims to Apaa land in fact have deeply intermingled origins and transecting histories. Such groups, including the ‘Acholi’ chiefdoms of Pabo, Lamogi, Parabongo, Pagak and Toro and the ‘Madi’ chiefdoms of Palaro, Ali and Oyuwi comprise of overlapping clans and lineages, many of which intermittently converged along the eastern Nile bank enveloping Apaa before they were forcibly segregated and displaced by colonial officials in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Interconnected histories of migration, social fragmentation and fusion explain why multiple identity groups have historic ties to Apaa lands; groups that only later assumed tribal identities during the colonial era. The evidence presented helps to explain the origins of ongoing ethnic conflict over Apaa land, but also how oral histories, inherited discourses, and clan structures present contemporary peasant groups with a *range* of possible forms of identity, belonging, and narratives with which to mobilise political action.

The earliest roots of connection between such groups can be traced, in broad strokes, to early migration patterns. While little can be known about the early settlement of the upper Nile region (Allen, 1991, 1993, pp. 50–51), some scholars speculate that ‘central Sudanic’ speakers (from which Madi derives) began to arrive around the late first millennium B.C, then continued to trickle into the region between the first and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries AD (see Atkinson, 2010, pp. 61–62). Eastern Nilotic speakers are also estimated to have filtered into the area between 1000–1600 AD, while western Nilotic Lwo speakers likely entered from the early 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards but remained few in number. Scholars suggest that some groups

that arrived during these overlapping periods were bi-lingual and that many either assimilated with or absorbed pre-existing groups, who were also likely of mixed origin, reflecting earlier waves of integration (Dwyer, 1972, p. 27; Girling, 2019, pp. 80–83, 99–110; Crazzolara, 1951, p. 398). In short, early forms of identity were likely overlapping, fluid and complex. Until the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup>-century, however, it appears the wider eastern Nile bank region (encompassing Apaa) was primarily inhabited by central Sudanic speakers and that the Madi language remained dominant until relatively recently when more groups began to embrace Lwo speech (Crazzolara, 1951, pp. 155, 172, 313; Atkinson, 2010, pp. 68–71, 212–213; cf. p'Bitek, 2019 [1971b], pp. 383–389).

Acholi myths and migration narratives often obscure such entangled histories. This tendency reflects the way that oral histories constitute living, evolving social commentaries, crafted and recrafted in ways that address pressing issues or political agendas of the day (Crazzolara, 1961, p. 136; MacArthur, 2016, p. 39). Portrayals of epic, coordinated Lwo migrations and un-broken 'Lwo' chiefly genealogies charted out by Acholi ethno-patriots of the 1940s and 50s (Anywar, 1954, pp. 10–14; Pellegrini, 1949) likely reflected local efforts to give expression to a growing sense of tribal belonging and political identity (see also Finnström, 2008, pp. 49, 53; Allen, 1993, p. 158). In the context of contemporary struggles over Apaa, Acholi elders sometimes present mythic 'Lwo' figures such as Olum and his sons as the first-comers to Mount Kilak, just south-east of Apaa, thereby bolstering exclusive ethnic claims to belonging in the region.

Reflecting a wider trend (Leonardi, 2013, p. 22), in contrast to sweeping tribal narratives, individual clan histories point to the intertwined migratory patterns of groups sharing historic ties to the area encompassing Apaa. Madi 'Ali' clan narratives, for example, tell of three Sudanic-speaking brothers who took separate routes from Bahr-al-Ghazal to the eastern Nile bank, including, it is claimed, parts of Apaa (Ali Pangori elder, Itirkiwa, 2019 December). After the youngest brother, Ngori, acquired Lwo speech and tokens of chiefly authority as he traversed Bunyoro, his brothers recognized his leadership, explaining how 'Pangori' became the ruling clan of the emerging Ali Chieftdom and how the Ali became bi-lingual. The son of the second Ali brother Kiri, it is told, subsequently broke off with a small group and joined the Lamogi (also Crazzolara, 1954, p. 467). Reflecting how such classic, stylized narratives sometimes broadly reflect historic events, today many Acholi Pakiri of

Lamogi continue to acknowledge their ‘Madi’ origins amongst the Pakiri of the Ali (Pakiri elder, Keyo, 2020 September). Likewise, as a Madi elder of Ali emphasized (Mungula, 2020 January), “the parents of the Ali Pakiri speak Lwo, many Pakiri in Lamogi speak Madi; they are the same people.” Such narratives offer an explanation for why today, elders of Lamogi and Ali clans both recount that their ancestors exclusively hunted along the Gorobi river in Apaa.

Oral and written evidence also links particular Lwo and Madi-speaking groups to Apaa land. For instance, a narrow strip running along the eastern Nile bank and areas surrounding Zoka forest remain deeply associated with clans that currently form the Madi Chiefdom of Oyuwi, and the Pajao. Oyuwi ties to Zoka and its wealth of butternuts, wild coffee, and flying squirrels are widely recognized, while Madi elders (Adropi, 2019 November) can also recall obsolete names for rivers in Apaa (such as ‘Kendua’) preserved in early colonial intelligence maps (e.g., MacAllister, 1901), yet otherwise unknown. Old slave trader camps of the eastern Nile bank such as ‘Oruba’ bore the names of Oyuwi clans, suggesting their presence in the area in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Crazzolaro, 1951, p. 253). Other sources, including British colonial correspondence (e.g., Browning, 1910),<sup>5</sup> Birch’s (1938) history of ‘Madi migration,’ and Crazzolaro’s (1954, p. 332) records of oral narratives also indicate that ‘Oyuwi’ sub-groups lived in these areas before the British removed populations in 1914. While a systematic account lies beyond the scope of this chapter, similar historic evidence also suggests other clans and lineage groups settled or hunted Apaa at various points.

The example of Oyuwi and Pajao illustrates the wider point that many descent groups that express historic ties to Apaa share sub-groups in common that bridge contemporary tribal identities. As Schlee (1989, 2010) observed in northern Kenya, clans are not merely sub-units of tribes but often cut across them (also, Allen, 1989, pp. 16–17). As the Pajao progressively dispersed southwards along the Nile banks, they became scattered among a variety of other groups (Crazzolaro, 1954, p. 408), including sub-groups of clans that form the (Acholi) Chiefdom of Pabo, such as Pakumba and Pakedo (Pakedo elder, Pabo, 2019 December). Oyuwi are also connected to Pabo Chiefdom through the Pagoro, a clan generally recognized as an early inhabitant of areas just west of Kilak in the vicinity of Apaa (local historian, Pabo

---

<sup>5</sup> Notes that ‘Chief Bokhi’ (father of Chief of Oyuwi, Okello Kibera) lived near Zoka forest.

township, 2019 November). Such connections illuminate the incongruity of contemporary exclusive tribal claims of belonging to Apaa land.

Clan ties to Apaa that cross-cut contemporary tribes can also be traced to patterns of identity formation, fission and amalgamation that accelerated during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Cici exemplify a clan that emerged through mutual habitation of a geographic area: as elders relate, Cici was not a common patriarch, but the name of a hill in the north-east corner of Apaa adopted as an ethnonym by Lwo and Madi-speaking groups that once lived around its base. As the Cici fragmented and dispersed, it is said, one section merged with Palaro, and another with Pabo (Cici elder, Parabongo, 2020 October). The Odree provide another example of a group that splintered during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, as a section of Odree broke off from Palaro to seek protection under Chief Ojuko of Pabo, who had grown in power as an ally of foreign slave traders. As an informant of Girling (2019, p. 129) recounted, Ojuko “sold ivory to the Arabs and received cattle in exchange. There was much food in his country... people came from far away to settle under him.” Today, Cici and Odree clans—both of which express historic ties of belonging to Apaa—can be found within the identity sub-structures of the Acholi Pabo and Madi Palaro groupings.

Finally, the interconnected relationship between Pabo and Palaro is also illuminated by a shared oral narrative that contemporary Acholi groups have evoked to defend their historical claims to Apaa land. Contemporary Acholi actors often insist that the ‘Juka’ (Zoka) river became a Madi-Acholi boundary upon the resolution of an inter-tribal conflict, placing Apaa in ‘Acholi’ territory (see Ochan, 2014). Details of the story, however, suggest that recent Acholi narrators have adapted the tale of a mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century inter-family feud between Palaro and Pabo. While accounts differ, the narrative pivots around the killing of the Palaro Chief Doli by men from Pabo, much to the regret of the Chief of Pabo, who was Doli’s nephew. Girling’s version (2019, p. 260) of the story, recorded in the 1950s, recounts that the Chief of Pabo, “distressed at seeing his uncle’s head impaled, went into his hut to mourn.” Neither Girling’s account, nor versions recalled by Palaro elders, however, include the creation of a border, suggesting that this detail was likely added recently to support exclusive Acholi land claims, just as the categories of ‘Madi’ and ‘Acholi’ are projected onto Pabo and Palaro. This reflects a broader tendency for oral narrators and scholars alike to read “the

present into the past” (Allen, 1993, p. 43) and in particular, to portray precolonial inter-chieftdom conflicts in tribal terms.

Far from providing an origin story of a tribal boundary demarcating Apaa lands, this narrative again speaks to the intimately connected histories of chieftdoms and clan groupings in the wider area comprising Apaa. The process of colonial encounter, however, had profound impacts on the identity of such intermingled groups, along with their claims to belonging.

### **3.2 Colonial encounter and rupture: c.1900 – 1945**

Across the African continent, colonial rulers advanced hegemonic land regime processes to extend territorial control, create administrative order, build the economic apparatus of the state and ultimately, consolidate authority (Berry, 2002; Peters, 2004; Boone, 2014). In northern Uganda’s Nile region, two such processes—forced resettlement and the carving of administrative territories—dovetailed to constitute a moment of rupture with the past which forged new precedents of state territorial control and radically reworked—yet did not entirely erase—prior forms and discourses linking identity, territory, authority and belonging to land. These intertwining processes set the stage for the emergence of multifaceted conflict over Apaa land along the eastern Nile bank around a century later. While such hegemonic processes were driven by colonial power to name, classify, and control, they were also variously resisted, undermined, renegotiated, and accordingly reshaped by local actors of the region.

#### *3.2.1 Colonial forced displacement and state territorial control*

As outlined in chapter two, colonial rulers often consolidated authority and social control through processes of “internal territorialization” (Vandergeest & Peluso, 1995). The demarcation of prohibited zones and forced resettlements in the name of disease control and conservation enabled colonial agents to concentrate populations, build territorial control, and capture the surplus of peasant labour (Neumann, 2004; Cavanagh, 2012). In northern Uganda, the forced displacement of populations from a vast area along the Nile banks—including the area currently known as Apaa—was justified as a public health measure, yet chiefly served

colonial interests of advancing administrative control, taxation, and cotton production (Dwyer, 1972, pp. 225–226; Ocitti, 1973, pp. 8, 15; Allen, 1993, pp. 123–127; Weschler, 2016, pp. 15, 30–37). Mass population relocation and the successive legal imposition of sleeping sickness ‘closed’ areas and conservation zones created precedents for direct state authority over the wider Nile belt which continue to shape contemporary struggles over Apaa land today.

In 1913–14, colonial officers evicted populations from swathes of land along the ‘Albert’ Nile, creating a large depopulated zone that was eventually demarcated as a settlement-prohibited ‘sleeping sickness area.’ At the time, this measure was hotly contested amongst colonial officials. Although Governor Bell’s eviction of thousands of lake-shore dwellers in central Uganda between 1906–1909 was initially lauded for curbing sleeping sickness deaths, by 1911, medical officers cautioned against mass relocations in the north, warning that as tsetse flies infested many small inland streams, relocating infected populations from the Nile banks could risk spreading the disease (for example, Hodges, 1911).<sup>6</sup> In contrast, administrators pressed for forced relocations, portraying contrary proposals to destroy fly habitat through regular bush clearing as impractical (e.g. Browning, 1910). After officials finally enacted evictions, the newly depopulated zone along the eastern Nile bank became overgrown, overrun by wild game and infested with the fly, making resettlement an even more labour-intensive prospect. As sleeping sickness outbreaks in the region continued into the 1920s, accordingly, administrators continued to execute small-scale displacements, expanding the Nile ‘closed area’ to the north and east (Northern Province Commissioner’s Office [hereafter NPCO], 1924, [1923–1927]).

Although sleeping sickness control played into administrators’ decision-making, the Nile displacements primarily constituted a strategy to consolidate colonial control (Weschler, 2016). As early as 1910, colonial administrators pushed for the relocation of populations scattered along the Nile banks to supply the new, unpopulated Gulu station with food and labour, and concentrate settlement along transport routes to facilitate road maintenance (Ocitti, 1973, pp. 8, 12–14; Sullivan, 1910). The long-envisioned mass relocations were finally implemented, however, after new sleeping sickness regulations, passed in 1913,

---

<sup>6</sup> Medical officers also argued that population relocations from the east Nile bank would only be effective if populations were simultaneously moved from the west bank, requiring coordination with the Governor of Sudan, who controlled West Nile until 1914. See correspondence, The Uganda Protectorate (1911)

provided District Commissioners (DC) with sweeping powers to relocate villages from ‘infected areas’ without higher authorization (Sleeping Sickness Ordinance Rules, 1913, p. 82).<sup>7</sup> The ensuing concentration of populations advanced colonial interests in cementing administrative control (Postlethwaite, 1947, p. 65), enforcing local production of cotton cash crops, and extracting taxes.

The Nile evictions also reflected a colonial tactic to suppress resistance (Weschler, 2016). The use of forced relocation to suppress dissent in northern Uganda, as Dywer (1972, p. 225) argues, was cemented by the Lamogi rebellion: after colonial military officers violently quashed the armed siege staged by Lamogi and other clans at Guru Guru in March 1912, they marched over 1070 prisoners to Gulu (Adimola, 1954, p. 175). In the first decade of colonial rule, officials often cast relocation of populations from remote bases (often hill-tops) to emerging spheres of administrative control as essential to ensure submission (e.g., Langlands, 1971; Eden, 1911). The evictions that finally expelled populations from the Nile area enveloping Apaa in 1914 appeared driven by similar concerns, particularly as colonial officials faced rising attacks against key local allies (Postlethwaite, 1914a, p. 4; Eden, 1914, p. 5). Upon discovering that a large group had returned to Zoka (within Apaa), Gulu’s DC (Postlethwaite, 1914b, p. 5) called for a swift reaction, warning that “if the malcontents of the district once find they can escape into the bush...[others] will soon follow suit.” Eviction and its enforcement were framed as a security matter.

Colonial efforts to exert territorial control were met with ongoing resistance. In some cases, local chiefs were co-opted to coordinate the evacuations, while particular groups appear to have accepted relocation as a temporary measure. When necessary, however, colonial officers evicted populations at gunpoint, destroying huts, crops and canoes (Lamogi elder, Keyo, 2019 November; Dwyer, 1972, p. 226). As the 1914 Nile bank evictions coincided with sweeping disarmament, local groups had few opportunities to confront colonial forces. Accordingly, resistance took the form of encroachment. For many years, police patrols reported ousting large groups reoccupying parts of the Nile ‘closed area,’ occasionally by opening fire (e.g., Postlethwaite, 1914b; Eden, 1917). While violent patrols succeeded in curtailing resettlement attempts, hunting and foraging groups continued to enter:

---

<sup>7</sup> See Haddon, April 1913, p. 17. The Principle Medical Officer (Hodges, 1913 April) envisioned that such regulations would enable limited, strategic relocations, not mass displacement.



in 1918, Gulu's DC (in Watson, 1918, p. 22) observed that "all the old roads and paths" were "well-trodden" by "large numbers of natives," while game department reports complained of 'poaching' and illicit 'tribal hunts' for decades. Colonial control of the Nile banks, accordingly, precluded settlement yet was frequently undermined.

The creation of closed 'sleeping sickness areas' forged an enduring precedent of state territorial control of the area enveloping Apaa. As occurred across colonial Uganda (Banana et al, 2018, p. 18), depopulated areas along the Nile were progressively converted into conservation zones. While certain colonial officers advocated for resettlement as sleeping sickness subsided (Warner, 1933), colonial Game Wardens pushed for the establishment of conservation areas, reflecting the wider emerging international conservation movement. Game department reports (e.g. 1930, p. 42) began to portray such areas as the natural abode and "last stronghold" of northern elephant populations even as the relative abundance of elephants along the Nile reflected ecological changes wrought through forced depopulation and vegetative regrowth (Laws et al, 1970, pp. 164–166). The vast 'Gulu Game Reserve' to the south was established in 1934; the area encompassing Apaa was technically gazetted as a restricted sleeping sickness area but treated as an 'elephant sanctuary' by the Game Department (1950, pp. 10,14). Such moves curtailed resettlement into the fringes of the closed areas permitted by colonial officials to 'relieve' population congestion in the 1930s (e.g., Warner, 1938, p. 31).

As explored below, local populations continued to contest state authority over the Nile bank area including Apaa during the colonial period and decades following independence. Before tracing the evolution of such conflicting claims to authority over land, the following sections examine the impact of the colonial encounter on interlinking forms of identity, authority, territory, and property.

### *3.2.2 The remaking of identity, authority and territory*

To consolidate control, colonial rulers often advanced land regimes that produced and leveraged a politics of territorialized ethnicity (Mamdani, 1996; Boone, 2014). Although the shifting modes of governance British officials imposed in Uganda's northern Nile region bore little resemblance to the colonial ideal of indirect rule, the advent of "native" administration

nevertheless constituted a moment of profound rupture that instilled an enduring spatial politics linking identity, authority, territory, and property rights. The roots of contemporary inter-ethnic struggle over Apaa land can be traced to the intersection of colonial forced relocations and the imposition of administrative units. During 1912-1914, interconnected groups that shared a historic attachment to Nile banks were segregated into new ‘Madi’ and ‘Acholi’ political communities comprising reconstituted ‘chiefdoms,’ leading to the gradual emergence of ethnic identities. In tandem with the rise of ethno-territorial colonial discourses, this reconfiguration set the stage for future conflicting claims over Apaa land, which lay within the depopulated, game-rich zone between administrative units.

The colonial decision to consolidate territorial administration in northern Uganda was spurred, in part, by mounting fears of local uprisings (Barber, 1968; Dwyer, 1972; Karugire, 1980). In 1911, colonial officials grew alarmed by the proliferation of firearms in the region via ivory trading: one police report (Edwards, 1911, p. 41) estimated populations had acquired over 10,000 guns, cautioning that “although the Nilotic races lack combination at present...a wave of emotionalism or fetish idolatry might consolidate” sections divided by “tribal feuds.” The Protectorate Governor (Jackson, 1911, p. 1) resolved that an “active occupation” be established in the Nile region, reversing his predecessor’s policy of withdrawal. This decision was reinforced by the ‘Lamogi’ revolt against gun registration over the dry season of 1911-1912, which illustrated to colonial officers (Baldwin, 1912, pp. 165–167) the potential for clans to wage allied armed struggle under key chiefs. The steps officials took from mid-1912 to legally fragment the Nile region into bounded ‘native’ administrative units accordingly reflected a strategy to prevent united resistance against colonial rule.

In Uganda’s Nile region, this process led to the gradual formation of new ‘tribal’ identities (cf. Behrend, 2000; Laruni, 2014, pp. 66-67). Although many African ethnic identities have long precolonial histories (Nugent, 2008; Reid, 2011), this appears not to be the case in any straightforward way for Acholi and Madi (cf. Atkinson, 2010). While the ‘Madi’ ethnonym derives from an old central Sudanic term for a person,<sup>8</sup> the ‘Acholi’ classification emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as it was haphazardly applied to Lwo speakers by various foreign intruders (cf. Girling, 2019, pp. 63–64; Allen, 1993, p. 99).<sup>8</sup> At the turn of the century, these categories were adopted by British officers as they mapped out ‘tribal’

---

<sup>8</sup> For varying theories see also Kitching, 1902, p. 9; Baker, 1985, pp. 251, 478; Crazzolara, (1955) [1938], p. vii.

zones and identified ‘Acholi’ and ‘Madi’ chiefs to extract hut taxes and labour. It was not until the period from 1912 to 1915, however, that populations were divided into bounded political communities, governed under separate Acholi and Madi ‘native’ authorities, laws and courts. Through the experience of cohabiting in a single geographical and political space, local populations began to adopt, negotiate and actively co-produce these emerging identities.<sup>9</sup> In the 1920s-40s, local ‘ethno-patriots’ published sweeping ‘Acholi’ migration histories, produced local language texts and launched ‘Acholi’ clubs and associations (see Girling, pp. 319–312; Laruni, p. 67). While Madi ethnic belonging appeared to develop more slowly (Allen, 1993, pp. 158-159), by 1946, the assistant DC Madi (In Western Province Office, 1949, p. 78) noted a “gradual but definite emergence of political consciousness in Madi.” In sum, while British officials did not ‘invent’ the Acholi and Madi tribes, they forcefully engineered institutional and political conditions that shaped their gradual co-construction (cf. Spear, 2003; Kabwegyere, (1995) [1974]; Verweijen & Bockhaven, 2020).

The confluence of the colonial ‘native’ administration and forced population relocation produced new alignments of identity and territory that continue to animate contemporary conflict over Apaa. As colonial officers imposed new administrative territories in 1912, they also began to displace populations from the Nile banks, forcing interrelated, bi-lingual groups to either relocate north into the new ‘Madi/Nimule’ District or southeast into ‘Gulu’ District. Local groups appeared to exercise a degree of agency in this process. One Madi elder of Palaro (2019 November), for example, recounted that although “our people spoke Luo” and British officers accordingly tried to resettle them amongst the Pabo ‘Acholi,’ they selected a preferred area in present-day Adjumani. Where clans relocated affected the ‘tribal’ identities they assumed thereafter. Before this rupture, for example, early British observers interchangeably described the bi-lingual Lamogi and Pabo as ‘Madi’ or ‘Acholi,’ or a “mixture” of the two, in the case of the Lamogi rebels (e.g., Sullivan, 1912, p. 73): after Pabo and Lamogi groups joined ‘Gulu District,’ however, they embraced an Acholi tribal identity, and gradually lost their Madi speech. Previously intermingled groups were politically segregated and thus gradually became ‘Acholi’ or ‘Madi’. Over time, as will be explored, tribal identities have become accentuated, and such intertwining roots more muted: collective memories of historic attachment to Apaa lands have been translated into increasingly exclusive ethnic claims of belonging.

---

<sup>9</sup> Leonardi (2020) and Allen (1993) make similar arguments about the development of identity in the region

The claim that Apaa is ‘Acholi’ territory likely has its origins in this moment of rupture. As noted above, contemporary Acholi actors often assert that ‘the British’ demarcated a tribal border along the Zoka river, placing Apaa within ‘Acholi’ jurisdiction. Colonial legal records reveal that the Zoka river did indeed demarcate the southern border between “Gulu” and “Madi/Nimule” Districts in 1912 (Boundary schedule, 1912, pp. 490–491), and remained the official boundary between shifting Madi-Acholi administrative arrangements until the second world war (The Uganda Protectorate, [1932-1946]). The initial Zoka boundary choice, however, reflected a compromise between colonial perceptions of ‘tribal’ territories and sleeping sickness mitigation measures. While the ‘Madi/Nimule’ District, the Provincial Commissioner noted (Eden, 1912), would “contain the Madi tribe only” (p. 4), ‘Gulu’ would be largely Acholi, but with “portions” of other tribes, including “a certain number of Madi...south of the Zoka river” (p. 3), in order to retain the dense Zoka forest as a “barrier” to sleeping sickness transmission. Although Madi/Nimule District was dissolved in 1914 as a result of an exchange of territory between Uganda and Sudan, Madi continued to be governed separately from Acholi (NPCO [1912-1922]).<sup>10</sup> Although details of the original demarcation are generally unknown amongst contemporary northern Ugandans, the colonial ‘Zoka’ boundary permeated Acholi collective memory; today, this recollection is wielded as a key narrative supporting contemporary Acholi claims. As elsewhere (Lentz, 2010; Leonardi, 2020) the broader logic conveyed through colonial rule—that administrative units constitute ‘customary’ ethnic territories—became a prominent strand woven into local political consciousness in the upper Nile region.

Links forged between chiefdom groups and sub-district colonial administrative units also shaped contemporary struggles over Apaa. Early British administrators tasked ‘chiefs’ with overseeing the maintenance of particular stretches of road, thereby demarcating their administrative territories. Reinforcing the association between chiefly identities and administrative jurisdictions, district sub-units (parishes, divisions or counties) typically bore the names of chiefdoms, such as Pabo, Lamogi, Alero in Acholi, and Palaro or Oyuwi in the east Madi area.<sup>11</sup> As will be seen in chapter six, as violent struggles broke out between Pabo and Lamogi peasants in 2005–2010 over the right to settle and allocate land in Apaa, both

---

<sup>10</sup> When Madi was a sub-district unit under Gulu, for example, officials still dealt with the ‘Acholi area’ and ‘Madi area’ separately. Each had their own native court. See Ugandan Gazettes 1915 – 1930.

<sup>11</sup> See Uganda Gazettes (1912-1940); NPCO monthly reports. Also, Laruni, 2014 p. 76

groups evoked narratives relating to early colonial administrative boundaries and the precedent of chiefly road maintenance to defend their exclusive territorial claims.

In the Nile region, ethno-territorial logics have arguably proven persistent because of—not just in spite of—the ambiguous character of ‘indirect’ rule that unfolded in northern Uganda. Initially, colonial officers sought to co-opt local hereditary ‘chiefs’ as agents of their rule, or where they proved lacking, to install various other “men with local prestige,” notably former translators and allies of Turco-Egyptian rule (Hailey et al, 1947, pp. 1–2). Before long, however, British officials began to replace hereditary ‘chiefs’ deemed defiant or incompetent and amalgamate chieftaincies to improve efficiency (cf. Girling, 2019, pp. 300–315; Laruni, 2014, pp. 4–5). In 1916 for example, provincial reports (Postlethwaite, 1916, p. 2) note that a chief in east Madi found “drunken and inert” was “deposed and his country amalgamated under Okello Kibera” of Oyuwi. While such rearrangements were negotiated and contested by local populations, colonial officials developed a hierarchy of salaried county, divisional and parish chiefs appointed by—and directly accountable to—the British District Commissioner (see also Girling, pp. 288, 315). By the late 1930s, a new wave of colonial administrators lamented that such chiefs amounted to mere “government agents,” the “very embodiment of ...direct rule” (Dundas, 1941, p. 1; Mitchell, 1937). Aside from a brief, aborted attempt to reconstruct the ‘customary’ chief system between 1938–1943 (Steil, 1947, p. 2; Laruni, pp. 76–78), administrative units remained deeply associated with particular ‘chiefdoms,’ yet headed by patently bureaucratic administrators, “divorced” as Girling (p. 314) put it, from the residual “ritual authority” of clan leaders of the past.<sup>12</sup> This dynamic produced an enduring, pliable sense of ethnic territoriality that outlived the specific structures of colonial ‘native’ administration.

The British imposition of native administration inadvertently linked territorial jurisdiction to property rights. In contrast to other contexts such as Ghana, British rulers did not grant ‘Madi’ and ‘Acholi’ chiefs particular powers over land; chiefs did not ‘own’ communal land, control property allocation, or collect rents. While ‘customary’ rules were imposed to regulate aspects of local life such as bride prices and hunting, land tenure practices were never codified into native laws. Colonial Land Ordinances simply outlined

---

<sup>12</sup> Attempts to reconstruct a ‘traditional’ clan-based system between 1938–1943 “failed,” British officials concluded, due to the “administrative ineptitude of the hereditary chiefs” (Steil, 1947, p. 2).

that non-titled land was ‘Crown land,’ held by ‘natives’ according to (unspecified) customary rights, although potentially subject to appropriation for state use (Girling, 2019, pp. 297–298; Hopwood, 2021). This lack of codification reflected that for much of the colonial period, land was considered abundant, while colonial officials often regarded local land tenure practices as ‘untranslatable’ into the idiom of law. In 1954, a colonial consultant (Wallis, 1954, p. 76) surmised that although Local Governments had recently been asked to “frame by-laws to regulate customary land...Africans will never be able to describe their own systems of land tenure any more than ordinary Englishmen could write down the rules of English Grammar.” For the most part, as Girling (p. 298) describes, during the colonial era rural dwellers established cultivation rights by clearing bush; family plots typically descended from father to sons, while ‘native authorities’ only intervened to mediate cases of serious dispute alongside “lineage elders and others.” In short, land tenure remained tied to social belonging in extended families but was never vested in or directly controlled by chiefly authorities or clan heads, whether recognized by colonial administration or otherwise.

Colonial structures and modes of rule nevertheless embedded the idea, however indistinct, that administrative territories align with customary tribal and clan lands. As Berry (1993, p. 22) observed, colonial administrative practices often had repercussions for the dynamics of property and land access, “whether or not they were explicitly designed for that purpose.” In the Nile region, the construction of ‘Acholi’ or ‘Madi’ native laws that applied within bounded jurisdictions reinforced a broad sense of tribal collective rights in land, as did the association between clan identities and sub-district units. This is evident, for instance, in a dispute between government-backed chiefs over the northeast section of the “Madi-Acholi” boundary in the 1950s and early 60s (Acholi District Local Government [1951-1962]).<sup>13</sup> When the Acholi Jago [divisional chief] of Attiak complained that a group of Madi had dug fields on their side of the boundary, officials from both districts advised that as the area was “actually in Madi,” they “should be left to cultivate” (Ocaya, 1962, p. 2). This broad association between land tenure and administrative structures formed during the colonial era, as will be explored, continues to shape conflict over Apaa land today.

---

<sup>13</sup> Thanks to Cherry Leonardi for providing a copy of these files.

### 3.3 A layering of competing claims: c.1946 – 1985

The post-World War II period leading to independence and beyond was characterized by the proliferation of precedents and a layering of claims to land along the eastern Nile banks encompassing Apaa. This was the case both in terms of collective resistance to state control of land and the rise of competing claims between ethnically-aligned administrative authorities and political communities. As explored below, the political action of local populations in response to state-driven exclusion from the Nile area was often shaped by the very language, categories, and logics advanced by the colonial and post-independence regimes.

#### 3.3.1 *State land control vs collective claims*

After World War II, colonial governments across many parts of Africa embarked on ambitious development and modernization programs encompassing state-directed agricultural reforms, commercialization, intensified commodity production and in some contexts such as Kenya, land titling programs touted to foster investment (Sorrenson, 1967; Berry, 2002, p. 647; Peters, 2004, pp. 273, 280). As Mamdani (1996, p. 173) observed, colonial rulers shifted away from “administrative coercion” in favour of cultivating market incentives to garner broader support “in the face of nationalist agitation.” At the same time, the rise of international conservation discourses (Addington et al, 1950, pp. 5–6; Neumann, 1998) culminated in a new colonial drive in the 1950s to enclose land to establish National Parks, forest reserves, and animal sanctuaries. Both state-led developmentalism and conservation discourses shaped rural struggles over land that continued after independence. In northern Uganda, state claims to control lands along the Nile bank encompassing Apaa in the name of conservation were legally consolidated in the later colonial and early independence decades but also challenged and undermined. As will be seen, the history of local resistance to state authority over the Nile banks, state toleration of Acholi settlements in Apaa from the 1970s, and confusion over conservation boundaries all play into contemporary conflict over Apaa land.

As the ‘war years’ ended, colonial officials, local authorities and rural populations began to debate the future of around a third of Uganda’s land mass that was depopulated on

account of tsetse flies (Worthington, 1946, p. v), including the eastern Nile bank enveloping Apaa. Amidst the rise of colonial developmentalist discourses, British officials touted various options for utilizing uninhabited ‘tsetse fly areas’ in the area, including proposals to dam the Albert Nile, develop fisheries, and establish a government farm (Worthington, p. 91). After 1950, however, British interests in these areas swung decisively towards conservation. In the decade leading to independence, a tug-of-war ensued as British officials pushed to demarcate protected areas, and councils, ‘chiefs’ and peasants demanded that the Nile ‘closed’ area be opened up for hunting, cultivation and resettlement. While Apaa lay in the centre of the restricted area, heated negotiations, focused on peripheral zones that offered immediate prospects for resettlement, provide insights that foreground contemporary conflict over Apaa.

Local struggles against forest reserve enclosures during this period highlight how rural populations drew upon chiefdom and tribal identities to contest colonial control: the very political identities that colonial officials leveraged to structure their rule became tools of resistance. The growing political salience of the Acholi identity, in particular, is captured by an anonymous petition (Petition, 1945) against the creation of Crown forests addressed to the DC, which complained that “the British Government” has no “authority to seize the land of our ancestors without the consent of the Acholi.” Between 1951-1953, the Pabo Division and Acholi District Councils, often aided by county chiefs, hotly contested colonial proposals to enclose Kilak, Labala and Wi-Ceri hills as forest reserves, in part because Kilak was regarded as the ‘birthplace’ of Acholi, but also because of the “real fear,” as Acholi District’s DC (in Rowlands, 1952) put it, that the reserve would block the Pabo people’s “desirable direction for expansion” west into the ‘closed’ area encompassing Apaa. To contest the proposed reserves, the “people of Pabo” together with ‘unofficial’ council members even petitioned the Chief Secretary in Entebbe (Pabo Division Council, 1952; Russell (presumed), 1952). Far from the ‘decentralised despotism’ of indirect rule that Mamdani (1996) argued characterised colonial Uganda, at least by the 1950s, government ‘chiefs’ often fought alongside their constituents, while local populations—grouped as chiefdoms or tribes—sometimes directly challenged the colonial state.<sup>14</sup>

Such negotiations ‘from below’ often shaped state decisions regarding land in the Nile region, reflecting how the colonial advancement of hegemonic land regimes constituted a

---

<sup>14</sup> Leonardi & Vaughan (2016) make a similar argument about this period of colonial rule in Sudan



contested process. After years of struggle, British officials pushed ahead to create reserves in Pabo, yet made notable concessions: Kilak hill was gazetted as a local rather than a crown forest reserve in acknowledgement of its “historical importance” to Pabo, while a “1.5-mile gap” was left between Labala and Kilak reserves to allow Pabo and Lamogi clans to spread “south-westward” as sleeping sickness restrictions were lifted (Russell, 1953).<sup>15</sup> Similarly, between 1950 and 1962, British officers progressively permitted resettlement on the fringes of the ‘closed’ area as a bargaining counter to garner local consent for the establishment of protected areas, including Murchison National Park (District Commissioner Acholi, 1950; Game Department, 1955, p. 11). As colonial officials pushed to gazette parts of the closed area—including the “wildest” central area comprising Apaa (Brooks, 1961, p. 7)—as a controlled hunting area before sleeping sickness legislation was rolled back (NPCO, 1958; Hunt et al, 1961), they attempted to win over reticent local councils and populations by allowing further incremental settlement and promoting the economic benefits of hunting safari fees and tourism (NPCO, 1958; NPCO, 1961; Anderson, 1961d).

Foreshadowing the fiery character of contemporary conflict over Apaa, however, the question of the wider eastern bank area erupted between 1960 and 1962. As explored below, in large part this reflected the rise of ethnically charged conflict over resettlement opportunities. It also stemmed, however, from the Acholi District Councillor’s fierce opposition to unpopular gazettment proposals during the political race for pre-independence elections (Field, 1961; Anderson, 1961a). Amid such tensions, colonial officials in Entebbe simply suspended decision-making until the elections had passed (Hunt, 1962c). While the transition from sleeping sickness restrictions to protected areas envisioned by colonial officials was not fulfilled until after independence, the legal and survey groundwork was laid.

During the first two decades of post-colonial rule, independent Ugandan regimes consolidated state legal control over land in the region. Two shifts are particularly relevant to contemporary struggles over Apaa. First, under Obote I, former sleeping-sickness areas along the Nile banks were finally gazetted into two contiguous Controlled Hunting Areas (CHA) in 1963; the southern ‘Kilak CHA’ was approved by the Acholi District Council (L.N 364), and the northern ‘East Madi CHA’ by the newly established Madi District Council (L.N 352). The entire Apaa area fell under the ‘East Madi CHA’ - a reality vehemently denied by many

---

<sup>15</sup> For full correspondence see Acholi District Commissioners Office, [1951-1953])

Acholi today. Although the Acholi Council's decision to gazette the Kilak area—driven in part by interest in hunting license revenues—was framed as reversible, “should land pressure arise” (Acholi District Council, 1963), it still proved controversial, arousing censure from local political opposition (DP [Democratic Party] supporter, 1962). Despite local demands (e.g., Kilak County Office, 1967), however, settlement of these areas remained officially off-limits throughout the 1960s, deepening the precedent of statist control. The 1963 gazettements, as will be seen, provide the historic basis for current state attempts to re-establish protected areas enclosing Apaa.

The second key shift that set the stage for contemporary conflict was that independent Ugandan regimes advanced land reforms in the 1960s and 1970s that facilitated elite property accumulation, reflecting the hegemonic process outlined in chapter two. During this period, many independent African states introduced state-led land titling programs; such reforms stemmed from policies promoted in the last years of colonial rule which argued that titling provided land tenure security, which was, in turn, critical for the growth of commercial agriculture and land markets (Xavier, 1997; Peters, 2002; Carswell, 2007). Reflecting proposals touted by the 1955 colonial Royal East African Commission, Uganda's 1960s land legislation facilitated titling but also provided a degree of protection to ‘customary’ landholders of non-alienated land as ‘tenants at will’ of the state (Nakayi, 2013, p. 14; Laruni, 2014, p. 180). Amin's ‘Land Reform Decree’ of 1975, however, went further, declaring all land ‘public’ and stripping titling processes of provisions for consent or compensation of local occupants (Coldham, 2000). In this new political-legal environment, powerful elite actors obtained leaseholds to vast areas in the name of ‘development’, often excluding the rural poor (Xavier; Mamdani, 1996). After the Kilak CHA was degazetted in 1972 as part of Amin's push to expand agricultural production, many prominent, state-connected actors acquired titles to large chunks of the eastern Nile bank area south of Apaa through the Uganda Land Commission, bolstering the emergence of a new political elite class.<sup>16</sup> As will be explored, the historic pattern of elite alienation of formerly gazetted conservation lands has continued to shape contemporary struggles between ruling elites and rural peasants over land, including Apaa.

---

<sup>16</sup> Such figures include Onegi Obel (Governor of the bank of Uganda, 1973-8) Erinayo Oryema (a Minister under Amin) and Captain Okecha.

Despite the legal entrenchment of direct state control over land during this period, in practice, rural communities increasingly undermined state prohibitions. Throughout the 60s and 70s, groups of Madi and Acholi engaged in multi-day hunting expeditions within Apaa, defying the licensing regulations of the Controlled Hunting areas. Pabo elders vividly recount participating in hunts, passing metal disks known as ‘galaya’ that marked the CHA boundaries, surveying the savannah-like expanses created by elephant grazing, and spearing antelope, warthog, and buffalo. State enforcement was insufficient to deter such expeditions: Game Department and warden reports from this period (1963–1974) complained of poor funding and described rangers discovering wire snares or carcasses but failing to apprehend poachers; hunters also recall that it was usually possible to negotiate or offer bribes of smoked game meat. As will be seen, through such expeditions, communities maintained intimate knowledge of such areas spanning several generations.

Such connections paved the way for the creeping resettlement of southern areas of Apaa during the 1970s-80s, further eroding the precedent of state control. While the ‘Kilak CHA’ was degazetted in 1972 (Statutory Instrument, No. 55), the East Madi CHA encompassing Apaa was not—a fact that contemporary state actors emphasise to defend attempts to re-establish Apaa as a wildlife reserve. Regardless, from the 1970s, dozens of hunters and cattle-herding families from Pabo in Acholi District began to settle in the southernmost stretches of Apaa such as Coro, Arii and Alony. The bulk of Apaa, however, remained uninhabited, aside from scattered fishing camps (likely Madi, Alur and Lugbara) that had long dotted the Nile banks (e.g., Wabomba, 1967). It remains unclear whether Acholi settlers knowingly encroached on the southern fringes of the ‘East Madi CHA:’ as in other parts of Uganda, Acholi settlers may have taken Amin’s public call for peasants to farm underpopulated areas as a sanction to encroach into the hunting grounds (Nel & Hill, 2013, p. 435); given the absence of enforcement, it is also possible they believed that they resided in the degazetted zone. As will be explored, the experience of settling in such a remote, inhospitable area during the politically tumultuous decades of the 1970s and 80s forged a new sense of belonging to land in Apaa amongst Pabo clans, providing impetus for the next generation’s land occupation movement in 2006.

Diverging historic precedents regarding Apaa lands can therefore be traced to the 1970s and 1980s. In part, this reflected emerging confusion between locations ‘on the

ground' and protected areas marked on maps. While Apaa fell within the settlement-prohibited East Madi hunting area, state enforcement was negligible, allowing Acholi settlers to live in the area's southern fringe relatively undisturbed until the 1990s, when Museveni's government forced northern populations into internally displaced persons (IDP) camps amidst the LRA war. During the interim, regardless of Amin's land decrees, most settlers claimed vacant land, welcomed friends and relatives, and occupied, tilled and transferred holdings in much the same ways as their parents and grandparents did before them. Two founding figures of the 1970s Apaa settlements—Alensiyo Obwur and Otoo Valensiyo—however, did apply for leasehold titles for around 500 acres under the Land Commission (Jago Pabo, 1984). Although the title Obwur eventually acquired applied to areas within the former Kilak CHA, not Apaa (Okwangi, 1985) current Apaa occupiers (somewhat ironically) wield his title as evidence for their collective 'customary' claims and to contest state narratives that Apaa was a legitimate protected area. As will be explored, in recent years, their descendants have also begun to leverage such title claims to extend exclusive authority over plots in Apaa centre which hold increasing commercial value, generating new internal conflicts within Apaa.

In sum, the long history of contested state extension of control over land in the upper Nile basin has contributed to a layering of claims convoluted by confusion over conservation boundaries and textured by rural communities' lived experiences and the historic construction of connections to land. This history is rendered thornier still by the emergence of conflicting, overlapping inter-ethnic claims to territory and property.

### *3.3.2 The rise of ethno-territorial struggle*

To understand the dimensions of contemporary struggles over Apaa land relating to ethnic identity and administrative jurisdiction, it is critical to examine a number of changes that unfolded from the post-World War II era through the first decades of independence. These include the rise of inter-administrative border disputes and the 'invisible' shifting of the Madi-Acholi boundary in 1947, colonial responses to inter-ethnic tensions over the resettlement of the eastern Nile bank, the souring of Acholi-Madi relations in the wake of Amin's regime, and the emergence of de facto 'Acholi' jurisdiction over Apaa settlements in the 1980s.

In northern Uganda, incongruities woven into the structures of colonial administration set the stage for a proliferation of disputes over internal borders. While for much of the colonial era, British officials envisioned administrative units as ethnopolitical entities reflecting ‘traditional’ tribal zones, in practice, provinces, districts, and counties were constantly rearranged (Berry, 2001). As Hirst (1971, pp. 91–95) observed, in the Protectorate of Uganda, “districts changed in shape and size” and “new districts were carved out of existing ones” as officials weighed and reweighed ‘ethnological’ factors with logistical concerns ranging from potential for economic self-sufficiency to the proximity of populations to administrative centres (also Tosh, 1973, p. 97; Sathyamurthy, 1986, p. 340). Notably, as colonial officials deemed Madi populations too small to warrant district status, the Madi ‘sub-District’ was shuffled between larger administrations for several decades, variously forming part of Gulu, Acholi, and West Nile Districts (see Allen, 1993, p. 129; *The Uganda Protectorate, [1932-1946]*). After Gulu and Chua were amalgamated to form Acholi District in 1938, Provincial administrative rearrangements before and after World War II altered numerous district (and sub-district) borders, including Acholi, Madi, Lango, Teso, and Karamoja (Deputy Governor, 1939). Such shifts established a lingering contradiction between the colonial vision of administrative units as immutable tribal structures and the reality of constant flux and change.

While colonial administrative boundaries were frequently adjusted from above, they also became increasingly subject to contention from below. By the 1950s, disputes over boundaries had become frequent enough to pose, Laruni (2014, p. 122) observes, “a hindrance to the daily running of the Acholi local councils.” Such disputes reflected political incentives built into colonial administrative structures. Local chiefs and councils contested the borders of neighbouring administrations to increase their tax intakes and expand the reach of their political authority. Local populations, in turn, invested in such struggles to gain or defend control over desirable hunting tracts, avoid paying taxes to authorities associated with another tribe or advance the prestige of their own ethnic group. For example, in the case of an Acholi-Lango District boundary dispute the District Commissioner Gulu (1946) observed that “Acholi now claim sole hunting rights in the area now within the Acholi boundary,” warning the District Commissioner of Lango, “there will be friction on the border.” Key dynamics that characterize ongoing struggles over Apaa—notably the fusion of ethnic land claims and

jurisdictional disputes—have their roots in the logics and inconsistencies of colonial administration.

Despite the sensitive nature of administrative boundaries, the border adjustment that transferred Apaa from ‘Acholi’ to ‘Madi’ territory occurred without struggle. At some point during the merging of Provinces in 1939 and the re-establishment of the Northern Province on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1947, officials shifted the southern inter-district boundary from the Zoka river to the Coro River, transferring Apaa from the Acholi District to the Madi sub-District under West Nile (Legal Notice 1, 1947). Along with the paucity of inter-war year records, the fact that the boundary was shifted within the uninhabited, ‘closed’ zone likely explains the absence of oral recollection or colonial correspondence detailing the decision; at the time, the shift had no immediate political repercussions. While many contemporary Acholi actors deny it, post-1946 maps and legislation reveal that the Coro River remained the boundary between successive districts associated with Madi and Acholi, from Madi and Acholi Districts in 1962 to Moyo and Gulu Districts in the 1980s, to Adjumani and Amuru Districts today (e.g., Constitution of Uganda, 1964 [1962], pp. 36–41, 1966, pp. 165–167). That the boundary adjustment went unnoticed helps to explain the dichotomous character of current debates: Madi and Acholi groups and politicians typically insist that their preferred demarcation reflects the ‘true,’ unchanging colonial border, which is held to inscribe timeless tribal territories. The repercussions of the inter-war boundary shift, as will be explored, only surfaced 60 years later as the LRA-government war drew to a close, and northern communities began to disperse from IDP camps to return ‘home.’

The potential for volatile conflict over administrative boundaries and the resettlement of depopulated areas, however, became palpable in the emergence of the Jonam-Acholi dispute. As colonial administrators considered opening up parts of the ‘closed’ sleeping sickness areas in the late 1950s-1960s, “difficult questions” arose, as the permanent secretary for Local Government (Hunt, 1961) put it, over “who should occupy de-restricted areas and how they are to be controlled.” In 1961, long-simmering tensions erupted between West Nile leaders, their constituent Jonam communities, and Acholi District and Anaka-based clans over the eastern Nile bank south of Apaa. The West Nile District Council (1961) narrated that after the British forcefully evicted Jonam during the sleeping sickness epidemic (p. 1), they incorrectly demarcated the area within ‘Acholi,’ even as the “riverine tribes” saw the “lost

bank” as their “promised land” (p. 2). In turn, the Acholi District Council defended its jurisdiction, pushing colonial authorities to grant direct control over resettlement (e.g., Anderson, 1961b, 1961c). As National Assembly elections drew near, the conflict became embroiled in party politics as councillors vied to champion their constituencies' cause (Field, 1962). Decades before the Apaa conflict erupted, the Jonam-Acholi dispute foreshadowed how colonial displacements and administrative practices set the stage for conflicts entangling jurisdiction, authority over land allocation, party politics, ethnic belonging, and resettlement rights.

The colonial response to the Jonam dispute and others like it introduced new layers of incongruity within the logics and structures of the Ugandan administration. Confronted by a proliferation of boundary-related conflicts, as independence neared, Uganda's colonial governors backpedalled on the idea that administrative units reflect ethnic political communities. Initially, British administrators often permitted county chiefs to oversee clan resettlement in de-restricted areas they “originally occupied,” which were usually assumed to adhere to administrative boundaries (Sandford, 1959, p. 1). As boundary conflicts flared, however, Protectorate officials increasingly attempted to recast boundaries as ‘purely administrative’ and citizenship and settlement rights as ‘national’ rather than local and tribal.’ In the case of the Jonam-Acholi conflict, officials began to reiterate that the district boundary was unalterable and that any resettlement must adhere to the “Government’s policy,” as the Northern Provincial Commissioner expressed, that “anyone could settle on equal terms anywhere in the country of Uganda” (Minutes, 1961, pp. 1–2). As will be explored, President Museveni has often invoked this principle in regard to the Apaa conflict.

This abrupt U-turn in colonial policy forged an enduring contradiction between the constitutional ideal of impartial local governance, and the political reality of ethnic local administrative structures. The incongruities of this policy reversal surfaced rapidly in the Jonam-Acholi dispute. As British officials emphasized national settlement rights—denying Jonam privileged access to reflect their ancestral claims—they also indicated that as the disputed zone lay in Acholi District, Acholi authorities would oversee land (re)allocation. While colonial officials swiftly revised proposals to allow Acholi chiefs to oversee resettlement “in accordance with customary law” (Hunt, 1962a, p. 2) subsequent plans for a new Acholi ‘District Land Board’ to issue licenses under the Crown Settlement rules (1960)

did not solve the dilemma (Hunt, 1962b): a supposedly impartial settlement process would still be overseen by an ethnically-aligned institution. The political infeasibility of such plans became obvious after independence. As central ministries (Gibson, 1963) warned Acholi authorities that settlement processes must “not discriminate against non-Acholi,” it became clear that calls for impartiality would be flouted. As tensions rose, the Obote I regime opted to foreclose the resettlement question entirely; the entire eastern Nile bank zone—from the disputed area opposite Pakwach north to Apaa—remained off-limits for all habitation until the 1970s.<sup>17</sup>

The incongruent logics interweaving territory, property, identity, and authority that emerged during this period continue to reverberate amid struggles over Apaa today. Colonial boundaries and administrative practices—however unstable and incongruent—embedded an enduring ethno-territorial grammar within local governance structures that continue to shape state strategies of rule and modes of resistance. As will be seen, just as colonial governors structured their rule around tribal administration and then declared nationalist rights to land settlement, Museveni’s regime similarly evokes nationalistic administrative principles whilst routinely leveraging territorial, ethnic politics to advance hegemonic control, including over land in Apaa.

Two further historical developments are critical to understanding the current ethnic dimensions of the Apaa conflict. First, the identity politics triggered by President Idi Amin’s regime led to a distinct souring of Acholi-Madi relations, jarring decades of joint hunting parties and intermarriage. The violent persecution of Acholi civilians and combatants during Amin’s reign and the atrocities committed by Amin’s soldiers as they fled north in 1979 sparked widespread reprisals (Allen, 1993, pp. 198–204; Laruni, 2014, pp. 261–263). As a Madi student later reflected, “People from West Nile, and the Kakwa, Lugbara and Madi in particular, found themselves being singled out as those responsible for Amin’s misdeeds” (in Amaza, 1998, quoted in Leopold, 2009, p. 471). As Obote’s forces—comprising largely of Acholi and Langi soldiers—struggled to oust remnants of Amin’s troops and emergent rebel groups from West Nile, they also inflicted violence upon the wider population (see Allen, 1993, pp. 204–205). In Gulu, even long-term Madi residents became targets of Acholi civilian-instigated attacks (Laruni, p. 262). Inter-ethnic tensions were kept alive during the

---

<sup>17</sup> See correspondence of Acholi District, 1964; Ruhweza, 1967.



war in northern Uganda as some Madi began to frame atrocities committed against them by the LRA in Adjumani as perpetrated by ‘Acholi.’ The depth of tensions ignited by such events should not be overplayed: Acholi-Madi cross-cutting clan relations were maintained, and the animosity that flared around 1979–1986 has faded. Many of my informants— Madi and Acholi— warmly recalled participating in large-scale joint hunting expeditions in and around Apaa during this period. Such inter-regional political dynamics, however, planted seeds of mistrust and division that have resurfaced in the context of contemporary struggles over Apaa.

Apaa settlements of the 1970s-90s were subjected to several violent incidents that have since been cast as ‘Madi’ attacks. Lying between Gulu and West Nile, villages in Apaa were caught in the cross-fire of the political turmoil that unfolded during this period. From 1979, Amin’s former combatants attacked Apaa homesteads on multiple occasions as they fled to West Nile. In 1980, Kilak County civil servants (Aber, 1980) reported that Amin’s men “have again come disturbing people in the area named Apaa,” abducting one man. An Acholi man was shot after he was discovered by West Nile linked ‘adwi’ (rebels) near their hunting camp; on another, three men were killed (Teko, 1982). Perhaps most seared into collective memory in Apaa, however, was the 1987 attack in which Madi civilians joined by Museveni’s NRA burned homes, shot one man, abducted two and injured others. As one survivor recounted (Apaa, 2020 November), NRA sought to avenge a raid conducted in Moyo by the ‘*Cilil*,’ (a branch of the Uganda People’s Democratic Army (UPDA) which waged an insurgency against Museveni). Apaa was targeted, it appears, because the *Cilil* rebels had a large base at the homestead of one of Apaa’s founding pioneers, Alensiyo Obwur. As many Apaa occupiers insist that it was a different *Cilil* unit that raided Moyo, they have come to view the incident as evidence of a long-standing Madi-NRM collusion against them. Conversely, that Apaa provided a strong hold for early anti-NRM insurgents and later became a hideout for LRA after populations were forced into IDP camps, has led some Madi observers to view Acholi in Apaa as vigilantes harbouring LRA-ties. Numerous prejudices that continue to colour ongoing conflict over Apaa, accordingly, have their roots in this tumultuous period.

The second key development during this period was that Acholi settlements in Apaa were incorporated into Gulu District’s administrative structures. During the 1970s to early

1990s, Apaa's settlements escaped the notice of Moyo District administrators, perhaps because they lay in the most remote stretches of the uninhabited 'East Madi' controlled hunting area. Gulu District administrative records reveal that Apaa became treated as a de facto unit under Kilak County, Pabo Division, Labala Parish, Andara Sub-Parish (e.g., Nyero, 1983). A long-retired Jago of Pabo (Sabino, Gulu, 2020 July) recalls making over-night trips in the late 1970s to collect tax from 100-150 registered households spread across Andara, a portion of which lived in Apaa in Ngoro, Gorobi, Arii, Fakata, Ocuu, Alony and Coro. By 1990, registered households in Apaa had grown to just under 500 (Amuru Division, 1990). At this juncture however, as will be explored, an inter-jurisdictional dispute began to emerge between the administrative units of Pabo (associated with Pabo clans) and Amuru (associated with Lamogi clans) *within* Gulu District. As will be seen, the de facto administration of Apaa by Gulu District and the emergence of the Pabo-Lamogi boundary dispute have critically shaped the unfolding conflict in Apaa. On the map, Apaa settlements fell under Moyo District, which later was carved up to form Adjumani. The lived experience of a growing number of Acholi settlers of Apaa, however, was that their pioneer settlements formed part of Gulu District administration, which was also later divided to form Amuru District.

### 3.4 Conclusion

As Sara Berry (2002, p. 647) reflected on African contexts more generally, "as boundaries were imposed, transgressed, debated and redrawn, the debates became as much a part of the colonial legacy as the boundaries themselves." Reflecting such dynamics, on the eve of independence, the West Nile District Council (ca. 1961), patently alluding to the Jonam's 'lost' eastern Nile bank warned Uganda's colonial authorities;

Colonialism has for its own ends...[taken the] land of one tribe within the Protectorate, and given it to another favoured tribe...This must now be rectified by him who fabricated it...unless inter-district boundaries are inscribed and described ethnically and ethically the consequences will be serious...History will lay the blame of such consequences at the door of Britain.

As this Memorandum evokes, by independence, the logic that ethnicity, administrative territory and property rights naturally align had become deeply rooted in local imagination, providing a framework with which to advance collective claims to property and jurisdiction and contest statist control over land. The incongruencies of colonial 'tribal' administration—

from the frequent readjustment of supposedly ‘customary’ boundaries to the abrupt denial of ethnic territoriality—set the stage for ongoing contestation of administrative boundaries, including in Apaa.

This chapter argued that the roots of conflict over Apaa can be traced to the moment of rupture in which colonial officers expelled clans from the Nile banks, and segregated such groups into emerging tribal administrative communities, leading to the gradual ‘co-construction’ of ethnic political identities. The contemporary tribes and chiefdoms that currently exert competing collective claims to Apaa land, accordingly, share intertwining histories through their composite clans and lineages. Subsequent historical processes gave rise to competing precedents and claims to authority over Apaa land, including the increasingly contested status of statist control over the wider Nile banks region, the quiet shifting of the Madi-Acholi District border in 1947, a souring of Acholi- Madi relations in the wake of Amin’s regime, and the growing disjuncture between the lived experiences of Acholi settlers in Apaa and conservation and administrative boundaries inscribed on maps. As will be seen, the history of Apaa land is itself the subject of rife contention between those engaged in the ongoing conflict; historic debates are rehearsed by politicians, state actors and community representatives in court documents, memorandums to the president, public radio addresses, political rallies, and the floors of parliament.

The following chapter turns to focus on contemporary processes of state-driven land expropriation in Apaa. The advancement of hegemonic land regime processes by Museveni’s regime to consolidate power and enclose Apaa land reflects many of the historic dynamics explored within this chapter: the extension of statist control justified by narratives of conservation, accumulation of land in the hands of political elites, and the leveraging of ethno-territorial identity politics.

## **Chapter 4**

## **Uganda's hegemonic land regime and elite struggles over Apaa 1986 – 2022.**

Since the late 2000s, scholars have challenged the assumptions of a flurry of research by international agencies and NGOs (GRAIN, 2008; Cotula & Vermeulen, 2009; Daniel & Mittal, 2009) depicting a flood of foreign 'land-grabbing' in African countries linked to the global fuel, food, and financial crises of 2007- 2008 (Oya, 2013; Scoones et al, 2013; Oliveira et al, 2021). While such crises certainly amplified demand for land, recent patterns reproduce much longer histories of expropriation, spanning colonial era creation of forest reserves and national parks to new enclosures for 'green' investment in the wake of the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s-90s (Berry, 2002; Edelman & León, 2013). Beyond a narrow focus on foreign investors, scholars have highlighted the role of states in driving land expropriation processes that implicate complex webs of actors, from domestic companies and local elites to para-militaries and global conservation agencies (Wolford et al, 2013; Fairhead et al, 2012; Ansoms & Hilhorst, 2014). Overturning conceptions of 'land grabbing' as a linear process that unvaryingly results in mass peasant dispossession and land-use change, scholars have highlighted how many contemporary land 'deals' remain unimplemented or transform over time (Li, 2010; Buckley, 2013, p. 432); some reflect 'virtual grabs' driven by speculative investment or political rent-seeking (McCarthy et al, 2012; Edelman et al, 2013, p. 1525), while others become embroiled in struggles in which local contestants, state institutions and elites advance conflicting interests in the same tract of land (Borras & Franco, 2013, pp. 1725–1728).

To understand such dynamics, scholars have increasingly responded to calls for fine-grained "ethnographic or historical analyses" of large-scale land expropriation processes (Edelman et al, 2013, p. 490; McCarthy et al, 2012; Larder, 2015). In this vein, a particular strand of scholarship on state expropriation has begun to merge with more established literature exploring African land tenure and struggles over authority, property, and territory in historic perspective, discussed in chapter two. While retaining a focus on "politics and power relations" implicit in the concept of 'land grabbing' (Borras & Franco, 2013, p. 1725), this fusion has sparked studies that grapple with the historical antecedents shaping contemporary land expropriation processes and the pluralistic political-institutional contexts in which they so often unfold (Berry, 2002, p. 66; Cavanagh, 2012; Lanz et al, 2018). This approach

illuminates that the fluid dynamics of large-scale land expropriation cannot be explained solely through the teleological lens of state-facilitated ‘capital accumulation’ but must be rather viewed in light of broader political processes of state formation (Borras & Franco, 2013, p. 1739; Boone, 2014; Verkoren & Ngin, 2017, p. 1340).

Building on such work, this chapter suggests that the concept of ‘hegemonic land regime processes’ introduced in chapter two captures how African regimes sometimes foster—and navigate—a range of rival interests in land to build central state power. The chapter develops this argument by exploring how Museveni’s regime, Ugandan government institutions and political elites have pursued multiple, often conflicting interests in Apaa land in northern Uganda. The ‘hegemonic processes’ examined encompass the policies, political culture and institutions cultivated by Museveni’s regime that have structured conflict over jurisdiction, property and belonging in Apaa, and the specific ways that ruling elites and the central state have leveraged such dynamics for political gain in evolving relationship to dissent from below.

In contrast to African rulers who have pursued a more distinctly ‘customary’ or ‘statist’ land regime in particular areas (Boone, 2014, 2018), the chapter argues that Museveni’s government has charted an ambiguous path spanning sub-regions that champions ‘customary’ tenure yet carves out ample space for the expansion of state patronage networks by facilitating the elite accumulation of property, resources and wealth. While state discourses embrace nationalist forms of citizenship, territoriality and settlement rights, state-driven decentralisation processes reproduce a colonial politics of ethnic difference, spawning inter-jurisdictional rivalries. The ambiguities woven into Uganda’s contested land regime have enabled Museveni’s government to wield state intervention in land matters, as Kjær (2017, p. 429) puts it, a fluid “political resource” (also Boone, 2013). This dynamic is exemplified by the central state’s engagement in Apaa, which has shifted from a primary focus on enclosing land for conservation and private investment in game trophy hunting to encompass broader political goals, from enabling elite resource exploitation to balancing rival political factions.

Reflecting the wider discussion of ‘public authority’ in chapter two, the term ‘state’ refers not to a monolithic agent, but rather the sum of a constellation of various governing

institutions and actors, structured by norms, laws, symbols and practices which overlap, interact and sometimes conflict (Hansen & Stepputat, 2001; Hagmann & Péclard, 2010); the ‘state,’ as Lund (2006, 2016) emphasises, is best understood not as a fixed, complete product, but as constantly negotiated and “in the making.” In contrast, the terms ‘regime,’ and ‘central state’ denote the ruling party power apparatus, encompassing the “presidential patronage system,” and higher strata of central government (Marijnen & Verweijen, 2020, p. 1000), including statehouse agents and Cabinet. As Tapscott (2021, p. 11) observes, in Uganda, Museveni’s NRM regime has sought to “make government, state and party synonymous;” presenting the idea of the state as the embodiment of centralised power works to strengthen the NRM system of rule.

The chapter is divided into two parts. The first examines Uganda’s land regime since 1986, exploring how Museveni’s government has advanced neoliberal reforms relating to administration, state territory and land tenure to consolidate political power. The second examines how such dynamics manifest in the case of Apaa in northern Uganda.

#### **4.1 Uganda’s land regime 1990 – 2021**

Since seizing power in 1986, Museveni’s rapid adoption of neoliberal reforms touted by international development agencies—from privatization, decentralisation, and market-orientated land reforms to the re-establishment of conservation areas—initially secured him a glowing reputation amongst donors and access to streams of foreign aid (Green, 2008, pp. 3–4; Child, 2009, p. 245; Branch, 2011, pp. 38–41). Museveni’s government has moulded such donor-driven reforms, however, to advance a hegemonic land regime that rather than decisively entrenching ‘statist’ control over land or devolving authority to ‘customary’ leaders, leaves room for ambiguity and political manoeuvring. This strategy reflects, as Boone (2014, p. 16) expresses, how “forms of legal pluralism must be understood, at least in part, as artifacts of state design, rather than the products of error, delay, or failure on the part of governments that should be creating unified national property regimes.” By fostering uncertainty and allowing a multitude of public authorities to compete to exert control over territory and property, Museveni’s regime is able to fragment dissent while positioning itself as the overarching authority.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> This dynamic reflects a broader argument Tapscott (2016, 2021) develops about Museveni’s rule.

The first part of the section below examines how Museveni's regime has utilised decentralisation reforms to foster ethno-territorial politics, while the second examines how Uganda's land tenure reforms have allowed the NRM regime to present itself as a champion of customary land rights while enabling elite accumulation. Finally, the third part explores how these two reform processes have reshaped communal land dynamics in northern Uganda.

#### *4.1.1 Decentralisation and ethno-territorial politics*

Although Museveni's NRM regime has outwardly proclaimed nationalistic principles of administration and citizenship, politicised state decentralisation reforms have reignited, rather than allayed the ethno-territorial logics that colonial structures, practices and discourses imprinted upon local governance institutions in northern Uganda. This divisive strategy has concentrated contests over power, resources and territory at the local level (Boone, 2007, 2013; Sjögren, 2015) yet provided the NRM regime with avenues to consolidate political control. As will be seen in later chapters, the hegemonic territorial-identity politics advanced by Museveni's regime both moulded the form of peasant political action that rose to challenge state expropriation of Apaa land and provided state actors with means to fragment their resistance.

During the 1990s, the neoliberal policies adopted by the Ugandan Government included wide-reaching governance reforms encompassing decentralisation, administrative fragmentation, and a rolling back of state institutions to afford a greater role to market forces, civil society, and reinstated 'traditional' authorities. Museveni's regime navigated these donor-backed reforms to consolidate political control (Dolan, 2005, p. 105; Green, 2008, pp. 13–14). First, decentralisation processes reinforced the efforts of Museveni's 'no-party' regime to extend NRM control into rural areas through the rollout of the five-tiered 'resistance council' system, eventually renamed 'local councils' (LCs) (Tidemand, 1994; Finnström, 2008, p. 93; Branch, 2011, pp. 27–28). Thereafter, the practice of multiplying administrative units afforded Museveni's government new avenues to co-opt local elites and grow electoral support across the country, as each new unit produced a slew of political posts, government jobs and state resource streams (Mwenda, 2007; Lindemann, 2011; Awortwi & Helmsing, 2014).

Administrative fragmentation has played a key role in consolidating NRM's political position. Since Museveni came to power, the number of districts in Uganda has just over quadrupled from 33 in 1986, to 138 in 2021, with the most rapid expansion coinciding with the introduction of multi-party elections in 2005 (Lewis, 2014, p. 579; Tapscott, 2021, p. 55). On many occasions, Museveni has personally announced his decision to 'give' communities a new district just before elections (van Hooft, 2018, pp. 318–319), while the creation of new units often targets politically borderline regions, seemingly to erode opposition (van Hooft, p. 197; Green, 2008, p. 15). Beyond building patronage relations, multiplying administrative units has enabled the NRM to expand surveillance networks into remote areas (Nsamba, 2013, p. 6; Lewis, 2014, pp. 82–84) and diminish the power of local governments by breaking them into smaller, weaker units (Carbone, 2008; Lindemann, 2011, p. 204). In practice, Museveni's government has moulded decentralisation policies to consolidate central state control (Sjögren, 2014; Fisher, 2014; Tapscott, 2021, p. 55).

Reminiscent of colonial indirect rule, decentralisation processes have also reinforced central state power by reinvigorating a spatial politics of ethnic difference (Dolan, 2005, p. 106; Green, 2010; Leonardi, 2020). While many boundary conflicts have long histories, by raising the stakes of controlling administrative territory, decentralisation processes have rekindled old disputes and sparked new ones, as scholars have explored in north-eastern Uganda (Kandel, 2017), West Nile (Leonardi & Santschi, 2016; Leonardi, 2020), Rwenzori (Reuss & Titeca, 2017) Acholi (Sjögren, 2015) and Bunyoro (SchelInberger, 2008). In Uganda's fragmented political milieu, local elites are incentivised to contest local boundaries to expand their tax intakes and access to state funds or to build electoral support by championing the territorial ambitions of ethnic groups (Meinert & Kjær, 2016). As Leonardi (2020, pp. 244, 249) argues, rivalries between neighbouring administrations tend to reinforce central state power, as local actors invoke the territorial logics of the state and compete for state-backing (Boone, 2013). Rather than reflecting state 'fragility' or incapacity to subdue sub-national tensions (Sjögren, 2015, p. 281) localised territorial contests can serve a political function.

The Ugandan state has played a veiled role in reproducing a hegemonic territorial politics of ethnic difference. Since its earliest inception, the NRM publicly espoused a discourse of 'national unity,' listing, for an instance, the goal of purging Uganda of ethnic sectarianism in its 1986 'ten-point program' (Dolan, 2005, p. 105). State policy emphasizes



that district governments represent all Ugandans within their jurisdiction, regardless of tribe, while Museveni has routinely censured local leaders for inciting tribalism, described local boundaries as purely ‘administrative,’ and emphasized national identity. At a celebration of the 1911 Lamogi Rebellion held in Amuru, for instance, the President lectured crowds that the British managed to rule over them because they “organised as clans and tribes” (Statehouse, 2015), arguing that colonial history teaches they must embrace NRM’s vision of national citizenship.

Museveni’s politics, however, belie his rhetoric. NRM has consistently leveraged regional and ethnic divisions to consolidate power, notably by forging a ‘southern’ alliance to oppose, it was framed, decades of ‘northern’ military rule (see Branch, 2011, pp. 15–19; Dolan, 2005, pp. 342–343) and engaging, as Tripp (2004, p. 23) puts it, in “ethnically based clientelist politics.” Undermining Museveni’s nationalist discourse, new administrative territories often align with ethnic and linguistic zones (Branch, 2011, p. 46; cf. Green, 2008, p. 7). In numerous cases—notably Pallisa District which became majority Iteso (Green, 2008, p. 7), and Pakwach District which became largely Jonam—new administrative units appear distinctly tribal. Central state agents have also been known to stir up ‘nativist’ sentiment in local politics. In Bunyoro, for example, Sjögren (2015, p. 280) recounts how Museveni encouraged local authorities to “ring-fence” political posts for Banyoro, fuelling regional ethnic tensions. As explored below in the case of Apaa, the contradictions between ‘nationalist’ state discourses and the sustained entanglement of local administrations and ethnicity in practice have fostered an ambiguous political environment, availing state actors’ multiple avenues to advance political control and suppress resistance.

A further dynamic complicating territorial disputes in northern Uganda stems from the reinstitution of ‘traditional’ chiefs. While the NRM’s restoration of ‘traditional’ authorities in 1993 primarily aimed to appease the Buganda kingdom’s federalist ambitions (Goodfellow & Lindemann, 2013), it also dovetailed with international agencies prevailing models of ‘local development,’ which envisaged customary authorities as ‘authentic,’ decentralised brokers to legitimize their interventions (Ubink, 2008; Geschiere, 2009). In northern Uganda, foreign donors funded the (re)installation of Acholi and Madi ‘chiefs,’ along with bureaucratized, urban ‘cultural institutions’—most prominently, ‘*Ker Kwaro Acholi*’ (KKA). Brushing aside the complex historical dynamics of chiefship, KKA presented itself as a timeless, traditional coalition of hereditary Acholi chiefs, the *rwoddi moo* – chiefs

anointed with oil (Paine, 2015, pp. 110–112). As with KKA, the creation of a Madi ‘traditional’ institution involved installing a ‘paramount chief,’ a position many agree has dubious historical legitimacy. Such cultural institutions situated themselves as key players in northern Uganda’s post-war aid industry (Komujuni & Büscher, 2020, p. 105), capturing donor funds to revive ‘traditional’ rituals and structures, which as Branch (2011, chapter five) argues, often reflected a narrow, patriarchal agenda. Such chiefly institutions often emerged as NRM political allies, particularly as KKA’s external funding dwindled as donors grew disillusioned with their rampant corruption (Komujuni & Büscher, pp. 115–117; Nakayi, 2012, pp. 492–499). As with decentralization policies more broadly, NRM’s recognition of ‘traditional’ institutions has broadly served to augment central state control, as Tapscott (2021, pp. 38, 56–57) argues, by further fragmenting public authority, while co-opting its core elements.

To understand how the reinstatement of ‘traditional’ leaders has played into local, territorial conflicts, it is first necessary to examine Uganda’s 1990s land tenure reforms and how such reforms have impacted communal land practices in northern Uganda.

#### *4.1.2 Land tenure reform and elite accumulation*

The ambiguity of Uganda’s land tenure reforms has allowed Museveni’s government to champion the restoration of customary land rights, but also, at strategic moments, to avail land for state ‘development’ projects (Murphy et al, 2017), conservation (Norgrove & Hulme, 2006), investors and political elites (Kjær, 2017), and ‘non-indigenous’ political constituents—notably Indian traders expelled under Amin, and Rwandans who aided his ascent to power (Mamdani, 2001, pp. 178–182). This strategy has allowed the central state to alternately appease rural populations and utilise land to build elite patronage networks (Gibb, 2013, pp. 16, 146).

During the 1990s, the Ugandan Government introduced legal reforms that it claimed would rectify the historically marginal status of customary tenure but ensure land would be utilised to facilitate national development.<sup>19</sup> The new framework reflected neoliberal policies promoted by development agencies which favoured the gradual ‘evolution’ of land markets over state-led titling and the erasure of customary tenure (Toulmin & Quan, 2000; Peters,

---

<sup>19</sup> Uganda’s 2013 Land policy emphasises these goals, pp. iv–v, 6–7.

2012, pp. 5–6). Accordingly, the 1995 Ugandan Constitution (article 237) and the 1998 Land Act (3,1) recognised ‘customary’ land alongside three other forms of tenure; freehold, leasehold, and *mailo* land, a landlord-tenant system specific to Buganda.<sup>20</sup> These instruments overturned Amin’s 1975 ‘Public Land Decree’ by vesting un-registered land ‘in the people’ rather than the state and recognising the dual operation of customary and statutory land systems. In keeping with donor demands, the 1998 Land Act created pathways for the expansion of land markets through the certification of customary land and the conversion of customary and leasehold land into freehold. It also devolved responsibility for land registration and dispute resolution from the central state to various local Government institutions.<sup>21</sup> While the Act acknowledged the role of ‘customary’ leaders in mediating civil land disputes, how they would relate to local statutory institutions was left unclear (Leeuwen, 2014, p. 295).

These land tenure reforms allowed room for the central state to wield land as a political resource in four key ways. First, Uganda’s land reforms position customary land as an inferior, transitional form of tenure from which more ‘secure,’ titled forms could emerge to facilitate development (Nakayi, 2012, pp. 318–335; Mamdani, 2013, p. 7). This framing is evident in legal provisions for the conversion of customary land and the Government’s emphasis on availing land for investment, encapsulated in the Uganda Land Policy’s (2013, p. iv) vision for “optimal use and management of land resources for a prosperous and industrialised economy.” In practice, Uganda’s reforms have led to a slow rate of conversion of customary land due to the state’s failure to develop the necessary institutional apparatus (Leeuwen, 2015, p. 217; cf. Gibb, 2013, pp. 121–125) and the difficulties of converting customary holdings into legal titles, given their complex, negotiable, multifaceted character (Hopwood, 2022, pp. 57–59, 217–221).<sup>22</sup> The evolutionary thrust underpinning Uganda’s reforms has nevertheless enabled the central state to appease rural voters by restoring ‘customary’ land rights whilst fostering a political-legal environment which tends to favour the state, titleholders and elite investors over customary occupiers in instances of dispute.

---

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion on Uganda’s land reform process in relation to the politics of the Bugandan Kingdom see Gibb, 2013, pp. 16, 93–97; Boone, 2019, p. 392.

<sup>21</sup> Which have been reshuffled by multiple amendments, see Leonardi & Santschi, 2016, pp. 87–88.

<sup>22</sup> Since 2017, the state has backed sporadic donor experiments to issue customary land certificates. See Hopwood, 2022 pp. 181–183 for critique.

A second, related mechanism enabling the NRM regime to leverage land to build power lies in the ambiguities of Uganda's legislation (Okuku, 2006, pp. 13–14; Kjær, 2017). Critically, the Land Act (1998) allows the state to compulsorily acquire land 'in the public interest' and to allocate 'public' land to investors. The Act's definition of 'public interest,' classification of public land, and processes for state allocation of land, however, proved unclear and "incoherent," as observed in Uganda's Land Policy (2013, p. 4).<sup>23</sup> Although the 2013 policy attempted to clarify residual ambiguities—which in part, reflect the layered legacies of past laws—a decade later, hardly any proposed reforms have been implemented. As scholars argue (Gibb, 2013, p. 146; Kjær) it has served the NRM regime's political interests to allow 'grey areas' to remain: uncertainties, gaps and institutional overlaps have enabled the regime to wield land as a malleable political tool, allowing the central state to bestow patronage to elite clients by facilitating land access, or when necessary, pacify rural voters by flouting enforcement, rescinding land-investment deals (Child, 2009; Tangri & Mwenda, 2013), or in recent years, promote programs issuing customary land certificates (New Vision, 2022).

A specific grey area of Uganda's land system that has enabled the NRM regime to utilise land to build state patronage networks relates to leasehold titling processes. Under Uganda's 1990s legislation, District Land Boards (DLB) were granted powers to allocate leasehold titles to unowned, "public" land held "in trust for the Citizens of Uganda" (The Uganda National Land Policy, 2013, pp. 10, 13, 12–23), leaving customary land claimants in historically contested areas in a precarious position. Highlighting such precarity, for example, in 2012, a Gulu High Court Judge ruled that Amuru DLB legitimately allocated leasehold titles to thousands of acres to the Madhvani company on the grounds that the contested land was indeed 'public,' as it was once a controlled hunting area, then managed by Uganda's Land Commission (see Atkinson & Owor, 2013, pp. 51–53). Although the applicants did a poor job of substantiating their customary claims (Atkinson & Owor), the case illuminated the strong legal hand of Land Boards and their elite clients (Nakayi, 2013). While Uganda's 1990s land reforms technically reversed Amin's 1975 'Public land Decree,' DLB have continued to portion out titles on 'public' land to private elite interests just as Uganda's national Land Commission did before them.

---

<sup>23</sup> See the Uganda's Land Policy 2013 analysis (pp. 11–14, 17–18, 21).

A third way in which the NRM regime has increased the availability of land for elite investment is through land enclosure in the name of conservation. Propelled by intersecting global conservation and neoliberal agendas of the 1990s (Fairhead et al, 2012; Kelly, 2011), the Ugandan government advanced reforms that encouraged investors to commodify the protection of nature without foreclosing opportunities for resource exploitation (Cavanagh et al, 2018, pp. 3–6). Uganda’s land Act (1998, section 44) thus vested ‘trusteeship’ of protected areas in the State but also allowed the allocation of concessions and licenses to private investors for mineral exploration, tourism, hunting and forestry (The Uganda National Land Policy, 2013, pp. 4, 12). In tandem, the Government created a parastatal body, the ‘Uganda Wildlife Authority’ (UWA), passed new wildlife legislation and embarked on a decade-long, nationwide process to consolidate control over wildlife-protected areas, funded by an array of donors, including the European Union, the World Bank, and US-AID (Lamprey & Micheltore, 1996; UWA, 2000a). These processes resulted in new waves of forced displacements of rural populations from conservation areas neglected by previous regimes or granted heightened protected status (Cavanagh & Benjaminsen, 2015; Carmody & Taylor, 2016), while elite actors gained new opportunities to profit from eco-tourism and carbon offsetting ventures (Nel & Hill, 2013; Lyons & Westoby, 2014).

Finally, a fourth key dynamic that enabled state-backed elite land accumulation in northern Uganda was the policy of forced displacement during the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA)-Government war. From 1996 onwards, Museveni’s regime forced large swathes of the northern population into internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, leaving the countryside vacant. While state rhetoric justified the camps as necessary to protect civilians and deny LRA rebels access to food, recruits and abductees, the camps were poorly guarded, exposing northern populations both to LRA attacks and abuses by UPDF (Finnström, 2008; Dolan, 2005; Branch, 2011). As Branch argues (2011), the IDP camps appeared to play to Museveni’s intertwined interests in prolonging the northern war, corroding Acholi political organisation and availing the regime with ongoing external military aid. While populations struggled for survival in the IDP camps, rumours abounded of elite land-grabs in the depopulated countryside (Finnström, 2008, pp. 174–180), notably involving commercial farming projects proposed by the President’s brother, Gen. Salim Saleh and his company, ‘Divinity Union’ (Tindifa, 2007, pp. 30–32; Atkinson, 2008, p. 17; Dolan, 2005, pp. 195–196).

While Saleh's plans eventually evaporated amidst scrutiny by Acholi leaders, political elites did indeed lay claim to thousands of vacant acres during the northern war with tacit—sometimes explicit—state support. As early as 1995, political elites such as Gen. Oketta and Betty Bigombe acquired large leasehold titles in Amuru (Kilak County Office, 1995); demonstrating NRM support for such acquisitions, when Oketta stood accused of land-grabbing, Museveni declared his plot 'constitutionally' obtained (see Oketta, 2007a, p. 2). Museveni likewise defended the vast leasehold title acquired by the Madhvani Company—a key patron of his electoral campaign—for sugarcane production in Amuru (Serwajja, 2014, pp. 132, 243; Martiniello, 2015, pp. 661–662). Elite accumulation in Nwoya proved particularly rife: by 2008, over 60 leases covering around a quarter of Nwoya (then a county, now a district) were registered by eminent figures such as Gen. Otema Awany and the Acholi Paramount Chief, pushing out peasant customary land claimants (interviews, Nwoya, 2020). As the Paramount Chief's personal acquisition highlights, 'customary' leaders also benefited from Museveni's exchange of political loyalty for opportunities to accumulate land and broker deals with investors (also Nakayi, 2012, pp. 492–499).

#### *4.1.3 Customary land dynamics*

Diverging strands of the hegemonic land regime advanced by Museveni's government—from administrative fragmentation, the reinstatement of traditional authorities and customary tenure, and war-time displacement to the drive towards land markets and elite accumulation—converged to impact communal land practices in northern Uganda in two key ways. The first was to exacerbate competition over land within and amongst land-holding families; the second was to agitate ethnic and clan-based conflict over land allocation in historically depopulated frontier areas. As will be seen, both dynamics have shaped struggles over Apaa and the emergence of the peasant occupation movement.

Before examining these shifts, it is necessary to consider communal landholding practices in northern Uganda more broadly. Reflecting wider scholarly discussions (Chimhowu & Woodhouse, 2006; Cousins, 2007) over the past decade, scholars, donor agencies and NGOs in northern Uganda have debated how the rural poor can achieve secure land access; some advocates call for customary tenure to be strengthened through certification processes; others argue that 'customary' systems inherently discriminate against

women and other vulnerable individuals, and should be gradually replaced (cf. Mamdani, 2013, p. 6; Atkinson et al, 2018; Adoko & Levine, 2004, 2005; Rugadya, 2008; Uganda Land Alliance, 2010). Such debates, however, curtail understanding of how communal land functions in practice; on both sides, ‘customary’ tenure is cast as a cohesive system in which patrilineal authorities govern by unchanging traditions—a system eroded by war but basically intact.

Recent research, however, paints a more nuanced picture (Hopwood, 2015, 2022; Meinert et al, 2017; Obika, 2022). As explored in chapter three, colonial officials never codified ‘customary’ land rules nor systematically granted chiefs powers to allocate land or extract rent. Accordingly, northern Uganda is devoid of state-backed ‘customary’ authorities that exercise sweeping power over land as in contexts such as Ghana. Rather, as Peters (1997) observes in the case of Malawi, ‘customary’ land amongst Acholi can be understood as ‘family property:’ amongst Acholi, ‘customary tenure’—conceived as *ngom kwaro* (the land of one’s grandfather)—is predominantly held and organised by families, usually extended families (*dogola*), which sometimes involve their wider *kaka* (sub-clan or clan groupings) in key decisions, such as to sell land (Hopwood, 2022, pp. 50–55, 218). In some cases, old hunting or grazing grounds remain managed by wider *kaka*, although this is becoming less common as demand for land rises. Within a *dogola*, authority over *ngom kwaro* is often primarily exercised by its senior male members, although such authority is only respected if elders act in the interests of the group (Hopwood, 2022, p. 207) and is increasingly contested by younger generations (Whyte & Acio, 2017; Kobusingye, 2020). In short, *ngom kwaro* is not allocated by chiefs or governed according to fixed ‘customs’ but managed by families in ways that reflect evolving cultural norms but also vary widely.

As in most African contexts (Berry, 1993; Lentz, 2007), an individual’s access to *ngom kwaro* derives from their social relationships, particularly their membership within a *dogola* (Hopwood, 2022, pp. 50–59). As such, as Hopwood argues (2015, pp. 389) people cannot be said to have ‘rights’ to *ngom kwaro* bestowed by public authorities; rather, people exert *claims* to access land or in some cases, *appeals* evoking social obligation. Patrilineal inheritance remains prominent yet constitutes just one form of claim: a man estranged from his father’s family, for example, might claim land with his maternal uncles; divorced women often reclaim land at their paternal home; the descendants of non-kin ‘guests’ gifted land by a family typically continue to claim land they have cultivated (Hopwood, 2022, pp. 163–168;

Obika, 2022, pp. 140–143; Leonardi & Santschi, 2016, pp. 109–113). As Hopwood (2022, pp. 201, 220, 213) demonstrates, whether claims are accommodated usually depends on how much land a *dogola* holds and the claimant's presence and popularity as much as lineage. As so often observed, customary land dynamics are relational, fluid, and negotiable.

Negotiations over customary land, however, are unfolding amidst new pressures shaped not only by demographic but also political change. Compounding rapid population growth, rising commercial demand for land and patterns of elite-land expropriation facilitated by Museveni's land politics have contributed to mounting competition over land. Increasingly, land is no longer perceived as relatively plentiful but as a scarce resource with rising monetary value (Branch, 2007, p. 34; Hopwood, 2022, p. 244). Against this backdrop, many families and kin networks have begun to tighten the boundaries of belonging along patrilineal lines (Leonardi & Santschi, 2016, pp. 123–134), spurred on by the rise of patriarchal interpretations of 'custom.' In the aftermath of the LRA war, Branch (2007, p. 35) wrote of widespread "expulsions...in the name of '*ngom kwaro*,'" obstructing those with ruptured familial ties from returning to land they previously inhabited. Scholars have continued to observe new dynamics of exclusion; of step-children, orphans and maternal nephews debarred from inheriting fields, widows evicted by in-laws, and 'guests' gifted land by an earlier generation who find their claim disputed (Whyte et al, 2012; Hopwood & Atkinson 2013, p. 53; Hopwood, 2022, p. 57; Obika et al, 2018). Some cases of exclusion reflect growing land scarcity; others interest in the rising commercial value of land and the opportunity to profit from the sale of communal land. Although such patterns are less evident among groups that still control substantial holdings (Hopwood, 2022, pp. 18, 240–245), overcrowding and landlessness are becoming increasingly common.

Another effect of Uganda's 1990s reforms is that negotiations over *ngom kwaro* are taking place in the context of heightened institutional pluralism. In instances of dispute, contestants turn to a variety of public authorities beyond family or lineage elders to advance their claims, from locally-elected *rwoddi kweri* ('chiefs of the hoe') and LC courts (I-III) to church leaders, *rwoddi moo* and NGOs, to the High Court. At the village and parish level, local authorities tend to mediate rather than arbitrate disputes, often enabling competing claimants to reach mutually acceptable compromises (Hopwood, 2015, pp. 408–409;



Kapidžić, 2018).<sup>24</sup> In some cases, marginalised individuals successfully navigate this plethora of public authorities to defend their claims and retain access (Kapidžić, p. 398; Obika, 2022, pp. 140–144). As Berry (1993, 2002) famously argued, the negotiable quality of land tenure can mitigate exclusion.

Wealthier, more influential contestants, however, are often able to leverage the multitude of available land forums to their advantage (Leonardi & Santschi, 2016, p. 123; cf. Hopwood, 2015, p. 407). LC mediation processes, for example, have sometimes been known to favour those able to pay remuneration or bolster their political standing (Leeuwen, 2015, p. 222). Increasingly, those contesting customary land claims (whether within or between *dogola*, or between *kaka*) have turned to litigation in Magistrate or High Courts. As MacDonald et al (2022, pp. 523–526) reveal, it is not uncommon for disputants to bribe authorities to have adversaries arrested on trumped-up criminal charges to create leverage in civil land suits. While it is not exclusively the wealthy who engage in such tactics (MacDonald et al, p. 525), lawyer fees, travel expenses and bribery rates can be prohibitive to those with fewer means and often disproportionately benefit the powerful. Unless the victor can finance private security, court rulings are usually not enforced and thus do little to resolve disputes ‘on the ground’ (Hopwood, 2022, p. 159), which often drag on, draining the resources of poorer disputants. Although those excluded from land continue to leverage different public authorities to renegotiate access or alternatively, struggle to rent or purchase rural plots or seek informal urban work, such strategies are not available to all and sometimes fail. As will be explored in chapter seven, growing landlessness and competition over land were key factors that propelled Amuru peasants to launch the Apaa occupation movement in the wake of the northern war.

A second way that the hegemonic land regime advanced by Museveni’s government has impacted communal land dynamics in northern Uganda is to fuel ethnically-charged conflicts over land in frontier areas. Mirroring contradictions that emerged in the late colonial era, Ugandan state discourses often defy political reality. Not infrequently, Museveni and state officials reiterate that ‘Ugandans may settle anywhere,’ whether via purchase, leasehold

---

<sup>24</sup> Despite state edicts removing LCI and II courts’ authority to hear land disputes (Leeuwen, 2015, pp. 221–222).

or even inhabiting vacant land (Mulumba, 2002; Tumwesige, 2019).<sup>25</sup> This nationalistic articulation of property, however, runs against the grain of Uganda's divisive decentralisation reforms. Reflecting the marked, residual ethnic character of administrative units, nationalist principles are often disregarded as local authorities privilege their own ethnic constituents, a dynamic which can deepen territorial contests over jurisdiction and spark conflict *between* rival customary claimants and with 'non-indigenous' settlers (Sjögren, 2015; Kandel, 2017). Despite official state rhetoric, administrative territory has repercussions for land access.

This dynamic has been compounded by the constructions of customary tenure advanced by northern Uganda's reinstated 'traditional' leaders. Drawing on reified notions of 'tradition,' cultural institutions such as KKA have portrayed customary land as a uniform system managed by chiefs and clans (Hopwood, 2021, p. 13). According to KKA's (2008, 2016) legally drafted documentation for instance, Acholi customary land "is vested in and owned by the clan" (p. 4), which "governs communal land" in its area (p. 5). While KKA positions itself (as an alliance of chiefs) as final mediators (p. 6), little recognition is given to the locally-selected, non-lineage-based '*rwoddi kweri*' who in practice, play key roles in resolving land disputes. Although such hierarchical portrayals have had limited influence on communal land practices, they have augmented the authority of clan heads and chiefs, enabled them to tap NGO funds to mediate land conflicts (Komujuni & Büscher, 2020, p. 113) and to engage in donor-funded projects to pilot customary land 'certification' processes (Atkinson et al, 2019 cf. Leeuwen et al, 2023). Perhaps most significantly, such discourses have exacerbated the ethno-territorial logics reignited by Uganda's decentralization reforms.

In 'frontier' zones of northern Uganda, these dynamics dovetailed to kindle ethnic-based conflict over settlement opportunities. As examined below, as the LRA conflict subsided and populations dispersed from IDP camps, interest in unclaimed land in historically depopulated frontier zones such as the eastern Nile bank exploded, inflamed by fears of elite land-grabbing and competition for arable land (Serwajja, 2014; Sjögren, 2015, p. 274). Against this backdrop, particularly between 2006 and 2010, chiefs in Amuru attempted to control settlement in areas such as Mulila, Lakang, Te Olam and Apaa by coordinating clan heads to portion out tracts in areas presented as chiefly domains. Madi chiefs also attempted to play a role in the resettlement of formerly depopulated areas in

---

<sup>25</sup> Reflecting the Constitution's declaration that land "belongs to the citizens of Uganda" (1995, Chapter 15, article 237(1)).

southern Adjumani, likewise fuelling the conflation of administrative boundaries, clan identity, and property rights. As will be seen in the case of Apaa, such dynamics have profoundly shaped peasant political action and also availed the central state with tools to repress resistance.

In sum, rather than advancing a coherent, monolithic land regime entrenching ‘statist’ control over particular areas or instituting indirect, ‘customary’ authority over land, Museveni’s government has entrenched dynamics of legal pluralism and fostered ambiguity, allowing various public authorities—from district land boards, politicians and local councillors, to clan heads and chiefs—to compete to exercise control over administrative territory and property while vying for central state recognition.

## **4.2 State and elite interests in Apaa land**

The case of Apaa exemplifies how Museveni’s government accommodates and balances multiple, contradictory hegemonic land processes advanced by different state institutions and rival political elites. Since 2006, as the Ugandan Wildlife Authority (UWA) championed state-backed attempts to enclose parts of Apaa as a wildlife reserve, NRM-connected elites also sought to exploit Apaa’s forest resources and accumulate private land holdings. At the same time, Museveni’s politicised decentralisation reforms of the 1990s reignited two ethno-territorial conflicts over Apaa—one between Acholi sub-counties and clans, the other between district administrations and Madi/Acholi tribes—which rival politicians and ‘customary’ authorities have exploited to build political authority, win votes and extend territorial control. As unpacked below, Museveni’s regime has navigated inter-elite competition over Apaa in such a way as to reinforce the overarching power of the central state and advance its shifting interests in expropriating Apaa land, fragmenting resistance, appeasing rural populations and balancing rival political factions. As will be seen in later chapters, the form of peasant resistance to state-driven enclosure of Apaa land reflects the structuring effects of multiple diverging hegemonic processes within a single sub-national area, rather than a distinctly ‘statist’ or ‘customary’ land regime (cf. Boone, 2014).

### *4.2.1 State-driven land expropriation for conservation*

The NRM government’s earliest attempts to expropriate Apaa land were led by the UWA as part of its wider process to consolidate Uganda’s protected area estate. Efforts to

enclose Apaa were justified by hegemonic narratives that dismissed the area's contested colonial history and the contemporary context of displacement, and advanced through violence. Although the state secured Apaa's legal status as a wildlife reserve and granted a concession to an investor to develop a hunting tourism venture, it has so far failed to gain territorial control over the area.

The re-gazettement of Apaa land exemplified the tendency (Neumann, 1998, pp. 154–155) for states and foreign partners to justify new enclosures by “erasing” the contentious pasts of conservation areas. In the case of Apaa, three key dynamics were overlooked or underplayed. First, documents from 1996–2008 that justified the creation of a Wildlife Reserve from the former East Madi ‘Controlled Hunting Area’ (CHA) ignored the violent colonial origins of conservation along the Nile banks explored in chapter three. Far from grappling with forced displacement and local struggles for resettlement, reports focused on the area's former importance as a colonial elephant sanctuary (Plumtre et al, 2008, p. 3) and the role of the CHA in facilitating “successful sports-hunting enterprises” (Lamprey et al, 2003, pp. 59–60, 88–91; Nampindo et al, 2005, pp. 27, 65–66). Such accounts portrayed Apaa as an undisputed yet fragile protected area in need of restoration after decades of neglect, opportunistic local hunting, and systematic armed poaching under Amin's regime.

A second factor the UWA minimised was that at the same time plans were drawn to enclose Apaa, northern Ugandan populations were displaced in IDP camps. While the UWA's technical planners acknowledged the context of displacement, they still leveraged the situation to justify gazetting 831 square km of land as the East Madi Wildlife Reserve (EMWR) and a “wildlife corridor” from part of the former Kilak CHA.<sup>26</sup> Reports from 1998 portrayed land in the proposed EMWR as uninhabited and described how Gulu District officials were flown over Kilak to view “large tracts of unoccupied lands” (UWA, 1998, p. 2). In Gulu District, the UWA's proposals fell flat: Acholi (and Jonam) leaders rejected the Kilak corridor proposal, insisting such land would be needed for post-war resettlement (UWA, 2000b, pp. 80–82, p. 161; Absolom, 1999). When Adjumani District leaders agreed to create the EMWR in 1998, however, the UWA pushed ahead, overlooking former Acholi settlements and Madi fishing villages in Apaa displaced by war. While UWA's technocrats may have been ignorant of Apaa's displaced inhabitants, a decade later the UWA refused to

---

<sup>26</sup> The proposed corridor linked Murchison National Park to the EMWR. See UWA, 2000a vol. 4, B.5-6

recognise their oversight (Minutes, 2007, p. 2). In 2008, conservation reports (Wildlife Conservation Society, 2008, p. 9; Plumtre et al, 2008, pp. 17–18) portrayed ‘human activity’ in Apaa as ‘limited’ and described re-emerging settlements as a poacher’s camp, even though the ‘camp’ they referred to was an informal IDP dispersal base with UPDF protection. Acholi groups returning to resettle their former lands in Apaa were cast as encroachers.

This omission reflected a third underlying problem with the UWA’s process: inadequate consultation. Reflecting a common disjuncture between global ‘participatory’ conservation discourses and practice (Corson, 2011, p. 715; Gingembre, 2015, p. 562), part of the problem stemmed from the limited nature of the UWA’s 1998 ‘community consultations.’ Although several Madi ‘elders’ were invited (UWA, 2000b, p. 69), they were far outnumbered by district officials and did not include key groups with ancestral ties to Apaa, such as Oyuwi. A larger problem related to the UWA’s colonially-tinted assumption that communal land claims align with administrative territory. As the UWA structured ‘participatory’ processes around a single district (Adjumani), Acholi farmers who inhabited southern portions of Apaa in the 1970s – 1990s were excluded entirely. The UWA, accordingly, were only directly confronted by Acholi claims to Apaa land in the wake of the war in 2007, by which stage processes to legally establish the EMWR were already underway (Parliament of Uganda, 2002), and despite the eruption of contention, completed in 2011 (Statutory Instrument, 2011).

The legal ‘fact’ of East Madi Wildlife Reserve—divorced from such problematic origins—emerged as a cornerstone of state attempts to enclose land in Apaa. In court affidavits, reports and media releases, the UWA, Adjumani politicians and the central State have portrayed the wildlife reserve as a technical, historical reality (e.g., Committee on Physical Infrastructure 2013). State narratives also emphasize that district boundaries place EMWR in Adjumani, validating Adjumani District’s authority to approve gazettelement and to grant a concession to a South African hunting tourism operator in 2009 (Management Agreement, 2009; Serwajja, 2014). Defending state evictions, then-third Deputy Prime Minister Gen. Moses Ali (2012) detailed the legislative history of the reserve in a full-page opinion article. Museveni’s discourse has also leaned on legal precedents but shifted, as explored below, according to political context. Amidst rising Acholi dissent over Apaa, for instance, in 2018, the President (Statehouse, 2018) proposed three ‘options:’ de-gazettelement,

compensation or resettlement. In state rhetoric, legal-historical conservation discourses provide an anchor, alternatingly evoked to tie state hands or hint at the state's extraordinary power to overturn the past.

Reflecting global patterns of militarized conservation (Massé & Lunstrum, 2016; Ojeda & Bocarejo, 2016), state-driven processes to enclose Apaa have also drawn upon violent attempts to change 'realities on the ground.' This has involved repeated state attempts to physically demarcate the EMWR's boundaries and large-scale, multi-month forced eviction operations aiming to depopulate Apaa, executed by the UWA, police, the UPDF and the NFA in 2011, 2012, and 2018 (Serwajja, 2014; Kobusingye et al, 2017). As will be explored in chapter five, despite inflicting vast destruction of homes, crops and property, devastating impact on education and health, injuries and occasional deaths, such operations have yet to displace Apaa's expanding population, whose resistance has rendered evictions politically costly. As such operations have repeatedly failed to secure state territorial control, Museveni's regime, as explored below, has increasingly pursued divisive strategies to fragment the Apaa movement, reflecting how states and elite actors constantly adapt in response to resistance as they advance hegemonic processes.

#### *4.2.2 Elite accumulation and state patronage*

The sporadic character of UWA evictions also reflects the extent to which central state interests in Apaa have never rested solely upon investment in wildlife tourism but on resource exploitation and political patronage opportunities more broadly. The state's initial focus on enclosing Apaa land as a wildlife reserve for hunting tourism has been diverted not only by peasant resistance but by elite investment interests and the competing attempts of NRM elites to exploit forest products and accumulate land.

While rumours of oil deposits remain rife, central state commercial interests in Apaa's resources surfaced most clearly in late 2016 when the Minister for Lands (Kasozi, 2016) announced that Zoka forest (which overlaps with the EMWR) would be "acquired" by a sugarcane investor to boost national production.<sup>27</sup> This scheme emerged after the Lake Albert Safari's Limited company publicly withdrew from its 2009 tripartite agreement with the

---

<sup>27</sup> Museveni's regime has degazetted several forest reserves for sugar cane investments, (Tumushabe & Bainomugisha, 2004) and exploited protected areas for oil (Dowhaniuk et al, 2018; Byakagaba et al, 2018).

UWA and Adjumani District to manage EMWR as a sports hunting park in 2015 (Otto, 2015a). While the sugarcane venture was discarded amidst internal ministerial wrangles and pressure from Adjumani environmental groups (Rwakakamba, 2016; Adjumani activist, 2019 October), the proposal underscored how state interests in Apaa land shift over time, but often focus on availing resources for elite investment.

Perhaps the key interest counteracting the state's focus on enclosing Apaa land for conservation, however, is NRM-connected elites' illicit trade in hardwood and charcoal. As Branch and Martiniello (2018, pp. 247–249) expound, militarized, “state-led extractivism” of forest products in northern Uganda began during the war and then proliferated as peace returned. During my fieldwork, I encountered several men in Pabo who worked as guards for NRM's Gen. Oketta's war-time logging operations in Apaa. Gen. Salim Saleh also reputedly extracted hardwoods as he constructed a ‘security road’ through Apaa under his Pabo-based Sobertra Company (Finnström, 2008, p. 175).<sup>28</sup> As conflict subsided after 2006, at least two larger competing elite cartels conducted logging operations in Zoka forest and remote parts of the EMWR (Adjumani journalist, 2019 November). In 2016, as the state faced pressure to address deforestation, a ‘ministerial investigation’ implicated a small band of Adjumani District officials but covered up, local activists emphasize, blatant illicit logging by military, police, and state-house connected elite (Marko, 2016; Goli, 2016a, 2016b).

Between 2018 and 2021, the complicity of state military in the illicit charcoal trade was difficult to miss. While the UWA and NFA routinely destroyed or confiscated charcoal produced by households for small-scale local traders, industrial-scale charcoal production overseen by Kampala elites operated undisturbed. Reflecting the military's complicity, the distinctive production camps that have burgeoned in Apaa—featuring tarpaulin tents, lorries, piled charcoal sacks and labourers from central and south-western Uganda—were positioned near UPDF bases in Junction and Juka centres. While Acholi peasants are frequently blamed for deforestation, most tree-felling in Apaa is controlled by a circle of elites, whose access appears to be facilitated by the state. Accordingly, while the state has so far failed to secure territorial control over Apaa, the contested, liminal status of the area has nevertheless enabled illicit, elite-driven resource extraction, bolstering state patronage networks.

---

<sup>28</sup> Such logging operations were also scrutinised by Gulu District Council, 1998, p. 15.

Beyond the forest product trade, NRM-connected elites have also sought to accumulate land in Apaa, adding further layers to the struggle over Apaa between rival public authorities. NRM military elites' interests in Apaa's agricultural potential for their personal enrichment can be traced back at least as far as 1999. During the war, military elites including the Commander of the Reserve Forces and Gen. Oketta launched 'the Kilak Foundation for Rural Development;' members also included local NRM politicians (Dolan, 2005, p. 196). The group aimed, as one local observer expressed:

to resettle people to Apar which is 30 kilometres away from Pabo camp to the west.

The group of 35 vigilantes...agreed to take off for Apar on Monday 24/5/99. The purpose is to resettle displaced persons ...and to increase production. The UPDF gave them guns for their movement (Pabo, 1999 May 17, in Dolan, p. 196).

While the initiative fell apart as it became perceived as "a scheme to eat Government money," as Dolans' (p. 196) informant in Pabo expressed in 2002, the idea was not dropped entirely. As will be explored in chapter five, as peasant groups launched the post-war occupation of Apaa, their movement was initially entangled in NRM elite interests. As Gen. Oketta aided peasant's efforts to resettle Apaa in 2006, he claimed vast tracts just beyond the reserve to pursue commercial beekeeping and agriculture, projects he defended in a letter to Museveni (Oketta, 2007a, p. 4) as "cooperative society arrangements" to benefit local communities. Several other NRM-connected elites—most notably Christopher Ojera, then Sub-County Chairman of Pabo—also claimed land in Apaa in 2006, strategically selecting areas that lay just outside EMWR boundaries.

While these acquisitions followed established patterns of elite land accumulation enabled by Museveni's regime, tensions emerged with Adjumani politicians and the UWA. Initially, Gen. Oketta leveraged his military authority to undermine UWA's attempts to extend territorial control over the Wildlife Reserve. Most dramatically, in February 2007 Gen. Oketta orchestrated the detainment of UWA rangers in a military detachment in Amuru for 5 days, exposing divides between UPDF segments under his control and the 85<sup>th</sup> Battalion assigned to support the UWA (former warden, Gulu, 2020 December). As conflict erupted over the district boundary however, Gen. Oketta's influence faded: after Ofua Sub-County officials (2007) in Adjumani petitioned Museveni to evict Gen. Oketta and threatened legal action (KGN Advocates, 2007, p. 2) against him for "forcefully grabbing" land, Oketta relinquished his holding in Apaa, likely under pressure from state house (former Ofua



politician, 2020 February). A handful of Acholi NRM-aligned elites, however, retained farms in Juka (just outside of the reserve) for many years.

Incongruities between the NRM's culture of elite land entitlement and UWA-led efforts to enclose the wildlife reserve also surfaced in gazetted areas of Apaa. After the northern war, a handful of wealthy Acholi with government ties staked out thousands of acres to establish commercial farms in southern areas *within* the wildlife reserve such as Ayobi and Coro. These elite interests within the wildlife zone presented yet another political factor to be weighed up by Museveni's regime; since 2012, such commercial farms have been left undisturbed by UWA eviction operations, suggesting the possibility of tacit state protection.

Adding further complexity, Adjumani's political elite have also claimed land in Apaa. Since 2017, as explored below, multiple Adjumani-based groups emerged to challenge the 'Acholi' occupation of Apaa. Although such groups comprise diverse elements, land seizures of Acholi homesteads in Zoka (an area *outside* the reserve known as 'Juka' to Acholi), Ngoro, Gorobi and Kalacut have so far largely benefitted NRM-connected elites. As an Oyuwi elder emphasized (2019 November), "that land [Apaa] belongs to Madi, the Pajao, Oyuwi and Ali, yet our politicians want to use their money from parliament to start large farms." As displaced Acholi describe, many plots seized in Juka/Zoka between 2017-2020 became occupied by hired agents on behalf of Adjumani businessmen and politicians. These seizures forged new rifts between Amuru and Adjumani NRM elites as Christopher Ojera and other wealthy Acholi lost their farms. In late 2018, Ojera instigated a court case (Application, 2018) on behalf of displaced Acholi in Juka/Zoka against 36 individuals from Adjumani District, including the first deputy Prime Minister, Gen. Moses Ali, the Chief of Adropi, and former MP Mark Dulu, accusing them of land grabbing and "cutting down plantations, burning grass huts." Such conflicting elite claims to farmland have since lingered unresolved, complicating dynamics, as explored below, between Acholi occupiers of Apaa and Madi peasant land claimants.

The Apaa case highlights that the hegemonic land regime advanced by Museveni's government accommodates multiple, conflicting agendas pursued by different military leaders, political elites and state institutions, all of which can impinge on peasant farmers'

attempts to secure land access. Beyond attempts to control natural resources and accumulate land, elite actors have sought to leverage Apaa land to build political power.

#### *4.2.3 Conflict over boundaries, votes, and territory*

The colonial territorial identity politics reproduced through Museveni's land regime contributed to the (re)emergence of two boundary conflicts over Apaa, entangling disputes over administrative jurisdiction, ethnic belonging, and property: the first features an inter sub-county, inter-clan dispute, while the second centres on the Amuru-Adjumani District border, pitting Acholi occupiers of Apaa against Madi land claimants. In both disputes, elite political actors have advanced their interests in building electoral support and controlling administrative territory and state resources.

The first border dispute over Apaa that emerged amidst the NRM regime's decentralization processes pit Pabo Sub-County and Pabo clans against Amuru Sub-County and clans of Lamogi, along with closely aligned clans of Parabongo, Pagak and Toro. Territorial tensions first arose in 1990, when Amuru leaders lobbied Gulu District to create a parish named 'Apaa' under their division, challenging Pabo's de facto jurisdiction (Amuru Division, 1990). Reflecting the institutional embeddedness of ethno-territorial logics, Amuru leaders justified their demand by evoking ancestral domains: Lamogi clans, they claimed, had always exercised spiritual guardianship of lands west of Kilak hill (Jago Amuru Division, 1990). After the war, the dispute resurfaced as struggles over settlement opportunities along the Nile banks became enmeshed in conflicts over new administrative territories (cf. Sjögren, 2015, pp. 274–275). In 2005, as officials laid plans to carve Amuru District out of Gulu and determine its sub-units, Pabo and Amuru Sub-Counties' politicians both insisted that the proposed 'Apaa Sub-County' fell within their own administrations (Odur, 2005). When the idea of Apaa Sub-County was dropped, they continued to contest the Pabo-Amuru border, each claiming areas between Wi-ceri and Lakang, including parts of Apaa.

Local public authorities played distinct roles in animating popular participation in the conflict. From 2006 - 2010, clan-based vigilante groups perpetrated cycles of raids on one another's new settlements in disputed areas, uprooting crops, burning huts, and engaging in occasional skirmishes (Lubangakene, 2008; Ocuwun, 2007). The conflict—which largely took place in Lakang, but also concerned Apaa—was spurred on by local politicians and

‘traditional’ leaders. Numerous men that participated recall the Pabo Sub-County Chairman, Ojera Christopher quietly goading them to “defend Pabo land” and oust Lamogi encroachers. Publicly, Ojera joined Pabo grassroot leaders in rejecting Gulu District’s pronouncement (2005) that disputed areas lay in Amuru Sub-County, claiming that surveyors erroneously altered the boundary “made by the British way back in 1902” (Ojera et al, 2006). During this period, arrests disproportionately targeted Lamogi youth, likely reflecting the influence of a high-ranking police commander who identified as Pabo, as well as Gen. Julius Oketta. Those present recalled that the presence of Oketta’s soldiers deterred ‘Lamogi’ incursions upon the Pabo-dominated ‘satellite’ camp in Apaa.

The role of *rwoddi moo* in the conflict can be illustrated by a meeting instigated by the Rwot Lamogi, held in November 2006 just days after a Pabo group relocated to Apaa.<sup>29</sup> In his opening statement, the Rwot Lamogi declared that “each clan of Kilak has its own area” while his secretary urged the “Rwoddi of Lamogi” to lead their people to reclaim Apaa from Pabo (Minutes, 2006 [author’s translation]). At one point, a Lamogi elder complained that ‘Pabo’ wants to turn Apaa into a sub-county, “like it is Pabo land;” at another, a man interjected that the ‘children of Lamogi’ also know how to be soldiers. Although some *rwoddi* appealed for non-violence, the tone of the meeting inflamed inter-clan tensions while elevating chiefly authority over land (Pabo elder, 2019 December). While *rwoddi* never allocated land in Apaa itself, and the authority they asserted over land in the region after the war proved temporary, their rhetoric reinvigorated a territorialized politics of ethnic difference.

A decade on, conflict over the Amuru-Pabo boundary simmers on quietly. As will be explored in chapter six, acute inter-clan violence over land access ceased in 2011 as Apaa’s peasant occupiers strategically opted to widen the ‘boundaries of belonging,’ recasting the relationship between territory and identity. The administrative border dispute, however, remains unresolved; contested areas sporadically miss out on sub-county services, and constitute a battleground for tax collection and voter registration. Between 2019 and 2021, I observed Pabo officials regularly erect revenue checkpoints to levy fees on logs and charcoal trucks in areas also claimed by Amuru.

---

<sup>29</sup> The Rwot Lamogi in this case was Otinga Atuka Olo yai Olwonga, rather than his rival, Olango Paul Loka

The sub-county boundary dispute, however, became overshadowed by a larger, tribally-charged conflict over the district border, which political elites from Amuru and Adjumani Districts have leveraged to gain voters and advance their political prestige and authority over administrative territory. As previously explored, the roots of the conflict can be traced to the colonial era, from the role of tribal administration in the emergence of Acholi-Madi identities and the rise of ethno-territorial logic, to the undetected relocation of the Madi-Acholi border. In the early decades after independence, the question of the southern district boundary lay dormant as Apaa remained an uninhabited wilderness within the East Madi CHA, with the exception of scattered southern Acholi settlements. After the LRA war subsided, however, conflict over the boundary erupted as the UWA—backed by Adjumani authorities—attempted to establish the wildlife reserve at the same moment Acholi (Pabo) settlers from Amuru entered Apaa. Adjumani District actors maintain that the boundary inherited at independence lies along Coro River, placing Apaa in Adjumani and ‘Madi territory,’ while Acholi politicians and Amuru clans argue the ‘true’ district boundary follows the Juka (Zoka) river.

The district boundary, infused with tribal claims of belonging, emerged as a key regional electoral issue. In Amuru, as will be explored in chapter five, a symbiotic relationship developed between peasant communities driving the Apaa occupation and Acholi politicians who championed their cause. To build electoral support, Acholi opposition politicians rallied to oppose the wildlife reserve and defend ‘Acholi’ rights to settle Apaa alongside Amuru’s jurisdictional claims. In parliament and media addresses, Acholi MPs derided Adjumani’s authority over Apaa by claiming that district maps are forged and demanding trips to London to view the ‘original’ colonial boundaries. In one meeting I attended in Apaa, Amuru’s District Chairperson evoked the biblical narrative in which King Solomon discerns the true mother of a baby claimed by two women, arguing that Adjumani’s abuse of Apaa’s Acholi residents reveals that Apaa is Amuru’s ‘baby.’ Amuru politicians often rouse crowds by crying ‘Apaa!’ eliciting the response in Acholi, ‘*Ngom wa!*’ (*Our land!*), affirming a sense of exclusive ethnic territoriality. Particular Amuru politicians have fuelled mistrust and violence, inciting Acholi occupiers to organize ‘defence groups’ to ward off Madi intruders.

In Adjumani District, politicians’ engagement in the border dispute has alternated between advocating for the wildlife reserve and promoting Madi land access. During the

early phases of the conflict, Adjumani MPs and district leaders argued that developing the East Madi Wildlife Reserve would advance local infrastructure, create tourism jobs and generate revenues from hunting fees. Over a decade later, although many Adjumani residents I met still accepted the idea of the reserve—or at least paid lip service to it—they have also grown to resent the Acholi occupation of Apaa not only because it prohibits tourism investment possibilities but also Madi settlement. One peasant farmer of the Kiraba clan of Oyuwi expressed;

It is one thing for the Government to say [Apaa] land must be kept for animals... But why have they allowed Acholi to rush there after the war and settle in the reserve while we, whose grandfathers once lived there, now find ourselves blocked?... We are now many, fertile land is lacking (Ayiri, 2020 December).

As frustration mounted, Adjumani politicians pledged to ‘win’ the district boundary dispute, oust Apaa’s Acholi occupants and redistribute land lying outside of the reserve. Leading up to the 2016 and 2021 elections, for instance, the Adjumani (NRM) MP Hon. Gen. Moses Ali promised to reclaim Apaa for his people, foremost implying Madi constituents, but also West Nilers, reinforcing his image as a political champion of the region. Reflecting the structuring effects and incentives reproduced by decentralization processes, the rhetoric of political leaders has reproduced colonial logics interweaving property claims, jurisdiction and identity.

Such electoral contests have translated into mounting conflict over access to Apaa land along tribal lines. As Amuru politicians reinforced exclusive Acholi claims to land, particular Adjumani MPs, and district and sub-county politicians backed popular associations that aimed to redistribute land in Apaa to Madi and West Nile affiliated groups. While scattered skirmishes began as early as 2012 (Lenhart, 2013, pp. 69, 75), it was not until 2017 that large-scale Madi land reclamation movements emerged, emboldened by the state’s demarcation affirming Adjumani’s jurisdiction over Apaa. Increasingly, groups of Madi and Lugbara have sporadically intruded into adjoining Apaa villages and intimidated occupiers, uprooted gardens, looted, burned huts and on occasion abducted, attacked or displaced Apaa’s occupiers, triggering violent Acholi reprisals.

Such intrusions have been executed by loosely connected, transient ‘associations’ with varied agendas, ties to political elites, and geographical orientations. Reflecting the fragmented character of local public authority, such associations operate in what Lund (2006) describes as the ‘twilight’ space between state and society, alternately tolerated, supported

or censured by different actors and branches of Adjumani's local Government. The group known as the 'Madi Community,' which executed the elite-dominated land seizures between 2017 and 2019 was fronted by an elected 'Chairman,' but by most accounts quietly sponsored by Gen. Moses Ali and particular local politicians. The association's ambiguous status is evident in its petition (Adibaku, 2019) to Adjumani's District Chairman, which assumed local Government recognition of the group's endeavour but also bemoaned the district's limited institutional support. Among 14 points, the petition queried why "the Ma'di community in Zoka are not feeling the administrative influence of the local council system," whether district security was monitoring "[Acholi] people claiming to be 'indigenous,'" and demanded action against "trespassing" Acholi MPs. Although the association disintegrated in 2019 as state military intervened, another prominent network emerged following the 2021 elections, allegedly backed by particular politicians, notably in Pakelle, Itirikwa and Ujusijoni Sub Counties. Participants escorted by hired mercenaries launched a series of violent incursions into Apaa from late 2021 into 2023, gradually seizing land from several hundred Acholi families in Apaa's Gorobi and Kalacut Villages just outside the wildlife reserve. Informants in both Adjumani and Amuru report that many seized plots have been quietly sold to domestic private investors.

Several less connected associations also emerged which comprised higher proportions of land-poor Madi farmers. One such group based in Pakelle Sub-County led incursions into eastern areas of Apaa outside the reserve between 2018 and 2020, in which several hundred participants, escorted by vigilantes armed with bows and arrows, allotted (but did not seize) plots of land by inscribing members' initials on trees. A pastor I encountered (2019 November) described the sermons he preached to embolden the groups before they set out which compared them to the Israelites reclaiming their promised lands, driving out their enemies by God's hand. In 2020, another group supported by Ukusijoni Sub-County politicians launched similar incursions into areas *within* gazetted areas, reflecting the association's distinct emphasis on the Oyuwi clan's historical ties to Apaa.<sup>30</sup> Although such associations failed to seize land in Apaa as they were suppressed by state military interventions from 2019, many of their members appear to have been reabsorbed into the elite-backed networks that re-emerged from 2021.

---

<sup>30</sup> The group petitioned the Prime Minister's office to degazette "Oyuwi ancestral lands" for resettlement (Ukusijoni Sub-County politician, 2020 December).

#### *4.2.4 Ethno-territorial disputes and central state power*

Rather than diminishing central state authority, the fragmented administrative landscape and divisive ethno-territorial dynamics reignited by Uganda's decentralisation processes have afforded Museveni's regime multiple avenues to consolidate power. In the case of Apaa, Museveni's regime has leveraged both boundary disputes—at the sub-county/chiefdom and district/tribal level—to alternately advance state enclosure of Apaa land, fragment resistance, and balance competing political factions.

The Amuru-Pabo wrangle has played to state interests in Apaa land in various ways. Once in motion, the ethno-territorial dynamics inflamed by the dispute provided ongoing political fodder for state agents. My informants contend that at a certain point, Pabo Chairperson Christopher Ojera deliberately exacerbated the conflict in an attempt to limit the occupation of the wildlife reserve to Pabo clans and divert the organizing energies of the movement into inter-clan conflict. This strategy appeared to reflect Ojera's position as an NRM agent as much as his personal interests in increasing Pabo's territorial influence, winning votes, acquiring land and access to forest resources. Although it is difficult to prove that Museveni's regime endorsed Ojera's political manoeuvres, this account of NRM efforts to splinter resistance in Apaa is widely accepted by observers in Amuru, both Pabo and Lamogi.

The state's ongoing fragmentation of political constituencies and administrative units has continued to reignite tensions along Lamogi-Pabo lines, eroding the unity of the Apaa movement. In 2016, the Government split Kilak County's MP electorate in two, creating a Lamogi-dominated 'Kilak South' and Pabo-dominated 'Kilak North,' prompting candidates to compete to register voters in Apaa villages lying in ambiguous zones between the two constituencies. Tensions were further exacerbated when the state proposed to sub-divide Amuru to create Lakang and Layima sub-counties just before the 2021 elections, creating anticipation of new resource streams. As candidates for new political posts campaigned in limbo villages of Apaa such as Coro, Ayobi and Akee, Apaa occupiers became increasingly split over which sub-county they identified with; Lamogi stalwarts backed Lakang and Layima, while those championing Pabo's ties to Apaa identified with Pabo. The passions aroused by questions of administrative affiliation reflect residents' emotional investment in clan territoriality, interwoven with more practical concerns; people often prefer authorities

associated with their own clan, perceiving they might receive favourable services or at least avoid discrimination.

Exacerbating inter-clan tensions has afforded local NRM agents with multiple channels to splinter Apaa's movement. As will be explored in chapter five, NRM 'operatives' have utilized many convoluted mechanisms to fragment Apaa occupier's resistance, from promises of state compensation to vacate Apaa, to take-overs of the Apaa motorcycle taxi Association, to co-opting leaders. Such manoeuvres prey on the occupiers' internal divisions, including along Lamogi-Pabo lines. In early 2022, for example, among various other gambits, the (NRM) Chairperson of Pabo began to issue Pabo Sub-County inscribed stamps to the LCIs of Apaa villages without Amuru District authorities' knowledge. While some Apaa leaders initially celebrated the stamps as a sign of state recognition of Apaa settlements, Lamogi supporters were angered by this new symbol of Pabo's jurisdiction. In retrospect, many Apaa occupiers perceived the 'stamp affair' as another NRM 'divide and rule' ploy to fragment the movement from within.

Museveni's regime has equally leveraged inter-district, Madi-Acholi wrangles over Apaa to advance its shifting political interests. Initially, the central state's interest in enclosing Apaa for investment in conservation neatly aligned with its backing of Adjumani District's predominantly NRM political leadership. Within this alliance, Gen. Moses Ali played a pivotal role, blurring the lines between personal politics and state policy: since backing UWA processes to re-gazette Apaa as Minister of Tourism in the 1990s, he continued to aggressively pursue expropriation, both as an Adjumani MP seeking voters, and as a Minister rising through NRM ranks. Most patently, in February 2012 he led a Cabinet committee which directed state forces (Ali, 2012) to oust "encroachers," resulting in violent evictions. Alongside other NRM loyalists, for many years Moses Ali also cultivated political backing for the reserve in Adjumani, ensuring that local councillors, religious leaders, and chiefs defer to the state's interests in Apaa. Despite rising discontent amongst certain clan leaders and Madi peasants, most elite actors I encountered in Adjumani reiterated, as one chief (Adjumani town, 2019 November) put it, that "the wildlife reserve is Government property, it's a constitutional matter."

For many years, state processes to establish the reserve moved hand and hand with central state recognition of Adjumani District's jurisdiction. After a decade of struggle with



Apaa's occupiers, the central government succeeded in demarcating the district (and reserve) boundary in October 2017 (Daily Monitor, 2017). Subsequently, a border military post and roadblock obstructed Acholi opposition politicians from entering Apaa and imposed a sense of central state surveillance. Central state officials have repeatedly affirmed Adjumani's jurisdiction. In 2018, for example, Museveni made a grand display of acknowledging Adjumani's territorial authority as he invited Moses Ali to address gathered crowds in Apaa, side-lining Acholi politicians. In April 2019, the Prime Minister's office directed Adjumani District to forcibly close Apaa market with UWA assistance. As the central state affirmed Adjumani's jurisdiction, Government bureaucrats in Amuru District have largely complied, withdrawing services as required.

In this political climate, local actors in Adjumani have played key roles in supporting state enclosure of Apaa, an agenda which became entangled in a sense of Madi tribal loyalty. This dynamic is evident in the biased handling of Apaa's Acholi occupiers by Adjumani police, court clerks and security officials. When Apaa residents are arrested for evading eviction, participating in demonstrations or violence against Madi intruders, they are often detained in Adjumani without bail or trial. While extra-legal detention is hardly unusual in Uganda, such practices are particularly politicized in the case of Apaa: Madi groups apprehended by UPDF in Apaa are quickly released by Adjumani authorities. Local Madi 'guides' originally recruited to assist UWA rangers have also played an evolving role in state expropriation processes. Civilian 'guides' have not only joined state eviction operations, but also perpetrated their own small-scale raids, fuelling Acholi perceptions of a Government-Madi alliance, and generating confusion over whether operations are state-sanctioned. Since 2017, some of these grassroots guides have participated in Madi land reclamation operations, exacerbating the impression in Apaa that the intrusions constitute a state-backed tactic to weaken the occupation.

Such political-institutional rifts position Madi and Acholi peasants against one another in a way that benefits state interests. As will be explored in chapter six, such structural divisions have so far prevented Madi farmers and Acholi occupiers of Apaa from allying to contest state expropriation: instead, Madi interests are channelled into politicised attempts to seize Acholi-occupied land. At particular moments, state agents have deterred the formation of inter-ethnic alliances under the pretext of preventing tribal violence. One Madi woman who identified as Oyuwi, for instance (2020 December), described how her village

elders organised to meet Apaa leaders in 2019 to broach possibilities of cohabitation in the reserve, only for the meeting to be blocked by Ukusijoni security agents and UPDF. Reminiscent of colonial indirect rule, state actors have reproduced divisions between Madi and Acholi communities, fragmenting resistance.

NRM agents have leveraged the Amuru-Adjumani boundary dispute to splinter the occupation movement through two further strategies. First, NRM agents have fostered division by persuading villagers in part of Apaa to shift their allegiance to Adjumani. As the central state demarcated the district boundary in 2017, Acholi NRM loyalists in Juka Village such as Christopher Ojera—initially with backing from Adjumani leaders—began to convince Juka residents that if they acknowledged Adjumani’s jurisdiction and rejected Apaa’s leadership, they would retain their land, which fell outside the reserve, but within the inter-district disputed zone. Most Acholi Juka residents acquiesced, forging deep rifts with Apaa occupiers in gazetted villages, who viewed them as traitors. Although (as discussed above) Ojera’s alliance with Adjumani politicians broke down, the divide between Juka residents and other Apaa villages remained, fraying the social fabric of the movement. NRM agents, as will be seen, have attempted similar strategies in other parts of Apaa.

A second way in which the central state has leveraged the border conflict over Apaa to advance NRM political interests relates to elections. For the decade following Uganda’s first multi-party election in 2006, Apaa has constituted a Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) opposition stronghold. In the 2021 elections, however, the electoral commission closed Apaa’s three polling stations, forcing voters to travel to Amuru polling booths across the official district border. As Apaa was omitted from voter registration, newly eligible voters were excluded entirely (Human Rights Watch, 2020). After narrowly losing to the FDC incumbent, NRM’s candidate, Christopher Ojera, challenged the result in court, arguing that Apaa voter’s ballots were invalid because Apaa falls in an Adjumani electorate. Although Ojera ultimately lost, the case highlights how disputed administrative jurisdictions enable political manoeuvres in which ruling party interests and personal politics bleed together.

Most significantly, the district boundary conflict has provided avenues for Museveni’s regime to consolidate power by positioning the central state as an overarching authority and moral arbitrator. Reminiscent of colonial officers’ incongruous attempts to deny the ethnic character of Uganda’s administrative units, Museveni’s public rhetoric refutes the political

significance of the Amuru-Adjumani district boundary, instead projecting a nationalist vision. In a 2019 public address, referring to Acholi-Madi tensions over non-gazetted areas, he declared;

Whether [Apaa] land is in Acholi or Madi sub-region, what difference does it make?

As long as it is in Uganda ...anybody is free to settle anywhere in the country as long as you use the right means (Museveni cited in Tumwesige, 2019).

By blaming the Apaa conflict on political leaders “stoking tribal tensions” for “cheap popularity” (Statehouse, 2021), Museveni has not only deflected attention from state abuses in Apaa but also masked the state’s complicity in reproducing the ethno-territorial dynamics driving the dispute, and the ways his regime has leveraged the conflict for political gain.

As the Apaa conflict has evolved, the NRM regime has reinforced central state authority by playing political rivals against one-another. After announcing Cabinet’s decision to evict Apaa residents in April 2019, for instance, the President responded to rising Acholi political pressure by abruptly appointing the (former) NRM deputy speaker Oulanyah (an Acholi) to lead a new conflict resolution process. At certain moments, Museveni has flagged the possibility of degazetting Apaa to appease Acholi interests. In 2021, for example, Museveni responded to Acholi political outcries by proposing yet another ‘commission of inquiry’ to establish the history of human settlement in Apaa and “whether the area is critical for conservation” (quoted in Kazibwe, 2021). Such cycles of inquiries and committees—which are yet to precipitate any decisive outcome—reflect the way Museveni positions himself as the arbitrator to which parties must continually address their pleas. As delegations of Acholi and Madi politicians continue to seek an audience with the President over Apaa, Museveni plays a delicate balancing game, keeping both sides’ hopes of gaining state favour alive.

Such dynamics are as evident ‘on the ground’ in Apaa as they are in political negotiations in Kampala. In response to the rise of Madi land seizure movements in Apaa since 2017, the state has played the role of a peacekeeper, yet intervened unpredictably, reflecting characteristics of ‘arbitrary governance’ delineated by Tapscott (2016, 2021). UPDF deployed to Apaa have been repeatedly restructured, alternately favouring Madi or Acholi interests. While Madi associations initially operated unchecked, new state forces deployed amidst rising Acholi dissent in early 2019 curtailed their operations. Journalists

from the state-aligned New Vision celebrated the army's role in imposing order, picturing security forces admonishing the Madi Community's Chairman for "inciting violence" (Ssejjoba, 2019). For over a year, Apaa's occupiers formed a tentative alliance with UPDF, informing commanders of intruders' movements. By mid-2022, however, troops under new command became passive, allowing new waves of claimants from Adjumani to seize Acholi-occupied land. By reshuffling security forces and allowing—or possibly instructing—they to pursue shifting agendas, Museveni's regime has fostered confusion, playing both 'sides.' Mirroring patterns scholars have observed amidst decentralization reforms (Boone, 2013; Leonardi, 2020), Ugandan state power is reinforced as fragmented, divided local and national political actors vie for central state backing.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

From the 1990s to 2022, the NRM regime's engagement with Apaa land has reflected not one, but multiple intersecting political interests that have changed in emphasis in response to the evolving contours of the conflict. Over time, the central state's initial focus on enclosing part of Apaa land to create a wildlife reserve and trophy hunting park has shifted, not only due to Acholi resistance but also as a result of elite interest in accumulating land and exploiting natural resources. While Museveni's recognition of Adjumani's District's jurisdiction initially dovetailed with state interests in enclosing Apaa land for conservation, as Acholi political dissent has grown, Museveni's regime has increasingly played rival political factions engaged in the conflict against one another, alternately dangling concessions to 'Acholi' interests in de-gazettement, and to 'Madi' interests in eco-tourism investment and reclaiming land.

This chapter has conceptualized these dynamics through a Gramscian lens, highlighting various contested, conflicting hegemonic processes advanced by state actors and ruling elites. In northern Uganda, Museveni's government has fostered an ambiguous land regime that has intensified—rather than supplanted—legacies of institutional pluralism. Uganda's reforms during the 1990s restored customary tenure yet privileged individual title and elite acquisition; affirmed nationalist administrative principles yet reproduced ethno-territorial conflicts. These hegemonic processes reinforce state power by positioning Museveni as a champion of customary land rights while accommodating elite accumulation and reproducing a colonial politics of ethnic difference, resulting in a proliferation of rival

public authorities competing to govern territory, determine land use, and authorise rights to property. As exemplified by the case of Apaa, and as Tapscott (2016, 2021) argues more broadly, this political strategy hinges on fragmenting rather than eliminating dissent, in presiding over rather than suppressing competing authorities over land.

In Apaa, by 2022, the original goal of facilitating large-scale land expropriation had become overshadowed—at least temporarily—by the NRM regime’s broader interests in reinforcing its ruling coalition and sustaining political authority. The following chapter examines the impact of Apaa peasant occupiers’ tactics and strategies of resistance in precipitating this shift.

## Chapter 5

### **Collective action in the Apaa land movement, 2006 – 2021.**

Scholars have often presented ‘everyday’ resistance (Scott, 1985) as a pervasive form of peasant struggle against land expropriation driven by repressive African states (Amanor, 2005; Moreda, 2015; Kandel, 2015, p. 636). Analysis focused on rural Uganda has likewise turned to Scott’s notion of everyday forms of struggle, even as scholars also highlight the use of overt tactics and legal strategies (Serwajja, 2014, pp. 160, 241; Cavanagh & Benjaminsen, 2015, pp. 729, 731). Martiniello (2015) for example, portrays struggles in Lakang and Apaa as grounded in peasants’ longstanding efforts to “withdraw from state control” (p. 657), presenting practices such as subsistence agriculture, seed-saving and non-monetised labour exchange as ‘everyday’ modes of resistance to state-backed “capitalist commodification” (p. 659), upon which peasants have layered other tactics, including open protest. At first glance, various practices that peasant organisers utilise in Apaa also resemble forms of ‘everyday resistance’, from covert sabotage and furtive relocation of boundary markers to encroachment and illicit cultivation.

This chapter challenges such approaches, arguing that in contrast to Scott’s (1985) model, peasant resistance in Apaa is best understood as an overt, organised, offensive land occupation that, for many, represents an opportunity to engage with rather than withdraw from commercialised agriculture. Collective action in the Apaa movement is characterised by the ongoing construction of a ‘culture of resistance’, which has enabled occupiers to employ diverse tactics to alternately evade and confront state power. This adaptable praxis is underpinned by a shared ethos of solidarity, which although an elusive reality, shapes the occupiers’ approach to engaging with political allies and deterring co-option. It is in the constant cultivation of solidarity, organisational practices, and mobilising skills that peasant resistance in Apaa can be considered routine and ‘every day.’

Beyond any single approach or tactic, it was the movement’s culture of resistance that enabled Acholi peasants to establish, expand and defend their occupation of state-claimed land in Apaa between 2006 and 2022. While the post-war occupation of Apaa began as a single settlement of around 300 peasants, by 2021, despite repeated cycles of violent state

eviction operations, the entire 831 km<sup>2</sup> gazetted area was inhabited by well over 15,000 villagers, with thousands more occupying the disputed inter-district area just outside East Madi Wildlife Reserve. The success of the occupation movement during this period is reflected in the fall and rise of two towers: in 2008, peasant activists covertly toppled a communications tower to undermine UWA development of the area as a trophy hunting park. In contrast, in early 2021 occupiers collaborated with a major telecommunications company to erect a tower within the reserve to extend cell phone network to Apaa's growing population. By late 2021, Apaa centre functioned as a regional trade hub of farm produce and boasted a petrol station, a permanent motorcycle taxi stage and burgeoning rows of businesses in permanent concrete buildings.

Although peasant resistance in Uganda is often portrayed as orchestrated by political elites, this chapter argues that peasant occupiers have always acted as the prime architects of collective action in Apaa. While various political leaders have provided logistical backing, advocacy in parliament and strategic advice, politicians have proven unstable allies, extending or withdrawing support according to their shifting interests. Peasant occupiers have accordingly learned to navigate an ever-evolving political landscape, at times drawing on elite support but ultimately charting their own strategic course of collective action.

The first of five sections in this chapter critiques the applicability of Scott's concept of 'everyday resistance' to the Apaa movement, and develops the alternative framework of a 'culture of resistance,' drawing on concepts from interlinking literature on social movements (Tilly, 1986, 1993; Tarrow, 1993; Snow & Moss, 2014), rural resistance (Isaacman, 1990; O'Brien & Li, 2006; Schock, 2015), and peasant responses to land expropriation (Borras, 2016; Hall et al, 2015). The following sections examine aspects of Apaa's culture of resistance, including elite alliances (2), tactical flexibility (3), and the use of symbolic, performative demonstrations (4). The final section explores the role of the movement's ethos of solidarity in aiding their struggle against infiltration and co-option (5).

## 5.1 A Culture of Resistance

### 5.1.1 *Rethinking approaches to peasant resistance*

Contrary to the portrayals outlined above, peasant political action in Apaa contrasts with Scott's (1985) notion of 'everyday' resistance in three key ways. Most centrally, although peasant resistance Apaa is often portrayed as a defensive struggle to defend customary land against state evictions (Martiniello, 2015; Olum, 2015), it is best conceived as offensive land occupation, comparable—on a smaller scale—to movements in Egypt (de Lellis, 2019), Malawi (Kanyongolo, 2005; Chinigò, 2016) and Latin America (Fernandes, 2005; Welford, 2010). As will be explored in the following chapters, by the close of 2012 the majority of Apaa's 'occupiers' (as they will be referred to) were not customary land-holding families that cultivated the area before the LRA war but rather landless or land-poor peasants from different parts of the wider Acholi region. Although peasant resistance in Apaa is not linked to a broader, interregional political land movement, it can be conceived as an "organised and isolated" occupation (Fernandes, pp. 332–333; Schock, 2015, p. 506) driven by marginalised peasants who have chosen to contest state-driven enclosure of land for elite investment and seek an alternative to growing patterns of exclusion within communal land practices exacerbated, as previously discussed, by neoliberal land reforms, and rising commercial demand for land. As will be discussed further in chapter seven, such 'ideologies' largely remain implicit within the movement.<sup>31</sup>

A second key way in which the Apaa case eludes Scott's model relates to the economic strategy pursued by those driving the movement. The analysis that follows draws on Feerman's (1990) concept of the 'peasant intellectual' to refer to the minimally-educated peasant farmers who have played a distinctly intellectual social role in crafting the movement. Many individuals who founded the occupation spent their pre-war years cultivating fields and keeping cows; some supplemented their livelihoods by engaging in local politics, small business, trade crafts or casual work as guards or cleaners. Others came of age in the camp and looked to their elders to inform their sense of pre-war rural life. Although most extended families in Apaa are connected to at least one (often several) urban-based relative(s) with off-farm businesses or salaried employment, they can be considered

---

<sup>31</sup> See Curtis & Sindre, 2019, pp. 396–401 for helpful discussion on the concept of 'ideology.'



‘peasants’ in that they survive through subsistence farming, produce almost all of what they consume, draw primarily on kin-based labour and do not engage in farm wage labour (see Feierman, pp. 24, 36; cf. Bernstein, 2014, p. 99).

While the idea of ‘everyday resistance’ portrays peasants as retreating from ‘capitalist’ agricultural markets, many joined the Apaa movement as a path to access larger plots of land, intensify production and maximise commercial crop sales. As Gardner (2012, p. 398) argues more broadly, wholesale rejection of market relations is rarely a “plausible or desirable” option for rural Africans (cf. Cavanagh & Benjaminsen, 2015, p. 727). Likewise, for many, the Apaa occupation embodies the possibility of navigating expanding involvement in regional markets rather than withdrawal. Despite devastating eviction cycles, some occupiers have drawn on crop surplus profits to expand cultivation, develop off-farm businesses and fund their children’s further education. As state eviction operations waned, Apaa’s central market emerged as a regional exchange hub: twice a week, produce-grinding machines hum as trucks and vans descend on Apaa centre from Amuru, Gulu, Adjumani Districts and further afield to purchase bulk produce and transport merchants. Between 2018 and 2021, occupiers mobilised direct actions to prevent the UWA from forcefully closing Apaa market and restricting commercial activity. By cultivating land marked for state-backed private investment, occupiers contest elite accumulation, but not marketisation nor commodification of agriculture; they pursue social advancement, not merely reproduction.

The Apaa movement is also antithetical to Scott’s (1985) model in a third way: while ‘everyday resistance’ denotes a multitude of hidden, uncoordinated acts, peasant resistance in Apaa is openly defiant and coordinated. As Apaa’s occupiers explicitly contest the Ugandan state’s claims, the political meaning behind even their most covert acts is unmistakable. To describe Apaa’s occupiers as utilising ‘everyday’ tactics *alongside* overt actions is conceptually murky: to equate Scott’s notion of ‘everyday’ resistance with quotidian practices or covert acts more generally deprives the concept of its distinctive edge (cf. Isaacman, 1990, pp. 31–33). Overuse of the concept of ‘everyday’ resistance also risks reinforcing the assumption that peasant resistance, or struggles of underprivileged urban dwellers (Bayart, 2000) are inevitably less organised and ‘defensive’ than movements driven by educated classes (de Lellis, 2019, p. 585; Bush & Martiniello, 2017, p. 202).

The argument that long histories of ‘everyday struggle’ set the stage for the emergence of overt resistance (Moreda, 2015; Korovkin, 2000; cf. Lilja et al, 2017) only partially applies in the case of Apaa. As explored in chapter three, many older Apaa occupiers certainly defied the state by quietly encroaching on restricted zones since the 1950s. Some, however, also participated in armed insurgencies against the NRA, while several prominent homesteads in the southern tip of Apaa acted as ‘*Cilil*’ rebel bases in the mid-1980s. If the roots of the contemporary Apaa movement can be traced to a history of hidden struggles, they are equally present in the occupiers’ experiences with overt, militant contestation.

Broad typologies of peasant struggle, whether ‘everyday’ resistance (Scott, 1985), militancy (Crummey, 1986), or ‘rightful’ resistance (O’Brien & Li, 2006) fail to capture the fluidly varying practices employed by Apaa’s occupiers. Although collective action in Apaa is sometimes executed secretly to avoid retaliation against individuals, its political intent is clear. Covert acts such as the destruction of state infrastructure are often far from subtle and result from weeks of planning. Conversely, many moments of overt protest are not planned in advance but unfold spontaneously. Although Apaa occupiers’ actions are often more transgressive than ‘rightful’ modes of resistance (O’Brien & Li, 2006, O’Brien, 2013), particular tactics (such as parliamentary petitions) resemble rightful forms of struggle. Apaa’s occupiers accordingly employ tactics that may be ‘rightful’ or unruly, planned or spontaneous, hidden or overt, audacious or risk-mitigating, violent or peaceful.

Such flexibility resonates with scholarly accounts of peasant struggle in East Africa and beyond (Borras & Franco, 2012). As Feierman (1990, pp. 170–172) highlights, Tanzanian peasants drew on varied tactics to contest colonial agricultural policies, from non-compliance to open protest marches. Studies of struggles in DRC (Verweijen & Marijnen, 2018, pp. 309–310) and Uganda (Cavanagh & Benjaminsen, 2015, p. 274; Kandel, 2015, pp. 246–247) similarly reveal that peasants often integrate militant tactics, advocacy, lawsuits and covert agriculture. Beyond categorising broad ‘types’ of peasant resistance, it is critical to examine, as Isaacman (1990, p. 51) recognised, how “rural communities with limited resources organis[e] themselves” and the internal dynamics that enable them to pivot between strategies “to confront changing relations of power” and shifting circumstances.

### 5.1.2 *A culture of resistance: praxis and solidarity*

The Apaa movement's fluid approach to collective action between 2006 and 2020 reflected the occupiers' continual construction of a 'culture of resistance.' While Scott (1985, pp. 34–35) conceived of a 'culture of resistance' as uncoordinated practices without "formal organisation," here the phrase denotes intentionally nurtured collective norms and practices (Isaacman, 1990, p. 56). While cultivating a 'culture of resistance' does not render peasant occupiers immune to hegemonic discourses, logics, and structures advanced by ruling elites (Scott, 1985), it equips them to critically review their strategies and assumptions. Rather than a standard that is attained, Apaa's culture of resistance consists of ideals towards which occupiers strive, against which failings are measured. Apaa's culture has two key dimensions: a 'praxis of resistance,' and an underpinning ethos of solidarity.

The Apaa movement's praxis of resistance was developed by a small, slowly-shifting group of peasant intellectuals who have built up an extensive 'repertoire' (Tilly, 1993) of tactics and improvisational skills (Tarrow, 1993). As early formulations of the 'repertoire' concept suggest (Tilly, 1986), some tactics stem from long-established practices, such as non-compliance with colonial hunting prohibitions or petitioning officials. As scholars (Doherty & Hayes, 2018; Jasper & Polletta, 2018, p. 72) emphasise, however, repertoires evolve as activists adapt old tactics and develop new ones. In Apaa, peasant organisers draw from ideas trialled by neighbouring communities or suggested by politicians and urban activists.

Apaa's peasant organisers test ideas from such sources by nurturing a praxis grounded in experimentation and critical reflection. The term *praxis* evokes the dynamic relationship between action and learning (Gramsci, 1971; Freire, 1970), capturing the way in which knowledge most useful to social movements emerges through experiences of political struggle (Choudry & Kapoor, 2010; Novelli, 2010, p. 124). In Apaa, this process is deeply practical. One strategist described to me, for example, the process of trial and error they used to determine precisely how heavy-duty building nails must be embedded in ruts in a dirt road to puncture UWA vehicle tires. Through experimentation, organisers have learned that spray from water bottles with punctured lids mitigates the effects of tear gas and developed methods to destroy various types of bridges. Alongside practical expertise, Apaa's organisers have learned to read unfolding political dynamics, opportunities, and risks (Doherty & Hayes, 2018, p. 283), and become attuned to scenarios in which state actors are unlikely to use

excessive force, the forms of mass mobilisation most effective in particular contexts, and to moments suited to retreat.

Core organisers have fostered this praxis amongst the ever-expanding swathes of Apaa's wider population. As new occupiers observe, receive coaching, and become immersed in Apaa's praxis, they develop the confidence and skills to join mass demonstrations. Protest is normalised in Apaa in the sense that participation in collective action, as Abdelrahman (2015, p. 69) puts it, has become a "lived daily reality." As one seasoned occupier explained (Apaa, 2020 September), "if someone raises an alarm (*goyo o duru*) you respond and gather quickly; you trust in numbers." Through frequent participation, occupiers have acquired the ability to follow leaders' cues to respond with displays of aggression, rapid road-block construction, or non-violent demonstration as different situations demand.

The capacity Apaa's occupiers have developed to respond creatively to unanticipated situations was exemplified by an action I witnessed in August 2018. As protesters returned to Apaa after ending a 35-day occupation of a UN office in Gulu (explored below), UPDF waylaid their hired trucks at the boundary roadblock, and refused to let them pass, demanding to see the protester's national IDs and record their names. Given the political attention generated by their recent protest and the presence of several Gulu-based NGO workers and myself, Apaa leaders correctly calculated that the soldiers would not use force and refused to comply. Hours into the stand-off several hundred Apaa residents (summoned via phone) flooded the scene, making it impossible for soldiers to identify the protesters. They arranged large stones on the road to light cooking fires, declaring they would prepare porridge for the returnees' children who were hungry after being delayed. Caught unprepared by the rapidly swelling numbers, security forces lifted the roadblock without registering the protesters.

As this example illustrates, Apaa occupiers draw from learned collective 'repertoires' paired with improvisation (Doherty & Hayes, 2018, p. 28). In the action described above, occupiers acted in concert without prior planning by turning to familiar practices such as unified non-compliance and rapid mass mobilisation. Particular elements, however, such as lighting cooking fires and mixing protesters with other residents were novel to the context encountered. Spontaneity and organisation are connected (Turner & Killian, 1987; Snow & Moss, 2014, p. 1125): the capacity for impromptu action is built through occupiers' experience implementing planned tactics and immersion in a praxis that values creativity.

In turn, the Apaa movement's collective action is enabled by an ethos of solidarity, which peasant intellectuals have cultivated by building a sense of 'common cause' and 'shared fate' (Hunt & Benford, 2004; Melucci, 1995). Apaa's ethos of solidarity is encapsulated by the idea that joining the occupation involves accepting personal risk and sacrifice. Solidarity assures Apaa's occupiers that when they engage in direct action or stay put after violent state eviction operations destroy their homes and crops, they will act as part of a wider, coordinated movement. Apaa's ethos of solidarity is captured in the repeated refrain '*Abi too pi Apaa*' (I'd die for Apaa) and reflected in occupiers' pride in recounting their sacrifices for the struggle. It is practically expressed as a collective readiness to assist families displaced by evictions, supply food to support direct actions and contribute funds to bail out those arrested defending the occupation. The hefty three million Ugandan Shilling bail set for a woman arrested in the wake of Apaa's 2015 naked protest (explored below), for example, was paid in three equal parts by her family, opposition politicians, and fellow occupiers (female protester, Apaa, 2019 September).

The Apaa movement's ethos of solidarity, however, remains imperfectly embodied: a guiding compass yet an elusive reality. To grow solidarity within social movements, organisers must foster a sense of collective identity (Melucci, 1995; Hunt & Benford, 2004) and engender trust in movement structures and leadership (Stutje, 2012; Routledge, 2015, p. 449). As will be explored throughout the dissertation, the strength and weakness of occupier solidarity in Apaa reflects the movement's unfolding struggle to construct—and reconstruct—its collective identity and framing story (chapter six) and to build viable, legitimate public institutions (chapter seven). As will be seen, although Apaa's peasant intellectuals have, to an extent, managed to create a "spatialised arena of solidarity" (Pahnke et al, 2015, p. 1076) grounded in shared belonging to place and commitment to the occupation (Routledge, 2015, p. 457), the movement remains afflicted by divisions and internal hierarchies based on clan, ethnicity, administrative affiliation, age, and gender. As Isaacman (1990, p. 51) observed, it is such "divisive tendencies" that fragment and undermine peasant collective action.

The remaining four sections examine how Apaa's culture of resistance, including its ethos of solidarity, is reflected in the movement's shifting alliances with political elites, its tactical flexibility, use of performative actions, and struggles against co-option.

## 5.2 Alliances with political elites

In recent decades, scholars have overturned the assumption that rural uprisings and peasant movements are inevitably instigated or coordinated ‘from above’ (see Isaacman, 1990, pp. 50–53). Recent studies recognise that organisers of rural movements often appeal to local politicians to advocate on their behalf (Gingembre, 2015, p. 581; Cavanagh & Benjaminsen, 2015, p. 738) or leverage inter-elite rivalries (O’Brien & Li, 2006; Borras & Franco, 2013, p. 1733). Studies of social movements (Lapegna, 2013; Dawson, 2017; Holdo, 2020) highlight the strategic ways organisers engage with elite patrons and negotiate the terms of political incorporation. The discussion below dispels the assumption that the Apaa movement was directed by political elites and explores how Apaa occupiers’ approach to engaging political actors is shaped by the movement’s ethos of solidarity.

### 5.2.1 *Ruling-party elites and the establishment of the occupation*

Ugandan state actors often claim that the post-war settlement of Apaa was orchestrated by Acholi politicians who ‘ferried’ peasants to gazetted areas and ‘incited’ them to resist central state policy (e.g., Ali, 2012; Ssemugaba in Hansard, 2013, minute 6.56). This depiction, however, overlooks the agency of peasants that founded the occupation. Even before populations began to disperse from IDP camps in 2006 as the LRA war drew to a close, small groups of peasants in Amuru began to plant crops within the East Madi Wildlife Reserve. Such groups were aware of the UWA’s claims and highly organised. Months before launching the occupation, residents of Omee II IDP camp (2006) wrote to Gulu District’s Chairperson objecting that “UWA staff from Adjumani” visited their camp to declare the Government intentions in Apaa and “proceeded to plant their mark-stones,” enclosing their “grandfather’s land.” Despite UWA warnings, a group of several hundred peasants from Pabo IDP camp, joined by others from Omee II, proceeded to Apaa in November 2006.

The assumption that politicians instigated the occupation misconstrues the dynamic, two-way relationship that Amuru peasants struck with NRM elites such as Gen. Oketta and Pabo Chairperson Ojera. Settlers who formed Apaa’s camp describe Oketta and Ojera as allies rather than architects of the movement. One founding peasant occupier recalled (Apaa, 2019 November): “Oketta never told anyone what to do. But he knew our plans in the camps and warned us, you must hurry; the Government wants that land.” Peasant intellectuals

petitioned Oketta, as a fellow ‘son of Pabo,’ to provide secure transport to Apaa and station his soldiers for protection, just as UPDF detaches guarded other transitional camps that sprung up in the region in 2006 (Gulu District Local Government, 2006; Chief Administrative Office Gulu, 2007). While Oketta’s actions, as previously discussed, also served his own personal interests in land acquisition, Pabo peasants exploited the alliance to expand minor pre-war Acholi settlements in Apaa.

In the early stages of the occupation, NRM elite support helped Apaa’s pioneer post-war settlers to resist the UWA. In early 2007 as the UWA pressured occupiers to vacate the area and arrested individuals accused of poaching (former ranger, 2020), the presence of Oketta’s soldiers deterred rangers from launching forceful eviction operations. In addition to advocating on the occupiers’ behalf to central government officials (Oketta, 2007b), Oketta’s detainment of UWA rangers (previously described) subdued UWA efforts to oust the settlers, prompting rangers to focus on lobbying Amuru officials to intervene. Occupiers recall that Ojera Christopher also supported their resistance by warning them of UWA movements: advance notice enabled occupiers to block UWA access to their camp by obstructing the road with logs, laying traps to puncture tires, and mobilising in large numbers to physically intimidate rangers.

As Pabo NRM politician’s support wavered, Apaa’s occupiers adapted, reflecting the way citizens facing unpredictable, changeable socio-political environments must constantly ‘reconfigure’ their alliances (Vigh, 2006 cited in Tapscott, 2021, p. 28). For many years, General Oketta continued to provide quiet assistance, notably by channelling post-war reconstruction funds to build a government health centre within the reserve. As Museveni’s regime pressured Oketta to comply with central state interests in Apaa, however, he withdrew his soldiers and ceased his open advocacy. Some occupiers contend that Apaa leaders were too slow to respond to Oketta’s growing subjection to his party: in 2015, Oketta was accused of luring occupiers to a ‘meeting’ that turned into a violent confrontation with state military (Okello & Ojimo, 2015, p. 16). As Apaa organisers perceived that Christopher Ojera had betrayed the movement, they rejected his attempts to recruit young men from the camp to participate in UWA animal tracking research in 2008. While Ojera continued to hold sway in Apaa’s village of Juka outside of the reserve, as occupiers in gazetted areas identified him as

a state collaborator, they rebuked his authority within Apaa, tarnished his political reputation, and backed his opponents in subsequent sub-county elections.

Increasingly, Apaa's occupiers relied on their own praxis of resistance. Between 2008 and 2010, occupiers continued to undermine the UWA by mounting roadblocks, mobilising in large numbers, and, most critically, expanding the occupation. Building norms of collective participation, occupiers cleared community paths, constructed churches, and convinced NGOs to drill boreholes and begin construction of a school before the government shut such projects down (former village leader, Gorobi, 2020). As will be explored in the following chapters, from late 2008 they called on extended family and friends lingering in IDP camps to join them as they disbanded the central 'satellite' camp and expanded deeper into the reserve. By this stage, the movement no longer leaned on elite figures such as Ojera and Oketta.

While Boone (2015, p. 255) cast opposition politicians as the most likely allies of local populations resisting 'statist' land expropriation, in the case of the Apaa, regime-aligned elites initially defied their own party to boost local electoral support, albeit temporarily. Organisers in Apaa capitalised on this situation but learned to treat elite alliances as transitory and contingent, reflecting the unpredictable political dynamics (Tapscott, 2016, 2021) wrought by Museveni's ambiguous land regime.

### *5.2.2 A strategic compass to guide elite alliances.*

As Pabo's NRM elites withdrew support, Apaa's occupiers turned to Amuru District's FDC opposition politicians, who as previously outlined, leapt at the opportunity to champion their cause, counteracting NRM support of Adjumani District. Amuru's opposition politicians—notably Kilak MP Gilbert Olanya, elected in 2011—are best conceived as enabling and shaping, rather than orchestrating, resistance in Apaa, which had already developed its own momentum and inner fulcrum of control. Apaa's organisers have haltingly learned to benefit from such alliances while retaining strategic independence and prioritising movement solidarity.



Opposition politicians played a critical role in stemming waves of state evictions between 2011 and 2012. In the aftermath of state eviction operations in 2011, Amuru politicians and several educated Pabo elders worked with Apaa organisers to launch a case against the UWA and the Attorney General in Gulu High Court (Civil Suit No. 0062) and seek an injunction against further evictions. Although the ambiguously worded temporary injunction order (2012) they procured failed to deter the UWA, the state was forced to halt evictions in 2012 after Acholi politicians' complaints prompted parliamentary investigations into the Adjumani - Amuru boundary, the legal status of the reserve, and alleged UWA human rights abuses (Kobusingye et al, 2017 pp. 462–468). Proceedings dragged on for several years, complicated by the refusal of parliament's appointed committee to make a resolution until court ruled on the pending case (see Committee on Physical Infrastructure, 2013). By repeatedly triggering lengthy proceedings, opposition elites stalled the resumption of systematic state evictions.

This achievement, however, also reflected the efforts of Apaa organisers. Apaa's peasant intellectuals pressured politicians to invest time and funds in court proceedings and parliamentary advocacy, gathered evidence of the UWA's destruction of property and human rights abuses, and pooled resources to attend court hearings in Gulu. Just as critically, from 2011 to 2014 occupiers frustrated state efforts to demarcate the Amuru-Adjumani District boundary. While MP Olanya joined Apaa peasants to aggressively disrupt state surveyor teams (Hansard, 2013), occupiers took initiative to repeatedly remove reserve marker stones and destroy 'Adjumani District' signs (former village LCI, Apaa, 2019). Through such disruption, they ensured that Adjumani District jurisdiction—and thus the UWA's authority—in Apaa remained as disputed 'on the ground' as it was in parliament. By allying with Amuru opposition MPs, Apaa's peasant strategists combined, as Alonso-Fradejas (2015) put it, 'politico-juridical' advocacy from above with collective action from below.

Apaa's organisers also utilised their alliance with opposition politicians to grow the movement. While central state actors (Ali, 2012) often claim that Amuru MPs ferried 'new encroachers' into Apaa from 2012 onwards, the expansion of the occupation reflected a dovetailing of elite-peasant interests. Apaa's occupiers perceived settling the entire reserve as a key strategy to consolidate the occupation and undermine UWA evictions. Meanwhile, opposition MPs saw an opportunity to fulfil 2011 electoral promises to defend 'Acholi' land

and extend land access to their constituents. While Apaa occupiers drew on their own networks, opposition MPs used public gatherings and radio announcements to attract recruits. As a key strategist of Apaa (Pabo, 2019) reflected:

We thanked our politicians for putting out the word for us. Their call was heard all over Acholi...2012 was a hard year. But it was the year we received the largest influx of settlers. It was the year we extended up to the Nile and founded Gaji [village].

Opposition MP's mobilisation augmented Apaa organisers' strategy of occupation expansion.

Despite such strategic synergy, Apaa's strategists have remained aware that elite political interests often change abruptly, reflecting the unpredictable way Museveni's regime handles rival public authorities and competing factions (Tapscott, 2021). To illustrate, while Apaa occupiers drew heavily on their alliance with Kilak MP Olanya from 2011-2015, they witnessed his interests shift after the state-divided Kilak County constituency in 2016 (as discussed in chapter four). To defend his seat as MP of Kilak South in the build-up to the 2021 elections, occupiers observed Olanya attempt to pry voters from FDC's Anthony Akol in Kilak North, inexplicably suggesting that by registering in Kilak South, residents could evade UWA evictions. In his attempt to acquire voters, Olanya created confusion and eroded solidarity in peripheral Apaa villages that fell in the disputed electoral zone. Apaa occupiers' qualms about his shifting priorities were reinforced when Olanya supported the NRM candidate, Christopher Ojera's court case to contest Akol's 2021 electoral victory.

In response to such unpredictability, Apaa occupiers have maintained a flexible approach to political alliances, guided by the movement's ethos of solidarity. In 2021, Apaa leaders continued to leverage Olanya's support but also counteracted misinformation spread during his electoral campaign. Occupiers have continued to lobby politicians to fund their activities and advocate on their behalf but sometimes opt to limit politicians' knowledge of their collective plans. A case in point was the UN occupation protest (explored below): by excluding politicians from their plans, Apaa leaders sought to avoid the impression that the action was politically motivated. In other cases, occupiers guard their plans knowing that an indiscreet public comment from an MP to gain political mileage could undermine the efficacy of their actions.

Apaa's occupiers have increasingly scrutinised politicians' strategic advice. This practice stems in part from the occupiers' rising awareness that opposition leaders gain political mileage from the protracted nature of the struggle rather than its resolution. In mid-2021, for instance, occupiers ignored MP Akol's advice to relocate settlements in heavily forested areas in order to placate the Government's new focus on protecting Zoka forest in favour of a mass assembly who agreed that withdrawing from an as-yet-unspecified zone of Apaa could be a trap, and cause tension with occupiers forced to move. The movement's ethos of solidarity outweighed their respect for a key political ally.

### **5.3 Tactical flexibility**

Social movements scholars have long recognised the importance of tactical flexibility (McAdam, 1983; Tarrow, 1993; Taylor & Van Dyke, 2004). McAdams's (1983) study of the civil rights movement, for instance, demonstrated how strategic shifts to incorporate new tactics such as sit-ins and freedom rides caught authorities unprepared. Tarrow's (1993, p. 293) research highlighted how Italian factory workers' capacity to generate 'twists' on conventional strikes in the 1960s forced industry change. While some scholars emphasise how shifting political opportunities precipitate tactical change (McAdam & Tarrow, 2018; Almeida, 2007) others focus on movements' internal culture and organisational features (Goodwin et al, 1999; Snow & Moss, 2014). As Doherty & Hayes (2018, p. 283) highlight, shifts in strategy usually reflect organisers' *reading* of changing political contexts: "internal movement cultures and external macro-structures" they argue, "are linked through strategic analysis." Such insights also apply to peasant struggle in Apaa: tactical adaptability forms a key component of Apaa's praxis of resistance.

In the first eight years of the occupation, peasant settlers of Apaa waged a struggle that made it impossible for the UWA and private investors to develop the reserve. Tactical diversity and flexibility played a key role in this achievement. In the early years of the movement, occupiers experimented to develop a wide repertoire of tools to proactively disrupt the UWA's presence in Apaa. As they moved into the reserve interior, occupiers defiantly expanded their cultivation; they also targeted the UWA's infrastructure, sabotaging reserve boundary markers, survey equipment and most notably, the UWA's radio communication tower. In late 2008, a team worked covertly overnight to topple, dismantle

and remove the booster tower using hacksaws and farm equipment, leading the UWA to abandon further infrastructure development (Former warden, 2020 December). Occupiers targeted the UWA ranger's barracks and airfield in Gaji Village, which the South African director of 'Lake Albert Safari's Limited' (LASL) used to access the reserve. When Apaa's LCI was summoned to the barracks, for instance, several hundred occupiers surrounded the rangers. In 2014, occupiers destroyed the sole bridge providing UWA with vehicle access to the barracks, undermining rangers' capacity to maintain the facility (occupier, Gaji, 2020 September).

During this early phase of the movement, the occupiers' tactical repertoire involved property destruction, violent posturing and occasional use of force. To ward off UWA from their central camp between 2006 and 2008, for instance, occupiers approached rangers in large numbers wielding machetes and spears. In the wake of the 2011 evictions, occupiers thwarted an attempt by state ministers and UWA rangers to identify the boundary by pelting their cars with stones (Eriku & Okudi, 2011). On several occasions, occupiers disrupted UWA eviction operations by assembling masses to intimidate rangers (occupier, Coro, 2019 October).<sup>32</sup> During this stage of the occupation, such tactics proved effective at frustrating the UWA's operations because occupiers still lived within a reasonably concentrated pattern within the reserve and were able to gather quickly, while the UWA had few rangers.

Physical intimidation tactics, however, became less effective as the state escalated the use of force. After occupiers "outnumbered" and "overpowered" the UWA as one Government report put it (Committee of Physical Infrastructure, 2013), subsequent state operations were reinforced by UPDF and police, and the occupiers' unruly mobilisations were violently suppressed. During waves of eviction, police arrested and injured dozens of protesters and forced occupiers into trucks, often at gunpoint. In February 2012, a police officer shot one occupier dead and injured many others gathered in Apaa centre to confront state forces (Uganda Human Rights Commission, 2012). Ultimately, occupiers recognised they could not curtail state evictions through physical confrontation.

Increasingly, Apaa's occupiers relied on non-violent tactics to undermine state expropriation. This tactical shift towards non-violence was pragmatic rather than principled

---

<sup>32</sup> For details of state eviction operations see Lenhart, 2013, p. 69. Kobusingye et al, 2017, pp. 462, 464

(Burrowes, 1996, p. 99), based on the occupiers' experimentation to determine 'what works' (Doherty & Hayes, 2018, p. 278). In later 2012 evictions, many hundreds of occupiers resisted state eviction by dragging their heels as UPDF set their huts alight and forced them into trucks, then immediately returning after they were dumped in Pabo town. Occupiers exposed the state's propensity towards violence to local journalists by contrasting UWA and UPDF abuses to their own peaceful resistance. By refraining from violence, as Vinthagen (2015, p. 15) put it, they undermined the "legitimacy that makes violence so powerful." Occupiers leveraged outrage at state violence to agitate land-poor households to join the movement. As one key strategist reflected (Acholi Ber, 2019 November), "When people heard that game [the UWA] burned so many homes and that Olanya Patrick was shot and killed, many resolved to join us." By shifting tactics to focus on non-violent disobedience, occupiers channelled regional anger at state abuses to broaden the scope of their struggle.

Cumulatively, the flexibility of the occupiers' praxis enabled them to decisively block the development of the wildlife reserve. While the LASL briefly announced that the reserve was open for sports hunting in 2010, operations were quickly cut short. As the company's manager acknowledged in 2013 (Serwajja, 2014, pp. 190–196), the occupier's presence and disruptive actions made construction of tourist accommodation and facilities unfeasible. A year after UWA rangers and LASL staff deserted their base in Apaa, the Safari company's director announced his withdrawal from the contract over Ugandan radio in 2015, citing "poaching and land feuds with local communities" (Otto, 2015a). This marked, as one occupier put it (2020 February), *agiki pi kare pa game i Apaa*—the end of the UWA's era in Apaa.

The conditions generated by the occupiers' tactical shifts during this period had lasting repercussions for state processes of expropriation. By early 2018, when the UWA finally relaunched systematic evictions, the occupation had expanded to over 13,000 settlers (Digital Verification Corp, 2019), covering the entire wildlife reserve. As the UWA were unable to round up Apaa's large, inaccessibly located population into trucks, they were forced to adopt defensive, guerrilla-style tactics. In place of swift, mass campaigns of 2012 that swept through the reserve from the south, small bands of mixed forces entered the reserve from boats along the Nile or from UWA bases in the north and focused on burning

grass-thatched homes and looting property. Concentrating on villages closest to their northern bases, such bands moved on foot and targeted homesteads for up to a week before retreating: rapid mass forced displacement of occupiers was no longer viable.

The shift towards non-violent tactics represented one of many ways in which Apaa's organisers have adapted their repertoire over time. Reflecting a game of chess (McAdam, 1983, p. 736), Apaa's organisers, central state actors and the UWA have continued to adjust and respond to each-others moves and countermoves. From 2014, the Ugandan state pursued new strategies to pave the way to renewed evictions: after obtaining legal backing to demarcate the boundary in 2014 (Hansard, 2017, p. 8), central state actors utilised mediation processes funded by the international NGO Safer World to win over officials in Amuru District. While Apaa residents were marginalised throughout the dialogues, the agreement that resulted between the UWA, the central government and the two conflicting districts generated a sense of legitimacy about the state's new process to demarcate the district border in 2015 (Republic of Uganda, 2015; New Vision, 2015). In turn, however, occupiers caught state actors off-guard by abruptly drawing on the unexpected, symbolic act of nude protest. After the state forcibly physically demarcated the boundary and resumed systematic evictions in early 2018, Apaa's strategists yet again stepped outside of their established tactical repertoire by performing a month-long occupation of a UN office compound in Gulu town. Such performative direct actions—the nude protest and UN occupation—were impactful, at least in part, because they caught state actors unprepared.

#### **5.4 Performative direct action**

Moments of breakthrough in social movements often occur when activists manage to express collective grievances through culturally resonant symbols and forms of protest (Snow et al, 2018; Jasper & Polletta, 2018). In such moments, movement organisers adapt existing cultural references to strategically trigger emotion (Jasper & Poulsen, 1995), garner media attention and capture the public imagination (Taylor & Van Dyke, 2004). While studies of peasant resistance have also explored the symbolism within 'hidden' expressions of dissent (Scott, 1985; Holmes, 1997, p. 187) and observed how cultural context shapes collective action (Isaacman, 1990, pp. 20–22; Pahnke et al, 2015), fewer scholars have considered the way that peasants strategically adapt 'culturally resonant' tactics (Schock, 2015, p. 5).

Building on such work, this section argues that symbolic acts must be examined within the broader scope of peasant movements and the praxis of resistance they cultivate rather than in isolation. Without such context, dramatic actions such as naked protest are too easily miscast as acts of last resort.

#### *5.4.1 Apaa's naked Protest: the power of cultural symbolism*

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of April 2015, a group of women stripped, rolled on the earth and wailed in front of a team of government Ministers, army officials and surveyors that arrived in Apaa to demarcate the Adjumani-Amuru District boundary. Demonstrating disciplined non-violence, hundreds of occupiers sat behind them blocking the road, holding placards (Abonga et al, 2020, p. 211). Confronted by the women's nudity, the Minister of Internal Affairs, General Aronda famously averted his eyes while the Minister of Lands, police, surveyors and other officials present broke down in tears (Daily Monitor, 2015). As opposition MPs had ensured that journalists were present, these scenes were broadcast across the country and picked up by the BBC (Byaruhanga, 2015).

This action was not an impromptu response but a pre-planned tactic that strategically evoked layers of cultural symbolism. Amongst Acholi, as in many parts of Africa (Tyler, 2013), for a mother or grandmother to bare her nakedness in anger expresses profound distress, censure, and repudiation. Antagonistically exposing the organs that gave birth and the breasts that provided milk invokes a curse, threatening to rescind life once given (Ebila & Tripp, 2017, p. 38; Female protester, Apaa, 2019). Acholi elders often attest that this shaming act was once applied in rare contexts within families or clans (Latigo, 2015). Over time, however, naked censure has become adapted into a regional repertoire of collective political action in northern districts (Martiniello, 2015) and across Uganda (Abonga et al, 2020): Apaa's strategists became aware of the tactic when women in the neighbouring area of Lakang stripped to protest land expropriation by the Madhvani Company in 2012. While its core meaning remains unmistakeable, the symbolic act takes on new nuances in each context it is performed. In Apaa, by lying naked on the earth, women conjured an image of vulnerable reliance upon the land (cf. Abonga, p. 214).

The immediate impact of the demonstration was undeniably dramatic. As Abonga et al (2020, pp. 214–215) relate, the disarming vulnerability yet potent condemnation conveyed

by the elderly women's nudity triggered a collective emotional response which appeared to compel state actors present to engage on a moral, relational level. A journalist recounted, "if you were there, you could do nothing but cry...even the officers were shedding tears" (Abonga et al, p. 214). The women's action provided a 'moral shock' (Jasper & Poulsen, 1995) by eliciting powerful emotions of shame, fear and possibly empathy (Goodwin et al, 2004; Jasper, 1998). This dynamic perhaps explains why the Ministers immediately assured the protesters that they had "no bad intentions" to take their land (Daily Monitor, 2015), aborted the demarcation exercise and ordered the withdrawal of the army and police. After leaving the scene, the Ministers further set back state plans by initiating fresh talks between Adjumani and Acholi parliamentarians.

It is critical, however, to consider the naked demonstration within the wider context of the occupiers' movement. Abonga et al (2020) observed both the power of naked protest to carve out space to "exercise political voice" (p. 199) amidst repression yet also the "narrow and fleeting" nature of this space (p. 210). The authors characterise Apaa's naked protest as an act of "last resort" (p. 216) that despite its initial impact, had little lasting effect (pp. 212–215 cf. Martiniello, 2017, p. 9). Although elements of this argument hold, by viewing the act in isolation, the authors both overplay the occupiers' expectations of the protest and overlook modest longer-term gains they achieved. As demonstrated above, occupiers have engaged in a diverse array of tactics to delay evictions over many years. A week before the protest, the presence of hundreds of occupiers congregated in Apaa centre had already deterred the state's first survey attempt (Ministry of Lands, Housing & Urban Development (MLHUD) 2017, p. 6). While the naked protest intentionally conveyed desperation, the women's decision to strip, as those involved relate (informal discussions, 2019 – 2021), was not a 'last resort' but rather a calculated countermove that reflected the adaptive nature of the occupiers' praxis. For Apaa's organisers, the protest was not a desperate last bid to resist eviction but a tactic to buy time to consolidate the occupation, which remained their central strategy.

Beyond the immediate impact of the protest, the symbolism of the women's actions captured the imagination of local civil society, igniting support. Although the Acholi 'Paramount' Chief condemned the act as 'an abomination' (Uganda Radio Network, 2015), Gulu's Catholic Archbishop, along with many other religious leaders, local NGOs, and Acholi politicians, rallied behind the occupiers; they publicly defended the women, conducted solidarity visits, documented human rights abuse, and advocated on their behalf to



state actors (Jamal, 2015; Ocungi, 2015; Okumu, 2015). Cumulatively, civil society's response to the protest marked the growing prominence of the occupiers' struggle in the wider Acholi region, demonstrating the power of culturally resonant, emotive protest to frame the Apaa movement in a way that moved people and created connection.

The women's nude protest remained a vivid point of reference for external observers of Apaa's movement. Five months after the protest, state actors descended upon Apaa in a display of military strength, injuring many and arresting dozens (Otto, 2015b) as they demarcated the disputed district boundary, enclosing Apaa within Adjumani District (MLHUD, 2017, pp. 7, 26–28). This display of state violence juxtaposed with Apaa women's earlier evocative, non-violent action and garnered further outrage amongst Acholi, expressed in radio talk shows, parliamentary debates and NGO reports (HURIFO, 2015). As the 2016 national election season drew closer, the tense political mood in the Acholi region over Apaa appeared to drive the central state to pause further operations: state actors even attempted to reassure Apaa residents that they would not face eviction. Accordingly, the year 2016, as one *rwot kweri* emphasised (Apaa, 2019 September) "provided rest. We dug more fields. More people arrived and we opened new sub-villages." While multiple factors contributed to this period of respite, the women's protest played a role by focusing regional attention on the unfolding situation and deepening political support for the occupiers.

Amongst occupiers of Apaa, the women's naked protest also became an emblem of the movement. For some, the action resounded with spiritual power, as the sudden death of General Aronda in late 2015 became attributed to the elderly women's demonstration (Wilmot, 2016). As Abonga et al (2020, p. 215) put it, "the curse imbued the protest with a kind of longevity" that lingered in occupier's "imaginations, memories and narratives." Organisers unconvinced of the protest's spiritual repercussions nevertheless express drawing resolve from the memory of state officials weeping before Apaa's grandmothers (Apaa leaders, 2020 November). The women's protest thus remained a key moment for Apaa's struggle not because it led to a conclusive resolution but because it cultivated the occupiers' confidence in their ability to undermine state force and gain public support to defend the occupation.

#### *5.4.2 Apaa's UN protest: Leveraging an international actor*

While scholars have explored the diverse connections between rural struggles, transnational movements and international organisations (Edelman & Borras, 2016; Temper, 2019), few studies examine cases in which peasant groups target—rather than lobby—international actors in order to indirectly apply pressure on their own government. Apaa peasant protestors' UN occupation provides a rare example of this kind of transgressive interaction with a supposedly-sympathetic international organisation. By leveraging a UN office against the Ugandan state and capturing public attention, Apaa's occupiers forced the regime to adapt its strategy of expropriation (See Laing & Weschler, forthcoming).

After weeks of planning, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2018, a group of 234 from Apaa travelled overnight to Gulu city to launch an occupation of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR). After deceiving a security guard to open the UN's gate to a few visitors, Apaa's protesters flooded into the walled compound, established a large camp of tarpaulin tents, and presented UN officers with specific demands designed to press the Ugandan Government to halt ongoing evictions and de-gazette Apaa (Laing & Weschler, 2018, Forthcoming). The petition concluded by requesting the UN OHCHR to “urge key foreign embassies and donors to make public statements condemning state abuses in Apaa” and to withhold funding if the Ugandan Government failed to respond.

In the lead-up to this action, Apaa's strategists faced a difficult situation. Between March and July 2018, the UWA burned over 840 homes across four villages in Apaa, inflicting injury and destroying crops and property in their wake. Although the majority of affected occupiers refused to leave and remained in Apaa, sleeping rough, Apaa's strategists feared that state forces would continue until every homestead in Apaa was destroyed and use increasing force. Amuru MP's legal interventions (Notice of Motion, 2017; Interim Order, 2018) and parliamentary advocacy (Hansard, 2018) had failed to gain political traction or curtail the evictions. Reflecting the position of key state ministers, first deputy Prime Minister Moses Ali declared to Parliament (Hansard, 2018 March 28) that “Apaa is in Adjumani, so whether to de-gazette it or not lies in the hands of Adjumani District Council. It is a fact that cannot be contested.” As state forces had begun to target key strategists during

evictions—including shooting one organiser dead at close range—Apaa’s leaders calculated that directing their action against state actors was too risky.<sup>33</sup>

In this context, the UN human rights office provided an oblique target: Apaa’s occupiers hoped to compel the UN to apply pressure on the state while shielding themselves from reprisals. By refusing to leave until their demands were addressed, Apaa’s protesters thrust the UN OCHCHR into a decision dilemma (Laing & Wilmot, 2018). On the one hand, UN staff perceived that accommodating the protesters risked jeopardising their fragile relationship with the Ugandan state: hours into the protest, state actors posted security forces on standby, demanding UN OHCHR have the occupiers removed. On the other, images of police forcefully expelling peaceful demonstrators from a UN compound could harm their reputation. The UN OHCHR settled for pushing the occupiers to leave voluntarily while holding closed meetings with central state actors. Five weeks into the protest, UN officials informed Apaa’s leaders that the UPDF had provided verbal assurance that there would be no further forceful evictions and that state officials ‘at the highest levels’ would provide further resolution. Despite the vague nature of such promises, Apaa’s strategists opted to end the action as their internal capacity to sustain the occupation waned.

Like the women’s naked protest, the symbolic nature of the Apaa’s UN occupation captured public attention in the Acholi region. The act of transplanting Apaa villagers to Gulu city into tarpaulin shelters resonated widely, evoking collective memories of forced displacement during the war and longer histories of forced movement. In their action, symbols of displacement were inverted into tools of resistance, generating a sense of collective empowerment in which Gulu residents could participate by offering practical support. During the month-long protest, religious leaders, market vendor groups, churches, NGOs and individuals delivered sacks of food, blankets and firewood to the UN compound gates, engaged the media, and petitioned state actors. The visibility of the protesters in the centre of Gulu city triggered a sense of urgency amongst civil society actors to pressure the state to end evictions. By performing displacement on a public stage, captured by local, national and, to a lesser extent, international media (NTV, 2018; Daily Monitor, 2018; Oryem, 2018), the protesters deepened political support for the movement.

---

<sup>33</sup> See Hansard, 2018 March 28.

By generating public pressure, the protesters' action compelled the state to shift tack. A week after the protesters' exit, the President visited Apaa and announced that a new joint committee of Acholi and Madi representatives would consider compensation, resettlement, or partial de-gazettement (Statehouse, 2018). After the Madi-Acholi delegation talks stalled however, Cabinet announced that the reserve would remain but that 'legitimate,' state-registered families would receive limited compensation (Kwesiga, 2019). Although the state's resettlement proposal proved disingenuous, it appeared Apaa occupiers' collective action had compelled the state to adopt a veneer of legitimacy. Rather than defend forced eviction, Cabinet publicly presented a peaceful, state-assisted resettlement process. Following the UN occupation, systematic, state-sanctioned evictions ceased, although small-scale, sporadic unauthorised attacks continued. Similar to state tactics used to advance the enclosure of land for Madhvani's sugarcane investment in Lakang (Martiniello, 2017), the underlying strategy behind the state's proposal, however, appears to have been to manufacture a short list of recipients willing to accept the deal to legitimise expropriation whilst provoking disunity amongst Apaa's occupiers.

The UN protest also contributed to broader shifts in the political landscape of the occupiers' struggle. As noted above, before the occupiers' protest, politicians' efforts to stem state evictions failed. The UN occupation, however, deepened Acholi support for Apaa and triggered a new political process which tilted conditions in the occupiers' favour. In particular, the formation of the 'Acholi' delegation generated cross NRM-opposition cooperation on the basis of ethnic loyalty. Against this backdrop, in early 2019 the NRM (Acholi) Deputy speaker Oulanyah increasingly leveraged his political clout to protect Acholi occupiers, particularly as Madi land claimant groups led new incursions into Apaa. The Acholi political alliance played into Oulanyah's appointment of a new Parliamentary committee on Apaa, which called for a moratorium on evictions (Daily Monitor, 2019a). By May 2019, Oulanyah, it appeared, personally swayed the President to reverse his snap announcement of 'final' Apaa evictions and appoint him head of yet another committee tasked to 'resolve' the conflict (Daily Monitor, 2019b).

These political dynamics proved surprisingly enduring. From May 2019, systematic state eviction operations in Apaa ceased, having become—for the time being—politically unpalatable. The release of Parliament's report (Parliament of Uganda, 2020, p. 13)

recommending de-gazettement, further dampened support for evictions. While the UWA refocused its efforts on quashing Apaa households' charcoal production, the state no longer ignored its excessive violence: when rangers shot and killed a Gulu-based charcoal dealer in Apaa in early 2020, the offenders were court marshalled and imprisoned. Subsequently, the UWA grew cautious, barely responding, for instance, when the MTN company erected a network tower within the reserve (Owiny, 2021). In this new political climate, the central state continued to placate the demands of allied Acholi politicians as the violent incursions of Madi land claimant groups became the dominant source of conflict in Apaa and expend military resources to protect Acholi settlements within the reserve that were previously targeted by state evictions.

In sum, Apaa strategists' performative direct action shifted the political terrain upon which their struggle continues. Even as Apaa strategists began to coordinate with UPDF to scatter intruding groups from Adjumani District, they remained aware that the fragile political balance working in their favour could easily shift or disintegrate. In 2022, some occupiers argued that state actors intended to exploit the presence of UPDF and the fear generated by Madi incursions in Apaa to weaken the movement before launching renewed eviction processes. Amidst ongoing unpredictability, Apaa's occupiers continue to draw on their accumulated praxis of resistance to analyse political shifts and develop new strategies.

## **5.5 The struggle for solidarity**

As Melucci (1995, p. 43) emphasises, unity and cohesion within social movements are never a natural "starting point" but rather the result of deliberate political work. The task of scholars, accordingly, is to "understand how a movement succeeds or fails in becoming a collective actor" (Melucci, p. 55). The core of this question—which revolves around how Apaa occupiers constructed collective identity, shared belonging and organisational structures—will be explored in chapters six and seven. It is helpful, however, to first consider how Apaa's peasant occupiers cultivate solidarity to address internal divisions within the movement exploited by state agents, and to counter ruling party co-option and infiltration.

As highlighted in chapter four, divisive state tactics have posed ongoing threats to Apaa occupiers' capacity to defend the occupation. Over time, my understanding of NRM

networks and how they operate to disrupt Apaa occupiers' organisation came into sharper relief. Long-term NRM 'operatives' are well known to Apaa's leadership.<sup>34</sup> Over the years operatives have co-opted several key Apaa strategists by threatening arrest for their role in prior actions and promising financial backing, then using them to gather intelligence, and as Gramsci put it (1971, p. 80) "sow disarray and confusion," to undermine movement cohesion. As outlined in chapter four, this dynamic was exemplified by the efforts of Ojera Christopher and his collaborators to drive a wedge between Apaa occupiers in Juka with villages within the wildlife reserve, leading Juka residents to abandon the movement. To illustrate the far-reaching repercussions of co-option, one village leader evoked the proverb, *twon kalang ka o too yo lweny ki lwake*—when the largest ant dies, its followers lose their way. By 'turning' influential organisers, agents gain inroads amongst their associates, further weakening participation in collective action.

On several occasions, state agents have directly infiltrated the movement. This occurred, for instance, amidst ruling party efforts to undermine the movement through the state 'resettlement' compensation package proposed in 2019. In early 2019, occupiers recount that a handful of newcomers arrived in Apaa, claiming connection with particular families. Together with known, embedded NRM agents, they attempted to acquire plots of land and tempt households to accept the package. Beyond securing a list of recipients ready to accept state compensation, such agents, it appeared, sought to wield the promise of pay-outs and the threat of renewed evictions to fracture Apaa residents' collective resolve to maintain the occupation.

Apaa's occupiers draw on multiple strategies to counteract such divisive tactics. Apaa leaders educate occupiers about ruling party pressure and defection and intervene when they believe a particular occupier is targeted for co-option. Interventions are often undertaken by the individual's Apaa-based relatives; if appeals to movement solidarity fail, relatives can draw on family loyalty and the threat of clan discipline to bring them in line. Low-ranking state operatives caught infiltrating the movement have been subjected to harsher reprisals. Several agents who managed to acquire plots in Pwunu Dyang Village in order to accept state compensation in 2019, for instance, were flogged, publicly humiliated and expelled from Apaa. Strategists in Apaa also guard against intelligence leaks. Strategy meetings, for

---

<sup>34</sup> For discussion on NRM security networks see Tapscott, 2021, p. 278

instance, are held in different remote villages rather than Apaa centre, which is considered more accessible to spies. Caution trumps convenience: I witnessed several meetings that were abruptly dispersed when a leader suspected of turning towards NRM agents turned up unexpectedly, even though many travelled for over half a day to attend.

Ultimately, Apaa's leaders counter such threats by cultivating solidarity. Strategic meetings in Apaa frequently address sources of disunity, whether arising from co-option by ruling-party agents, dwindling engagement of villages located in areas rarely exposed to evictions or intrusions, or, as will be explored in the following chapters, divisions based on clan identity, administrative allegiances, and disputes over land allocation and resource use. Apaa's key strategists use various discursive strategies to cultivate solidarity (Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Hunt & Benford, 2004). Drawing on historical precedent to illustrate the dangers of co-option, for example, in one meeting an elder underlined that UPDA insurgents failed to prevent Museveni's rise to power because their leaders acquiesced to the NRA's offers for personal advancement, fracturing the movement. Strategists often appeal to prior moments in Apaa's struggle, presenting solidarity as the key to the movement's achievements. When Acholi Ber Village bore the brunt of UWA and land-claimant intrusions in mid-2020, for example, one leader reminded those gathered of times when occupiers rallied to defend targeted areas when their own villages were unaffected. "Our struggle," he emphasised, "is your struggle. If they take Acholi Ber, won't your villages be next?" By appealing to a mutually accepted principle, even as it appeared in decline, he sought to revive cross-village solidarity.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

In their struggle against state expropriation, peasant occupiers of Apaa developed a diverse repertoire of collective action that cut across the categories of militant mobilisation and non-violent demonstration, conventional advocacy and direct action, impromptu tactics and orchestrated dramatic action. By cultivating a flexible praxis of resistance, occupiers acquired the capacity to shift between such approaches to consolidate and expand their occupation of Apaa. To enact this praxis, Apaa's strategists relied on large numbers of occupiers across villages to consistently turn up, develop skills and accept risk. This required

organisers to engage in the slow, daily work of organising and cultivating an ethos of solidarity.

In the discussion above, Apaa occupiers' claims to land and belonging found gritty expression in their destruction of boundary markers, disruption of survey teams, and strategic alliance with Acholi politicians. The following chapter turns to examine how Apaa's occupiers have drawn on interwoven narratives linking history, landscape and belonging to construct—and reconstruct—a sense of collective identity and to frame and justify their claims to territory and property. As will be seen, Apaa occupier's ethos of solidarity remains limited by the extent to which the movement's framing story reproduces ethno-territorial logics advanced by ruling elites.



## Chapter 6

### **Framing the Apaa movement: Reconstructing identity, territory, and history**

Since the late 1980s, a wave of geographers and anthropologists have re-examined the relationship between political struggle, landscape, identity, and narratives of the past (Cohen & Odhiambo, 1989; Moore, 1993; Keith & Pile, 1993; Gregory, 1994). Integrating insights from diverse literatures spanning critical approaches to subaltern resistance (Mitchell, 1990; Ortner, 1995), the history of African land regimes (S. Moore, 1978; Berry, 1993) and the nature of ethnicity (Iliffe, 1979; Vail, 1989), this ‘spatial turn’ in the study of identity politics drew attention to the fluid, shifting processes by which people infuse places with layers of meaning, and construct, contest and renegotiate belonging to land, and claims to territory (Moore, 1998). This surge of interest in contested ‘geographic imaginaries’ reinvigorated historical studies of ethnicity and resistance to colonial rule (Bender, 2013; Willis & Gona, 2013; MacArthur, 2016), complemented scholarship on struggles over property, territory, and citizenship (Lund, 2008; Geschiere, 2009; Fontein, 2006), and informed emerging concepts of ‘socio-territorial movements’ (Fernandes, 2005; Halvorsen et al, 2019). Critical analysis of the ‘politics of place’ is still only rarely applied, however, to the study of contemporary responses ‘from below’ to state-driven land expropriation, a task all the more pressing given a recent resurgence of essentialist readings of indigeneity and ethnic homelands in popular discourse and scholarly research (Simpson, 2014; Anthias & Hoffmann, 2021).<sup>35</sup>

This chapter takes the case of the Apaa land occupation to examine how peasant farmers in northern Uganda have resisted state enclosure of land by constructing and reconstructing discourses interknitting history, landscape, identity, and territory. Two connected ideological processes are examined: the construction of collective identity that unites participants and fosters solidarity (Melucci, 1995; Snow et al, 2018) and the articulation of ‘framing’ narratives (Benford & Snow, 2000) or as Lund (2008) puts it, ‘strategies of legitimation’ that justify territorial claims, rationalise political action and win over supporters. As foregrounded in chapter two, this chapter seeks to understand the

---

<sup>35</sup> Literature bridging this gap includes Li, 2000; Moore, 2005; Verkoren & Ngin, 2017

dynamics that enable successful resistance—a line of inquiry of interest to scholars of social movements and rural protest—whilst grounding the analysis in historically-orientated scholarship on African land regimes (Berry, 1993; Boone, 2014; Leonardi, 2020).

This approach disrupts prominent portrayals of large-scale struggles over land in northern Uganda. Media, NGO, and scholarly accounts often miscast the Apaa struggle in two key ways. First, reflecting an all-too-common impulse to romanticise and reify ‘indigenous’ or ‘local’ resistance (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992, p. 8; Radcliffe, 2017), scholars (Serwajja, 2014; Martiniello, 2015) and local observers (Olum, 2015) often take the Apaa occupation’s ethnic character and ancestral land claims at face value, without probing how the movement’s social makeup and framing narratives came to be. Martiniello (2015, p. 662), for instance, unquestioningly frames Lakang and Apaa as struggles waged by “Acholi peasants” to defend their customary land against state dispossession and market forces. Second, accounts of the inter-administrative, ethnic dimensions of conflict in Apaa and the wider region (Otim, 2012; Lenhart, 2013; Sjögren, 2015) tend to focus narrowly on the politicised, elite-driven character of identity-based competition over land. Sjögren (2015, p. 275), for example, characterises the “instrumentalised use” of “clan and chieftaincy identity” in large-scale land disputes in Amuru as a “crude device for mobilising political power in the context of [a] scramble for resources—a case of political tribalism superseding moral ethnicity.” This assessment highlights important dynamics at play but fails to explain the depth of the emotional attachments to land that have animated struggles over Apaa and how the conflict has transformed over time.

To challenge such portrayals, this chapter draws upon Feierman’s (1990) concept of the ‘peasant intellectual’ and the Gramscian-inspired notion of counter-hegemonic land practices developed in chapter two. The chapter is structured in two parts: the first examines how past and present hegemonic land regime processes advanced by ruling class actors shaped the Apaa land occupation between 2006 and 2011, while the second examines distinctly counter-hegemonic elements of the movement that emerged through political struggle. The analysis focuses on two counter-hegemonic processes that have unfolded within the Apaa movement since 2010: Apaa’s peasant intellectuals struggle to transcend divisions based on clan identity and emerging discussions that deconstruct exclusive narratives of Acholi tribal belonging. The chapter highlights how Apaa’s peasant occupiers have overcome barriers to successful organising and frustrated UWA evictions by creatively re-envisioning

political forms of belonging, but also how their engagement in such counter-hegemonic practices remains limited, posing ongoing dilemmas to the movement.

## **6.1 Hegemonic processes and the shaping of resistance**

While discourses of ‘ethnic territoriality’ and indigeneity are rooted in colonial modes of power which contemporary ruling elites continue to exploit for political gain, they also constitute ‘sites of resistance,’ providing political language to advance struggles against elite accumulation and state-driven dispossession (Moore, 1998, p. 357; Peluso, 2009; Steinebach, 2017). As Anthias and Hoffmann (2021, p. 218) argue, struggles waged from below may “reproduce dominant ethno-territorial regimes,” even as they disrupt ruling class power.

Similarly, the peasant political action that arose to advance communal claims to Apaa land was distinctly shaped by hegemonic logics linking identity, territory, and property, perpetuated by ruling elites. The section below begins, however, by exploring the creative agency of ‘peasant intellectuals’ (Feierman, 1990) in constructing the discourse of Pabo clan authority which gave shape to the Apaa land movement in 2006, highlighting the ways that they drew together memories of place and experiences of suffering (Malkki, 1992; Moore, 1993) into a powerful mobilising discourse. Next, the section teases out the ways that this collective framing narrative was moulded by the hegemonic territorial identity politics reignited by Museveni’s state-building strategies. Finally, the section examines how Apaa’s peasant intellectuals have reclaimed ethno-territorial discourses to resist state enclosure of Apaa land, but also the ways in which their political action has been limited by its reproduction of the very social divisions elite actors wield to fragment their resistance.

### *6.1.1 Constructing Pabo clan belonging*

As several hundred farmers departed from Pabo and Omee II IDP camps in November 2006 to establish a base in the gazetted area of Apaa, they framed their movement as the ‘return’ of Pabo clans to their ancestral lands. From 2006, they drew on this narrative and the relational networks of Pabo’s many clans to recruit new occupiers and strengthen collective resolve amidst mounting pressure from state forces. While a handful of families that launched the occupation was indeed returning to land they (or their parents) formerly inhabited, many were new arrivals, reflecting a broader trend observed after the war for displaced groups to

trace “lineages and lands to areas of earlier ancestral descent,” rather than return to previous locales (Rugadya et al, 2008, p. 8; Joireman et al, 2012); or as one NGO (Refugee Law Project, 2007, p. 4) cynically framed it, to stake new claims based on “invented history” and “political opportunism.” Certainly, as argued in chapter three, the pre-colonial ‘ancestral’ ties of Pabo lineages to the Apaa area appear no stronger than those of other Madi and Acholi-speaking groups in the region: expressions of exclusive Pabo claims to Apaa land only emerged as the war drew to a close.

To understand how the narrative of Pabo belonging in Apaa propelled the occupation movement, it is necessary to trace the roots of this discourse beyond the politics of post-war return and untangle how peasant intellectuals “articulated,” as Hall (1996) [1986] and Li (2000) express, a collective identity tied to social memories of place. Pabo’s peasant intellectuals did not construct such narratives in isolation, but in dialogue with many other local actors, from former parish and sub-county chiefs of Pabo who re-emerged as influential figures in the ‘Pabo Development Foundation,’ to political-military elites and ‘customary’ leaders. While such elite figures played important roles in condensing and propagating these discourses into written petitions and memorandums, it was the conceptual work of peasant farmers—drawing upon political memories and oral histories—that provided the substance and texture of such texts.

The narrative woven by Pabo’s peasant intellectuals that bound ancestral chiefdom identity to Apaa’s landscape proved a powerful mobilising force, at least in part, because it linked social memories of Pabo’s pre-war frontier settlers to longer histories of colonial exclusion and resistance. The peasants and cattle herders who encroached into the ‘East Madi Controlled Hunting Area’ to settle southern stretches of Apaa in the 1970s gradually framed their actions as part of a long struggle of Pabo clans to return to the eastern bank of the Nile, from which they claim their forefathers were displaced by the British. Their narratives emphasise the continuity of Pabo clan ties to the area in various ways. One elder of Pabo Pabide recounted how Pabo’s *aligo*—great lone hunters—defied British officials to traverse Apaa and hunt game in the 1950s at a time when Pabo leaders contested the colonial enclosure of Kilak hill. Pabo clan members who participated in illicit inter-clan hunting parties in Apaa in the 60s emphasise that it was hunters from Pabo, who retained an intimate

knowledge of Apaa's landscape, who led the way. Such stories of defiance became etched, to borrow Fontein's (2006) term, into the very 'history-scape' of Apaa.

Pabo Elders who settled the Apaa frontier in the 70s and 80s emphasise spiritual ties they formed with the land. While some pioneers acknowledge that they simply claimed land that appealed to them, others narrate that they resettled the *wi obwur* of their grandfathers—the former settlements or *gony* (hunting camps) evidenced by remains of stone bases of granaries, grinding stones, and graves. As often observed in African contexts (Shipton, 2009; Meinert et al, 2017), material remnants serve as symbols of belonging as well as evidence to bolster claims to land. One elder in Arii Village in Apaa recounted how his father showed him his *wi obwur* during hunting trips in the 1960s, then returned to clear bush and plant crops; by reclaiming this site, he expressed, he maintained links to his predecessors and their *joggi*—their lingering spiritual presence. Another form of transcendent connection to Apaa's landscape stems from the *ayweya*—old trees or rocks embodying powerful spirits—that Pabo settlers identified and appeased with offerings as they mediated the forces of the *tim*—the wild, untamed bush. It is such ritual connections to land that Pabo elders wove into exclusive expressions of belonging in the politicised context of the post-war scramble for land.

More broadly, narratives justifying Pabo's authority are grounded in respect for the struggle in which Pabo elders engaged to reclaim Apaa as a land frontier, create a habitable place and forge a new community. Whenever I expressed interest in Apaa's history, current occupiers eagerly spoke of Apaa's pioneers of the 1970s (Juda Ojok, Nekanori Bere, Atoo Valensiyo and Ouma Ocut, to name a few), recounting where they settled, the trees they planted, and the challenges they faced. The son of one such founding figure narrated:

There was nothing when my father arrived, no roads, no market, no school, few people.... Just wild animals- elephants, even lions occasionally...But there was wide open, fertile land to dig, room to graze herds, land for any number of children...By the time I was grown, they'd opened a school in Arii and a small weekly market; they began paying taxes to Pabo (Arii, December 2019).

Many occupiers recall the influence of Alensiyo Obwur of Pabo Kal and his charismatic wife Angela, a renowned *ajwakka* (healer, spirit medium) who attracted and hosted extended kin and friends, providing a social focal point for Apaa's expanding community. The scattered settlements established by such pioneers became loosely integrated into Pabo division's

jurisdiction under Gulu District, informing an emerging sense of Pabo's authority over 'Apaa,' an area which became construed not only as encompassing settled areas but also as the open frontier to the north, and to the west.

Narratives interweaving past and present struggles of 'Pabo' to defend Apaa are also textured by the 'social memories' (Halbwachs, 1980 [1950]; Daphi, 2013; Nugent, 2019, p. 484) of those who lived through the political upheavals of the 1980s and 1990s. The experience of sporadic violent encounters with Madi neighbours (detailed in chapter three) and the mounting brutality of Museveni's forces from 1985 engendered a sense that well before the current struggle, Apaa's settlers from Pabo had already, as Moore (1998, p. 358) expressed, "suffered for the land." Some of Apaa's current occupiers express pride that early Pabo settlers provided bases for segments of the UPDA known as *Cilil* who struggled against Museveni's forces between 1985 and 1987, and emphasise that Apaa was targeted by NRA forces as an insurgent 'hideout.' One woman born in Apaa described her memory, as a nine-year-old, of an attack by NRA soldiers in the late 1980s:

they beat my mother, defecated in our *agulu* (clay drinking pot) and smashed in our roof ...they told us to leave...I think government wanted Apaa land, even then (Apaa, 2019 September).

Several years later, she narrated, soldiers caught and almost killed her father, prompting their family to flee to Labala; they were eventually forced into Pabo IDP camp in 1996. Another man recalled how "soldiers tried to push many people out of Apaa around 1989. We and many others refused to leave, but they kept coming" (Apaa, 2019 November). Such recollections of resistance, endurance and violent expulsion from the land have been formed into what Baird and Le Billon (2012) conceptualise as 'spatialised political memories,' woven into broader narratives that frame the move to Apaa in 2006 as the continuation of an inter-generational struggle to reclaim Pabo land.

Such discourses began to take definite shape amidst the social ruptures of life in the IDP camps, particularly between 1996 and 2006. As scholars have observed (Hammond, 2011; Long, 2013; MacDonald & Porter, 2020), periods of exile and displacement often constitute radical moments in which those plunged into a liminal space renegotiate links between belonging and place, sometimes constructing new "homes and homelands" (Malkki, 1992, p. 24). The IDP camps of wartime northern Uganda were congested, squalid, and inhumane; places where people were neither protected from LRA attacks nor abuses by

government soldiers, where disease outbreaks were frequent, devastating fires common, and food rations insufficient (see Dolan, 2005, pp. 158–267; Branch, 2011, chapter 3). When they recall life in Pabo IDP camp, Apaa’s current occupiers often convey a sense of moral crisis manifest in the degrading lack of pit latrines and privacy, the proliferation of alcoholism and a breakdown of familial norms (also Mergelsberg, 2012). Although some gravitated towards the hustle of ‘town life’ as the war subsided (see Branch, 2013, pp. 3155–3158), other displaced camp dwellers sought to return to ‘the village’—a domain associated with independence, spaciousness, and social order—even as broken familial ties left many uncertain as to where they could access land. It was in this context that Apaa’s pre-war settlers began to articulate a broader political project to reclaim the Apaa land frontier for ‘Pabo,’ enveloping, as explored in chapter seven, a growing array of landless, land-poor, marginalised, or entrepreneurially-minded people.

As peasant intellectuals of Pabo instigated, and then expanded the occupation of Apaa, new recruits were initially amalgamated into the movement on the basis of their Pabo identity, maternal clan ties or non-kin friendships and connections to members of Pabo clans. The narrative that tied Pabo identity to Apaa and justified clan-based authority over land allocation must be understood as embedded in social memories of place, textured by suffering, and materially manifest in new layers of *wi obwur*—the fruit trees, graves and grinding stones left behind in southern stretches of Apaa by the settlers of the 1970s – 80s as they were forced into IDP camps by Museveni’s soldiers.

#### *6.1.2 On-stage narratives and the exclusion of ethnic others*

While the discourse of clan-based identity, belonging and authority articulated by peasant intellectuals that initially propelled the Apaa movement was grounded in a historically rooted attachment to place, this sub-section demonstrates that it was also shaped by hegemonic land regime processes advanced by ruling elites and the state, past and present. Between 2006 and 2010, the Apaa movement moulded to the territorial identity politics that characterised the neoliberal state-building strategies employed by Museveni’s regime (explored in chapter four) which had reignited divisive logics underpinning colonial administration (explored in chapter three). As new pressures on land emerged and local politicians mobilised ethnic constituents, peasant intellectuals of Pabo displaced into IDP camps began to translate their past experiences of connection to the Apaa frontier into more

rigid claims to descent-based authority, drawing on history, as Leonardi and Browne (2018, p. 9) expressed, to justify “exclusion along ethnic lines.”

Peasant intellectuals driving the Apaa movement initially articulated Pabo authority over land in opposition to two distinct ‘others.’ First, the idea of Pabo authority carried with it an exclusion of a ‘Lamogi’ other, an identity also encompassing smaller Acholi chiefdom groupings in the region such as Parabongo, Boro, Toro and Pagak, along with their many constituent clans. The second implicit exclusion was of a tribal, ‘Madi’ other, which also stood as a short-hand for other related ‘West Nile’ groups such as Lugbara. As Lentz (2010, p. 75) observed of African contexts more broadly, the key issue at stake was not simply land use but rather the authority to control land allocation and act as hosts (also Berry, 1993). Some Pabo loyalists tied this sense of exclusive authority over the resettlement of the Apaa land frontier to the pioneering work of Pabo elders in the 70s. To paraphrase an elderly occupier from a Pabo Palwong clan;

Maybe Lamogi clans lived here long ago, before sleeping sickness. They say Parabongo once stayed at the foot of Mt. Olwiyo... But they didn’t return! We were the ones who returned... The Lwo migrated from Bahr Gazel in Sudan, but would we be justified in returning there now? It’s not possible! If Lamogi wanted land, they could have come to us in the right way (Apaa, 2020 October).

As they established the occupation, Pabo peasant leaders welcomed individuals of non-Pabo descent who acknowledged their authority but excluded and engaged in aggressive confrontations with groups mobilised as ‘Parabongo’ or ‘Lamogi’ who expressed competing claims to authority over Apaa land.

Although local politicians and customary leaders stirred up animosity along ethnic lines during this period, peasant intellectuals of Amuru District actively co-produced such divisions. In May 2006, for example, Omee II camp dwellers (Onek et al, 2006) wrote to the Pabo Sub-County chairperson seeking support to create a transition camp in Apaa specifically to counter “*ayela-yela pa jo Amuru*”- the mounting disruption waged by ‘Amuru’ (Lamogi) clans who had begun to uproot the crops they planted. One man from Pabo who participated in the skirmishes between 2005 and 2010 recalled;

It wasn’t just the politicians. *We lu te dero* (ordinary people) also organised. When we had just left Pabo [camp] for Apaa, the Lamogi came, arriving in small trucks loaded



with beans, hoes and pangas....They didn't come to ask for land but to take it forcefully. We chased them away with the same means they tried to use on us...If you didn't help, our leaders would confiscate your chicken (Apaa, 2020 October).

Mirroring the prevailing ethno-territorial grammar that characterised local politics amidst state decentralisation reforms (Lentz, 2010; Geschiere, 2009), peasant intellectuals from Pabo leveraged political memories to construct new identity-based hierarchies of authority over land in Apaa.

It was in this political moment that peasant intellectuals, aided by literate, town-based elders, began to refine a distinct, 'on-stage' framing narrative to publicly justify the occupation, whether to journalists or state officials. This narrative had several key features. First, it revolved around scripted narratives of displacement designed to demonstrate the indigeneity of Pabo clans in Apaa, appealing to conceptions of 'customary' land that had gained currency in the 1990s. Individuals selected by Apaa leaders to publicly represent the movement typically identify as Pabo and narrate that they (or their parents or grandparents) 'returned' to their customary land in Apaa in the 70s after Amin de-gazetted the area, then 'returned' to Apaa immediately after the LRA war. In mid-2019, for example, I observed an older male occupier adopt this simplified script, recounting to a visiting NGO worker how he was born in Apaa in the 70s: he later acknowledged that he was born near Pabo trading centre, and joined the movement in 2013. Apaa's occupiers were typically unconcerned about my interest in the complexity and diverse origins of their paths to Apaa. In immediate, politicised public contexts, in which nuances are easily lost or misconstrued, they opted to present a uniform story, reflecting the 'simplification' and 'boundary-making' processes that often characterise the articulation of collective belonging and the position of indigeneity (Hall, 1990; Li, 2000; Moore, 2005).

A second feature of the essentialist 'on-stage' narrative leveraged by peasant intellectuals in Apaa relates to the way it melded historical accounts of administrative borders to customary land rights. Drawing from colonially derived ethno-territorial logics, peasant intellectuals of Pabo interwove reinterpreted oral histories, British administrative practices, and material evidence to narrate that Apaa has always constituted Pabo—and more broadly Acholi— territory. In one strategic discourse, Pabo elders refute narratives wielded by Lamogi elders that link the establishment of British administrative boundaries to the stretches

of colonial roads maintained by each chief. In the ‘Lamogi’ version, the Chief of Pabo was ‘lazy,’ only accepting responsibility for a short portion of the road, thereby curtailing Pabo’s territory, and placing Apaa within Lamogi territory (Lamogi elder, Olwal, 2020 July). In contrast, some Pabo elders retort that Chief Abiny of Pabo cleverly evaded imposing a heavy road-labour load on his people but that the bulk of ‘Pabo’ territory (including Apaa) lay in the hunting grounds, beyond major roads. Pabo lands, one elder contended, have long been compared to a rhinoceros; *wiye bit, dude lac*—its tip is sharp and thin, but its bottom is wide.

Apaa peasant ‘strategies of legitimation’ often also feature a stylised story of a Madi-Acholi conflict leading to the creation of an inter-tribal boundary placing Apaa in Acholi-land. The conflict is often dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although some versions inexplicably specify the 1920s, well after British officers displaced populations from the area. In a Gulu High court witness statement (Ochan, 2014), for example, a Pabo elder testified;

I am an old Mzee and I know that between 1924 to 1926 the Acholi as a tribe and the people of Pabo, in particular, were already in Apaa...During that time there was a tribal war between Acholi and Madi...the two tribes [held] a reconciliation meeting where they met in Nimule being a neutral ground...the chiefs agreed the...boundary between the two tribes be a river and the name of the river to be Juka, [which] in Acholi language means to put an end or to stop.

As argued in chapter three, it is likely this narrative was adapted from the story of a 19<sup>th</sup> century inter-family inter-clan feud which had no bearing on a boundary, either ‘tribal’ or administrative. In such narratives, colonial boundaries, contemporary administrative borders, and ‘ancestral’ ethnic territories inferring property rights are conflated and leveraged in service of the “spatial ambitions” (Lund, 2013, p. 20) of Apaa’s occupiers.

Finally, the ‘on-stage’ narrative Apaa’s peasant intellectuals articulated to justify the occupation inverts the historical, legal and technical claims of state actors. Rather than challenging whether the government’s ‘statist’ claims to Apaa land are just, Apaa leaders contest the historical accuracy of state narratives. Thus, while UWA, Adjumani and central state officials recount that Apaa fell within ‘Madi’ District at Independence (which was subsequently divided to form Moyo, then Adjumani), Apaa’s peasant intellectuals claim that Apaa fell within Acholi, Gulu, then Amuru District—indicating that Apaa constitutes ‘Acholi’ territory and that Adjumani leaders lack jurisdiction to dictate land use in the area.

Likewise, while the UWA highlights that Apaa formed part of ‘East Madi Controlled Hunting Ground’ in 1963, which was reduced to form the East Madi Wildlife Reserve in 2002, Apaa’s peasant intellectuals and their allies insist Apaa fell within the ‘Kilak Controlled Hunting ground’ which Amin degazetted in 1972. In each instance, Apaa’s peasant intellectuals assert counter-claims which are (as demonstrated in chapter three) technically inaccurate, yet reflect the social memories of Pabo’s 1970s settlers and possibly also hazy recollections that the Juka/Zoka river did indeed once mark a colonial Acholi-Madi boundary.

Apaa’s peasant intellectuals have also leveraged alternative ‘strategies of legitimization’ (Lund, 2008) to bolster their historical claims. In particular, they focus on material proof that their forefathers resided in the area in the 1970s–80s under ‘Acholi’ local government units. In a written memorandum to the President (Toobina & Ochan, 2012), elders from Pabo emphasised that Apaa residents formerly paid graduated tax to Gulu District, that general elections in Apaa since 1980 were conducted under Pabo Sub-County, and that “cassia, mango trees and banana plantations...planted way back in the 1970s” still stand in Apaa today. Apaa leaders and their political allies have presented such evidence in court, Parliament, and in appeals to NGOs; during the 2018 UN protest, for example, Apaa elders displayed their faded, frayed graduated tax tickets pre-dating wartime displacement, stamped by Pabo Sub-County in 1994. The exclusive character of such claims mirrored the ethno-territorial logics leveraged by ruling elites amidst the post-war scramble over land.

### *6.1.3 The power and limits of ethno-territorial logics*

As Anthias and Hoffmann (2021, p. 219) observe, although the language of ethnic territoriality reflects colonial power and contemporary strategies of state rule, the mapping of ethnic homelands can also constitute a ‘site of resistance’ (Peluso, 1995; Simpson, 2014; Steinebach, 2017; Anthias, 2018). Even as Apaa’s peasant intellectuals reproduced the categories, logics and structures advanced by ruling elites, they nevertheless leveraged the ‘tools of hegemony,’ as Feierman (1990, p. 40) put it, against hegemonic power. The ethnoterritorial ideology and ethnic identity that so powerfully propelled the Apaa occupation and engendered political support, however, have also hindered the movement.

In northern Uganda, peasant discourses articulating Pabo (and more broadly, Acholi) authority over Apaa land provided powerful instruments of resistance to state land expropriation in three key ways. First, by evoking deeply resonant frames and collective memories, the narrative of Pabo authority proved compelling enough to draw followers to join the movement at significant personal risk. The shared story of Pabo belonging helped to give flesh to the emerging ‘collective identity’ (Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Hunt & Benford, 2004) and ethos of solidarity that underpinned the pliable resistance strategies occupiers successfully employed during the early years of the occupation, as explored in chapter five.

The discourse of ethnic belonging also enabled peasant resistance to the expropriation of Apaa land because it availed the movement with powerful political allies. By embracing political narratives that portrayed Apaa as the ancestral and administrative territory of ‘Pabo,’ peasant intellectuals initially secured the military protection and political backing of local Pabo elites such as the Pabo Sub-County Chairperson and Gen. Oketta, who proved eager to represent their ethnic constituencies. As Apaa’s peasant leaders reframed the movement (as explored below) around tribal identity, they further benefited from the advocacy and protection of national-level Acholi MPs. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Apaa’s peasant leaders wielded such political alliances to great effect, procuring intelligence, strategic advice, funding, and powerful advocates in Parliament and Cabinet.

Finally, the ‘framing’ narrative of ethno-territorial belonging—to borrow from the language of social movement scholars (Snow, 2004)—provided Apaa’s peasant intellectuals with a viable strategy to justify the movement. Apaa occupiers’ historical narratives garnered substantial support amongst NGOs, the Ugandan media, religious institutions, international agencies and the wider Acholi public, reflecting the rising sway of global discourses favouring ‘indigenous’ rights (Amanor, 2001; Li, 2000), and the way such narratives resonated with local political dynamics after the war. The widespread appeal of Apaa occupiers’ historical discourses is evident in the way that they have been reproduced by NGOs (Lokwiya, 2011, p. 2; HURIFO, 2015, pp. 14–16; Olum, 2015, pp. 4–11), scholars (Serwajja, 2014; Ebila & Tripp, 2017) and popular media (Liri, 2011; Komakech, 2015). In the wake of the 2018 ‘UN’ protest, Gulu NGO workers observed how particular UN officials and NGO directors were compelled by Apaa leaders’ narratives of indigeneity to engage further; some quietly lobbied state actors, others channelled funds to support occupiers’ direct

actions. Despite the strength of the state's legal position, Apaa's occupiers managed to cast doubt on competing historical narratives and persuade many of the movement's legitimacy, imbuing Apaa occupiers' collective action with the political salience to disrupt state eviction processes.

To the extent that the Apaa movement conformed to the hegemonic ethno-territorial logics leveraged by ruling elites, however, it has remained vulnerable to political manipulation, internal fragmentation, and ongoing conflict. As discussed in chapter four, such dynamics came to a head as tensions mounted between Apaa's occupiers organised around Pabo authority and rival groups dispersing from IDP camps organised along Lamogi clan lines. Many occupiers recall how it became increasingly unfeasible between 2006 and 2011 to sustain a struggle fought on two fronts, against the UWA and other clan-based groups. To paraphrase the reflections of an occupier of Pabo Pugwang present in Apaa during this period:

Could we have defeated UWA if we continued to fight our brothers, Lamogi and Parabongo? It was a difficult time...No one died, but people suffered; we lived with fear. Crops were destroyed, people injured. If we had kept on like that, struggling to extend into Lakang, barring Lamogi, we would have lost the land (Apaa, 2020 February).

Some occupiers of non-Pabo clans also recall feeling torn between their recognition of Pabo authority and their own clan loyalties. As peasant intellectuals from Pabo reproduced the contours of inter-clan, inter-sub-county political struggles over territory exploited by elite actors in the wake of the northern war, the resulting conflicts threatened to undermine the movement.

The movement has also been deeply constrained by the way peasant intellectuals reproduced hegemonic, ethno-territorial logics that pit Acholi against Madi and Lugbara peasants. From the perspective of Apaa's Acholi occupiers, the mounting threat posed by Madi counter-claims was thrown into sharp relief in a series of clashes in Apaa in June 2017 in which at least 17 Acholi died, and many were injured (Apaa Religious Peace Initiative, 2017). While what provoked the clashes, the identity of the Madi-speakers involved, and the degree of higher political provocation involved remain uncertain, the intimate character of violence inflicted by machetes and bows and arrows, and the horror of limbs and bodies

recovered decaying in the bush, shook the movement to its core.<sup>36</sup> In the wake of the clashes, many left the movement. In my travels through Amuru I met several former occupiers who permanently abandoned Apaa at this moment, overwhelmed by uncertainty and fear. This exodus accordingly left several villages within the gazetted zone diminished and vulnerable to the UWA eviction operations that began in late 2017 and continued into 2018.

The internal organising structures of the movement were also left demoralised, contributing, several of Apaa's strategists believe, to their failure to adequately disrupt the government's demarcation of the Amuru-Adjumani boundary in October 2017, which precipitated the resumption of state evictions. As previously outlined, the subsequent rise of violent intrusions into Apaa by Adjumani-based land claimant groups, the large-scale seizures of land in Juka in 2017 and 2019 and the arrest of occupiers who engaged in revenge attacks have continued to afflict the Apaa movement and erode occupiers' solidarity and organisational capacity.

From the perspective of many Madi and Lugbara peasant farmers, conversely, the Acholi occupation of Apaa continues to represent how Acholi occupiers have thwarted government promises for development and the unjust exclusion of Madi from Adjumani District's most fertile tracts of land. An older Madi man from an Oyuwi clan living just north of Apaa, across the Zoka river, emphasised:

It is painful to see Acholi living there when we, the rightful landlords are denied...Our people started to move back to our ancestral place in the 1980s, but they were not permitted to extend to those ends. If we cannot settle there, they should not be able to settle there. We respected the government, now they favour Acholi! It is humiliating (Ayiri, 2020 January).

Another Madi farmer located near Apaa articulated, "Acholi have taken such large plots for themselves...We could have stayed there together, if they had recognised the true Madi history of the land" (Mungula, 2020 January). As such narratives highlight, for some—particularly Madi Oyuwi, Ali and Palaro clans—the Acholi occupation of Apaa represents the appropriation of an ancestral homeland to which they have long been barred from returning. For land-poor peasant farmers in Adjumani, participation in political land claimant groups

---

<sup>36</sup> For varying accounts of the June clashes, see Hansard, 2017 June, Minute 3.13- 5.35. Also, Akol, 2017; Affidavits, 2017.

involves substantial risk of violence, injury and arrest, whilst offering uncertain rewards, particularly given the tendency for Adjumani elites to sequester and sell seized land, and ongoing conflicts with Apaa's Acholi occupiers. It is rather politicians and state actors who have derived benefits from perpetuating institutionalised, ethnic divides between Acholi and Madi groups in the struggle over Apaa land.

## **6.2 Counter-hegemonic imagination**

As research on African land regimes reveals, the relationship between identity, landscape and claims to territory and property is not static but dynamic; ever-evolving through processes of political struggle and negotiation (Berry, 2001; Juul & Lund, 2010; Leonardi & Browne, 2018). To contest colonial control over land, peasant communities have drawn on oral histories and cross-cutting lineage ties to reimagine the boundaries of belonging to land (Holmes, 1997; Bender, 2013). Upending exclusionary ethno-territorial logics wielded by colonial and post-independent regimes, other movements have reconstructed collective identity around shared residency and ties to place (Mamdani, 1996; MacArthur, 2016; Anthias & Hoffmann, 2021). As social movement scholars argue, the very process of reclaiming and defending territory can reshape collective identity (Fernandes, 2005; Halvorsen et al, 2019).

Building on such insights, this section explores how Apaa's peasant intellectuals have drawn upon oral histories and shared experiences of struggle and cohabitation to reimagine 'counter-hegemonic' forms of identity and belonging, enabling the movement to curb division and strengthen collective action to resist state expropriation. Such processes, however, remain partial and incomplete, posing ongoing dilemmas for the movement. The first sub-section explores how occupiers have addressed divisions based on clan, while the second examines their limited efforts to transcend divisions based on tribe.

### *6.2.1 Redefining collective identity and belonging beyond clan*

Around four years into the occupation, amid lingering cycles of conflict with Lamogi clan groups, peasant intellectuals of Apaa began to renegotiate the relationship between landscape, belonging, and authority within the movement. Through a process of geographic reimagining (Keith & Piles, 1993; MacArthur, 2016), the narrative of Pabo-exclusive

ancestral authority over land softened and receded, creating space for more inclusive ‘counter-hegemonic’ discourses to emerge. As peasant leaders of the movement active between 2009-2011 recall, two key strategic impulses compelled this process: the need to end the clan-based hostilities that drained occupiers’ morale and organising capacity, and the realisation amid escalating state evictions that to rapidly populate the entire area targeted by the UWA (831 km<sup>2</sup>), it was necessary to expand the recruitment of occupiers beyond Pabo clan networks.

Peasant intellectuals driving the movement developed such insights in dialogue with local elites. One such elite figure was Rwot Yusaf Adek, the Gulu city-based, self-styled ‘traditional’ Chief of Pageya, a critic of the cultural institution *Ker Kwaro Acholi* and infamous NRM dissenter; another was Olanya Gilbert, the fiery FDC opposition politician elected Kilak MP in 2011. A decade later, Olanya reflected on his role in this key shift within the movement:

I decided, let me help cool down this unnecessary rivalry. I told people in Apaa whether you are from Pabo, from Lamogi, from where...this is your customary land...We are Acholi, this is our homeland. I advised them of the disadvantages of dividing ourselves; if we are divided, we will lose the land (Gulu city, 2020 October).

While Olanya had clear political incentives for reconciling his divided constituents and championing the defence of Apaa on behalf of all clans in his electorate, not just Pabo, Apaa’s leaders recall that his reasoning resonated with their own analysis.

While educated political elites played a role, it was the day-to-day organising and discursive work of Apaa’s peasant intellectuals which brought about the reconciliation of Lamogi and Pabo clans. Apaa leaders recount co-organising a series of meetings with Lamogi grassroots leaders based in Lakang, bringing together *rwoddi kweri*, LCIs and various clan elders from further afield. Some also recall meetings with *rwoddi moo*, during which chiefs who formerly exacerbated clan-based rivalries agreed to support a more inclusive reading of belonging in Apaa. A tentative process of rebuilding trust climaxed in a celebration held in a village between Apaa and Lakang. One participant related;

The Lamogi organised the function, they killed goats as a sign of peace, we ate, drank and danced the whole night; the next morning they escorted our party back to Apaa...after that, Acholi began to defend the land together (Apaa center, 2020 October).



In the wake of this process, many individuals who had previously failed to access land in Apaa were enfolded into the movement. In 2011, for example, Apaa's LCI office designated brothers from a Parabongo clan an expansive 'hill' each in Ngoro Village near Mt Olwiyo (a site of spiritual significance to Parabongo) and invited them to sub-allocate the land.<sup>37</sup> Gradually, local leadership positions within Apaa's villages were filled not only by Pabo clan members but also a wide range of Acholi clans from Amuru and beyond: the re-imagining of the links between belonging, landscape and identity led to shifts in the makeup of public authority of the movement.

The new counter-hegemonic story of belonging that peasant intellectuals constructed comprised two distinct yet interwoven strands. Revealing the extent to which oral histories can provide a rich 'cultural archive' (James, 1988 in Allen, 1988, p. 50) with which to reimagine ties between landscape and ethnicity (also Mamdani, 2001, p. 277; Kandel, 2018, p. 285), the first strand re-envisioned Apaa as a homeland of all Acholi, not just Pabo. Although Apaa's leaders continued to emphasise the unique ties of Pabo clans with Apaa land in 'onstage' public contexts, in 'off-stage' contexts beyond the public gaze they began to highlight the overlapping, entangled ancestral ties to the land shared by Acholi clans. Apaa leaders began to emphasise the story of the Madi-Acholi conflict that supposedly placed Apaa in 'Acholi' territory. With input from various influential figures, peasant leaders began to weave the Apaa landscape into the very origin myth of the Acholi and Alur people—the ubiquitous story of the bitter parting of two brothers at the Nile over a spear, a bead, and a killed child (see Girling, 2019, p. 399; cf. Crazzolara, 1950, p. 6; Finnström, 2008, p. 53). In new reiterations, Apaa became the wilderness beyond Kilak in which Gapir searched for Labongo's lost spear, while Juka (Zoka, or 'Ayugi') became the dark forest of elephants where he finally retrieved the spear and received the precious bead. Such stories recast Apaa as the birthplace of all Acholi, the children of Labongo, and reimagined the role of Pabo clans as paving the way for others to re-join them to complete their struggle. At first, such narratives served primarily to knit together a rapidly expanding, increasingly diverse community amid an ongoing threat of factionalism rather than to outwardly justify the movement.

---

<sup>37</sup> Also known as Mt. Olwede.

The second parallel strand which peasant intellectuals began to entwine into this narrative of belonging emphasised occupiers' identity as residents of Apaa: those who struggle for the land. This form of place-based political identity, as Mamdani (2001, p. 275) argued, expresses a "commitment to live under a common roof over the recognition of common history," emphasising residency over descent, locality over lineage. The experience of appropriating and defending shared territory, as Halvorsen et al (2019) express, informed a new sense of political subjectivity. This place-based form of belonging became expressed in the phrase *dano me Apaa*—the people of Apaa. New occupiers began to frame their identity around their contribution to key moments of resistance, such as the 2015 naked protest. In one village meeting called to address factional divides, a young leader reminded gathered occupiers that their identity as Apaa residents should surpass their clan ties, quipping that they were part of the 'USA'—the United States of Apaa; a territory-based political identity formed from disparate elements. In the following weeks, this tongue-in-cheek wordplay was repeated in unofficial discussions and gatherings, reflecting how the idea of occupiers' new collective identity resonated within the movement.

These intertwining counter-hegemonic strands within the movement's narrative of belonging transformed the occupation. Beyond allaying clan-based hostilities, such discourses deepened the movement's ethos of solidarity and enabled rapid geographic expansion at a moment when state evictions threatened to uproot the occupation. Increasingly, occupiers recruited newcomers through extended non-kin connections beyond Pabo, while political leaders put out calls on the radio for land-poor Acholi to approach Apaa's leadership, bringing a flood of new recruits to the struggle. Many hailed from Amuru or Gulu District, but others from as far as Kitgum, Omoro, Nwoya and Pader, a fact that occupiers have attempted—although not always successfully—to keep hidden in public, 'on-stage' contexts for fear of undermining the narrative that Apaa constitutes occupiers' 'customary' land. This expanded form of belonging was reflected in the names bestowed upon new villages and sub-villages established between 2011 and 2014. Names such as *Acholi Ber* (Acholi are good), and *Acholi Waribo Cingwa* (Acholi we join hands) speak of tribal belonging. Names such as *New York* and *Oloyo Kampala* (it beats Kampala) hint at Apaa's budding cosmopolitanism with playful irony, while others, notably *Ngom Oromo* (we meet together on the land) portray Apaa as a place of a merging of peoples. Strikingly, some families have opted to bury their dead in Apaa, thereby cementing a sense of belonging to the

land and laying down new evidence of their claims. Such geographic imaginaries reflect the fluidity of peasant intellectuals' 'off-stage' debates over the relationship between identity, territory, tradition, and belonging.

These counter-hegemonic shifts within the Apaa movement, however, remain contested and incomplete. Although some Lamogi and Parabongo previously engaged in the inter-clan conflict were absorbed into the movement, others were not; some Lamogi clan members I encountered in Amuru still complain that 'Pabo' unjustly took control of Lamogi territory after the war.<sup>38</sup> Likewise, while the settlement of hostilities in 2011 marked a radical shift, discourses emphasising Pabo primacy remain dominant; recognition that Apaa lies in Pabo Sub-County is still considered a key marker of loyalty to the movement, while Pabo remains over-represented in Apaa's authority structures. Certainly, many occupiers embrace Pabo elders' unique role in founding the movement, regardless of their own clan identity. In one meeting I attended, for example, a Pabo elder admonished a parish-level politician for interfering in Apaa politics, stating:

I am an elder of Pabo, I arrived just after Mzee Bere...Can you show me our *wi obwur*? Do you know where the elders of Pabo planted their mango trees? You have much to learn (Apaa, 2021 April).

His interjection was met with applause and nods. As I have often observed, many non-Pabo occupiers have learned to flawlessly narrate the 'on-stage' history of Apaa, complete with details of Pabo's early settlers. The continued sway of Pabo-centred discourses, however, has also continued to weigh heavily in the micro-politics of Apaa, weakening solidarity which renders collective action effective.

This pattern has played out in various ways. In several instances, occupiers' attempts to install Pabo clan members in leadership positions have fuelled disunity. As I witnessed over a four-year period, for example, a leadership dispute in an outlying village in Apaa involving a wide range of factors including adultery, violent revenge, and corruption became entangled in inter-clan identity politics. In 2019, two competing factions emerged, leading to a community referendum which would decide whether to divide the village. Although at the time, the majority voted against segregation, Apaa leaders failed to resolve the dispute.

---

<sup>38</sup> Some observers argue that conflict only subsided when Lamogi groups settled open land further south, reducing their interest in Apaa

Tensions continued to escalate, weakening the capacity of occupiers to organise against sporadic attacks by UWA rangers and respond to incursions by Madi-speaking land claimant groups. By mid-2022, Pabo loyalists and other discontents succeeded in supplanting the former LCI with a new leader from a Pabo clan, sparking further division.

Inter-clan tensions have also afflicted villages in southern areas of Apaa which particular factions contended should fall under sub-counties associated with Lamogi clans rather than Pabo. Such dynamics have repeatedly impaired Apaa occupiers' organisational capacity. In one village, questions of administrative territory played into a long-standing conflict between the reigning LCI, a Pabo stalwart, and his rival, who fought with Lamogi groups in early skirmishes against Pabo and was accused of attempting to realign the village with Amuru Sub-County. From 2019 to 2020, factionalism sparked by this rivalry threatened to subsume village leaders' organising energy at a moment when NRM agents sought to acquire village land to accept state compensation (discussed in chapter five). As discord grew, the village's leadership nearly failed to prevent the sons of a family from Pabo Palwong from pursuing a 16-million-shilling land deal with state agents reportedly connected to the NRM General Otema Awany. While the deal was quashed as community members rallied to discipline the 'traitorous' sons, the process was unnecessarily drawn out, preventing strategists from supporting their neighbouring village, which experienced ongoing intrusions. As scholars highlight (Ortner, 1995, p. 177; Gledhill, 2014, pp. 510–525), groups seeking to resist oppression often face internal 'factional conflict' which detracts from their capacity for coherent political action.

Transcending clan-based divisions within the movement requires continuous political work. In strategy meetings I observed in Apaa, village leaders urged one another to set aside emotional investment in clan territoriality and focus on their common identity as residents of Apaa. In October 2020, as Lamogi-Pabo tensions over administrative affiliation surged in the build-up to the 2021 elections, I attended a meeting called to address the problem of division. The meeting's chair entreated, "Madi are practically dividing up *Acholi Ber* for themselves and moving into *Lulayi*, yet we are struggling against each other." One leader emphasised that if they remained divided on the issue of sub-county boundaries in villages such as Akee and Pwunu Dyang, they could lose territorial control to Adjumani District; another urged them not to give NRM agents new footholds to disorganise their resistance. After the meeting, one strategist described his experience of trying to unite occupiers whilst defending

Apaa from ongoing intrusions by quoting from his Luo Bible (Corinthians 4), which translates: “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair.” As his experience evokes, peasant intellectuals in Apaa have managed to hold together and continually restitch the social fabric of the movement, even as it frays and unravels.

Albeit imperfectly, Apaa’s peasant leaders have often managed to suppress, set aside, or overcome clan-based divisions that undermine effective organisation. Despite their tumultuous internal politics, in 2021 leaders of the village described above managed to leverage political pressure to push UPDF stationed in Apaa to disperse intruding land-claimant groups. After the two rival leaders entangled in Pabo-Lamogi clan politics ended up in a physical altercation in early 2021, they resolved the incident without involving the police. By continually struggling to deconstruct the hegemonic logics exploited by ruling class elites and striving towards solidarity grounded in collective, place-based identity, Apaa’s peasant intellectuals have managed to grow the occupation for over 15 years.

#### *6.2.2 The struggle to transcend divisions based on tribe*

Just as peasant intellectuals driving the Apaa movement struggled to recast the boundaries of belonging beyond ‘Pabo’ to overcome inter-clan conflict, in recent years, mounting threats posed by Adjumani-based land claimant groups have prompted them to explore new pathways to peace, including the possibility of softening the narrative of exclusive Acholi belonging in Apaa. Despite deep barriers to change, it is not inevitable that the Apaa movement will maintain its current historical narrative of belonging indefinitely. Emergent conversations in Apaa hint at the possibility of a more expansive, shared future transcending tribal divides.

It is first important to note three limited ways that Apaa’s peasant occupiers have cultivated cross-tribal alliances. First, they accepted the presence of a handful of Madi families within Apaa. While some Madi returning to eastern stretches of Apaa outside the wildlife zone after the war left as inter-tribal tensions began to rise, a few families remained and developed good relationships with Acholi occupiers. While such families typically hold quietly to their own historical narratives of Madi clan connections to the Apaa landscape,

outwardly they tend to comply with occupiers' Acholi authority structures and claims to belong.

A second way in which Apaa occupiers have countered oppositional identity politics is by sustaining cross-tribal clan connections and positive trade relations. Numerous Acholi occupiers maintain close clan ties with Madi relatives in Adjumani—notably those who identify with Pakiri (a clan spanning Acholi Lamogi and Madi Ali) and Cici (spanning Madi Palaro and Acholi Pabo)—by attending burials and clan meetings. Such ties dampen Apaa occupiers' appetite for revenge against land claimant group incursions and open avenues for dialogue. Apaa's large bi-weekly main market also serves as a connection point between Apaa's occupiers and Madi traders from Adjumani, some of whom have developed sympathy for the occupiers' struggle. On several occasions—notably, a protest against UWA's attempts to close Apaa market in 2019—Madi traders joined Apaa occupiers' demonstrations against state forces in a show of solidarity.

A third way in which Apaa's Acholi occupiers have partially included tribal 'others' in the movement is by cohabiting land along the edge of the Nile River in villages such as Gaji and Ayobi. As previously foregrounded, riverbank settlements along the Nile have long histories as heterogenous fishing communities characterised by cultural and linguistic mingling, a pattern which informed the social dynamics that emerged as Apaa's Acholi occupiers established village structures in riverine areas between 2012 and 2014. When Acholi occupiers extended into Gaji in 2013, they found dozens of Lugbara families residing in semi-permanent fishing camps and huts and accepted their intermittent presence as they moved between the east and west Nile banks. One male Acholi occupier recalled;

We found the Lubgara already here, and we began staying with them peacefully. They were just fishing and farming small patches near the banks...They come to this bank because there are many fishermen on the other side. There was no dispute (Gaji, 2020 September).

Numerous Acholi married Lugbara women, while one elderly Lugbara woman became the *la wi mon* of Gaji—the village leader of women. Inter-tribal relations in villages such as Gaji were also initially eased by the pragmatism employed by Lugbara families, who in 2020 numbered around 200. While tensions surface intermittently, these families have largely avoided articulating ancestral ties to the land which they perceived could spark contention,

expressed little interest in farming larger tracts of land further from the water's edge and generally acquiesced to Apaa's Acholi orientated authority structures.<sup>39</sup> One of Apaa's strategists proudly informed me that over the years a few Lugbara occupants of Gaji even joined mass protests.

In recent years, Apaa's peasant leaders have tentatively debated the possibility of integrating neighbouring Madi groups into the movement. In late 2019 as I explored the history of Apaa, I invited several knowledgeable Acholi elders from Apaa and other parts of Amuru to meet for a joint discussion—both in my capacity as a PhD researcher and a community organiser engaged in supporting Apaa activists. To provoke debate, I related my experiences of Madi clan elders' compelling historical narratives of belonging in Apaa, and shared archival documents that lent weight to Madi claims. Over several conversations, my interlocutors debated the meaning of colonial boundaries and the origins of clan territoriality, traced Pabo and Lamogi clans present amongst neighbouring Madi groups, and spoke of long histories of intermarriage and inter-relationship. Several elders embraced the intertwined character of Madi-Acholi ties to Apaa land and one another; others held such ideas in tension with narratives emphasising Acholi territorial authority. They broadly agreed, however, that histories of inter-belonging presented a potential path to reframe the movement, build alliances with Madi groups and undermine NRM divisionary tactics.

'Off-stage' discussions that followed amongst strategists and elders in Apaa again highlighted how oral histories provide rich sources with which to reinterpret the past in light of new political goals (Mamdani, 2001). In one speech I witnessed an elder narrated how the pre-colonial chiefdom of Pabo expanded under *Rwot Ogwang* during a time of famine, absorbing the *lu jur*—the various Madi, bi-lingual and Luo-speaking lineages scattered across hill-tops—suggesting they too could form new ties between disparate peoples to overcome adversity. In response, Apaa leaders present traced their own clan, maternal, marital and friendship ties with Madi and Lugbara, echoing the sentiment observed by Father Crazzolara in the 1940s (1950) and Tim Allen in the 1980s (1989, p. 57) that Madi and Acholi viewed each other as brothers, and “really the same people.” They reached back to strands within their oral histories and inherited discursive landscapes that speak to the fluidity of identity

---

<sup>39</sup> In 2021, however, some Acholi village leaders noted that some Lugbara residents had begun to avoid community meetings expressed interest in establishing parallel leadership structures.

and inclusive character of belonging, questioning the ethno-territorial logics that originally gave shape to the occupation.

Ongoing efforts to transcend the tribal character of the Apaa occupation, however, will face at least two substantial barriers within the movement. The first reflects generational dynamics: younger occupiers in their thirties and forties who now constitute Apaa's core strategists are less open to recasting the framing story of the movement than their parents and grandparents. This follows a broader trend Lentz (2007, p. 47) observed for young men—rather than elders—to cling most tightly to “discourses of autochthony,” likely because they face rising competition over land and feel more distant from histories of interconnection. In Apaa, younger organisers shoulder the weight of responding to intrusions by Madi groups and are often quick to view ‘Madi’ as government collaborators. Reflecting this dynamic, several young leaders expressed scepticism at the counter histories their elders presented during a series of exploratory ‘peace’ dialogues which took place between Apaa leaders and several Madi chiefs and clan leaders that began in 2020.<sup>40</sup> After one meeting, a prominent young strategist told me he still believed ‘Apaa is Acholi land, not Madi land,’ and that when the UPDF failed to block intruding ‘Madi’ he would be ready to fight them. Regarding the possibility of integrating Madi clans into the movement to undercut political support for state-driven evictions, he responded, to paraphrase;

...but could we trust them? Even if some Madi joined our struggle with good intentions, others could come to hand land back to government, to spy...or to push us out to make way for Moses Ali's people (Apaa, 2021 September).

His perspective reflects the extent to which Acholi youth engaged in defending Apaa have become invested in discourses of tribal belonging and that political-institutional divisions reproduced by ruling elites continue to position Madi and Acholi peasants against one another. Acholi occupiers perceive that to ally with Madi peasants would involve foregoing the ethnic-based political support of Acholi MPs that has proved a powerful force in mitigating state eviction processes. Also entwined in such fears is the persistent stereotype that Madi tend to align with the government and are unwilling to resist ruling party oppression, a perception that may have its roots, as Allen (1993, p. 158) suggests, in the distinct ways that Madi and Acholi identities evolved in relation to colonial rule.

---

<sup>40</sup> This process morphed into sporadic ‘peace’ talks between Acholi and Madi Chiefs between 2020 - 2023



A second dynamic likely to inhibit future efforts to transcend the tribal character of the movement is the extent to which Acholi peasants have already consolidated the occupation. Between 2009 and 2011, when Apaa's peasant intellectuals reframed the occupation to encompass non-Pabo Acholi clans, the movement was struggling to sustain occupier numbers amidst mounting state evictions while vast expanses of land still lay unclaimed. By 2021, the population of Apaa likely surpassed 20,000 people, spread over the 831 square kilometres of gazetted 'wildlife' land and the wider disputed administrative territory. In most Apaa villages, the rapid expansion of the occupation—a process viewed as critical in 2011—is no longer the primary strategic concern. The incentive for Apaa's Acholi occupiers to reconfigure and broaden the movement, accordingly, has diminished. As land in Apaa becomes less abundant, Apaa occupiers may feel the need to more tightly delineate, as Lentz (2007) argued, between insiders and 'strangers' (also Mujere, 2011). To meaningfully include Madi and Lugbara clans in the occupation, Apaa's current Acholi peasant leaders would need to embark on a radical process of land redistribution, requiring occupiers to accept reduced holdings and relinquish prospects of profiting from the rising commercial value of Apaa land. Equally, for any land-sharing arrangement to work, Madi groups would need to surrender their ambition to exert exclusive authority over Apaa land, prioritise building relationships with Acholi occupiers over their ties with Adjumani politicians, and resolve to defy state prohibitions against settlement of the wildlife reserve.

How struggles over Apaa land will unfold is uncertain. Madi peasant interest in land reclamation groups may fade if promised gains do not materialise. It is also possible, however, that Adjumani elites' political and personal interests in Apaa will continue to drive violent intrusions, and Madi frustration with their exclusion from Apaa's fertile expanses will mount as land becomes scarce while its commercial value rises. If Apaa's peasant intellectuals do not find a way to transcend hegemonic tribal divisions over Apaa land, they are likely to face ongoing insecurity that may cause prolonged disruption and suffering or escalate into a broader conflict.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

Since 2006, peasant intellectuals driving the Apaa land movement have constructed, deconstructed, and renegotiated political discourses interweaving identity, territory, and

authority. The narrative of Pabo clan authority over Apaa land that initially animated the movement can neither be construed as a timeless, indigenous rootedness to the soil nor a hollow product of elite political manipulation. Rather, clan-based claims to control the Apaa land frontier were grounded in socio-political memories of place and sanctified by shared experiences of suffering, yet also mirrored the hegemonic ethno-territorial politics reignited by Museveni's state-building strategies, demonstrating Mamdani's (1996, p. 24) dictum that "the form of rule" often "shapes the form of revolt against it." This story of ethnic belonging proved a powerful mobilising force to recruit followers, gain political allies and win over external audiences, yet also exposed the movement to cycles of violent conflict and state tactics to splinter occupier solidarity, dissipating potential for cross-ethnic class solidarity.

This chapter also explored counter-hegemonic elements of the Apaa land movement that emerged through political struggle. Peasant intellectuals of Apaa reimagined the boundaries of belonging by building trust with Lamogi leaders, reinterpreting oral histories to recast Apaa as an Acholi homeland, and forging a sense of collective identity based on locality. Although the struggle to transcend clan divides remains incomplete, such counter-hegemonic discourses enabled Apaa's occupiers to expand the movement and overcome barriers to effective organising. While emerging dialogues deconstructing exclusive tribal claims to Apaa land have so far failed to prompt a second radical broadening of the movement, it is not inevitable that occupation will continue to reproduce political-institutional divides pitting Acholi and Madi peasants against one another. The unfolding movement of Apaa demonstrates the extent to which, as Berry (2002, p. 65) puts it, "people continue to seek land" via "multiple channels, renegotiating relationships and identities in the process." Beyond broadly celebrating the 'negotiability' of African land tenure, however, the Gramscian-inspired notion of counter-hegemonic land regime processes illuminates how peasant resistance to state-driven expropriation is enabled by discourses and practices that deconstruct, disrupt, and transcend the ethno-territorial divisions leveraged by ruling elites.

The following chapter further develops the concept of counter-hegemonic land practices by examining the forms of public authority, jurisdictional territory and property rights that have emerged within the Apaa land movement.

## Chapter 7

### Counter-hegemonic alternatives:

#### New forms of authority and property in the Apaa occupation movement

Writing from Mussolini's prison in the 1930s, Gramsci (1971, p. 367) argued that through political struggle, material and discursive power structures can cease "to be an external force which crushes man, assimilates him to itself and makes him passive" and can instead be "transformed into a means of freedom, an instrument to create a new ethico-political form and a source of new initiatives."<sup>41</sup> As scholars elaborate (Jackson Lears, 1985; Fontana, 2005; Ciavolella, 2018), Gramsci observed that some peasant and working-class movements not only resist hegemonic political and economic structures advanced by states and ruling elites but create new, 'counter-hegemonic' alternatives. Counter-hegemonic forms of organisation may be "embryonic" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 327) in that they fall short of upending unjust systems of rule and lack an ideological framework, yet nevertheless present prophetic alternatives to unfettered capitalism and ruling class oppression, providing seeds from which broader change can be cultivated (Im, 1991, pp. 126–127, 141; Fonseca, 2016).

While Gramsci (1921) drew inspiration from the factory council movement in Turin (Jones, 2006), contemporary scholars have explored varied forms of counter-hegemonic organisation, from trade unions (Abdelrahman, 2014, p. 87), 'autonomous' markets (Ciavolella, 2018, p. 58), and factory recuperations (Tauss, 2015) to the creation of communal forests (Gustavo et al, 2017) and housing cooperatives (Bollier & Helfrich, 2015). Research on land occupation movements in Latin America (Petrás, 1998; Veltmeyer, 2005; Karriem, 2009, 2013) and Asia (Kerkvliet, 1993; Feranil, 2005; Lund & Rachman, 2016) reveals how peasants and landless groups have forged alternatives to ruling-class land accumulation by seizing territory and creating new authorities which redistribute land and, in some cases, issue IDs, enforce bylaws, and collect taxes. Such class-based land movements navigate rival territorial projects advanced by the state in varied, evolving ways; many remain

---

<sup>41</sup> For analysis of this passage in Gramsci's *Prison notebooks*, see Fonseca, 2016, pp. 118–132; Reed, 2012, p. 584, *supra* note 2.

entangled in dominant power structures even as they resist ruling class control; some seek state recognition; others doggedly pursue autonomy (cf. Ulloa, 2011; Zibechi, 2012; Routledge, 2015).

Compared to prominent land movements in Latin America, little scholarly attention has been given to creative political forms within contemporary peasant land struggles in African contexts. Considerable research examines cases of rural resistance to state-driven land expropriation (Neumann, 1998; Cavanagh & Benjaminsen, 2015; Boone, 2015) but depicts defensive, localised struggles in which African peasants seek to protect or reclaim land holdings rather than develop alternative forms of territory, authority, and property. What Bernstein (2005, p. 591) describes as the “relative paucity in [recent] African history of broad rural political organisation focused on land” beyond parochial struggles against dispossession likely reflects, as discussed in chapter two, how hegemonic state-building projects since the colonial era have channelled conflict over land along ethnic, nationalist and racial lines, impeding potential for class-based movements (Mamdani, 1996; Boone, 2014, pp. 14, 50). This pattern is evident in the wave of land occupations of settler farms in Zimbabwe since the 1980s, which, as scholars (Marongwe, 2003; Davies, 2004; Cousins, 2006) argue, became dominated by ruling elites and co-opted by an increasingly repressive state to reinforce its political power (cf. Moyo, 2001; Moyo & Yeros, 2005). Likewise, although plentiful research examines struggles waged by African rural militias, associations, ‘traditional’ authorities, and clan sections to control territory and claim property in volatile contexts (Hoehne, 2016; Van Acker, 2005; Verweijen & Vlassenroot, 2015) limited evidence emerges of political organisation that unambiguously serves the interests of marginalised rural peasantries.

Disrupting such portrayals, this chapter examines the resourceful forms of authority and property that emerged within the Apaa land occupation movement in northern Uganda. Taking up the challenge posed by Bernstein (2014, p. 101), the chapter confronts the “contradictions and complexities” of rural struggle in Apaa, assessing the successes the movement’s organisational structures have accrued and the challenges they face. Drawing on the concept of counter-hegemonic land processes outlined in chapter two, the chapter argues that peasant intellectuals in Apaa not only adopted familiar public authority structures and inherited land tenure practices but also adapted them to generate creative new forms, enabling the movement to extend opportunities to marginalised peasants to access land. As Gramsci (1971) has argued, however, the outcome of counter-hegemonic movements cannot be

gleaned a priori. As such, the emancipatory potential of the Apaa occupation movement has been limited by the ways in which Apaa's occupiers have replicated hegemonic patterns of elite accumulation and reproduced prevailing gender inequalities.

The chapter presents evidence that localised rural political action in African contexts may remain entangled in ethno-territorial conflict yet forge creative, alternative institutional forms that counter rising patterns of elite control over land. This capacity for innovation reflects, as Berry (1993, p. 133) argues, that while rural land in many African societies remains "linked to social identity," rural dwellers have continued to adapt, renegotiate, and develop new social networks and structures to secure land access amidst political and economic instability. This chapter proceeds in two sections: the first examines how the Apaa movement developed new forms of public authority, while the second explores how peasants in Apaa constructed a new, more equitable system of land tenure which departs from market relations, counters elite accumulation of marginal frontier land, and reinstates communal, familial peasant ownership.

### **7.1 Public authority in the Apaa movement.**

The development of alternative, 'counter-hegemonic' forms of public authority can prove central to peasants' struggles against state-driven land expropriation. During the period between 2006 and 2022, peasant leaders of the Apaa occupation needed to construct forms of public authority that would sustain the movement and promote the interests of its followers. The new structures Apaa leaders developed closely resembled village-level state institutions. In a way, they invoked the 'idea' of the state (Abrams, 1988; Lund, 2006), while working outside and against the state, without receiving its authorisation. They built governing structures which enabled them to defy state evictions and circumvent state security agents whilst simultaneously seeking to gain state recognition (also Campbell, 2015; Lund, 2016, pp. 1208–1210). By adopting the 'mantle of a governing institution' (Lund & Rachman, 2016, p. 1333), the Apaa movement managed to organise collective action across a territory of over 1000 square kilometres and create sufficient social order to sustain control, from the maintenance of bridges to the handling of disputes. The form of public authority that emerged in Apaa can be considered 'counter-hegemonic' in that it enabled the movement to disrupt oppressive state systems of control and remained relatively non-authoritarian. As explored below, however, in 2021, Apaa's leaders had so far failed to establish an effective centralised

organisation and develop sufficient ideological tools to guide its authority structures, limiting the emancipatory potential of the movement.

Two contrasting dynamics help explain how the form of public authority Apaa occupiers constructed enabled them to resist state land expropriation between 2006 and 2022. The first is the familiar nature of the public structures they reproduced, while the second is the way they subversively adapted them to the needs of the movement, creating new institutional forms.

### *7.1.1 Legitimacy through familiarity*

In part, the public authorities that peasant occupiers installed in Apaa succeeded in gaining legitimacy because they reproduced two institutional forms that have become deeply embedded in rural northern Uganda: *rwoddi kweri* ('chiefs of the hoe') and village local councils (LCI). To understand how Apaa leaders both reproduced and adapted these institutions, it is worth briefly surveying each in turn. LCIs originated as the lowest rung of the five-tiered 'resistance council' system which Museveni forged during the 'bush war,' rolled out to consolidate NRM control, and eventually enshrined in law, forming Uganda's decentralised governance structure. Although Acholi populations initially viewed village councils as a hostile extension of NRM rule (Finnström, 2008, pp. 94–97), they evolved into an indispensable, locally-rooted institution (Porter, 2012; Hopwood, 2022, p. 41). While Museveni's regime has employed various techniques to engineer NRM loyalty amongst LCIs (Tapscott, 2021, pp. 54–56), in practice, LCIs seldom operate as NRM agents, reflecting the extent to which their authority—along with their limited income from user fees—depends upon retaining their constituents' confidence.<sup>42</sup> LCIs are usually the first public office people turn to witness transactions, resolve disputes, access state services, and navigate higher state institutions.

The second public authority that peasant occupiers recreated in Apaa (the *rwoddi kweri*) has provided a strand of continuity in rural Acholi life for around a century. As Girling (2019, pp. 308–309) observed, *rwoddi kweri* first emerged during the early colonial period as people reorganised group farming around neighbourhood ties rather than kinship and

---

<sup>42</sup> LCI chairmen might report a regime threat if they came across it, but generally focus on day-to-day community concerns.

independently created a new local authority to oversee the rotation of farm work parties. Today, *rwoddi kweri* remain appointed by popular consensus, serving for as long as their constituents retain faith in them. As scholars observe (Porter, 2012, p. 88; Hopwood, 2022, p. 43), *rwoddi kweri* play varying roles according to local needs: while their work usually focuses on collective farming, in remote areas they sometimes also act as subsidiary LCIs. Accordingly, while *rwoddi kweri* technically qualify as ‘customary’ leaders, in practice, they sometimes function like statutory authorities. Conversely, although overlap can emerge between clan elders and *rwoddi kweri* in areas densely populated by a particular kinship group, the authority of *rwoddi kweri* remains rooted in geography rather than genealogy (also Porter, 2013, p. 11). As such, their authority retains a locally-rooted, democratic quality; *rwoddi kweri* are directly accountable to neighbourhood communities rather than clans or the state.

It was these familiar institutions (*rwoddi kweri* and LCIs) that peasant leaders reproduced as they established the Apaa occupation. In the early years of the movement, Apaa’s pioneer occupiers rallied around the LCI Chairperson of Apaa Sub-Parish, the infamously fierce Okot Justino who was voted in during the 2001 national LCI elections from Pabo IDP camp, during displacement.<sup>43</sup> As the occupation expanded, however, peasant organisers founded new villages within Apaa’s frontier, each governed by a new LCI and a ‘senior’ *rwot kweri* (singular) who oversees many *rwoddi kweri*, who in turn manage their own *te kweri*—a cluster of thirty to seventy households ‘under the chief’s hoe.’ By 2019, Apaa boasted fifteen villages (ten within the gazetted area), while Apaa’s leaders continued to create new village jurisdictions as the occupation’s population grew. The Ugandan state, however, does not recognise any of Apaa’s villages or their LCIs, who were appointed by Apaa occupiers without state-authorised elections. When national LCI elections were finally held in 2018 after a 17-year hiatus (officially attributed to lack of funding), Apaa, as a settlement-prohibited wildlife reserve, was excluded. Apaa’s internal governing structures are accordingly treated as illegal by the central Government and Adjumani District authorities and frequently ignored by Amuru District bureaucrats.<sup>44</sup> Apaa’s occupiers have reproduced a state institution without state permission.

---

<sup>43</sup> Some claim Okot Justino was part of Apaa’s RC before mass displacement in 1996.

<sup>44</sup> Health interventions are a significant exception. Even after Apaa’s Government health center was closed in 2017, Amuru staff have continued to conduct sporadic vaccination/immunisation campaigns.

Adopting the institutional form of the LCI and *rwot kweri* has advantaged the Apaa occupation movement in three key ways. First, institutional familiarity helped enable Apaa's peasant leaders to develop 'state-like' legitimacy and relationships of "reciprocal recognition" (Lund, 2016, pp. 1205-1207) with their followers. Apaa's village authorities are readily recognised by their constituents, at least in part, because they function similarly to LCIs and *rwoddi kweri* in other remote areas where higher government services remain sparse or erratic, reflecting, as Jones (2008) highlights, that rural dwellers in northern Uganda have a long history of ordering rural life 'beyond the state' (also Hopwood, 2015, pp. 396–397, 408). For the most part, Apaa's occupiers respond to their *rwot kweri*'s summons to meetings, road-maintenance days, and farm-work parties or accept the penalty; when disputes arise, they usually submit to their *rwot kweri*'s mediation or escalate the case to their LCI. Proactive LCIs and *rwoddi kweri* in Apaa have overseen the establishment of community schools, market authorities and savings and loans groups. Building such state-like (Lund, 2008) legitimacy has allowed Apaa's village leaders to build coherent social order within the movement and sufficient trust to facilitate collective action.

A second way that adopting LCI and *rwoddi kweri* structures has advantaged the movement is that their geographically-orientated institutional character reinforces the occupation's sense of collective identity grounded in residency and shared struggle. As elsewhere in northern Uganda, Apaa's village *rwoddi kweri* and LCIs operate in a distinct sphere from lineage elders. While some clans, sub-clans or *dogolas* present in Apaa have appointed local representatives to connect them to wider kin networks, these structures organise clan burials and weddings and handle family disputes, rather than public matters within Apaa.<sup>45</sup> As Apaa's peasant intellectuals broadened the 'boundaries of belonging' of the occupation beyond Pabo (as explored in chapter six), the LCI-*rwoddi kweri* structure enabled them to rapidly integrate new recruits from many different clans, who, in turn, have gradually become represented in Apaa's village institutions. This has aided Apaa's peasant leaders in their ongoing efforts to overcome clan divisions and strengthen movement solidarity.

Finally, by reproducing the Government's LCI structure, Apaa's peasant intellectuals made Apaa settlements legible to state authorities. As scholars observe (Rossi, 2017;

---

<sup>45</sup> Across the region, kinship groups are widely scattered but often gather for bi-annual meetings. See Hopwood, 2022, pp. 51–52.



Halvorsen et al, 2019, p. 1467), in some cases, ‘socio-territorial movements’ ultimately seek state recognition and integration into state structures. In line with this long-term strategy, as Apaa’s peasant leaders founded new, self-ruling villages, they also recalibrated Apaa’s original ‘sub-parish’ LCI office to preside over Apaa as a whole—a territory resembling a substantial sub-county or small district in size. For many years, Apaa’s central LCI has held a bi-weekly court, mediating disputes that village authorities fail to resolve. Although Apaa’s leaders sometimes joke about rebranding this central office to reflect its vast jurisdiction, they have strategically retained the ‘LCI’ label to remain recognisable to external parties, presenting Apaa as a sub-parish of a legitimate, state-recognised parish (Labala), sub-county (Pabo), and district (Amuru). Apaa’s outgoing correspondence—whether to parish councillors or the President—consistently wields this four-line address and is imprinted with Apaa’s highly-prized LCI stamp issued in the 2001 national LCI elections. Such seemingly mundane bureaucratic choices constitute bids for legitimacy, state recognition and inclusion.

Over time, the Apaa movement has built public authority by winning small victories of recognition. Apaa village leaders, for example, are often given the microphone alongside MPs, district officials and Acholi *rwoddi moo* at public civil society events; media outlets often quote the ‘LCI chairman Apaa’ or village leaders; Apaa leaders have hosted parliamentary committee members and religious leaders. Such external recognition of public authority in Apaa has made it increasingly difficult for the central state to dismiss Apaa as a fringe, illegitimate settlement of encroachers. Although the central state’s relationship with Apaa remains uncertain, moments of recognition mark milestones towards the Apaa movement’s long-term goal, which remains inclusion within Uganda’s political order rather than secession.

### 7.1.2 *Autonomy and subversive adaptation*

If counter-hegemonic alternatives are to take root, Gramsci (1971, p. 360) argued, they must develop a “personality:” a self-governing, self-aware organisational character (Fontana, 2005, p. 99). In Apaa, beyond reproducing familiar forms, peasant organisers subversively adapted the institutions of the LCI and *rwoddi kweri* to function autonomously and serve the needs of the movement. Despite many similarities in form and function, Apaa’s public authorities differ radically from other village institutions in northern Uganda,

particularly in terms of their relationship to the state. As Tapscott (2017, pp. 274–279, 2021, pp. 54–55) highlights, in Uganda, local authorities such as LCIs are usually embedded within a mesh of state institutions with unclear, overlapping jurisdictions that keep each other in check, including multi-tiered structures of police, military, ‘internal security officers’ (ISOs), NRM committees, and higher LCs. This fragmented, unpredictable institutional landscape destabilizes Ugandan citizens’ attempts to make demands of the state or consolidate alternative forms of political organisation (see Tapscott, 2016, p. 40, 2017, p. 265). Between 2006 and 2021, however, Apaa’s peasant occupiers carved out an enclave which village LCIs governed autonomously and state security structures seldom penetrated except in moments of violent intervention. In line with Gramsci’s (1971, pp. 352, 360, 388) thought, this relative autonomy gave rise to an alternative, though embryonic, form of political organisation which has enabled the movement to maintain control of Apaa land.<sup>46</sup>

It is first critical to explore how Apaa’s leaders cultivated autonomy, thereby subverting inherited institutional forms. Most pivotally, in the early years of the occupation, Apaa’s peasant intellectuals developed a unique ‘social contract’ (Lund 2016, p. 1205; Nugent, 2010, 2019, pp. 31–33), requiring occupiers to submit to Apaa movement authorities and defy ruling-party state actors in exchange, as will be explored below, for access to land. This social contract became embodied in the *cik me Apaa*—a body of verbal ‘rules’ recruits consent to upon joining the movement—which create, as Lund (2011a, pp. 73–74, 2016, pp. 1205–1206) theorised, a category of citizenship defining the terms of membership of Apaa’s political community.<sup>47</sup> While Apaa’s *cik* have been continually renegotiated through public discussion and political practice, its key tenants prohibit recognition of Adjumani District’s jurisdiction, collusion with hostile ruling party agents, and behaviours deemed to tear Apaa’s social fabric, notably adultery and witchcraft. Several edicts, as will be explored below, relate to land holding, while another deters occupiers from involving NRM-aligned state authorities in internal disputes. Apaa’s ‘*cik*’ are widely recognised yet far from uniformly interpreted or enforced; breaches are handled at the discretion of village authorities, with penalties ranging from public censure or fines to (at least in theory) expulsion from the movement. Generally,

---

<sup>46</sup> For analysis of Gramsci’s writings on autonomous ‘subaltern’ organisation (see Fonseca, 2016, pp. 115–116; Fontana, 2005, p. 99).

<sup>47</sup> Apaa’s *cik* have similarities to the behavioural codes produced by other associations in northern Uganda (see Tapscott, 2016, p. 51).

village authorities seek to bring wayward occupiers in line and restore ‘social harmony’ (Porter, 2013) through negotiation and public pressure.

Amuru opposition politicians have actively supported Apaa’s villages to function autonomously. While such politicians, as previously discussed, championed the occupation since 2011 to advance their own electoral ambitions, far from micro-managing the movement they have coached Apaa’s peasant leaders to develop self-governing structures, akin to the way ‘frontier elites’ have been known to help vigilantes refine their mandate (Brown, 1975 in Tapscott, 2017, p. 268). During an inter-village meeting in Apaa held to address various internal disputes, for example, a visiting Amuru politician emphasised;

Apaa is independent, it is unique; you have your own rules...There is no LCII, LCIII or LCV with real authority here—only your LCIs. I’m coming in to offer advice, but you need to keep running your own government (2021 February, Apaa).

The fact that the politician felt compelled to reiterate this point speaks to the unstable nature of public authority in Apaa, which is continually ‘in the making’ (Lund, 2016, p. 1200), reinforced when occupiers recognise their village leaders and eroded, as explored below, when they turn elsewhere. Yet as his words also capture, Apaa’s occupiers have developed public institutions detached from regular state structures.

To cultivate such autonomy, for many years Apaa’s peasant leaders attempted to block state security forces and NRM-aligned actors from entering Apaa territory entirely. Apaa leaders who were active during the first decade of the occupation recall employing various tactics to prevent police, UWA and ISO from establishing permanent bases in Apaa centre, from non-compliance to sabotage. A former village LCI committee member recounted:

We made the police and other security feel defeated; we made life impossible for them... No one would sell them anything to eat or drink or even acknowledge them.

They would always discover their vehicle tires punctured or a new roadblock. Stones flew from nowhere to smash their windscreens (2020 September).

One police officer posted to Apaa centre during this period of unmitigated hostility recalled how his unit withdrew after maintaining the outpost became untenable (personal communication, 2021 January). Although police continued to intervene in Apaa between

joint security-force eviction operations—notably arresting Apaa’s central LCI Chairman in 2015, allegedly for murder—they did so sporadically and relied on force.<sup>48</sup>

Apaa occupiers’ strategy of rigid autonomy, however, shifted dramatically in 2017. In the wake of the 2017 inter-ethnic clashes described in chapter four, the state re-established the Apaa centre police post and positioned military barracks by the border roadblock, and near Junction and Juka centres. Demoralised, Apaa movement leaders recall feeling hesitant and unable to resist their presence and instead opted to adapt their strategy. Rather than attempting to push state security out of Apaa’s roadside centres, they evaded officers tied to central state intelligence networks and developed alliances with officers who proved sympathetic. In April 2019, for instance, occupiers convinced an officer to divulge details of state plans to forcibly close Apaa market, enabling them to craft a collective response. The issue of state security presence in Apaa, however, remained contentious. As Apaa’s roadside centres hosted ever-swelling numbers of transient charcoal dealers and labourers from across Uganda, some occupiers began to view police as necessary to counter mounting theft and insecurity. Apaa’s leaders became divided between the view that thawing relations with security actors indicated rising state acceptance of Apaa’s settlements and a sense that cooperation could allow state agents to develop new tactics to undermine the movement.

Amidst such shifting dynamics, Apaa’s villages continued to cultivate autonomous self-rule, blocking ruling party actors from interfering with the occupation’s internal affairs. Despite security forces’ presence in Apaa, Juka and Junction centres, prohibitions against divulging sensitive information to such actors remained strong, while beyond roadside centres, occupiers continued to recognise Apaa’s large interior as an autonomous domain. Village institutions routinely handle disputes and even criminal matters that would elsewhere would involve police, security agents or higher LC courts (cf. Hopwood, 2022, p. 41), while breaches of Apaa’s jurisdictional sphere elicit swift censure. In early 2021, for example, village authorities from across Apaa responded with outrage when the Parish Chairman (LCII) of Labala brought police to a community mediation of a land allocation dispute. In a subsequent meeting, the Parish Chairman faced a barrage of rebukes: one LCI admonished, “Don’t you understand Apaa? Those police heard things they shouldn’t have...If you enter

---

<sup>48</sup> See Criminal Appeal, 2019, p. 4. Some observers argue that the charges against Apaa’s former LCI were politically motivated.

Apaa, respect our leaders and our rules.” Another *rwot kweri* stated, “Never bring police and the like into Apaa. If you do, you are not welcome here.” Apaa’s village leaders underscored that state hierarchies do not apply in Apaa, and the Parish Chairman’s authority was contingent upon the Apaa leader’s endorsement.

The autonomy of Apaa’s village public authorities has enabled the occupation movement to maintain territorial control and resist state expropriation in three key ways. First, keeping police and state security agents at a distance reduces opportunities for ruling party agents to exploit internal disputes within the movement to sow division, co-opt occupiers, and gain knowledge of the movement’s strategies and plans for collective action. In turn, by reducing division and internal rifts, Apaa’s occupiers also cultivate the solidarity necessary to sustain the movement’s fluid praxis of resistance.

A second way in which autonomy has proven crucial to the movement’s success is that it enabled Apaa’s village authorities to function as organisers of collective action, creating a decentralised resistance structure. In northern Uganda, LCI posts are often filled by NRM-leaning men who have gained local trust, but are unwilling to challenge the state (cf. Tapscott, 2021, p. 55; Jones, 2008, p. 65). In contrast, autonomous village LCI chairmen and *rwoddi kweri* in Apaa are often selected for their commitment to the occupation, resilience to co-option and ability to lead contentious action. Alongside more typical responsibilities, Apaa’s village authorities develop resistance strategies: beyond managing group farming, *rwoddi kweri* train their constituents how to respond to state violence; beyond handling disputes, LCI chairmen maintain intelligence networks and coordinate between villages. With a large population spread over a vast area with patchy cell-phone reception, the decentralised organisation provided by village structures is vital. To prepare for demonstrations to protest District border demarcation in 2015, for example, village leaders across Apaa prepared their constituents for confrontation and levied crop contributions to support hundreds to camp in Apaa center for many days to await the government envoy. Reflecting the need Routledge (2015, p. 450) identified for “organisational structures” to “mobilise relations between peasants to occupy land,” the close relationships between *rwoddi kweri* and their constituent households plays a key role in Apaa’s ‘praxis of resistance,’ enabling rapid dissemination of new tactics.

Finally, the autonomy of Apaa's village authorities created space for Apaa's peasant intellectuals to cultivate an egalitarian leadership culture, enabling the movement's praxis of resistance. Across northern Uganda, the authority of LCIs and *rwoddi kweri* depends upon community support, and is thus far from authoritarian (Jones, 2008; Hopwood, 2022, p. 41). This dynamic is magnified in Apaa: compared to the dynamics of local councils elsewhere, strategic discussions in Apaa's villages are unusually open, critical and organically democratic, reflecting the "sense of immediacy, fellowship, and spontaneity" described in Graeber's (2009, p. 190) reflections on the culture of direct-action planning (also Escobar, 2008). Inter-village gatherings of Apaa leaders often set aside the ideas of senior LCIs, elders or well-connected individuals in favour of tactics proposed by younger occupiers. Such non-hierarchical, egalitarian dynamics, as social movements scholars (Snow & Moss, 2014, p. 1128) theorise, encourages innovation in Apaa by valuing the "impromptu contributions" of diverse participants (also, Agnew & Oslender, 2013). The occupier selected to lead the 2018 UN protest, notably, was a relatively young, recent recruit with no official central position, but who was considered a skilful strategist and orator. Driven by the necessity of defending the occupation, in Apaa, aptitude and quality of analysis is often valued above rank.

In sum, by forging a unique social contract, maintaining autonomy from the state structures, and resourcefully adapting the political forms of the LCI and *rwoddi kweri*, Apaa's occupiers shielded themselves from some of the destabilizing effects of the 'institutionalised arbitrariness' of NRM rule Tapscott (2016, 2021) describes. As the authority of Apaa's village LCIs is not grounded in state consent, it is less easily eroded by state repudiation; as village leaders anticipate state violence, they are less disorientated by the unpredictability of state interventions. Paradoxically, building a semi-independent 'spatial jurisdiction,' to borrow Lund's (2016, p. 1213) phrase, has enabled peasant organisers not only to consolidate autonomous authority but also to advance their struggle for central state recognition of Apaa as a legitimate sub-unit of Amuru District.

### *7.1.3 Challenges facing new expressions of public authority in the movement*

In the Prison Notebooks, Gramsci (1971, pp. 326–327) emphasised the challenges of constructing counter-hegemonic alternatives within an existing, dominant order, observing (p. 388) that "from the moment in which a subaltern group becomes really autonomous" the need

arises to “construct...a new type of society” and “develop more universal concepts and more refined and decisive ideological weapons.”<sup>49</sup> Although the Apaa occupiers’ subversive adaptation of familiar institutions to form self-governing villages enabled them to resist state land expropriation, and as explored below, provide land to marginalised groups, the structures they developed lacked strongly centralised organisation, clearly articulated ideological principles and a solid consensus regarding how power should be wielded and transferred. The weakness of Apaa’s central council allowed ‘new hegemonies’ to emerge within the movement (Wolford, 2010, p. 13; also, Devine, 2018, p. 569), mirroring the very patterns of elite accumulation Apaa’s peasant intellectuals originally contested. Like rebel groups that end up replicating the very ‘governance practices’ they once fought to supplant (Burihabwa & Curtis, 2019), Apaa authorities’ abuses of power and marginalization of women have curtailed the movement’s emancipatory potential.

Many challenges facing the Apaa movement stem from its lack of legitimate, enduring centralised organisation. While the movement enjoyed strong leadership between 2006 and 2014, two key factors contributed to the rapid decline of Apaa’s central council after 2015. First, the movement initially relied too heavily on the personalised leadership of the Apaa Sub-Parish LCI Chairman, Okot Justino, a figure who wielded a claim to statutory legitimacy by virtue of winning office in the 2001 national elections, and conveniently proved a fierce and adept strategist. Okot’s sudden arrest and imprisonment in 2015 revealed that the movement had failed to build a sufficiently strong, central institution that could outlive him. A second factor inhibiting the development of central organisation was the Apaa occupiers’ fixation with statutory legitimacy. Following Okot’s imprisonment, instead of holding open elections or institutionalising a representative council of village LCIs and *rwoddi kweri*, Apaa’s leaders selected new central Chairman from the old 2001 committee.<sup>50</sup> While this strategy served the movement’s interest in retaining a veneer of legality, restricting themselves to a small pool of ageing men produced weak leaders, eroding Apaa’s centralised authority structure. Between 2015 and 2021, Apaa’s non-elected central LC Chairmen have proven cautious, bureaucratically-minded men with limited support bases, curbing the movement’s potential to implement the deeper ideological foundation Gramsci envisioned.

---

<sup>49</sup> For discussion see Ciavolella, 2018, pp. 58–61; Reed, 2012, pp. 565–568, 584.

<sup>50</sup> This strategy has been applied widely in the absence of state-authorised LCI elections between 2002 – 2018.

Reflecting broader patterns observed by social movement scholars (Abdelrahman, 2015; Flesher Fominaya, 2015), a lack of centralised organisation has undermined the Apaa movement's praxis of resistance in three key ways. First, the weak state of Apaa's central LCI triggered a series of destabilising factional struggles and coups, breeding division. Between 2015 and 2019, Apaa's village leaders overthrew their central LCI chairman twice; the first post-2015 Chairman was promptly ousted, only to be reinstalled several years later after occupiers lost trust in his replacement. These political manoeuvres both failed to restore effective central leadership and drained Apaa village strategists' attention, reducing their organisational capacity. By mid-2022, the institutional instability of Apaa's central office paved the way for (NRM) Pabo Sub County Chairman to orchestrate an external coup: during the 'stamp affair' noted in chapter four, Pabo's Chairman, backed by a UPDF officer, forced Apaa's central LCI into hiding and appointed a new LCI Chairman, who was promptly co-opted by NRM agents and began to proclaim Adjumani District's jurisdiction, collect charcoal 'dues' on behalf of Adjumani, promised to reward occupiers who vacated gazetted areas, and aided Madi land claimant groups.<sup>51</sup> Even as Apaa's occupiers eventually managed to oust him, the turmoil that resulted exacerbated divisions within Apaa's leadership, undermining their capacity to resolve internal disputes, weakening the movement.

Apaa's weak central organisation, secondly, has limited the movement's capacity for collective action. From late 2015 to 2021, Apaa's central LCIs played little role in organising resistance: often, its members shied away from risky action; at other moments, Apaa's strategists actively excluded them, perceiving them as corrupt or susceptible to government pressure. In 2018, for example, village leaders hid their UN protest plans from Apaa's (then) central LCI chairman, whom they believed had succumbed to the influence of NRM-loyalist and former Pabo Chairman Christopher Ojera. While Apaa's village leaders continued to cultivate the movement's praxis of resistance, after 2015, they faced new challenges: "After we lost Justino," a village LCI member observed in 2019, "we became less disciplined. These days it's still unclear who should call meetings or make decisions. It's harder to keep people together." Apaa's post-2015 ad hoc, horizontal mode of organising, many in Apaa agree, suffers from a lack of centralised coordination.

---

<sup>51</sup> Pabo's Sub-County chairman demanded that Apaa's central LCI return its prized 2001 stamp, supposedly to receive a new one. When Apaa's central LCI committee refused, he declared them illegitimate, using this pretext to install new leadership.



Finally, ineffective central organisation left the movement vulnerable to state agents' divisive tactics. As discussed in chapter four, in 2017, NRM agents under Ojera gained control of Juka Village, convincing its residents to align with Adjumani and abandon the Apaa movement. Although the secession of Juka Village reflected several dynamics, including Juka residents' reliance on UPDF protection from Madi land claimant groups, Apaa strategists insist such a betrayal could not have occurred under their former central LCI structure, which united Apaa's fifteen villages. In 2019, ruling party agents attempted to extend control over another roadside village outside the gazetted area, briefly installing their own LCI. Although leaders of other Apaa villages managed to replace the compromised LCI chairman, their lack of recognised central authority contributed to their failure to neutralise (or expel) the NRM agents, who continued to gather intelligence, co-opt followers and undermine the movement.

Beyond hampering the movement's praxis of resistance, the weakness of Apaa's central LCI between 2014 and 2021 limited the potential of the occupation to build a sustained alternative to hegemonic patterns of elite accumulation and abuses of power. By 2020, many occupiers perceived Apaa's central LCI as focused on extracting bloated administration fees for handling disputes and sourcing additional revenue, in part via the forest product trade. While some Apaa villages briefly attempted to prohibit commercial tree sales, a few central LCI members began to extract rents from forest product deals, eroding their authority to prevent certain village LCIs and *rwoddi kweri* from acting likewise. Between mid-2021 and 2023, UPDF soldiers orchestrated mass deforestation in Apaa, while Apaa's roadside centres bustled with charcoal dealers and loggers from across Uganda. Although Apaa's peasant occupiers gained small one-off payments for selling trees (sometimes under duress) and leaders received kickbacks, NRM-connected elites reaped the biggest profits while stripping Apaa's resources. Even as occupiers sought autonomy and resisted state land expropriation, they accordingly became, as Raeymaekers and Vlassenroot (2009, p. 140) put it, "complicit and collaborative with state power," enabling regional patterns of elite resource control, rather than forging an alternative.

The emancipatory potential of the Apaa occupation, finally, has also been limited by its unquestioning reproduction of patriarchal authority, reflecting a weakness often observed in rural movements (Mamdani, 1996, p. 206; Routledge, 2015, p. 454). Although the 2015

naked protest led some observers (Martiniello, 2015) to assume women play a pivotal role in organising Apaa's resistance, this act marked an exception to the norm of male-dominated collective action. Reflecting prevailing regional gender norms, LCI positions in Apaa are held by men, while *rwoddi okoro* (female 'chiefs of the shell') organise the feasts that conclude farming parties, rather than devise strategies like their male counterparts, the *rwoddi kweri*. Men often dissuade or prevent their wives from participating in meetings that remove them from household tasks and childcare, while women that manage to attend are often side-lined. One young female occupier expressed, "They [Apaa leaders] invite women to speak when NGOs visit, but they don't listen to our ideas." While patterns of authority and strategic planning in Apaa have, to some extent, challenged social hierarchies of age, rank and wealth, they are yet to significantly disrupt dominant gender dynamics, thereby limiting the pool of skills and ideas from which their praxis draws.

## **7.2 The Apaa movement's counter-hegemonic property regime**

As the movement evolved, Apaa's peasant intellectuals developed a counter-hegemonic form of land tenure based upon continuous occupancy that favoured landless and land-poor Acholi peasants. The form of tenure Apaa's peasant intellectuals forged disrupted patterns of 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey, 2005) facilitated by a global hegemonic system linking state political power and international and domestic corporate interests in land; it posed an alternative to the hegemonic process advanced by state and elite actors to claim historically depopulated frontier land in northern Uganda. Apaa's unique property system also provided an alternative to patterns of exclusion within communal land-holding practices across northern Uganda—patterns exacerbated, as argued in chapter four, by Uganda's neoliberal land reforms, a growing sense of scarcity, and the rising commercial value of land—that have increasingly left marginalised individuals and families in a precarious position. By seizing control of a residual land frontier claimed by the state, the Apaa occupation created a temporary context of land abundance, enabling land-poor peasants to reinstate inclusive communal land practices and adapt them to the needs of the movement.

The novel form of land tenure that emerged within the Apaa movement, it must be noted, reflected an implicit, rather than explicit ideological "set of beliefs about the world" and "how the world should be" (Curtis & Sindre, 2019, p. 396). In contrast to land occupation

movements in Latin America (Karriem, 2009, p. 316; Wolford, 2010), Apaa's peasant intellectuals have not developed or publicly articulated critiques of capitalism, private property relations, histories of elite accumulation, or land commodification; they are yet to develop a tightly defined class basis for land allocation or champion a broad political program for social change. As explored in chapter six, Apaa's occupiers outwardly present their actions in terms of the defence of customary, ancestral land. However, reflecting Gramsci's (1971, p. 326) observation that subaltern groups hold their "own conception of the world, even if only embryonic; a conception which manifests itself in action," through the process of political struggle and activism, the Apaa movement gave rise to a counter-hegemonic political form: a more equitable, though transitional, mode of land tenure.

Beyond flexible tactics, justifying narratives and strategic alliances, it is Apaa's land tenure regime that enabled the movement to successfully resist violent state evictions for over a decade and create opportunities for land-poor peasants to gain fertile land. Apaa's counter-hegemonic land tenure regime demonstrates the potential for creative political forms to emerge within rural African land movements that initially appear purely parochial and defensive. This section begins by exploring the emergence and counter-hegemonic character of Apaa's land tenure regime and then examines the challenges this system has faced.

### *7.2.1 The Apaa movement's property system*

As Kopytoff (1987, pp. 9, 16) famously articulated, frontier spaces have long constituted "institutional vacuums" where pioneers draw from inherited cultural repertoires but also innovate dynamic, new social and political forms (also Le Meur, 2006, pp. 869, 872). Similarly, while the Apaa land occupation was shaped by inherited practices of frontier settlement and inclusivity, through political struggle, peasant intellectuals developed a creative form of land tenure grounded not in patrilineal descent, financial capacity, elite connections, or even 'first-come' or usufructuary rights, but in continuous occupancy and commitment to resistance.

Before considering the counter-hegemonic qualities of Apaa's transitional property system, it is important first to outline its origin and basic form. According to peasant leaders active since the movement's inception, the emergence of Apaa's land allocation process and

tenure rules was precipitated by the intensification of state eviction operations between 2009 and 2012 (outlined in chapter five). Amidst mounting state violence, Apaa's leaders sought to maintain existing villages while rapidly expanding the occupation to encompass the rest of the empty or sparsely populated gazetted area and disputed border zone. To achieve these goals, they needed to incentivise continuous habitation, fill gaps left by evictions, and efficiently recruit new occupiers not only through familial networks but public channels such as the radio. Key aspects of the property system Apaa's peasant intellectuals developed to meet such demands became encapsulated in the '*cik me Apaa*,' the verbal social contract outlined above. Although such principles are articulated in varied ways, they generally convey that: (1) new families joining the movement are allocated land on the condition that they collectively maintain residency to protect Apaa from expropriation; (2) a brief period of absence following evictions or violence is tolerated, but must be communicated to their LCI; (3) if a family's absence becomes prolonged, their holding will be redistributed to new occupiers; (4) returning occupiers may pay a fine and receive a new plot, or regain a smaller portion of their previous holding; and (5) occupiers are encouraged to 'gift,' rather than subdivide and sell their land to ensure that newcomers recognise movement leaders and submit to Apaa's rules. As explored below, these principles have been interpreted, negotiated and applied in varied ways across Apaa, and have evolved over time.

Within this tenure system, the authority of *rwoddi kweri* and LCIs extends far beyond the roles such leaders usually play in land matters in northern Uganda, namely witnessing transactions and mediating disputes. At the time fieldwork was conducted between 2019 and 2021, Apaa's LCI chairmen and 'senior' *rwoddi kweri* were still expected to vet those seeking land in their village; applicants without a letter of recommendation from their former LCI were often rejected, as were those suspected of seeking land for speculative purposes or involvement in NRM intelligence networks. An LCI letter establishes that an applicant is well-regarded and not formerly known, as one senior *rwot kweri* put it (Apaa, 2019 August), as "a thief, troublemaker, or *la jok*" — someone who engages in malicious witchcraft.<sup>52</sup> It was usually then the *rwot kweri* of the designated area who led the process of land allocation or oversaw the 'gifting' of land to newcomers by established occupiers. To receive a new plot, newcomers paid a sum of money often known as *cul te gumboot*, a fee which was originally

---

<sup>52</sup> *La jok* is someone who purchases 'yat' (drugs, power-laden substances) intending to cause harm, or employs an *ajwaka* (spirit medium) to invoke a curse.

created to compensate the *rwot kweri*, their committee and neighbouring occupiers for trekking through wild bush to delineate boundaries—literally wearing gumboots, hence the name. Together with their LCI, *rwoddi kweri* assessed cases of absence and, when necessary, reallocated land to new recruits and negotiate with returnees. While village leaders have played varying, ad hoc roles in land allocation in other stretches of the eastern Nile bank frontier, no other area has developed alternative authorities outside of the state that so systematically exercise authority to redistribute land.

Apaa's property system can be considered counter-hegemonic for two key reasons. First, it provided opportunities for land-poor families and marginalised individuals to access frontier land in the wake of the war. While the deprived or intrepid also sought land elsewhere along the eastern Nile bank frontier (Hopwood, 2022, pp. 18, 111), as previously discussed, political elites and agricultural investors also staked out vast tracts of land in much of western Nwoya and parts of west Amuru, making it more difficult—although not impossible—for less-connected, poorer settlers to establish secure claims. In contrast, Apaa emerged as a frontier for those with little land and few options, partly because its contested status, exposure to state eviction processes and inter-ethnic tensions deterred wealthier families and investors. As such, the Apaa occupation provided an alternative for those who found themselves navigating fractured kinship ties, embroiled in land conflict, or simply lacking sufficient land to accommodate their family's needs. A young man from a Patiko clan, for example, described his decision to settle in Apaa around a decade ago:

When we returned from the camp, our neighbours encroached, and the conflict became too stressful...we've kept struggling, but even so, our *ngom kwaro* [grandfather's land] here in Parabongo was not enough. My father has many brothers; they all have many sons and others to support, like my mother's aunty you just met...We've had to find other paths...My brother bought several acres in Omee, but I didn't have that money...My first wife is still based here, but I took [my younger wife] to Apaa. It has not been easy, but it was the only way I could be sure to leave land to my children (Parabongo, 2020 July).

Like many other occupiers, this man perceived joining the Apaa movement, with all the hardship and uncertainty the decision entailed, as a chance to claim land that could become, he explained, the *ngom kwaro* of his *lukwayi*—his grandchildren and descendants.

Specific aspects of Apaa's property system have enabled marginalised individuals and land-poor families from across the Acholi-speaking region to acquire land, particularly in peripheral, risk-prone areas. Families unable to purchase land at market prices elsewhere could often muster enough for Apaa's allocation fees. Because Apaa's system was premised on incentivizing commitment to the occupation, it attracted and benefited those with few options, prepared to shoulder risk and endure hardship to hold onto land. As late as 2021, 50 acres in unstable parts of Gaji and Acholi Ber Village in Apaa could still be accessed for 100,000 to 200,000 Ugsh; in contrast, market rates for land in remote (but secure) areas of Amuru were over 1 million Ugsh per acre, while land near market centres or main roads was considerably more, sometimes double. Although many occupiers struggle to get by, some enterprising families have done surprisingly well out of this equation, largely because Apaa's long-fallowed soil remains rich and crop yields high. Several families I stayed with in such areas have lost their huts and possessions multiple times to UWA operations in recent years but still managed to sell enough surplus sesame, rice, and groundnuts to raise fees to send children to school in Amuru or Gulu city, an unreachable goal before they joined the occupation.

A second counter-hegemonic feature of Apaa's tenure system is that it has provided unusual opportunities for poorer women to exercise control over land. While scholars have argued that contrary to common assumptions, communal land practices in northern Uganda are responsive to women's land needs (Hopwood, 2015, 2022, pp. 142–143) and that women employ wide-ranging strategies to exert claims to land (see Obika et al, 2018, 2022), women are still typically marginalised in family decision-making processes; in most cases, they must direct their claims or appeals to men, and often have limited say in questions of inheritance. By contrast, some women—notably older, separated or widowed women—have acquired large areas of land in Apaa, which they control independently, overseeing its use and allocation amongst any children, relatives, or friends who join them. One fifty-five-year-old woman, for example, related how her late husband's family elsewhere in Amuru had granted her access to a small field but barred her teenage children from another relationship. In Apaa, however, she had claimed over 80 acres, abundant land to leave her sons, daughters, and other dependents. When I met her in 2020, she had sustained an injury fleeing from intruding land-claimant groups, while frequent UWA incursions had disrupted her farming, leading to a minimal harvest. With support from neighbours, she scraped through the season. As her case

highlights, although Apaa's property system has left the most risk-prone areas of land to those with the fewest options, it has nevertheless provided openings for women, as well as marginalised men, to take control of land they could not access via the market or familial ties.

In part, Apaa's land tenure regime proved successful because it integrated two key inherited land-holding practices. First, in the early years of the movement, Apaa's founders grew the occupation through well-worn inherited patterns of frontier settlement. From late 2008, a mix of returning and newcomer families left Apaa's 'satellite' camp and gradually settled Apaa's interior; a few returned to old sites, and most claimed expansive new holdings. While 'customary' chiefs exerted unprecedented authority over the allocation of vacant land elsewhere in Amuru after the war, this did not eventuate in Apaa, largely because the (late) Chief of Pabo proved disinclined—or perhaps too elderly—to play such a role, and Apaa's founding occupiers rejected the authority of other chiefs and clan leaders. Rather, until 2011, newcomers approved by Apaa's village leaders were free to claim land, although established occupiers often helped them identify suitable areas. New arrivals based themselves at occupiers' homesteads for several months while they selected a nearby site, cleared bush, constructed huts, and planted their first crops. Between 2006 and 2010, this process unfolded in Apaa in much the same way people have long staked out land in sparsely populated frontiers without the involvement of higher 'customary' or state authorities in the wider region (Leonardi & Santschi, 2016, pp. 107–108; Hopwood, 2022, p. 239; Lonsdale, 1992, pp. 335–336). Even as Apaa's peasant leaders adapted and layered new structures upon this process, the underlying, familiar practice of frontier settlement resonated widely across the Acholi region, enabling the movement to gain new followers.

A second key way in which Apaa's peasant organisers drew upon inherited land tenure practices to advance the movement was by cultivating inclusivity. Some pioneer families of the occupation—notably those with ties to Apaa predating the war—(re)established an archetypal form of communal holding, with a grandfather presiding as the head of the *dogola*, fields reserved for his wives, and areas apportioned to adult sons, who in turn allot fields to their own wives, older sons, and dependents. Other occupiers joined the movement with only their immediate family, effectively forging, to borrow Hopwood's (2022, p. 239) framing, new land-holding *dogolas*. In both arrangements, Apaa's village leaders encouraged occupiers to accommodate extended family, including maternal kin and

marital relations. In some cases, such inclusivity has resulted in arrangements considered unusual by Acholi cultural norms. In some *dogola* in Apaa, for example, multiple women have broken with patrilocal custom to bring their husbands to their father's or brother's land, often because their husband's *ngom kwaro* was overcrowded. Many families have also 'gifted' large tracts of their land to friends. One homestead I visited in Lulayi Village in late 2019, for example, had already carved off three parcels of land to accommodate new families and was in the process of handing over a fourth. Families occupying Apaa have gained access to land plentiful enough to allow them to embrace inherited land practices in their most inclusive form; to fulfil social obligations to support any kith and kin willing to accept the risks of inhabiting a disputed area.

The practice of inclusivity is strategic, both to occupying families and the survival of the movement. Reflecting dynamics that prevailed throughout much of the African continent where land was once considered abundant (Berry, 2002; Lentz, 2007; Leonardi & Santschi, 2016), until recently, families occupying Apaa viewed people and their labour as their most valuable resource. By integrating extended relatives, families can open more fields, boosting their overall production, while also mitigating a sense of insecurity and isolation. Gifting land parcels likewise enables occupiers to improve the security of their *te kweri* by gaining new neighbours, as well as accruing social capital amongst recipient families, who are expected to offer ongoing 'gifts,' usually in the form of crops or labour. Apaa's peasant intellectuals have also explicitly encouraged occupier families to practice inclusivity as a mechanism to grow the movement; building numbers is critical to the occupation's strategy of expanding territorial control.

Beyond the integration of inherited land practices, however, the success of Apaa's counter-hegemonic land tenure regime stems from its unique features. Distinctive, innovative aspects of Apaa's land tenure system have benefited the movement in five key ways. First, the system's focus on continual residency has enabled the movement to defy state evictions. The mechanism at play can be illustrated by an exchange between two middle-aged women I witnessed in 2020 whilst walking between villages in Apaa. Unprompted, one woman began to complain that her *rwot kweri* had not only reallocated her late husband's land (which she wished her children to inherit) but also demanded she and her new husband pay a fine to reclaim their plot after they fled UWA incursions in 2019. The second woman challenged



her, noting that her urban-based adult children never took up residence, leaving the first plot empty, while she had also taken too long to return to the second. Drawing on phrases I have often heard in Apaa, she stressed;

No one can flee danger for safety and expect everyone else to guard their land for them.... If we'd all left, the government would have found our village empty and declared victory... You knew Apaa's rules, you agreed to them (paraphrased, Gaji, 2020 November).

Embracing this logic, many occupiers take pride in never abandoning their land and sleeping in tarpaulin-covered burned huts or makeshift grass shelters in the wake of eviction operations. In strategy meetings held between 2019 and 2020, Apaa's village leaders urged each other to increase the pace of recruitment to fill land left vacant in the wake of the mass state evictions of 2018. As they reminded each other in such gatherings, it was only by consistently enforcing continued occupancy that they had maintained territorial control over Apaa.

A second advantage of Apaa's unique tenure system is that by defining, bestowing, and enforcing rights to property, village leaders consolidated their authority, reinforcing the social order which enabled the occupation to function. This dynamic, as discussed in chapter two, is captured in Christian Lund's (2006, 2011, 2016) observations that the power to categorise and establish property rights *produces* public authority and that such power emerges as institutions and political subjects co-construct relationships of 'reciprocal recognition.' Between 2011 and 2022, new occupiers acquired land through Apaa's village *rwoddi kweri* and LCI. Although disputes abound (as explored below), Apaa's new occupiers recognise Apaa's land tenure system, and with it, the institutional authority of Apaa's peasant leaders. They become beholden to locally elected village leaders rather than the state, a family patriarch, or clan authorities. This is less true, certainly, of families that settled Apaa before the war and those who pioneered the occupation before 2011, whose holdings are generally viewed as incontrovertible. Such families, however, tend to be large and committed to the movement, presenting little challenge to the strategy of continuous occupancy.

A third way that the Apaa's distinctive property system has benefited the movement relates to its 'off-stage' (Feierman, 1990, p. 42), subversive character. As previously discussed, in their 'on-stage' public discourse, Apaa's peasant intellectuals leverage the

reified language of ‘custom,’ portraying the movement as the defence of their ancestral homeland. Apaa’s leaders tend not to divulge Apaa’s property regime in such ‘on-stage’ forums as court-rooms or parliament, perceiving that outsiders may view land allocation based on a commitment to resistance, rather than descent, to undermine the movement’s historical claims. ‘Off-stage,’ however, it has become widely known amongst peasant communities in Acholi-speaking districts that it is possible to approach Apaa’s leadership to access land at very little cost; it is this diffusion of information that has enabled the occupation to grow. Within this expansive ‘off-stage’ space, Acholi peasant farmers from across the region tend to accept the idea that Pabo and Lamogi groups might hold historical ties to an area, yet also create a structure allowing others to join them to prevent state expropriation, reflecting an implicit understanding that ‘customary’ land practices have always shifted over time, evolving in response to new circumstances. By presenting a simplified ‘on-stage’ narrative while also diffusing ‘off-stage’ informal knowledge of Apaa’s unique tenure system, the Apaa movement leveraged the powerful justifying logic of ‘custom’ and ancestral land rights, while also developing a subversive political practice that transcends descent-based claims, enabling rapid expansion.

The flexible form of Apaa’s land regime has benefited the movement by allowing village leaders to adapt its rules to the evolving contours of the struggle. Key variables that village leaders have renegotiated over time include the size of plots allocated, the ‘gumboot’ rate, and the permitted period of absence. In 2011, for example, the ‘gumboot’ fee was set at around 15,000 Ugsh to encourage mass recruitment. By 2013, however, demand proved high enough for villages to charge up to 50,000, while by 2019, some villages charged as much as 200,000 to 700,000 for families to access between 10 and 100 acres. Gumboot rates reflect risk: fees to access land in peripheral zones subject to frequent attacks are kept low to attract newcomers but set higher in established, ‘safer’ areas. At certain crisis points, village leaders attempted to unify their strategy. By mid-2019, amidst ongoing intrusions, Acholi Ber’s population had dwindled from several hundred families down to around 25; large tracts of Gaji, Lulayi and Oyanga also lay vacant. In a meeting in November 2019, Apaa village leaders debated how to set the gumboot rate low enough to avoid prohibiting poor families but high enough to generate a sense of commitment to encourage sustained occupancy. They settled on 50,000 Ugsh to access 50 acres and resolved to subdivide larger plots to increase population density and, therefore, security. Although this resolution was not applied

consistently, it set a benchmark that helped the movement to recruit new occupiers to such exposed areas during the following year, re consolidating the occupation's territorial control.

Finally, Apaa's unique tenure system has also benefited the movement by providing a source of revenue. As in much of rural northern Uganda, Apaa's village leaders live largely off farming, but also collect small fees for their services. While 'gumboot' contributions initially provided a modest revenue supplement for *rwoddi kweri*, as the rate ballooned over time, its function evolved and diversified across Apaa. In many villages, leaders devised formulas to divide the contribution between the *rwot kweri*'s committee, the *senior rwot kweri*, the LCI, and Apaa's central LCI. Although the fee has provoked significant conflict (explored below), it has also enabled Apaa's peasant leaders to expend considerable time organising collective action. At important junctures, village leaders have also drawn from gumboot fees to fund direct action, for instance, to feed volunteers stationed at roadblocks, and to supplement community contributions to support occupiers to await government convoys in 2015. Some villages utilise land allocation revenue for community development. In 2021, for example, the senior *rwot kweri* of Lulayi used around 2 million shillings acquired through recent land reallocations to purchase building materials for a new village school. This use of gumboot fees has proven particularly effective at building trust between village leaders and constituents, strengthening solidarity within the movement.

### 7.2.2 Challenges facing Apaa's property system

As Gramsci (1971, p. 334) recognised, the process of constructing counter-hegemonic leaders and alternative structures is "long, difficult, full of contradictions, advances and retreats." Peasant movements may pose a challenge to ruling class oppression in some regards, yet create new hierarchies and inequalities others, reflecting, as Abdelrahman (2014, p. 122) expresses, Gramsci's insight that as "the progressive character of these movements is never assured in advance," the struggles of workers and peasant groups "do not always have a unified progressive direction" (also Gustavo et al, 2017, p. 102; De Angelis, 2012). Despite the counter-hegemonic qualities outlined above, the emancipatory potential of Apaa's property system has been limited by its failure to transcend patriarchal norms and corroded by Apaa leaders' tendency to emulate hegemonic processes of elite accumulation, leading to division and disparity.

Many challenges facing the Apaa occupation stem from the way certain village LCIs and *rwoddi kweri* have mirrored the very hegemonic processes of accumulation the occupation sought to contest, weakening occupiers' trust and compliance with Apaa's property system and in turn, the movement's capacity for collective action. The roots of this dynamic can be traced to early years of the occupation, when peasant leaders who rose to prominence claimed many hundreds of acres of land, often comprising of plots in separate villages for their different wives. This pattern did not provoke conflict in and of itself; new occupiers generally accepted leaders' over-sized land holdings as a privilege of their role in pioneering the occupation, particularly as until very recently, land remained abundantly available to those willing to accept the terms of the movement. Such early large-scale acquisitions, however, forged a precedent of land accumulation amongst Apaa's leaders and created an expectation that authority over land in Apaa could be used for personal gain.

This pattern set the stage for the emergence of corruption within Apaa's land tenure system. The flexible form of land allocation that enabled Apaa's leaders to respond strategically to the movement's shifting needs also allowed certain leaders—driven by various combinations of poverty and opportunism—to take advantage of their authority. Rent-seeking behaviour has taken various forms. Most commonly, senior *rwoddi kweri* or LCI chairmen covertly extend control over land allocation, quietly hiking the gumboot fee and retaining the lion's share for themselves without involving committee members or neighbours. Sometimes leaders provide more secure plots, lower rates, or lenient terms of absence to relatives and friends to advance their social capital. In a few rare, but particularly detrimental cases, leaders violated Apaa's recruitment code by colluding with wealthy individuals interested in land for speculative purposes. Between 2018 and 2019, for example, a village LCI chairman and *rwot kweri* conspired to allocate at least eight over-sized plots in a remote corner of Apaa to a Gulu-based businessman, collecting millions of shillings in inflated allocation fees. As the businessman had no immediate plans to occupy or utilise the plots, the land remained vacant, leaving the area less secure and preventing the reallocation of the land to new occupiers. When discovered, the land deal played into an ongoing leadership wrangle in the village, reducing occupiers' ability to organise against ongoing UWA incursions. By replicating hegemonic processes of accumulation, peasant leaders undermined

the collective capacity of their village to maintain territorial control and resist state expropriation.

Such abuses of authority over land in Apaa have also complicated disputes over the movement's principle of continuous occupancy. In the wake of the turmoil of 2017 and 2018, which left large tracts of land empty in peripheral villages of Apaa such as Oyanga, Gaji, Acholi Ber, Lulayi, Gorobi, and Luru, disagreements arose over the acceptable period of absence following evictions, particularly where occupier turn-over rates remained high due to ongoing violent intrusions. Where leaders developed coherent processes to redistribute land and negotiate with 'late' returnees, disputes were resolved quickly. In one village, however, conflicts escalated as the LCI and *rwoddi kweri* applied Apaa's land reallocation system in unpredictable, partial, and self-interested ways. A particularly thorny case involved several dozen occupier households of a clan from Omoro District who fled Apaa amidst the violence of 2017 and 2018 but sought to return to their former plots in early 2020. Tensions mounted when the returnees discovered that village leaders had not only reassigned their land to newcomers but also claimed desirable plots for themselves. Because the leaders involved had developed a reputation for extorting excessive profits from land (re)allocation, a significant portion of the village's population began to support the returnees' demands, exacerbating the conflict. The pro-returnee faction levied accusations of discrimination, citing cases in which absentees from Amuru-based clans were treated more leniently, reawakening clan-based rivalries. Once again, abuse of authority over land bred division, undermining the solidarity necessary for effective organising.

Although such rent-seeking behaviour was concentrated in just a few villages, it has posed broader challenges to Apaa's tenure system and autonomous rule. Since 2019, occupiers have increasingly attempted to involve the police in internal land disputes in Apaa, contesting their leaders' authority to reallocate land. In part, this trend reflects that as state evictions have subsided, Apaa's occupiers have become less reliant on the strategies that brought about such success and more willing to break Apaa's 'rules' to advance their own interests. Mistrust in Apaa's public institutions sparked by cases of corruption, however, has also played a role. In the case discussed above, for example, the returnees from Omoro District were absent for several years, far exceeding Apaa's usual grace period. The village

leaders' corrupt behaviour, however, led some occupiers to contest Apaa's land reallocation system more broadly. As one young occupier who sided with the returnees expressed:

Those leaders lack integrity: why should we abide by such rules when they disregard them, taking the best land for themselves, eating the money they collect... (Apaa, 2021 May).

In the wake of inconclusive attempts by Apaa's central LCI to resolve the dispute in early 2021, the Omoro group turned to external state authorities, including police and the LCIII Chairman of Pabo who was responsible for orchestrating the coup described above. By exposing the conflict to hostile external authorities, the group risked providing state agents with new avenues to sow discord within the movement. As in other, less dramatic cases, the village leaders' abuse of power led occupiers to feel justified in flouting the movement's rules, weakening Apaa's property regime and social cohesion.

Beyond corruption, Apaa's property system faces challenges posed by the rising commodification of land within the movement. Since 2019, land sales have become increasingly common, particularly in Apaa's most secure, southern villages such as Arii, Coro, and Gulu Gulu where UWA operations have not reached since 2012 and where land is almost fully allocated. Although still within the wildlife zone, land in such villages is perceived as relatively secure and thus more marketable. Since 2019, occupiers have increasingly sought to sell or rent out rather than 'gift' sub-sections of their large land holdings. By 2021, land in relatively stable villages fetched about 200,000 per acre, a rate still under a quarter of the market value of rural land elsewhere but still sufficient to tempt families seeking cash for school fees, burials, or small-scale business ventures. When occupying families approach their *rwot kweri* and LCI to establish that an interested purchaser genuinely lacks land and intends to submit to Apaa's code, despite Apaa's original rule to the contrary, land sales are generally permitted. Increasingly, however, occupiers have sold plots covertly because they fear that Apaa's leaders will either reject the purchaser or charge high fees for witnessing the transaction.

It is such illicit land sales that have begun to undermine Apaa's tenure system, posing threats to the movement. In one inter-village strategy meeting I attended in February 2021, *rwoddi kweri* and LCIs from eight different Apaa villages emphasised that covert land sales were rising within their jurisdictions. One LCI chairman advised those gathered;

Some people coming here to buy land plan to sell it to rich investors...others want to coordinate with government, to our ruin...Let us agree: if you have 200 acres and need school fees, rent out 50 acres rather than selling!

As his words capture, covert sales in Apaa posed two key threats: land banking by absentee speculative investors and acquisition of plots by NRM agents planted to accept state compensation in exchange for vacating the area. By 2021, Apaa's leaders had already discovered multiple cases of false acquisitions after Museveni's Government announced a compensation package in 2019. A less dramatic but more widespread effect of covert land sales between 2019 and 2021 was the influx of mobile farmers who cultivated but did not reside. Such relatively well-off farmers proved less invested in the occupation, less present, and unwilling to engage in direct action. This pattern has already cost the movement the opportunity to recruit active members and threatens to unravel Apaa's culture of solidarity, eroding the occupiers' capacity to resist state expropriation tactics in the future.

Rapid commodification of land in Apaa centre has led to rising inequality and conflict within the movement. Since 2019, Apaa centre has emerged as the largest trading hub between Amuru centre and Adjumani town, evidenced by the expansion of its twice-weekly market and the proliferation of new businesses. Land in Apaa centre remains controlled by two families from Pabo clans whose predecessors settled the area in the mid-1970s, both of whom claim to hold leasehold titles and dispute their mutual boundary. As Apaa centre is increasingly perceived as secure and demand for roadside land rises, these families have begun to rent and sell land to outside investors, including large numbers of traders from central Uganda initially attracted to Apaa's burgeoning charcoal trade. Occupier families renting roadside plots who have contributed to the occupation for over a decade are increasingly struggling to compete. In 2021, one woman well known for her sacrifices to the movement was forced to raise 3 million shillings to purchase the plot where she had constructed a small restaurant; others have found themselves squeezed out of the centre's new land market entirely. One of Apaa centre's two land-holding families has also begun to contest land formerly 'gifted' by their predecessors, a pattern often observed as land values rise (Lentz, 2007; Alava & Shroff, 2019). Most prominently, in early 2021, conflict flared over land held by the Catholic church and Apaa central primary school as one of the families claimed that the plots fell within their own boundary, thereby contesting the right of the rival family to gift it to such institutions after the war. Increasingly, land in Apaa centre secured

through collective political struggle has enriched a few families and business entrepreneurs able to purchase prime plots, undermining the movement's role in countering elite accumulation.

The emancipatory potential of Apaa's land tenure system is also limited by the way it reproduces patriarchal norms. While Apaa's post-2011 land allocation system, as noted above, never excluded woman-led households, in practice, few women have been able to take up the opportunity, largely because opening land in a remote, insecure area remains a risky and daunting prospect, particularly for those caring for small children alone. Likewise, although the inclusive land practices cultivated in Apaa have benefited women, occupying families and village leaders have reproduced, rather than revolutionized, gender dynamics prevalent in the wider region; beyond the opportunity to settle open bushland, no unique structural innovations advantaging women have emerged. As such, women within occupying families have limited input in decisions related to land use and remain wary that their land access relies upon their relationships with men. In one notable case, a woman who served on an LCI committee was forced to leave Apaa in 2021 after her husband expelled her. Village leaders advised her husband to accommodate her but did not intervene when he refused. Alone with a baby, she felt unable to take a new plot in the more unstable, peripheral areas of Apaa where unallocated land was still available. Despite her commitment to resistance, she lost land access, illustrating that as elsewhere, the dynamics of property in Apaa are embedded in social relations, which remain unequal.

### **7.3 Conclusion**

Peasant political action in Apaa was shaped by inherited practices and institutional forms, but also produced new forms of territory, authority, and property. By reproducing familiar village institutions, Apaa's peasant intellectuals established a viable internal social order while also becoming legible to external authorities, aiding the occupation in its pursuit of state recognition and inclusion as a legitimate sub-unit of Amuru. Initially, the occupation grew through time-worn practices of frontier settlement and inclusive communal land holding. The demands of defending the occupation, however, pressed Apaa's peasant occupiers to subversively adapt such socio-political forms; as such, they forged a distinct jurisdictional sphere beyond state control and created institutions capable of organising



contentious collective action; they developed an ‘off-stage’ land tenure system that prioritised commitment to resistance over patrilineal descent, usufructuary rights, social status, or financial capability. These ‘counter-hegemonic’ political initiatives enabled the movement to consolidate territorial control and extend opportunities to impoverished peasants from across the region to access land. The Apaa occupation demonstrates the potential for creative political forms and class-based organisation to emerge within rural African struggles over land, even when such struggles remain fraught by divisive ethno-territorial politics.

The case of Apaa, however, also reveals how peasant land movements are limited when they perpetuate inequalities and mirror hegemonic processes of accumulation. Although the occupation provided opportunities for women to control land, it did not systematically address prevailing gender inequalities. The movement’s failure to build accountable, centralised authority contributed to the rise of rent-seeking, accumulative behaviours by Apaa’s leadership, igniting conflicts over authority, control of resources and land redistribution while weakening Apaa’s unique property system. These dynamics have both undermined the organisational capacity of the movement and limited its emancipatory potential to disrupt rising patterns of landlessness, social division, and exclusion in northern Uganda.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Conclusion**

Between 2006 and 2021, the Apaa occupation movement that emerged to contest state-driven enclosure of frontier land for investment in conservation expanded from a camp of several hundred pioneers from Pabo to a vast territory of villages comprising over 20,000 peasant farmers from the Acholi subregion. Despite ongoing attacks by wildlife rangers and groups mobilised around Madi ethnic land claims, Apaa's peasant occupiers managed to resist state expropriation for fifteen years. Despite the NRM regime's political clout and military might, they expanded their territorial control over ten thousand square kilometres of fertile land along the Albert Nile's east bank. How peasant farmers in northern Uganda accomplished this impressive feat presented the puzzle that motivated this dissertation. By examining this historical experience, the dissertation sought to elicit broader insights into the dynamics that enable successful resistance to land expropriation.

As the research unfolded, it became clear that to understand the shifting contours of peasant mobilisation in Apaa—how it emerged, the dilemmas it faced, and how it evolved over time—it was necessary to trace the contested political history of land regimes in northern Uganda. Drawing on archival sources, participant observation, interviews, and activist research, the dissertation probed how past and present struggles over land regimes forged the political conditions that Amuru peasants encountered in 2006 and moulded the institutional and conceptual landscape of possibility for their response.

The main underlying argument of this research is that how peasant organisers reproduce, renegotiate, and transform inherited discourses and forms of identity, property, and authority has profound effects on their capacity to 'out-manoeuvre' prevailing power structures to advance collective claims to land. Drawing on the case of Apaa, the dissertation presented evidence that alongside organisational practices such as tactical flexibility, symbolic protest and political alliances, successful resistance to state land expropriation is enabled by collective action that constructs land regimes that transcend inequalities, social divisions and ethno-territorial logics exploited by ruling elites. To illuminate such patterns, the dissertation presented a Gramscian-inspired conceptual framework that bridges

structuralist and processual perspectives to understand struggles over land, power, and belonging as contested hegemonic and counter-hegemonic processes.

By drawing studies of peasant resistance and social movements into dialogue with historically grounded research on African land regimes, the dissertation contributed to both sets of literature. On one hand, it demonstrated how a fresh analytical focus on the dynamics that inhibit and enable peasant struggles against dispossession can shed new light on debates on the ‘negotiable’ character of African land tenure. On the other, it underscored that to move beyond positivist, reified readings of resisting indigenous subjects, ethnic belonging, and ‘customary’ tenure, studies of political reactions ‘from below’ to land grabbing must examine the contested trajectories of land regimes. Beyond differentiating peasant communities and their political responses along lines of gender, generation, class or ethnicity, scholars must trace how forms of identity, belonging to land and property are constructed, renegotiated, and transformed over time.

This chapter first brings together the main arguments and conceptual contributions the dissertation makes to the field, then highlights the research’s key limitations and avenues for future research.

## **8.1 Key arguments**

### *8.1.1 How states and ruling elites use land to build power*

To understand the political context in which peasant mobilisation unfolded, the dissertation explored the questions: How have states and ruling elites advanced control over land in northern Uganda? What functions have such processes served these actors? To address these questions, the dissertation developed a Gramscian-inspired lens that views land regimes as contested, shifting ‘hegemonic’ processes by which states and ruling classes build power and cement elite privilege. By capturing how states and rival elites compete to exert authority over land and people while adjusting their strategies in response to popular dissent, this concept transcends the static understanding of land regimes that limits structuralist approaches. By highlighting how institutions and discourses linking territory, identity and property advanced by ruling classes offer potent, oppressive tools of state-building, control

and accumulation even as they remain unstable and contested, this framing also avoids underestimating how uneven power dynamics constrain ordinary people's efforts to negotiate claims to land.

Illuminating such dynamics, chapter three revealed how colonial officials carved northern Uganda into 'ethnic' administrative units, forcibly relocated populations from the Nile banks encompassing Apaa, and converted expropriated land into protected areas. These hegemonic land regime processes served colonial interests in splintering resistance and imposing social order. According to their shifting, sometimes contradictory priorities of rule, however, colonial officials often re-arranged 'traditional' authorities, restructured territories, and redrew boundaries. Adapting their strategies to placate dissent, they conceded greater local control over resources and partially reopened settlement-restricted areas. In response to disruptive conflicts over boundaries, administrators eventually attempted to backtrack on the ideal of ethnic territories in favour of national citizenship and settlement rights. Rather than forging rigid institutions, such incongruous colonial interventions set the stage for ongoing disputes over territory, authority, and property: British strategies to reorder northern Uganda's landscape and maintain social control created competing precedents further complicated by administrative and policy shifts wrought by post-independence regimes.

While structuralist approaches highlight how African governments advance 'statist' or 'neo-customary' land regimes in different sub-national territories, the concept of 'hegemonic' land processes illuminates a more convoluted strategy in which African governments build control by allowing rival authorities and interest groups seeking control over land to compete for central state recognition. A key contribution the dissertation makes to the field is thus to explicitly conceptualise how forms of legal and institutional pluralism can reflect a strategy of rule that enables states to wield land as a flexible political tool (cf. Boone, 2014, p. 16). In the case of Uganda, Museveni's NRM government advanced a hegemonic land regime that entrenched rather than resolved Uganda's pluralistic institutional legacies. The regime peddled nationalist, non-sectarian principles yet implemented divisive decentralisation reforms that reignited colonial ethno-territorial logics, driving politically charged disputes over administrative jurisdiction, resource control and land access. The ambiguous character of Uganda's land tenure reforms allowed the regime to consolidate power by alternately championing customary land rights and availing land to investors, conservation agencies and

political elites whilst fostering competition amongst rival institutions. In turn, this strategy contributed to rising conflict over communal land and ethnicity-based disputes over residual land frontiers such as Apaa.

Broadly, the dissertation underscores that research on large-scale land expropriation must be grounded in an analysis of regionally specific, contested histories of state-crafted land regimes. This approach reveals how contemporary African governments recycle structures and discourses wielded by prior regimes: in the case of Apaa, colonial precedents and global conservation discourses fed into national power dynamics, giving nationalist leaders opportunities to advance processes to enclose land for conservation and investment. This approach also offers insight into why central state engagement in land expropriation processes can morph over time as regimes leverage legacies of institutional pluralism and resulting tensions over land to consolidate power. In the case of Apaa, state-backing for UWA processes to enclose land for conservation waxed and waned in relation not only to popular dissent but also competing, hegemonic elite interests in land accumulation, resource exploitation, territorial control, and electoral victory. For many years, central state recognition of Adjumani District's jurisdiction dovetailed with the regime's interest in enclosing Apaa land, while conflicts inflamed by administrative disputes provided state agents with political fodder to fragment resistance. In response to mounting dissent, however, Museveni's government began to exploit the Apaa conflict to serve broader political goals, playing Madi and Acholi factions against one another.

Such dynamics have persisted. In February 2023, Uganda's Prime Minister announced imminent mass evictions in Apaa (Kasoocha, 2023), indicating that the central state is yet to relinquish the goal of establishing a wildlife reserve. In response, Apaa leaders—backed by Acholi politicians—forced the Prime Minister to flee a public meeting amid riotous protest, then used a creative direct action targeting the Acholi Paramount Chief to secure an in-person meeting with the President (James & Omona, 2023). In turn, Museveni promptly overturned the eviction order, instituting yet another 'commission of inquiry' into Apaa (Kitara, 2023). Six months later, however, the new 'judicial' commission had yet to commence its work, while Museveni issued ambiguous, non-committal statements on Apaa, perhaps to pacify Madi political leaders' indignation at his positive response to Acholi protest.

Such patterns suggest that Museveni's regime will continue to test the waters to gauge whether support for the Apaa movement has become sufficiently fractured to allow renewed eviction operations. As long as mass evictions remain politically untenable, however, the regime will likely ensure that the Apaa conflict simmers on, punctuated by inconclusive state inquiries, dialogues, or legal proceedings. By advancing hegemonic processes that prolong the Apaa dispute while fostering rival parties' hope of a favourable state ruling, Museveni's regime reinforces its position as an overarching authority. As the Apaa case illuminates, oscillating state involvement in land expropriation processes that initially appear to stem from indecision or dysfunction can reflect political strategy.

### *8.1.2 How peasant political action over land is shaped by the past*

To understand how the Apaa occupation movement emerged and the dilemmas it faced, the dissertation explored the questions: How has peasant political action been shaped by inherited discourses and political forms linking territory, identity, authority, and property, particularly those advanced by the state and ruling classes? How have such dynamics inhibited or enabled successful peasant resistance to state-driven land expropriation? Disrupting portrayals of peasant mobilisation as the defence of ancestral homelands by indigenous peasants or the product of recent elite political manoeuvres, the dissertation argued that the past presents a range of possible political identities and spatial logics that peasant intellectuals may mobilise as they contest state land expropriation. Centrally, it contended that the articulation of collective claims to property, territory, and belonging is always a strategic, creative, political process even as it is shaped and constricted by discourses and structures advanced by ruling classes. Building on the work of such scholars as Feierman (1990) and Mamdani (1996), a key contribution this dissertation made to the field was thus to illuminate how inherited political discourses—particularly those reproduced by ruling classes—offer a double-edged sword to peasant groups contesting state-driven land expropriation. When peasants replicate hegemonic ethno-territorial logics and forms advanced by ruling classes, they gain powerful tools for mobilisation that can, to an extent, enable resistance. Such tools, however, also perpetuate conflict, erode solidarity necessary for effective organising, and restrict the emancipatory reach of peasant political action.

Reflecting such dynamics, chapter three argued that colonial strategies of rule in northern Uganda imposed a political, institutional landscape which shaped the gradual ‘co-construction’ of Acholi and Madi tribal identities. While colonial administrators wielded tribal categories, boundaries, and chiefly authority structures as instruments of social control, rural dwellers re-appropriated them to advance collective claims and resist British authority over land: dissidents organised around the Pabo Chiefdom identity blocked the creation of ‘crown forests’; rural communities, mobilised along tribal lines, contested settlement prohibitions. The divisive ethno-territorial undercurrents of such mobilisations, however, positioned rural colonial subjects against one another, triggering volatile conflicts that undermined efforts to reclaim land along the Nile banks.

In turn, inherited political discourses, structure, and practices linking territory, property, identity, and authority offered peasant intellectuals many tools to shape the Apaa movement. Apaa organisers developed tactics, as argued in chapter five, that reflected older generations’ experiences of encroachment in state-protected areas and militant organising amid political turmoil in the 1980s. The forms of organisation and land tenure they created, as seen in chapter seven, drew upon long-established patterns of frontier settlement and familiar public authority structures. As argued in chapter six, peasant intellectuals wove together oral histories, social memories of place and ideas of ‘suffering for territory’ to construct a collective identity and historical narrative of ‘Pabo’ clan authority over Apaa. This process of articulation, however, was constricted by colonial ethno-territorial logics reignited by state and ruling-class hegemonic manoeuvres: Pabo authority over Apaa involved the exclusion of Lamogi and Madi ‘others.’

Such inherited political tools proved vital but also limiting. Reproducing familiar public institutions and communal land practices enabled Apaa leaders to build authority, develop cohesion and grow the occupation, but proved insufficient to expand territorial control in the face of state evictions and divisive tactics. The story of Pabo and Acholi belonging and authority provided powerful ethno-political allies and compelling framing narratives. By conforming to ruling elites’ hegemonic logics, however, the Apaa occupation became susceptible to political manipulation and internal disintegration: this pattern became manifest in inter-clan conflicts, struggles over administrative affiliation, and violent clashes with Madi groups, eroding the movement’s capacity to out-manoeuvre the state.

Peasant political action in Apaa has continued to face such trade-offs. In a written petition presented to Museveni in Gulu in February 2023, Apaa representatives emphasised that Apaa residents and Acholi more generally “overwhelmingly voted [for] you in 2021,” urging: “as you firmly sit on your presidential seat...let us also stay firmly in our homes and land in Apaa” (Apaa community, 2023). Reflecting broader political shifts in northern Uganda since 2016, Apaa’s peasant intellectuals link Acholi support for Uganda’s ruling party to demands for state protection of ‘Acholi’ land interests. The dark underbelly of this strategy is that ethnic division over Apaa has intensified since 2022 as Madi land claimant groups have seized land in Gorobi, displacing hundreds of Acholi families, and sporadically raided peripheral villages, prompting clashes. In August 2023, clashes led to the death of four Acholi occupiers, and an unknown number of Madi assailants (Ijjo & Okot, 2023). Reinforcing such patterns, regional leaders’ rhetoric remains ethnically charged. In response to this violence, for example, an Acholi MP rallied for region-wide protest while the Acholi Paramount Chief attempted (but failed) to lead march on foot from Gulu to Apaa: both adopted the slogan, ‘Rise up Acholi.’

Amid rising insecurity, Apaa’s peasant leaders will likely continue to turn to powerful ethnic political allies for protection. If they uphold the movement’s exclusive ethnic character while politically-sponsored Madi groups expand their activities, the conflict could unfold in several ways. Museveni’s regime will likely intermittently intervene to impose order, increasing state military presence in Apaa. Past precedent also indicates, however, that troops will be withdrawn or given new orders, allowing clashes to resume. If Apaa’s Acholi occupiers begin to respond to mass incursions with organised violence, conflict could escalate, bringing acute suffering and eroding the movement’s capacity to resist state expropriation. Alternatively, Madi land claimant groups may make territorial gains, leading to a slow displacement of Acholi occupiers, making way for Adjumani elites and private investors rather than land-poor Madi peasants. Most likely, the conflict will unfold haphazardly, exhibiting all these dynamics at different turns. Reflecting the limits of inherited political tools wielded by ruling classes, all of these scenarios inhibit peasant struggles against dispossession and elite accumulation.



### 8.1.3 Peasant land struggles and counter-hegemonic imagination

To understand how the Apaa land movement adapted and evolved over time, the dissertation examined a final sub-question: How does peasant political action reimagine and reconstruct forms of authority, territory, identity, and property? To tackle this question, the dissertation developed the Gramscian-inspired concept of ‘counter-hegemonic’ land movements: although peasant action is moulded by hegemonic land regime processes advanced by ruling elites, through deconstruction and political struggle, peasant intellectuals can also forge creative, alternative forms of belonging, identity, property, territory, and authority. Counter-hegemonic land processes enable successful peasant resistance by transcending social divisions and ethno-territorial logics perpetuated by ruling elites. Broadly, the dissertation demonstrated that research on peasant resistance must embrace an historical, ethnographic perspective to grasp how peasant intellectuals rework “symbolic sedimentations in the landscape” (Moore, 1997, p. 96) to generate novel political institutions and subjectivities capable of contesting dispossession. The concept of counter-hegemonic land movements contributes a fresh tool to equip scholars for this task.

In the case of Apaa, peasant intellectuals advanced three counter-hegemonic processes that enabled the movement to resist state evictions, expand territorial control and extend land access to marginalised groups. First, they reinterpreted oral histories and migration myths to expand the boundaries of belonging beyond Pabo clans, reimagining the ties between landscape, identity and belonging. To overcome unsustainable conflict with Lamogi clan groups, Apaa’s peasant intellectuals forged a new historical framing narrative and collective identity that interwove the idea of Acholi ethnic authority over land with a place-based, spatial form of belonging rooted in shared struggle. To advance this creative political process, peasant leaders drew on rich cultural memories of overlapping identities, common lineages, and supple forms of belonging to land that predated the ruptures of colonial rule.

A second counter-hegemonic innovation within the Apaa movement was their construction of an autonomous, decentralised organising structure, which enabled activists and occupiers to build the ‘culture of resistance’ and tactical flexibility explored in chapter five. To build this structure, Apaa’s peasant intellectuals adapted the familiar public institutions of the *rwoddi kweri* and LCI to function autonomously beyond state control.

Subverting inherited structures, they created a social contract in which occupiers submit to Apaa movement authorities in exchange for access to land.

The third, most crucial innovation of the Apaa movement was their construction of a unique, more equitable form of transitional land tenure that posed an alternative to state and corporate accumulation of historically depopulated frontier land. Basing Apaa's flexible property system around continuous occupancy and commitment to resistance, rather than financial capacity, patrilineal descent, or first-come rights, enabled the movement to thwart state evictions while providing land-poor families access to fertile plots. While scholars have portrayed African peasant land struggles as parochial and defensive, the Apaa case reveals potential for the emergence of novel, creative, political forms: African land movements may involve elements of proactive, class-based struggle, even as they remain entangled in ethnic politics.

The dissertation also illuminated, however, how resistance movements do not always advance in a uniformly progressive direction. Peasant action may mirror patterns of hegemonic accumulation or create new hierarchies, limiting its capacity to forge distinctive political alternatives. In the case of Apaa, the emancipatory potential of the movement was limited by its failure to develop a stable, legitimate, centralised authority structure. Patterns of rent-seeking, corruption, and personal accumulation bred disparity and division, eroded occupiers' compliance with Apaa's authority structures and land tenure system, and created windows for state agents to co-opt key leaders, weakening the movement's capacity for collective action. Mounting commodification of land and 'illicit' land sales in Apaa threaten to undermine the movement's role in extending land to those with few opportunities.

Counter-hegemonic processes to transform the movement's collective identity and framing narrative also remain incomplete. Clan-based territorial discourses linger, driving division and disorganisation. Despite cross-tribal clan ties, Madi-Acholi trade relations and repeated efforts at peaceful dialogues, the Apaa movement has, as yet, fallen short of a second radical transformation to transcend ethnic schisms. Institutional and political divisions position Madi and Acholi peasants against one another: Madi clans continue to resent their exclusion from Apaa, while Apaa's younger Acholi leaders are reluctant to engage with Madi groups they view as aligned with their political enemies. Recent interventions by Museveni's

regime have perpetuated such dynamics. In 2022, the central state stymied re-emerging talks between Madi and Acholi ‘Chiefs’ and Apaa peasant representatives by extending funding to ‘traditional’ cultural institutions: the talks were promptly hijacked by state-aligned ‘Paramount’ Chiefs whose aggressive posturing stifled further negotiation. Millions of shillings went unaccounted for, deepening mistrust between rival parties.

The Apaa movement’s exclusive ethnic character, however, must not be viewed as fixed and unmovable. In mid-2023, some Acholi leaders of Apaa reflected that ‘things could still be different’ if Madi clans sought to build relationships and negotiate land access instead of joining politically-backed, violent incursions, and efforts to rekindle peace processes were also ongoing. The barriers to change are immense. To radically reconstruct the movement, Apaa’s occupiers would need to step back from the Acholi political alliances that have played a critical role in their struggle and build class-based ties with ordinary Madi and Lugbara farmers that supersede inter-district, inter-ethnic political divisions. To offer Adjumani’s peasant farmers a more reliable avenue for property acquisition than the forceful land-claimant groups, many Apaa occupiers would need to relinquish their vast plots, redistribute land, accept smaller holdings, and forge communities with those formerly cast as enemies. Beyond building trust, such a process would demand the creation of new reiterations of land tenure and public authority structures. Such a radical rebirth of the movement is unlikely. As the history and evolution of the Apaa movement reveals, however, it is not impossible.

## **8.2 Limitations and further research**

This dissertation has three key limitations which could be addressed by future research. First, as discussed in chapter one, despite my efforts to seek out and understand Madi oral histories and perspectives, the dissertation privileged the story of the Acholi occupation, reflecting my experience living amongst Acholi and unique access to the movement. Likewise, much of my research was conducted in remote Acholi villages within Apaa’s gazetted area, which function as the political engine room of the movement: the heightened presence of state-security forces made it difficult to regularly visit areas such as Juka where Adjumani-based groups have seized land since 2017, or to access Madi settlements in Apaa’s fringes such as Gbayi and Zoka C. As a result, the dissertation offers an in-depth perspective on the organisational dynamics of the Acholi land movement, while its

analysis of Madi counter-political action is less comprehensive. Further ethnographic research based in Adjumani, West Nile and new Madi settlements within and near Apaa could examine the shifting internal dynamics of Madi-Lugbara land-claimant groups and probe how colonial politics, war-time displacement, elite rivalries, and decentralisation processes have distinctly shaped Madi peasant responses to state-driven land expropriation.

A second limitation of this research lies in privileging political over economic analysis of peasant collective action. Qualitative research involves trade-offs. To focus on the Apaa movement's construction of collective identity, framing narratives, tactics and forms of authority and property, the dissertation offered a less detailed account of economic dynamics in northern Uganda and the labour, agricultural, and market integration strategies of Apaa's peasant occupiers. While the dissertation highlighted how occupiers utilise land access to expand their market participation, further research could examine the extent to which this strategy has enabled social mobility or facilitated survival, explore the opportunities and constraints peasants occupying disputed frontier land face according to their differentiated socio-economic positions, and shed greater light on micro-processes of class-formation within Apaa. Such research could add depth to the dissertation's understanding of how the Apaa movement has impacted the lives of its protagonists.

A third limitation of this dissertation stems from its attempt to analyse peasant political mobilisation as it unfolded. While the dissertation examined the historical antecedents and emergence of the Apaa struggle with a degree of temporal distance, fieldwork and writing were carried out as the movement evolved amidst an ever-shifting political landscape. The longer-term outcomes of the struggle, accordingly, cannot be extrapolated from the dynamics the dissertation traced between 2006 and 2021. It is likely, for example, that I witnessed the Apaa movement's unique tenure system at its peak, just as a stark shift towards the commodification of land was unfolding. In 2022, new trends emerged as Apaa occupiers began to rent plots to large numbers of farmers from central and south-west Uganda who initially accessed Apaa through the charcoal trade, further complicating Apaa's land tenure dynamics. While subsequent change does not negate the importance of prior modes of political organisation to a movement, it can cast their role and impact in a new light. Future research, accordingly, could examine how forms of belonging, authority, and tenure that emerged in Apaa between 2006 and 2021 evolve over time and whether they

continue to enable marginalised groups to ‘out-manoeuvre’ the powerful in northern Uganda’s rapidly vanishing land frontier.

### **8.3 Land, the past, and political imagination**

As Appiah (2018, p. 67) expressed, reflecting on the nature of identity and belonging, “none of us creates the world we inhabit from scratch” but rather in “dialogue with the past.” Yet “Dialogue is not determinism”; we must recognise “that one day we, too, shall be ancestors. We do not merely follow traditions; we create them.” Similarly, scholars of Gramsci have long recognised that our inherited discursive and institutional landscapes can be used for oppression but also resistance and renewal. Rulers seize cultural symbols, institutions, and forms of identity and reify them, casting them into tools to extract compliance, splinter dissent, and cement power and privilege. Although subjects take up such tools to fight back, they often prove unwieldy and limiting; “the master’s tools,” as Audre Lorde (1978) famously articulated, “will never dismantle the master’s house.” Rather, it is when stories and political forms leveraged by ruling elites are creatively transformed to transcend their divisive character that they can be reclaimed as effective instruments of emancipation. Often, oppressed groups equip themselves best for this prophetic task not by “inventing new symbols” (Brueggemann, 2001, p. 64) but by reviving deeply embedded, resonant language, practices, and social structures from their own histories.

This dissertation has argued that to understand how such sweeping patterns of power and resistance play out in cases of peasant responses to land expropriation in African contexts requires historical, regionally-specific analysis of land regimes. To decipher the dynamics that enable successful resistance thus demands detailed, archival investigation into such seemingly peripheral processes as colonial boundary-making, the genesis of ethnicity, land titling reforms, neoliberal policies, and the politics of migration myths. The case of Apaa reveals how discourses and forms interlinking territory, identity, authority, and property provide powerful instruments of state-building and elite accumulation but can also be reclaimed to reimagine political alternatives in service of peasant struggles against dispossession.

## References

### Published sources

- Abdelrahman, M. (2014). *Egypt's long revolution: Protest movements and uprisings*. Routledge.  
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cam/reader.action?docID=1762023>
- Abdelrahman, M. (2015). In praise of organization: Egypt between activism and revolution. *Development and Change*, 44(3), 569–585.
- Abrams, P. (1988). Notes on the difficulty of studying the state. *Journal of Historical Sociology* (1), 58–89.
- Abu-Lughod, L. (1990). The romance of resistance: Tracing transformations of power through Bedouin women. *American Ethnologist*, 17(1), 41–55.
- Adams, W. M., & Hutton, J. (2007). People, parks, and poverty: Political ecology and biodiversity conservation. *Conservation and Society*, 5(2), 147–183.
- Adimola, A. B. (1954). The Lamogi rebellion. *Uganda Journal*, 18(2), 166–177.
- Adoko, J., & Levine, S. (2004). *Land matters in displacement: The importance of land rights in Acholiland and what threatens them*. Civil Society Organisations for Peace in northern Uganda (CSOPNU) & Land and Equity Movement in Uganda (LEMU).
- Adoko, J., & Levine, S. (2005). *A land market for poverty eradication? A case study of the impact of Uganda's Land Acts on policy hopes for development and poverty eradication*. Land and Equity Movement in Uganda (LEMU).
- Affidavits. (2017). [Various affidavits in support of Application]. Misc. clause No. 15. *Hon. Akol Anthony & 8 others v The Attorney General, Uganda Wildlife Authority and Adjumani District Local Government*. High Court of Uganda, holden at Gulu.
- Agarwal, B. (1994). *A field of one's own: Gender and land rights in South Asia*. Cambridge University Press.
- Agnew, J., & Oslender, U. (2013). Territorialities, sovereignty in dispute: Empirical lessons from Latin America. In W. Nicholls, B. Miller, & J. Beaumont (Eds.), *Spaces of contention: Spatialities and social movements* (pp. 121–40). Ashgate.
- Akol, A. (2017). *Statement of national importance on unrest and killings in Apaa sub-parish, Pabo sub-county in Amuru district* [Presentation by the Member of Parliament, Kilak North, Amuru]. <https://www.parliament.go.ug/cmisis/browser?id=0ff1bb4e-6549-43c6-91ee-0b9ffe894f01%3B1.0>

- Alam, J. (2002) [1983]. Peasantry, politics and historiography: Critique of new trends in relation to Marxism. In D. Ludden (Ed.), *Reading subaltern studies: Critical history, contested meaning and the globalization of South Asia* (pp. 42–57). Anthem Press.
- Alava, H., & Shroff, C. (2019). Unravelling church land: Transformations in the relations between church, state and community in Uganda. *Development and Change*, 50(5), 1288–1309.
- Ali, M. (2012, March 4). Acholi MPs lied about land rows – Gen. Ali. Perspective, 22, *Sunday Monitor*. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/insight/acholi-mps-lied-about-land-rows-gen-ali-1510804>
- Allen, T. (1989). Violence and moral knowledge: Observing social trauma in Sudan and Uganda. *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, 13(2), 45–66.
- Allen, T. (1991). Histories and contexts: Using pasts in the present on the Sudan/Uganda border. *Bulletin John Rylands Library*, 63–91.
- Allen, T. (1993). *Social upheaval and the struggle for community: A study of the Ugandan Madi*. [Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of Manchester].
- Almeida, P. D. (2007). Organizational expansion, liberalization reversals and radicalized collective action. *Research in Political Sociology*, 15, 57–99.
- Alonso-Fradejas, A. (2015). Anything but a story foretold: Multiple politics of resistance to the agrarian extractivist project in Guatemala. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 42(3–4), 489–515.
- Amanor, K. (1999). Global restructuring and land rights in Ghana: Forest food chains, timber, and rural livelihoods (No. 108). Nordic Africa Institute.
- Amanor, K. (2001). Land, labour and the family in southern Ghana. (Research Report 116). Nordic Africa Institute.
- Amanor, K. (2005). Night harvesters, forest hoods and saboteurs: Struggles over land expropriation in Ghana. In S. Moyo & Yeros (Eds.), *Reclaiming the land: The resurgence of rural movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (pp. 102–117). Zed Books.
- Amaza, O. (1998). *Museveni's long march from guerilla to statesman*. Fountain Publishers.
- Ambler, C. H. (1988). *Kenyan communities in the age of imperialism: The central region in the late nineteenth century*. Yale University Press.
- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined communities*. Verso.
- Anthias, P. (2018). *Limits to decolonization: Indigeneity, territory, and hydrocarbon politics in the Bolivian Chaco*. Cornell University Press.
- Anthias, P., & Hoffmann, K. (2021). The making of ethnic territories: Governmentality and counter-conducts. *Geoforum*, 119, 218–226.

- Ansoms, A., & Hilhorst, T. (2014). Introduction: Causes and risks of dispossession and land grabbing in the Great Lakes region. In A. Ansoms & T. Hilhorst (Eds.), *Losing your land: Dispossession in the Great Lakes region* (pp. 1–9). James Currey.
- Anywar, R. (1954). *Acholi ki ker megi*. The Eagle Press.
- Appiah, K. A. (2018). *The lies that bind: Rethinking identity*. Profile Books.
- Application. (2018). *Ojera Christopher & 47 others V. Hon. Mark Dulu & 35 others*. Civil misc. application No. HCT-08-CV-MA-0036/2018 (Arising from Civil Misc. application NO-033/2018, 32/20180). Barenzi Advocates, High Court of Uganda, holden at Arua.
- Atkinson, R. (1989). The evolution of ethnicity among the Acholi of Uganda: The precolonial phase. *Ethnohistory and Africa*, 36(1), 19–43.
- Atkinson, R. (2008). Land issues in Acholi in the transition from war to peace. *The Examiner* 4, 3–25. Human Rights Focus (HURIFO), Gulu.
- Atkinson, R. (2010). *The roots of ethnicity: Origins of the Acholi of Uganda* (2nd ed.). Fountain Publishers.
- Atkinson, R., & Owor, A. (2013). ‘Land grabbing:’ The Ugandan Government, Madhvani, and others versus the community of Lakang, Amuru District. *Journal of Peace and Security Studies*, 1, 49–63.
- Atkinson, R., Latigo, J., Ahirirwe, S., & Aloba, S. (2018). *Instituting the protection of rights to customary land ownership in Acholiland: A research project of the Joint Acholi Sub-region Leaders’ Forum (JASLF) and Trócaire*. Trócaire, Democratic Governance Facility & the JASLF.
- Awortwi, N., & Helmsing, A. B. (2014). In the name of bringing services closer to the people? Explaining the creation of new local government districts in Uganda. *Revue Internationale des Sciences Administratives*, 80(4), 811–835.
- Baird, I. G., & Le Billon, P. (2012). Landscapes of political memories: War legacies and land negotiations in Laos. *Political Geography*, 31(5), 290–300.
- Baker, S. (1895). *Ismailia: A narrative of the expedition to central Africa for the suppression of the slave trade*. Macmillan and Co.
- Banana, A., Nsita, S., & Bomuhangi, A. (2018). Histories and genealogies of Ugandan forest and wildlife conservation: The birth of the protected area estate. In C. Sandbrook, C. Cavanagh & D. Tumusiime (Eds.), *Conservation and Development in Uganda* (pp. 16–44). Routledge.
- Barber, J. (1968). *Imperial frontier: A study of relations between the British and the pastoral tribes of north east Uganda*. East African Publishing House.



- Bassett, T. J., & Crummey, D. E. (Eds.). (1993). *Land in African agrarian systems*. University of Wisconsin Press.
- Bayart, A. (2000). From 'dangerous classes' to 'quiet rebels:' Politics of the urban subaltern in the global south. *International Sociology*, 15(3), 533–557.
- Behrend, H. (2000). *Alice Lakwena and the holy spirits: War in northern Uganda, 1985–97*. Ohio University Press.
- Beinart, W. (2000). African history and environmental history. *African Affairs*, 99, 269–302.
- Bender, M. V. (2013). Being 'Chagga:' Natural resources, political activism, and identity on Kilimanjaro. *The Journal of African History*, 54(2), 199–220.
- Benford, R. D., & Snow, D. A. (2000). Framing processes and social movements: An overview and assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26(1), 611–639.
- Benjaminsen, T. A., & Bryceson, I. (2012). Conservation, green-blue grabbing and accumulation by dispossession in Tanzania. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(2), 335–55.
- Benjaminsen, T., & Cavanagh, C. (2022). Conservation, land dispossession, and resistance in Africa. In S. M. Borras & J. Franco (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of land politics* (pp. C23.S1–C23.N2). Oxford University Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197618646.001.0001>
- Bere, R. M. (1955). Land and chieftaincy among the Acholi. *Uganda Journal*, 19(1), 49–61.
- Bernstein, H. (2003). Farewells to the peasantry. *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, 52(1), 1–19. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1353/trn.2003.0027>
- Bernstein, H. (2005). Rural land and land conflicts in sub-saharan Africa. In S. Moyo & P. Yeros (Eds.), *Reclaiming the land: The resurgence of rural movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (pp. 67–101). Zed Books.
- Bernstein, H. (2014). African peasants and revolution revisited. *Review of African Political Economy*, 41(1), S95–S107. doi: 10.1080/03056244.2014.976365
- Berry, S. (1993). *No condition is permanent: The social dynamics of agrarian change in sub-Saharan Africa*. University of Wisconsin Press.
- Berry, S. (2001). *Chiefs know their boundaries: Essays on property, power and the past in Asante, 1896–1996*. Heinemann: James Currey.
- Berry, S. (2002). Debating the land question in Africa. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 44(4), 638–668.
- Berry, S. (2017). Struggles over land and authority in Africa. *African Studies Review*, 60(3), 105–125.

- Besteman, C. (1996). Local land use strategies and outsider politics: Title registration in the middle Jubba Valley. In C. Besteman & L. Cassanelli (Eds.), *The struggle for land in southern Somalia: The war behind the war* (pp. 29–46). Westview Press.
- Bevington, D., & Dixon, C. (2005). Movement-relevant theory: Rethinking social movement scholarship and activism. *Social Movement Studies*, 4(3), 185–208.
- Birch, J. (1938). Migration movements of the Madi, with some tentative conclusions. *Uganda Journal*, 6, 114–122.
- Bocarejo, D., & Ojeda, D. (2016). Violence and conservation: Beyond unintended consequences and unfortunate coincidences. *Geoforum*, 69, 176–183.
- Bollier, D., & Helfrich, S. (2015). *Patterns of commoning*. Levellers Press.
- Boone, C. (2007). Property and constitutional order: Land tenure reform and the future of the African state. *African Affairs*, 106(425), 557–586.
- Boone, C. (2013). Land regimes and the structure of politics: Patterns of land-related conflict. *Africa*, 83(1), 188–203.
- Boone, C. (2014). *Property and political order in Africa: Land rights and the structure of politics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Boone, C. (2015). Land tenure regimes and state structure in rural Africa: Implications for forms of resistance to large-scale land acquisitions by outsiders. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 33(2), 171–190.
- Boone, C. (2018). Shifting visions of property under competing political regimes: Changing uses of Côte d'Ivoire's 1998 land law. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 56(2), 189–216.
- Boone, C. (2019). Legal empowerment of the poor through property rights reform: Tensions and trade-offs of land registration and titling in sub-saharan Africa. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 55(3), 384–400.
- Boone, C., & Nyeme, L. (2015). Land institutions and political ethnicity in Africa: Evidence from Tanzania. *Comparative Politics*, 48(1), 67–86.
- Borras, S. (2016). Land politics, agrarian movements and scholar-activism [Inaugural Lecture]. *International Institute of Social Studies*. [https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/borras\\_inaugural\\_lecture\\_14\\_april\\_2016\\_final\\_formatted\\_pdf\\_for\\_printing.pdf](https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/borras_inaugural_lecture_14_april_2016_final_formatted_pdf_for_printing.pdf)
- Borras, S. & Franco, J. (2012). Global land grabbing and trajectories of agrarian change: A preliminary analysis. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 12(1), 34–59.
- Borras, S., & Franco, J. (2013). Global land grabbing and political reactions ‘from below.’ *Third World Quarterly*, 34(9), 1723–1747.

- Branch, A. (2007) *Fostering the transition in Acholiland: From war to peace, from camps to home*. Human Rights Focus (HURIFO), Gulu.
- Branch, A. (2011). *Displacing human rights: War and intervention in northern Uganda*. Oxford University Press.
- Branch, A. (2013). Gulu in war...and peace? The town as camp in northern Uganda. *Urban Studies*, 50(15), 3152–3167.
- Branch, A., & Martiniello, G. (2018). Charcoal power: The political violence of non-fossil fuel in Uganda. *Geoforum*, 97, 242–252.
- Brockington, D., & Igoe, J. (2006). Eviction for conservation: A global overview. *Conservation and Society*, 4(3), 424–470.
- Brown, R. M. (1975). *Strain of violence*. Oxford University Press.
- Brueggemann, W. (2001). *The prophetic imagination* (2nd ed.). Fortress Press.
- Buckley, L. (2013). Chinese land-based interventions in Senegal. In W. Wolford, M. Saturnino, J. Borras, R. Hall, I. Scoones, & B. White (Eds.), *Governing global land deals: The role of the state in the rush for land* (pp. 231–252). Wiley Blackwell.
- Burawoy, M. (1998). The extended case method. *Sociological Theory*, 16(1), 4–33.
- Burawoy, M. (2009). *The extended case method: Four countries, four decades, four great transformations, and one theoretical tradition*. University of California Press.
- Burihabwa, Z., & Curtis, D. (2019). The limits of resistance ideologies? The CNDD-FDD and the legacies of governance in Burundi. *Government and Opposition*, 54(3), 559–583. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2019.2>
- Burrowes, R. J. (1996). *The strategy of nonviolent defense: A Gandhian approach*. State University of New York Press.
- Büscher, M., Urry, J. & Witchger, K. (Eds.). (2010). *Mobile methods*. Routledge.
- Bush, R., & Martiniello, G. (2017). Food riots and protest: Agrarian modernization and structural crises. *World Development*, 91, 193– 207.
- Byakagaba, P., Twesigye, B., & Ruyle, L. E. (2018). Dialectics of conservation, extractives, and Uganda’s ‘land rush.’ In C. Sandbrook, C. Cavanagh, D. Tumusiime (Eds.), *Conservation and development in Uganda* (pp. 226–246). Routledge.
- Byaruhanga, C. (2015, June 1). The Ugandan women who strip to defend their land. *BBC Africa*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa->
- Camara, B. (2013). The dynamics of land tenure systems in the Niger basin, Mali. *Africa*, 83(1), 78–99.

- Campbell, J. (2015). *Conjuring property: Speculation and environmental futures in the Brazilian Amazon*. University of Washington Press.
- Caouette, D., & Turner, S. (Eds.). (2009). *Agrarian angst and rural resistance in contemporary Southeast Asia*. Routledge.
- Carbone, G. (2008). *No-party democracy? Ugandan politics in comparative perspective*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Carmody, P., & Taylor, D. (2016). Globalization, land grabbing, and the present-day colonial state in Uganda: Ecolonization and its impacts. *The Journal of Environment & Development*, 25(1), 100–126.
- Carswell, G. (2007). *Cultivating success in Uganda*. James Currey.
- Castree, N. (2008). Neoliberalising nature: The logics of deregulation and reregulation. *Environment and Planning A*, 40(1), 131–152.
- Cavanagh, C., & Benjaminsen, T. A. (2015). Guerrilla agriculture? A biopolitical guide to illicit cultivation within an IUCN Category II protected area. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 42(3–4), 725–745.
- Cavanagh, C. (2012). *Anthropocene conservation: Governing environmental change, biodiversity and local resistance at Mount Elgon, Uganda* [MA thesis, Norwegian University of Life Sciences].  
[https://nmbu.brage.unit.no/nmbuxmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/187739/Cavanagh%20\(2012\)%20-%20Anthropocene%20Conservation.pdf?sequence=1](https://nmbu.brage.unit.no/nmbuxmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/187739/Cavanagh%20(2012)%20-%20Anthropocene%20Conservation.pdf?sequence=1)
- Cavanagh, C., & Himmelfarb, D. (2015). “Much in blood and money”: Necropolitical ecology on the margins of the Uganda Protectorate. *Antipode*, 47(1), 55–73. doi: 10.1111/anti.12093
- Chakrabarty, D. (2015). Subaltern studies in retrospect and reminiscence. *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 38(1), 10–18.
- Chandra, U. (2015). Rethinking subaltern resistance. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 45(4), 563–573.
- Chanock, M. (1985). *Law, custom, and social order: The colonial experience in Malawi and Zambia*. Cambridge University Press.
- Chauveau, J. (2006). How does an institution evolve? Land, politics, intergenerational relations and the institution of the *tutorat* amongst autochthones and immigrants.” In R. Kuba & C. Lentz (Eds.), *Land rights and the politics of belonging in west Africa* (pp. 213–40). Brill.

- Cheru, F. (1997). The silent revolution and the weapons of the weak: Transformation and innovation from below. *Innovation and Transformation in International Studies*, 10, 153–169.
- Child, K. (2009). Civil society in Uganda: The struggle to save the Mabira Forest Reserve. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 3(2), 240–258.
- Chimhowu, A., & Woodhouse, P. (2006). Customary vs private property rights? Dynamics and trajectories of vernacular land markets in sub-saharan Africa. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 6(3), 346–371.
- Chinigò, D. (2016). Rural radicalism and the historical land conflict in the Malawian tea economy. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 42(2), 283–297.
- Choudry, A., & Kapoor, D. (Eds.). (2010). *Learning from the ground up: Global perspectives on social movements and knowledge production* (pp. 121–138). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ciavolella, R. (2018). Gramsci in and beyond resistances: The search for an autonomous political initiative among a subaltern group in the Beninese savanna. *Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology*, 82, 49–63. doi:10.3167/fcl.2018.820104
- Civil Suit No. 0062. (2011). Dr Abongamera Micheal, Dr Nyeko Philip, Hon. Gilbert Olanya, Mrs Lapenga Elizabeth, Prof. Kenneth Okello Lapenga, Mrs Angelina Obur, Mr Okot Justino, Mr Tobina Thomas, Mr Apora Kwirino, Mr Ochan Sabino, Prof. Nyeko Philip, Mr Latim Benedicto Otoo, Mr Lakony Michael, Hon. Ogik Severino, Hon. Ojera Christopher, & Hon. Apio C. Oywaa v Uganda Wildlife Authority and the Attorney General. The Republic of Uganda, High Court of Uganda, holden at Gulu.
- Clifford, J., & Marcus, G. E. (Eds.). (1986). *Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography*. University of California Press.
- Cohen, D., & Odhiambo, E. (1989). *Siaya: The historical anthropology of an African landscape*. James Currey.
- Coldham, S. (2000). Land reform and customary rights: The case of Uganda. *Journal of African Law*, 44(1), 65–77.
- Committee on Physical Infrastructure. (2013). *Report of the sectoral committee on physical infrastructure on boundary disputes between Amuru and Adjumani Districts*. In Hansard, 2013, August 21, Parliament of Uganda.  
<https://www.parliament.go.ug/documents/1091/hansards-2013-august>
- Constitution of the Republic of Uganda. (1995). Government of the Republic of Uganda.  
<https://www.parliament.go.ug/documents/1240/constitution>

- Constitution of Uganda. (1964) [1962]. In G. Slade (Ed.), *Laws of Uganda* (Rev. ed. Vol. IX). Government of Uganda.
- Constitution of Uganda. (1966). <https://www.parliament.go.ug/cmisis/browser?id=781299d5-60c8-4156-85f8-be5983538e40%3B1.0>
- Cormack, Z. (2016). Borders are galaxies: Interpreting contestations over local administrative boundaries in South Sudan. *Africa*, 86(3), 504–527.
- Corson, C. (2011). Territorialization, enclosure and neoliberalism: Non-state influence in struggles over Madagascar's forests. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 38(4), 703–26.
- Cotula, L. (2012). The international political economy of the global land rush: A critical appraisal of trends, scale, geography and drivers. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(3–4), 649–680.
- Cotula, L., & Vermeulen, S. (2009). Deal or no deal: The outlook for agricultural land investment in Africa. *International Affairs*, 85(6), 1233–1247.
- Cousins, B. (2006). Review essay: Debating the politics of land occupations. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 6(4), 584–597.
- Cousins, B. (2007). More than socially embedded: The distinctive character of 'communal tenure' regimes in South Africa and its implications for land policy. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 7(3), 281–315.
- Crazzolara, J. P. (1950). *The Lwoo, part I, Lwoo migrations*. Missioni Africane.
- Crazzolara, J. P. (1951). *The Lwoo, part II: Lwoo traditions*. Missioni Africane.
- Crazzolara, J. P. (1954). *The Lwoo, part III: Clans*. Editrice Nigrizia.
- Crazzolara, J. P. (1961). Lwo migrations. *The Uganda Journal*, 25(2), 136–148.
- Criminal Appeal. (2019). Criminal Appeal No. 007 in Kidega Joseph & Okot Justino v Uganda [Appeal arising from the decision of Criminal Appeal No.007 of 2016]. The Supreme Court of Uganda at Kampala. <https://old.ulii.org/system/files/judgment/supreme-court-uganda/2020/27/supreme-court-uganda-2020-27.pdf>
- Crummey, D. (1986). *Banditry, rebellion, and social protest in Africa*. James Currey.
- Curtis, D. (2019). What is our research for? Responsibility, humility and the production of knowledge about Burundi. *Africa Spectrum*, 54(1), 4–21.
- Curtis, D., & Sindre, G. (2019). Transforming state visions: Ideology and ideas in armed groups turned political parties- Introduction to special issue. *Government and Opposition*, 54(3), 387–414. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2018.51>

- Daniel, S., & Mittal, A. (2009). *The great land grab: Rush for world's farmland threatens food security for the poor*. The Oakland Institute. <https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/great-land-grab-rush-world's-farmland-threatens-food-security-poor>
- Daphi, P. (2013). Collective identity across borders. In F. Flesher, & L. Cox (Eds.), *Understanding european movements: New social movements, global justice struggles, anti-austerity protest* (pp. 158–171). Routledge.
- Davies, R. (2004). Memories of underdevelopment: A personal interpretation of Zimbabwe's economic decline. In B. Raftopolous & T. Savage (Eds.), *Zimbabwe: Injustice and political reconciliation* (pp. 1–18). Institute for Justice and Reconciliation.
- Dawson, H. (2017). Protests, party politics and patronage: A view from Zandspruit informal settlement, Johannesburg. In P. Marcel, C. Runciman, & L. Sinwell (Eds.), *Southern resistance in critical perspective: The politics of protest in South Africa's contentious democracy* (pp. 118–133). Routledge.
- De Angelis, M. (2012). Crises, movements and commons. *Borderlands*, 11(2), 1–22.
- de Lellis, F. (2019). Peasants, dispossession and resistance in Egypt: An analysis of protest movements and organisations before and after the 2011 uprising. *Review of African Political Economy*, 46(162), 582–598. doi: 10.1080/03056244.2019.1688487
- Deininger, K., & Binswanger, H. (1999). The evolution of the World Bank's land policy: Principles, experience and future challenges. *The World Bank Research Observer*, 14, 247–76  
<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/614861468326135799/pdf/766330JRN0WBR000Box374385B00PUBLIC0.pdf>
- Dell' Angelo, J., D'Odorico, P., Rulli, M., & Marchand, P. (2017). The tragedy of the grabbed commons: Coercion and dispossession in the global land rush. *World Development*, 92, 1–12.
- Dell' Angelo, J., Navas, G., Witteman, M., D'Alisa, G., Scheidel, A., & Temper, L. (2021). Commons grabbing and agribusiness: Violence, resistance and social mobilization. *Ecological Economics*, 184, 107004.
- Devine, J. A. (2018). Community forest concessionaires: Resisting green grabs and producing political subjects in Guatemala. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 45(3), 565–584.
- Digital Verification Corp. (2019). *Digital mapping dwellings estimate: Communities residing in gazetted areas of Apaa, northern Uganda*. Center of Governance and Human Rights, Cambridge University.

- Doherty, B., & Hayes, G. (2018). Tactics and strategic action. In D. Snow, S. Soule, and H. Kriesi (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell companion to social movements* (2nd ed., pp. 269–288). Wiley Blackwell.
- Dokotho, T., & Ojok, M. (2023, February 6). Acholi Chiefdom sues govt over 95,000-acre Aswa land. *The Daily Monitor*. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/acholi-chiefdom-sues-govt-over-95-000-acre-aswa-land-4113378>
- Dolan, C. G. (2005). *Understanding war and its continuation: The case of northern Uganda* [Doctoral dissertation, London School of Economics and Political Science]. <http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/832/>
- Dowhaniuk, N., Hartter, J., Ryan, S. J., Palace, M. W., & Congalton, R. G. (2018). The impact of industrial oil development on a protected area landscape: Demographic and social change at Murchison Falls Conservation Area, Uganda. *Population and Environment*, 39, 197–218.
- Duffy, R. (2000). *Killing for conservation: Wildlife policy in Zimbabwe*. James Currey.
- Dunn, K. C. (2009). Contested state spaces: African national parks and the state. *European Journal of International Relations*, 13(3), 423–46.
- Dwyer, J. (1972). *The Acholi of Uganda: Adjustment to imperialism* [Doctoral dissertation, Columbia University].
- Ebila, F., & Tripp, A. (2017). Naked transgressions: Gendered symbolism in Ugandan land protests. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 5(1), 25–45.
- Edelman, M. (2009). Synergies and tensions between rural social movements and professional researchers. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 36(1), 245–265.
- Edelman, M., & Borras, S. (2016). *Political dynamics of transnational agrarian movements*. Practical Action Publishing.
- Edelman, M., & León, A. (2013). Cycles of land grabbing in Central America: An argument for history and a case study in the Bajo Aguán, Honduras. *Third World Quarterly*, 34(9), 1697–1722.
- Edelman, M., Oya, C., & Borras Jr, S. M. (2013). Global land grabs: Historical processes, theoretical and methodological implications and current trajectories. *Third World Quarterly*, 34(9), 1517–1531.
- Eggers, N. (2020). Authority that is customary: Kitawala, customary chiefs, and the plurality of power in Congolese history. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 14(1), 24–42.
- Ekers, M., & Loftus, A. (2008). The power of water: Developing dialogues between Foucault and Gramsci. *Environment and planning D: Society and Space*, 26(4), 698–718.



- Elamin, N. (2018). The miskeet tree doesn't belong here: Shifting land values and the politics of belonging in Um Doum, central Sudan. *Critical African Studies*, 10(1), 67–88.
- Emin Pasha, (1964) [1887, February 7-13<sup>th</sup>]. The diaries of Emin Pasha: Extracts VII edited by J. Gray. *Uganda Journal*, 28(1), 75–97.
- Engström, L., Bélair, J., & Blache, A. (2022). Formalising village land dispossession? An aggregate analysis of the combined effects of the land formalisation and land acquisition agendas in Tanzania. *Land Use Policy*, 120, 106255.
- Eriku, J., & Okudi, M. (2011, August 29). Ministers survive residents' wrath over game reserve land. *The Monitor*. <https://allafrica.com/stories/201108291877.html>
- Escobar, A. (2008). *Territories of difference: Place, movements, life*. Duke University Press.
- Fairhead, J., & Leach, M. (1995). False forest history, complicit social analysis: Rethinking some West African environmental narratives. *World Development*, 23(6), 1023–1035.
- Fairhead, J., Leach, M. & Scoones, I. (2012). Green grabbing: A new appropriation of nature?. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(2), 237–261.
- Feierman, S. M. (1990). *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and history in Tanzania*. University of Wisconsin Press.
- Feranil, S. (2005). Stretching the 'limits' of redistributive reform: Lessons and evidence from the Philippines under neoliberalism. In S. Moyo & P. Yeros (Eds.), *Reclaiming the land: The resurgence of rural movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (pp. 257–284). Zed Books.
- Fernandes, B. M. (2005). The occupation as a form of access to land in Brazil: A theoretical and methodological contribution. In S. Moyo & P. Yeros (Eds.), *Reclaiming the land: The resurgence of rural movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (pp. 317–340). Zed Books.
- Finnström, S. (2008). *Living with bad surroundings: War, history, and everyday moments in northern Uganda*. Duke University Press.
- Fisher, J. (2014). When it pays to be a “fragile state:” Uganda’s use and abuse of a dubious concept. *Third World Quarterly* 35(2), 316–32.
- Flacks, R. (2004). Knowledge for what? Thoughts on the state of social movement studies. In J. Goodwin & J. Jasper (Eds.), *Rethinking social movements: Structure, culture, and emotion* (pp. 135–153). Rowman & Littlefield.

- Flesher Fominaya, C. (2015). Debunking spontaneity: Spain's 15-M/Indignados as autonomous movement. *Social Movement Studies*, 14(2), 142–163. <https://doi-org.ezp.lib.cam.ac.uk/10.1080/14742837.2014.945075>
- Fonseca, M. (2016). *Gramsci's critique of civil society: Towards a new concept of hegemony*. Routledge.
- Fontana, B. (2005). The democratic philosopher: Rhetoric as hegemony in Gramsci. *Italian Culture*, 23(1), 97–123.
- Fontein, J. (2006). *The silence of great Zimbabwe: Contested landscapes and the power of heritage*. UCL Press.
- Forsyth, T. (2009). The persistence of resistance: Analyzing local responses to agrarian change in Asia. In D. Caouette and S. Turner (Eds.), *Agrarian angst and rural resistance in contemporary Southeast Asia* (pp. 267–276). Routledge.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Continuum.
- Fuller, D. (1999). Part of the action, or 'going native'? Learning to cope with the 'politics of integration.' *Area*, 31(3), 221–227.
- Gardner, B. (2012). Tourism and the politics of the global land grab in Tanzania: Markets, appropriation and recognition. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(2), 377–402.
- Genat, B. (2009). Building emergent situated knowledges in participatory action research. *Action Research* 7(1), 101–115.
- Geschiere, P. (2009). *The perils of belonging: Autochthony, citizenship, and exclusion in Africa and Europe*. University of Chicago Press.
- Gibb, R. (2013). *The politics of land reform in Uganda* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Kansas]. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/213401933.pdf>
- Giddens, A. (1979). *Central problems in social theory: Action, structure and contradiction in social analysis*. University of California Press.
- Gingembre, M. (2015). Resistance or participation? Fighting against corporate land access amid political uncertainty in Madagascar. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 42(3–4), 561–584.
- Girling, F. (2019) [1960]. The Acholi of Uganda. In O. p'Bitek, & F. Girling (Edited and introduced by T. Allen), *Lawino's people: The Acholi of Uganda* (pp. 47–378). LIT Verlag Münster.
- Gledhill, J. (2014). Indigenous autonomy, delinquent states, and the limits of resistance. *History and Anthropology*, 25(4), 507–529.

- Goheen, M. (1992). Chiefs, subchiefs and local control: Negotiations over land, struggles over meaning. *Africa*, 62(3), 389–412.
- Goli, A. (2016a, October 13). Former Adjumani LCV Chairperson rejects Zoka forest report. <https://ugandaradionetwork.net/story/ministerial-zoka-forest-report-diversionary-former-adjumani-lcv-chairperson>
- Goli, A. (2016b, October 14). Friends of Zoka forest trash minister's report. *Uganda Radio Network*. <https://ugandaradionetwork.net/story/friends-of-zoka-forest-trash-ministers-report>
- Goldstein, D. M. (2014). Laying the body on the line: Activist anthropology and the deportation of the undocumented. *American Anthropologist*, 116(4), 839–842.
- Goodfellow, T., & Lindemann, S. (2013). The clash of institutions: Traditional authority, conflict and the failure of “hybridity” in Buganda. *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 51(1), 3–26.
- Goodwin, J., Jasper, J., & Khattra, J. (1999). Caught in a winding, snarling vine: The structural bias of political process theory. *Sociological Forum*, 14(1), 27–54.
- Goodwin, J., Jasper, J., & Polletta, F. (2004). Emotional dimensions of social movements. In D. Snow, S. Soule, & H. Kriesi (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to social movements* (pp. 413–432). Blackwell.
- Graeber, D. (2009). *Direct action: An ethnography*. AK press.
- GRAIN. (2008). *Seized: The 2008 landgrab for food and financial security*. <https://grain.org/article/entries/93-seized-the-2008-landgrab-for-food-and-financial-security>
- Gramsci, A. (1921) *The Turin factory council movement*. [Marxists.org/www.marxists.org/archive/Gramsci/1921/03/turin\\_councils.htm](http://Marxists.org/www.marxists.org/archive/Gramsci/1921/03/turin_councils.htm)
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks* (SPN). (Edited by Q. Hoare & G. Nowell Smith). International Publishers.
- Gray, C. (2002). *Colonial rule and crisis in equatorial Africa: Southern Gabon ca. 1850–1940*. University of Rochester Press.
- Gray, J. (1952). Acholi history, 1860-1901–II. *The Uganda Journal*, 16(1), 32–51.
- Green, E. (2008). *District creation and decentralisation in Uganda*. Crisis States Research Centre.
- Green, E. (2010). Patronage, district creation, and reform in Uganda. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 45, 83–103.
- Greenwood, D. J. (2008). Theoretical research, applied research, and action Research. In C. Hale (Ed.), *Engaging contradictions: Theory, politics, and methods of activist scholarship* (pp. 319–340). University of California Press.

- Gregory, D. (1994). *Geographical imaginations*. Blackwell.
- Guha, R. (1988). On some aspects of the historiography of colonial India. In R. Guha & G. Spivak (Eds.). *Selected Subaltern Studies* (pp. 37–44). Oxford University Press.
- Gupta, A., & Ferguson, J. (1992). Beyond “culture:” Space, identity, and the politics of difference. *Cultural Anthropology*, 7, 6–23.
- Gustavo, A., López, G., Velicu, I. & D’Alisa, G. (2017). Performing counter-hegemonic common(s) senses: Rearticulating democracy, community and forests in Puerto Rico. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 28(3), 88–107. doi: 10.1080/10455752.2017.1321026
- Hagmann, T., & Péclard, D. (2010). Negotiating statehood: Dynamics of power and domination in Africa. *Development and Change*, 41(4), 539–562.
- Halbwachs, M. (1980) [1950]. Space and the collective memory. In M. Halbwachs (Ed.), *The collective memory*. Harper & Row.
- Hale, C. (2006). Activist research v. cultural critique: Indigenous land rights and the contradictions of politically engaged anthropology. *Cultural Anthropology*, 21(1), 96–120.
- Hale, C. (2008). Introduction. In C. Hale (Ed.), *Engaging contradictions: Theory, politics, and methods of activist scholarship* (pp. 1–27). University of California Press.
- Hall, R., Edelman, M., Borrás, S. M., Scoones, I., White, B., & Wolford, W. (2015). Resistance, acquiescence or incorporation? An introduction to land grabbing and political reactions ‘from below.’ *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 42(3–4), 467–488
- Hall, S. (1990). Cultural identity and diaspora. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: Community, culture, difference* (pp. 222–237). Lawrence and Wishart.
- Hall, S. (1991). Old and new identities, old and new ethnicities. In A. King (Ed.), *Culture, globalization and the world-system* (pp. 41–68). University of New York Press.
- Hall, S. (1996) [1986]. On postmodernism and articulation: An interview with Stuart Hall. In L. Grossberg, D. Morley & K. Chen (Eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies* (pp. 131–150). Routledge.
- Halvorsen, S., Fernandes, B. M., & Torres, F. V. (2019). Mobilizing territory: Socioterritorial movements in comparative perspective. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 109(5), 1454–1470.
- Hammond, L. (2011). “Voluntary” repatriation and re-integration. In E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, G. Loescher, K. Long & N. Sigona (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of refugee studies* (pp. 499–512). Oxford University Press.

- Hansard. (2013, August 21). Parliament of Uganda.  
<https://www.parliament.go.ug/documents/1091/hansards-2013-august>
- Hansard. (2017, June 21). Parliament of Uganda.  
<https://www.parliament.go.ug/documents/1135/hansards-2017-june>
- Hansard. (2018, May 5). Parliament of Uganda.  
<https://www.parliament.go.ug/documents/2034/hansards-2018-may>
- Hansard. (2018). Parliament of Uganda [Records for 27–29 March and 4–6 May, discussions on Apaa evictions]. <https://www.parliament.go.ug/documents/2032/hansards-2018-march>:  
<https://www.parliament.go.ug/documents/2034/hansards-2018-may>
- Hansen, C. (2021). A critical ethnography of political activism: Challenges arising from practical, emotional and theoretical closeness to the field. *Kritisk Etnografi*, 4(1), 41–55.
- Hansen, T. B., & Stepputat, F. (2001). Introduction: States of imagination. In T. Hansen, F. Stepputat, J. Adams & G. Steinmetz (Eds.), *States of imagination: Ethnographic explorations of the postcolonial state* (pp. 1–38). Duke University Press.
- Haraway, D. (1991). *Symians, cyborgs and women: The reinvention of nature*. Routledge.
- Harvey, D. (2005). *The new imperialism*. Oxford University Press.
- Haynes, D. E., & Prakash, G. (Eds.). (1992). *Contesting power: Resistance and everyday social relations in South Asia*. University of California Press.
- Hertz, R. (1997). Introduction: Reflexivity and voice. In R. Hertz (Ed.), *Reflexivity and voice* (pp. xii–xviii). Sage.
- Hickey, S., & Mohan, G. (2005). Relocating participation within a radical politics of development. *Development and Change*, 36(2), 237–262.
- Hirst, M. A. (1971). The changing pattern of district administrative centres in Uganda since 1900. *Geographical Analysis*, 3(1), 90–98.
- Hoehne, M. V. (2016). The rupture of territoriality and the diminishing relevance of cross-cutting ties in Somalia after 1990. *Development and Change*, 47(6), 1379–1411.  
doi:10.1111/dech.12277
- Hoffmann, K., & Kirk, T. (2013). *Public authority and the provision of public goods in conflict-affected and transitioning regions* (JRSP paper No. 7). London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), Justice and Security Research.  
Programme.<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08a49e5274a27b200050f/JRSP7-HoffmannKirk.pdf>

- Holdo, M. (2020). Power games: Elites, movements, and strategic cooperation. *Political Studies Reviews*, 18(2), 189–203.
- Holmes, G. (2014). Defining the forest, defending the forest: Political ecology, territoriality, and resistance to a protected area in the Dominican Republic. *Geoforum*, 53, 1–10.
- Holmes, J. T. (1997). Contested kinship and the dispute of customary law in colonial Kenya. *Anthropologica*, 39(1), 79–89.
- Hoppe, K. A. (1997). Lords of the fly: Colonial visions and revisions of African sleeping-sickness environments on Ugandan Lake Victoria, 1906–61. *Africa*, 67(1), 86–105.
- Hopwood, J. (2015). Women's land claims in the Acholi region of northern Uganda: What can be learned from what is contested. *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, 22(3), 387–409.
- Hopwood, J. (2021). An inherited animus to communal land: The mechanisms of coloniality in land reform agendas in Acholiland, northern Uganda. *Critical African Studies*, 14(1), 38–54. doi: 10.1080/21681392.2021.1931383
- Hopwood, J. (2022). *Looking for land, finding people: Intimate governance and subalternity in Acholi, northern Uganda* [Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of Ghent].
- Hopwood, J., & Atkinson, R. (2015). Developing a land conflict monitoring and mapping tool for the Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda. *Justice and Security Research Programme Working paper*, 28.
- Human Rights Focus (HURIFO). (2015). Land conflict and human rights abuses in Apaa. *The Examiner*, 2, 1–20. Gulu.
- Human Rights Watch. (2020). *Northern village may be disenfranchised: Ensure all eligible citizens in Apaa right to vote; access to polls*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/22/uganda-northern-village-may-be-disenfranchised>
- Hunt, S., & Benford, R. (2004). Collective identity, solidarity, and commitment. In D. Snow, S. Soule, & H. Kriesi (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to social movements* (pp. 433–457). Blackwell.
- Igoe, J., & Brockington, D. (2007). Neoliberal conservation: A brief introduction. *Conservation and Society* 5(4), 432–449.
- Ijjo, D., & Okot, R. O. (2023, August 31). Deadly attack in Apaa leaves four dead, dozens injured. *Nile Post*. <https://nilepost.co.ug/2023/08/31/deadly-attack-in-apaa-leaves-four-dead-dozens-injured/>
- Iliffe, J. (1979). *A modern history of Tanganyika*. Cambridge University Press.

- Im, H. (1991). Hegemony and counter-hegemony in Gramsci. *Asian Perspective*, 15(1), 123–156.
- Interim Order. (2018, January 31). [Order signed by the Assistant Registrar, High Court of Uganda, Gulu]. Misc. application No. 007, arising out of Misc. application No. 200 of 2017, Hon. Akol Anthony, Hon. Lakony Michael, Labda Richard P'Lacaka, Tokwiny Michael, Omony Geoffrey, Oling Samuel, Asuma Wilson & Loum Sitwell Ibedo ki Laneki v The Attorney General, Uganda Wildlife Authority Adjumani District Local Government & Amuru District Local District Local Government. Republic of Uganda, High Court of Uganda, holden at Gulu.
- Isaacman, A. (1990). Peasants and rural social protest in Africa. *African Studies Review*, 33(2), 1–120.
- Jackson Lears, T. (1985). The concept of cultural hegemony: Problems and possibilities. *The American Historical Review*, 90(3), 567–593.
- Jamal, F. (2015). Challenges in resolving the land dispute in Apaa, Amuru District, *The Examiner*, 2, 1–4, Human Rights Focus, Gulu.
- James, J., & Omona, C. (2023, February). Apaa land saga: Residents storm cultural palace with coffins. *The New Vision*. <https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/news/apaa-land-saga-residents-storm-cultural-palac-154476>
- James, W. (1988). *The listening ebony: Moral knowledge, religion, and power among the Uduk of Sudan*. Oxford University Press.
- Jasper, J. (1998). The emotions of protest: Affective and reactive emotions in and around social movements. *Sociological Forum* 13(3), 397–424.
- Jasper, J., & Polletta, F. (2018). The cultural context of social movements. In D. Snow, S. Soule, & H. Kriesi (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell companion to social movements* (2nd ed., pp. 63–78). Wiley Blackwell.
- Jasper, J., & Poulsen, J. (1995). Recruiting strangers and friends: Moral shocks and social networks in animal rights and animal protest. *Social Problems* 42, 497–512.
- Joireman, S. F., Sawyer, A., & Wilhoit, J. (2012). A different way home: Resettlement patterns in northern Uganda. *Political Geography*, 31(4), 197–204.
- Jones, B. (2008). *Beyond the state in rural Uganda*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Jones, S. (2006). *Antonio Gramsci*. Routledge.
- Jungnickel, K. (2014). Getting there...and back: How ethnographic commuting (by bicycle) shaped a study of Australian backyard technologists. *Qualitative Research*, 14(6), 640–655.

- Juris, J. S. (2007). Practicing militant ethnography with the movement for global resistance in Barcelona. In S. Shukaitis, D. Graeber & E. Biddle (Eds.), *Constituent imagination: Militant investigations, collective theorization* (pp. 164–178). AK Press.
- Justin, P. H., & Verkoren, W. (2022). Hybrid governance in South Sudan: The negotiated state in practice. *Peacebuilding*, 10(1), 17–36.
- Juul, K., & Lund, C. (Eds.). (2002). *Negotiating property in Africa*. Heinemann.
- Kabwegyere, T. (1995) [1974]. *The politics of state formation and destruction in Uganda*. Fountain Publishers.
- Kandel, M. (2015). Politics from below? Small-, mid- and large-scale land dispossession in Teso, Uganda, and the relevance of scale. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 42(3–4), 635–652. doi: 10.1080/03066150.2015.1016918
- Kandel, M. (2017). Land conflicts and social differentiation in eastern Uganda. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 55(3), 395–422.
- Kandel, M. (2018). State formation and the politics of land in north-eastern Uganda. *African Affairs*, 117(467), 261–285.
- Kanyongolo, F. E. (2005). Land occupations in Malawi: Challenging the neoliberal legal order. In S. Moyo & P. Yeros (Eds.), *Reclaiming the land: The resurgence of rural movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (pp. 118–1). Zed Books.
- Kapidžić, D. (2018). Public authority beyond hybrid governance: Creating throughput legitimacy in northern Uganda. *Peacebuilding*, 6(2), 127–143.
- Karambiri, M., & Brockhaus, M. (2019). Leading rural land conflict as citizens and leaving it as denizens: Inside forest conservation politics in Burkina Faso. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 65, 22–31.
- Kareem, O. I. (2018). The determinants of large-scale land investments in Africa. *Land Use Policy*, 75, 180–190.
- Karriem, A. (2009). The rise and transformation of the Brazilian Landless Movement into a counter-hegemonic political actor: A Gramscian analysis. *Geoforum*, 40, 316–325.
- Karriem, A. (2013). Space, ecology, and politics in the praxis of the Brazilian Landless Movement. In M. Ekers, G. Hart, S. Kipfer & A. Loftus (Eds.), *Gramsci: Space, nature, politics*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Karugire, S. (1980). *A political history of Uganda*. Heinemann Educational Books.
- Kasooha, I. (2023). Apaa land encroachers given a 90-day ultimatum to vacate. *Office of the Prime Minister*. <https://opm.go.ug/apaa-land-encroachers-given-a-90-day-ultimatum-to-vacate/>



- Kasozi, E. (2016, October 10). Ministers disagree on Zoka central forest giveaway. *The New Vision*. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Ministers-disagree-on-Zoka-central-forest-giveaway/688334-3410814-qck2j0z/index.html>
- Kazibwe, K. (2021, August 13). Museveni to set up commission of inquiry into Apaa land conflict. *The Nile Post*. <https://nilepost.co.ug/2021/08/13/museveni-to-set-up-commission-of-inquiry-into-apaa-land-conflict/>
- Keith, M., & Pile, S. (Eds.). (1993). *Place and the politics of identity*. Routledge.
- Kelly, A. (2011). Conservation practice as primitive accumulation. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 38(4), 683–701.
- Kelly, A., & Peluso, N. (2015). Frontiers of commodification: State lands and their formalisation. *Society & Natural Resources*, 28(5), 473–495.
- Ker Kwaro Acholi (KKA). (2008). *Cik me loyo ki kit me tic ngom kwaro i Acholi: Principles and practices of customary tenure in Acholiland*. Gulu.
- Ker Kwaro Acholi (KKA). (2016). *Re-draft of the text document titled; Principles and practices of customary tenure in Acholi land* [Report submitted to Trócaire and the Joint Acholi sub-region leader's forum]. Arcadia Advocates.
- Kerkvliet, B. (1986). Everyday resistance to injustice in a Philippine village. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 13(2), 107–123.
- Kerkvliet, B. (1993). Claiming the land: Take-overs by villagers in the Philippines with comparisons to Indonesia, Peru, Portugal, and Russia. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 20(3), 459–493.
- Kitara, J. (2023). Apaa land saga: Museveni to appoint judicial commission of inquiry. *The New Vision*. <https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/news/apaa-land-saga-museveni-to-appoint-judicial-c-154696>
- Kjær, A, M. (2017). Land governance as grey zone: The political incentives of land reform implementation in Africa. *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 55(4), 426–443. doi: 10.1080/14662043.2017.1272876
- Klopp, J. M. (2000). Pilfering the public: The problem of land grabbing in contemporary Kenya. *Africa Today*, 47(1), 7–26.
- Klopp, J. M. (2001). Ethnic clashes and winning elections: The case of Kenya's electoral despotism. *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 35(2), 473–517.
- Klopp, J. M. (2002). Can moral ethnicity trump political tribalism? The struggle for land and nation in Kenya. *African Studies*, 61(2), 269–294.

- Kobusingye, D. N. (2020). African youths; the forgotten category in land governance: A case study of post-conflict Acholi region, northern Uganda. *Geoforum*, 109, 135–142.
- Kobusingye, D. N., Leeuwen, M., & van Dijk, H. (2017). The multifaceted relationship between land and violent conflict: The case of Apaa evictions in Amuru district, northern Uganda. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 55(3), 455–477.
- Komakech, M. (2015, May 17). Distortions on Amuru game reserves. *The Independent*.  
<https://www.independent.co.ug/distortions-amuru-game-reserves>
- Komujuni, S., & Büscher, K. (2020). In search of chiefly authority in ‘post-aid’ Acholiland: Transformations of customary authorities in northern Uganda. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 14(1), 103–124.
- Kopytoff, I. (1987). (Ed). *The African frontier: The reproduction of traditional African societies*. Indiana University Press.
- Korovkin, T. (2000). Weak weapons, strong weapons? Hidden resistance and political protest in rural Ecuador. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 27(3), 1–29.
- Kuba, R., & Lentz, C. (Eds.). (2006). *Land and the politics of belonging in west Africa*. Brill.
- Kwesiga, P. (2019, February 27). Cabinet approves resettlement packages to Apaa families. *The New Vision*, National News, p.10.
- Laing, T., & Weschler, S. (2018). Displacement as resistance in northern Uganda: How 234 rural farmers occupied a UN compound to defend their land. *Africa at LSE* [Blog]. London School of Economics and Political Science.  
<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2018/10/23/displacement-as-resistance-in-northern-uganda-how-234-rural-farmers-occupied-a-un-compound-to-defend-their-land/>
- Laing, T., & Wilmot, P. (2018). Ugandan farmers emerge victorious after monthlong occupation of UN office. *Waging Nonviolence*. <https://wagingnonviolence.org/2018/08/uganda-apaa-farmers-occupy-united-nations-ohchr/>
- Laing, T., & Weschler, S. (Forthcoming). Rural radicalism and the tactic of third-party leverage: How Acholi peasants drew a UN agency into their struggle against land-grabbing by the Ugandan state. *African Studies Review*.
- Lamprey, R., & Michelmores, F. (1996). *Surveys of protected areas, Phase I and Phase II*. Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, Kampala, Uganda.
- Lamprey, R., Buhanga, E., & Omoding, J. (2003). *A study of wildlife distributions, wildlife management systems, and options for wildlife-based livelihoods in Uganda* [Report for IFRPI, USAID].

- Langlands, B. (1971). *The population geography of Madi District* (Occasional paper No. 31). Department of Geography, Makerere University.
- Langlands, B. W., & Obol-Owit, L. E. C. (1968). *Essays on the settlement geography of east Acholi*. Department of Geography, Makerere University.
- Lanz, K., Gerber, J. D., & Haller, T. (2018). Land grabbing, the state and chiefs: The politics of extending commercial agriculture in Ghana. *Development and Change*, 49(6), 1526–1552.
- Lapegna, P. (2013). Social movements and patronage politics: Processes of demobilization and dual pressure. *Sociological Forum*, 28(4), 842–863. doi: 10.1111/socf.12059
- Larder, N. (2015). Space for pluralism? Examining the Malibya land grab. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 42(3–4), 839–858.
- Laruni, E. (2014). *From the village to Entebbe: The Acholi of northern Uganda and the politics of identity, 1950-1985* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Exeter].  
<https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10871/16003>
- Latigo, O. (2015, April 29). Naked Acholi mothers: Land or leadership gap? [Opinion article by the former leader of Opposition, 8<sup>th</sup> Parliament]. *The Observer*.  
<https://observer.ug/viewpoint/37567-naked-acholi-mothers-land-or-leadership-gap>
- Laws, R., Parker, I. & Johnstone, R. (1970). Elephants and habitats in northern Bunyoro, Uganda. *East Africa Wildlife*, 8, 163–180.
- Le Billon, P., & Sommerville, M. (2017). Landing capital and assembling ‘investable land’ in the extractive and agricultural Sectors. *Geoforum*, 82, 212–224.
- Le Meur, P. Y. (2006). State making and the politics of the frontier in central Benin. *Development and Change*, 37(4), 871–900.
- Leeuwen, M. (2014). Renegotiating customary tenure reform: Land governance reform and tenure security in Uganda. *Land Use Policy*, 39, 292–300.
- Leeuwen, M. (2015). Localizing land governance, strengthening the state: Decentralisation and land tenure security in Uganda. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 17(1), 208–227.
- Leeuwen, M., Kobusingye, D., & Maiyo, J. The legitimization effects of peacebuilding and development interventions—strengthening land registration in northern Uganda. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 18(2), 142–157.
- Lenhart, L. (2013). Alleged land grabs and governance: Exploring mistrust and trust in northern Uganda – The case of the Apaa land conflict. *Journal of Peace and Security Studies*, 1, 64–85.

- Lentz, C. (2000). Of hunters, goats and earth-shrines: Settlement histories and the politics of oral tradition in northern Ghana. *History in Africa*, 27, 193–214.
- Lentz, C. (2003). “This is Ghanaian territory!”: Land conflicts on a West African border. *American Ethnologist*, 30(2), 273–289.
- Lentz, C. (2006). Decentralization, the state and conflicts over local boundaries in northern Ghana. *Development and Change*, 37(4), 901–919.
- Lentz, C. (2007). Land and the politics of belonging in Africa. In L. Haan, U. Engel, & P. Chabal (Eds.), *African Alternatives* (pp. 37–58). Brill.  
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cam/detail.action?docID=467628>.
- Lentz, C. (2010). Is land inalienable? Historical and current debates on land transfers in northern Ghana. *Africa*, 80(1), 56–80.
- Leonardi, C. (2013). *Dealing with government in South Sudan: Histories of chiefship, community & state*. James Currey.
- Leonardi, C. (2020). Patchwork states: The localization of state territoriality on the South Sudan–Uganda border, 1914–2014. *Past & Present*, 248(1), 209–258.
- Leonardi, C., & Browne, A. (2018). Introduction: Valuing land in eastern Africa. *Critical African Studies*, 10(1), 1–13.
- Leonardi, C., & Santschi, M. (2016). *Dividing communities in South Sudan and northern Uganda: Boundary disputes and land governance*. Rift Valley Institute.
- Leonardi, C., & Vaughan, C. (2016). We are oppressed and our only way is to write to a higher authority. In E. Hunter (Ed.), *Citizenship, belonging, and political community in Africa: Dialogues between past and present* (pp. 74–100). Ohio University Press.
- Leopold, M. (2005). *Inside West Nile: Violence, history & representation on an African frontier*. James Currey.
- Leopold, M. (2009). Crossing the line: 100 years of the north-west Uganda/South Sudan border. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 3(3), 464–478. doi: 10.1080/17531050903273743
- Levien, M. (2018). *Dispossession without development: Land grabs in neoliberal India*. Oxford University Press.
- Lewis, A. G. (2012). Ethics, activism and the anti-colonial: Social movement research as resistance. *Social Movement Studies*, 11(2), 227–240.
- Lewis, J. (2014). When decentralization leads to recentralization: Subnational state transformation in Uganda. *Regional and Federal Studies* 24(5), 571–88.

- Li, T. M. (2000). Articulating indigenous identity in Indonesia: Resource politics and the tribal slot. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 42(1), 149–179.
- Li, T. M. (2007). *The will to improve*. Duke University Press.
- Li, T. M. (2010). Indigeneity, capitalism, and the management of dispossession. *Current Anthropology*, 51(3), 385–414.
- Lilja, M., Baaz, M., Schulz, M., & Vinthagen, S. (2017). How resistance encourages resistance: Theorizing the nexus between power, ‘organised resistance’ and ‘everyday resistance.’ *Journal of Political Power*, 10(1), 40–54.
- Lind, J. (2017). The method of ethics-as-process: Embracing ambivalence in research on childhood and deportability. *Migraciones*, 42, 93–117.
- Lindemann, S. (2011). Just another change of guard? Broad-based politics and civil war in Museveni’s Uganda. *African Affairs* 110(440), 387–416.
- Liri, M. (2011, September 13). To the best of my knowledge, East Madi Game Reserve doesn’t exist. *The Daily Monitor*. <https://allafrica.com/stories/201109130232.html>
- Lokwiya, F. (2011). *Uganda Wildlife Authority evicts Apaa residents*. Newsletter, Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative.
- Lombard, L. (2016). Threat economies and armed conservation in northeastern Central African Republic. *Geoforum*, 69, 218–226.
- Long, K. (2013). *The point of no return: Refugees, rights and repatriation*. Oxford University Press.
- Lonsdale, J. (1992). The moral economy of Mau Mau: Wealth, poverty, and civic virtue in kikuyu political thought. In B. Berman & J. Lonsdale (Eds.), *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa* (pp. 315–504). Ohio University Press.
- Lonsdale, J. (2016). Unhelpful pasts and a provisional present. In E. Hunter (Ed.), *Citizenship, belonging, and political community in Africa, dialogues between past and present* (pp. 17–40). Ohio University Press.
- Lorde, A. (2018). *The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house*. Penguin Books.
- Lowry, A., & Donahue, T. P. (1994). Parks, politics, and pluralism: The demise of national parks in Togo. *Society & Natural Resources*, 7(4), 321–329.
- Lubangakene, C. (2008). Clans warned against fanning land row. *The New Vision*. <https://allafrica.com/stories/200811280295.html>
- Lund, C. (2006). Twilight institutions: Public authority and local politics in Africa. *Development and Change*, 37(4), 685–705.

- Lund, C. (2008). *Local politics and the dynamics of property in Africa*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lund, C. (2011a). Property and citizenship: Conceptually connecting land rights and belonging in Africa. *Africa Spectrum*, 3, 71–75.
- Lund, C. (2011b). Fragmented sovereignty: Land reform and dispossession in Laos. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 38(4), 885–905. doi: 10.1080/03066150.2011.607709
- Lund, C. (2013). The past and space: On arguments in African land control. *Africa*, 83(1), 14–35.
- Lund, C. (2016). Rule and rupture: State formation through the production of property and citizenship. *Development and Change*, 47(6), 1199–1228.
- Lund, C., & Rachman, N. F. (2016) Occupied! Property, citizenship and peasant movements in rural Java. *Development and Change*, 47(6), 1316–1337.
- Lund, C., & Boone, C. (2013). Introduction: Land politics in Africa—constituting authority over territory, property and persons. *Africa*, 83(1), 1–13.
- Lunstrum, E. (2014). Green militarization: Anti-poaching efforts and the spatial contours of Kruger National Park. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 104(4), 816–32.
- Lynch, G. (2011). *I say to you: Ethnic politics and the Kalenjin in Kenya*. University of Chicago Press.
- Lyons, K., & Westoby, P. (2014). Carbon colonialism and the new land grab: Plantation forestry in Uganda and its livelihood impacts. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 36, 13–21.
- MacArthur, J. (2013). When did the Luyia (or any other group) become a tribe?” *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 47(3), 351–363.
- MacArthur, J. (2016). *Cartography and the political imagination: Mapping community in colonial Kenya*. Ohio University Press.
- MacDonald, A., & Porter, H. (2020). The politics of return: Understanding trajectories of displacement and the complex dynamics of ‘return’ in Central and East Africa. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 33(4), 639–662.
- MacDonald, A., Cooper-Knock, S. J., & Hopwood, J. (2022). “Maybe we should take the legal ways:” Citizen engagement with lower state courts in post-war northern Uganda. *Law & Society Review*, 56(4), 509–531.
- Malkki, L. (1992). National geographic: The rooting of peoples and the territorialization of national identity among scholars and refugees. *Cultural Anthropology* 7, 24–44.
- Mamdani, M. (1996) *Citizen and subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism*. Princeton University Press.

- Mamdani, M. (2001). *When victims become killers: Colonialism, nativism, and the genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton University Press.
- Mamdani, M. (2013). *The contemporary Ugandan discourse on customary tenure: Some theoretical considerations* (Working paper 13). Makerere Institute of Social Research, Makerere University.
- Marijnjen, E. (2018). Public authority and conservation in areas of armed conflict: Virunga National Park as a 'state within a state' in eastern Congo. *Development and Change*, 49(3), 790–814.
- Marijnjen, E., & Verweijen, J. (2020). Pluralising political forests: Unpacking “the state” by tracing Virunga's charcoal chain. *Antipode*, 52(4), 996–1017.
- Marko, T. (2016, September 23). Adjumani RDC drags journalists to court over Zoka forest reports [Blog post]. <https://taibotmarko.wordpress.com/2016/09/23/adjumani-rdc-drags-journalists-to-court-over-zoka-forest-reports/>
- Marongwe, N. (2003). Farm occupations and occupiers in the new politics of land in Zimbabwe. In A. Hammar, B. Raftopolous & S. Jensen (Eds.), *Unfinished business: Rethinking land, state and citizenship in Zimbabwe* (pp. 155–90). Weaver Press.
- Martiniello, G. (2015). Social struggles in Uganda's Acholiland: Understanding responses and resistance to Amuru sugar works. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 42(3–4), 653–669.
- Martiniello, G. (2017). Agrarian politics and land struggles in northern Uganda. *Community Development Journal*, 52(3), 405–420.
- Massé, F., & Lunstrum, E. (2016). Accumulation by securitization: Commercial poaching, neoliberal conservation, and the creation of new wildlife frontiers. *Geoforum*, 69, 227–237.
- McAdam, D. (1983). Tactical innovation and the pace of insurgency. *American Sociological Review* 48, 735–754.
- McAdam, D., & Tarrow, S. (2018). The political context of social movements. In D. Snow, S. Soule, & H. Kriesi (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell companion to social movements* (2nd ed., pp. 17–42). Wiley Blackwell.
- McCarthy, J. F., Vel, J. A., & Afiff, S. (2012). Trajectories of land acquisition and enclosure: Development schemes, virtual land grabs, and green acquisitions in Indonesia's outer islands. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(2), 521–549.
- McCurdy, P., & Uldam, J. (2014). Connecting participant observation positions: Toward a reflexive framework for studying social movements. *Field Methods*, 26(1), 40–55.
- Meinert, L., Willerslev, R., & Seebach, S. H. (2017). Cement, graves, and pillars in land disputes in northern Uganda. *African Studies Review*, 60(3), 37–57.

- Meinert, L., & Kjær, A. (2016). "Land belongs to the people of Uganda:" Politicians' use of land issues in the 2016 election campaigns. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 10(4), 769–788.
- Melucci, A. (1995). The process of collective identity. In H. Johnston & B. Klandermans (Eds.), *Social movements and culture* (pp. 41–63). University of Minnesota Press.
- Mergelsberg, B. (2012). The displaced family: Moral imaginations and social control in Pabbo, northern Uganda. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 6(1), 64–80.
- Middleton, D. (1955) Notes on the political organisation of the Madi of Uganda. *African Studies*, 14(1), 29–36.
- Ministry of Lands, Housing & Urban Development (MLHUD). (2017, June 21). *Statement to Parliament on the Amuru-Adjumani boundary*.  
<https://www.parliament.go.ug/cmris/browser?id=7254ff8a-f94c-45fb-881a-37131c4f970d%3B1.0>
- Mitchell, P. E. (1937). Indirect rule. *Uganda Journal*, 4, 101–107.
- Mitchell, T. (1990). Everyday metaphors of power. *Theory and Society*, 19(5), 545–577.
- Monjane, B. (2023). Resisting agrarian neoliberalism and authoritarianism: Struggles towards a progressive rural future in Mozambique. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 23(1), 185–203.
- Moore, D. S. (1993). Contesting terrain in Zimbabwe's eastern highlands: Political ecology, ethnography, and peasant resource struggles. *Economic Geography*, 69(4), 380–401.
- Moore, D. S. (1997). Remapping resistance: 'Ground for struggle' and the politics of place. In S. Piles & M. Keith (Eds.), *Geographies of resistance* (pp. 87–106). Routledge.
- Moore, D. S. (1998). Subaltern struggles and the politics of place: Remapping resistance in Zimbabwe's eastern highlands. *Cultural Anthropology*, 13(3), 344–381.
- Moore, D. S. (2005). *Suffering for territory: Race, place, and power in Zimbabwe*. Duke University Press.
- Moore, S. F. (1978). *Law as process*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Moore, S. F. (1986). *Social facts and fabrications: 'Customary' law on Kilimanjaro 1880–1980*. Cambridge University Press.
- Moore, S. F. (2013). [1998]. Changing African land tenure: Reflections on the incapacities of the state. In C. Lund (Ed.), *Development and rights: Negotiating justice in changing societies* (33–49). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315038186>
- Moreda, T. (2015). Listening to their silence? The political reaction of affected communities to large-scale land acquisitions: Insights from Ethiopia. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 42(3–4), 517–539.



- Mouffe, C. (Ed.). (1979). *Gramsci and marxist theory*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Moyo, S. (2001). The land occupation movement and democratization in Zimbabwe: Contradictions of neoliberalism. *Journal of International Studies*, 30(2), 311–330.
- Moyo, S., & Yeros, P. (Eds.). (2005). *Reclaiming the land: The resurgence of rural movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America*. Zed Books.
- Mujere, J. (2011). Land, graves and belonging: Land reform and the politics of belonging in newly resettled farms in Gutu, 2000–2009. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 38(5), 1123–1144.
- Mulumba, B. (2002, July 12). Uganda: President declares ‘Ugandans free to buy land anywhere.’ *The Daily Monitor*. <https://allafrica.com/stories/200207120554.html>
- Munro, W. A. (1998). *The moral economy of the state: Conservation, community development, and state making in Zimbabwe*. Ohio University Press.
- Murphy, S., Carmody, P., & Okawakol, J. (2017). When rights collide: Land grabbing, force and injustice in Uganda. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 44(3), 677–696.
- Mwenda, A. (2007). Personalizing power in Uganda. *Journal of Democracy* 18(3), 23–37.
- Myers, G. W. (1994). Competitive rights, competitive claims: Land access in post-war Mozambique. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 20(4), 603–632.
- Nakayi, R. (2012). *The dynamics of customary land rights and transitional justice: The case of Acholi sub-region, northern Uganda* [SJD dissertation, University of Notre Dame].
- Nakayi, R. (2013). The challenge of proving customary tenure in courts of law in Uganda: Review of the case of Hon. Ocula Michael & others vs. Amuru District Land Board, Major General
- Nampindo, S., Phillips, G., & Plumptre, A. (2005). *The impact of conflict in northern Uganda on the environment and natural resource management* [Report for Wildlife Conservation Society, USAID].
- Nel, A. (2015). The neoliberalisation of forestry governance, market environmentalism and re-territorialisation in Uganda. *Third World Quarterly*, 36(12), 2294–2315.
- Nel, A., & Hill, D. (2013). Constructing walls of carbon—the complexities of community, carbon sequestration and protected areas in Uganda. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 31(3), 421–440.
- Neumann, R. P. (1998). *Imposing wilderness: Struggles over livelihood and nature preservation in Africa* (Vol. 4). University of California Press.
- Neumann, R. P. (2004). Nature-state-territory: Toward a critical theorization of conservation enclosures. In R. Peet & M. Watts (Eds.), *Liberation ecologies: Environment, development and social movements* (pp. 179–199). Routledge.

- New Vision. (2015, February 6). *Amuru and Adjumani leaders support opening of the district boundaries*. Section G7.
- New Vision. (2022, September 15). *Museveni hands over land titles to over 1,500 families*.  
<https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/news/museveni-hands-over-land-titles-to-over-1500-143150>
- Nielsen, K. B., & Nilsen, A. G. (2015). Law struggles and hegemonic processes in neoliberal India: Gramscian reflections on land acquisition legislation. *Globalizations*, 12(2), 203–216.
- Nilsen, A. G. (2015). Subalterns and the state in the *longue durée*: Notes from “the rebellious century” in the Bhil heartland. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 45(4), 574–595.
- Norgrove, L., & Hulme, D. (2006). Confronting conservation at Mount Elgon, Uganda. *Development and Change*, 37(5), 1093–1116.
- Notice of Motion. (2017). Ap. 15. Hon. Akol Anthony, Hon. Lucy Akello, Hon. Lakony Micahel, Abola Richard P’Lacaka, Tokwiny Michael, Omony Geoffrey, Oling Samuel, Asuma Wilson & Loum Sitwell v the Attorney General, Uganda Wildlife Authority, and Adjumani District Local Government. Notion of Motion. M/s Okello Oryem & Co Advocates.
- Novelli, M. (2010). Learning to win: Exploring knowledge and strategy development in antiprivatization struggles in Colombia. In A. Choudry & D. Kapoor. (Eds.), *Learning from the ground up: Global perspectives on social movements and knowledge production* (pp. 121–138). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nsamba, M. A. (2013). Decentralization and territorial politics: The dilemma of constructing and managing identities in Uganda. *Critical African Studies*, 5(1), 48–60.
- NTV. (2018, August 14). *Apaa residents end 30-day protest, leave UN compound*.  
<https://www.ntv.co.ug/ug/news/national/apaa-residents-end-30-day-protest-leave-un-compound-2382762>
- Nugent, P. (2008). Putting the history back into ethnicity: Enslavement, religion, and cultural brokerage in the construction of Mandinka/Jola and Ewe/Agotime identities in west Africa, c. 1650–1930. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 50(4), 920–948.
- Nugent, P. (2010). States and social contracts in Africa. *New Left Review*, 63, 35–68.
- Nugent, P. (2019). *Boundaries, communities and state-making in West Africa: The centrality of the margins*. Cambridge University Press.
- O'Brien, K. J. (2013). Rightful resistance revisited. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 40(6), 1051–1062.
- O'Brien, K. J., & Li, L. (2006). *Rightful resistance in rural China*. Cambridge University Press.

- O'Laughlin, B. (2016). Bernstein's puzzle: Peasants, accumulation and class alliances in Africa. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 16(3), 390–409.
- O'Hanlon, R. (2002) [1988]. Recovering the subject: Subaltern studies and histories of resistance in colonial South Asia. In D. Ludden (Ed.), *Reading subaltern studies: Critical history, contested meaning and the globalization of South Asia* (pp. 135–186). Anthem Press.
- Obika, J. (2022). The intimate governance of land in northern Uganda. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 31(2), 136–152.
- Obika, J., Otto, B., Babiiha, S., & Whyte, M. (2018). Contesting claims to gardens and land: Gendered practice in post-war northern Uganda. In M. Bruun, P. Cockburn, B. Skærlund & M. Thorup (Eds.), *Contested property claims: What disagreement tells us about ownership* (pp. 205–220). Routledge.
- Ocitti, J. P. (1973). *The urban geography of Gulu* (Occasional paper No. 49). Department of Geography, Makerere University.
- Ochan, S. (2014). *Witness statement of Ochan Sabino*. Civil Suit No. 62 of 2011 Dr Abongamera Micheal et al v. Uganda Wildlife Authority and the Attorney General. The Republic of Uganda, High Court of Uganda, holden at Gulu.
- Ocungi, J. (2015, May 21). MPs attack Latigo for stand on Apaa women. *The Daily Monitor*. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/mps-attack-latigo-for-stand-on-apaa-women-1611660>
- Ocuwun, C. (2007, March 19). Four Acholi clans clash over land. *The New Vision*. <https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1168793/acholi-clans-clash-land>
- Odgaard, R. (2003). Scrambling for land in Tanzania: Processes of formalisation and legitimisation of land rights. In T. Benjaminsen and C. Lund (Eds.), *Securing Land Rights in Africa* (pp. 71–88). Frank Class.
- Onyango-ku-Odongo, O. K., & Webster, J. B. (1976). *The central Lwo during the Aconya*. East African Literature Bureau.
- Okello, E., & Ojimo T. (2015) Human rights abuses during Apaa conflict. *The Examiner*, 2, 14–17. Human Rights Focus (HURIFO), Gulu.
- Okuku, J. A. (2006). The Land Act (1998) and land tenure reform in Uganda. *Africa Development*, 31(1), 1–26.
- Oliveira, G., McKay, B., & Liu, J. (2021). Beyond land grabs: New insights on land struggles and global agrarian change. *Globalizations*, 18(3), 321–338.

- Olum, J. B. (2015). The historical context of Apaa. *The Examiner*, 2, 5-11. Human Rights Focus (HURIFO), Gulu.
- Ortner, S. B. (1995). Resistance and the problem of ethnographic refusal. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 37(1), 173–193.
- Oryem, N. (2018, July 23). *Forced evictees in northern Uganda entitled to remedy: Residents in Apaa seek United Nations help*. Human Rights Watch.  
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/07/23/forced-evictees-northern-uganda-entitled-remedy>
- Osterweil, M. (2013). Rethinking public anthropology through epistemic politics and theoretical Practice. *Cultural Anthropology*, 28(4): 598—620.
- Otim, B. (2012). *Border or ownership question: The Apaa land dispute* (Situation brief). Refugee Law Project.
- Otto, A. (2015a, September 15). Investor explains why he withdrew from east Madi Game Reserve concession. *Uganda Radio Network*. <https://ugandaradionetwork.net/story/bruce-martin-speaks-out-on-east-madi-game-reserve->
- Otto, A. (2015b, September 8). Amuru shooting victims amputated. *Uganda Radio Network*.  
<https://ugandaradionetwork.com/story/amuru-shooting-victims-amputated->
- Owiny, T. (2021, September 20). *UWA under fire over fuel station in game reserve*. The Daily Monitor. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/uwa-under-fire-over-fuel-station-in-game-reserve--3556636->
- Oya, C. (2013). Methodological reflections on ‘land grab’ databases and the ‘land grab’ literature ‘rush.’ *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 40(3), 503–520.
- p’Bitek, O. (2019) [1971a]. African religions in western scholarship. In O. p’Bitek, & F. Girling (Edited and introduced by T. Allen), *Lawino's people: The Acholi of Uganda* (pp. 519–600). LIT Verlag Münster.
- p’Bitek, O. (2019) [1971b]. Religion of the central Luo. In O. p’Bitek, & F. Girling (Edited and introduced by T. Allen), *Lawino's people: The Acholi of Uganda* (pp. 379–518). LIT Verlag Münster.
- Pahnke, A., Tarlau, R., & Welford, W. (2015). Understanding rural resistance: Contemporary mobilization in the Brazilian countryside. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 42(6), 1069–1085.
- Paine, C. (2015). Images of a traditional authority: The case of Ker Kwaro Acholi in northern Uganda. In J. Gallagher (Ed.), *Images of Africa: Creation, negotiation, subversion* (pp. 105–124). Manchester University Press.

- Parliament of Uganda. (2002). *Resolution of Parliament authorizing the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry to alter the boundaries of East Madi Wildlife Reserve*. Republic of Uganda.
- Parliament of Uganda. (2020). *Report of the select committee on the evictions and displacement of the people of Apaa community*. <https://parliamentwatch.ug/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Report-of-the-Select-Committee-on-the-Eviction-and-Displacement-of-the-people-of-Apaa-Community.pdf>
- Pas, A., & Cavanagh, C. (2022). Understanding ‘night grazing:’ Conservation governance, rural inequalities, and shifting responses ‘from above and below’ throughout the nycthemeron in Laikipia, Kenya. *Geoforum*, 134, 143–153.
- Pellegrini, V. (1949). *Lok pa Acholi ma con*. Catholic Mission, Uganda.
- Peluso, N. (1992). *Rich forests, poor people: Resource control and resistance in Java*. University of California Press.
- Peluso, N. (1995). Whose woods are these? Counter-mapping forest territories in Kalimantan, Indonesia. *Antipode*, 27(4), 383–406.
- Peluso, N. (2009). Rubber erasures, rubber producing rights: Making racialized territories in west Kalimantan, Indonesia. *Development and Change*, 40(1), 47–80.
- Peluso, N., & Lund, C. (2011). New frontiers of land control: Introduction. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 38(4), 667–681.
- Peluso, N., & Lund, C. (Eds.). (2013). *New frontiers of land control*. Routledge.
- Peluso, N., & Vandergeest, P. (2011). Political ecologies of war and forests: Counterinsurgencies and the making of national natures. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 101(3), 587–608.
- Peluso, N., & Watts, M. (2001). *Violent environments*. Cornell University Press.
- Peters, P. (1994). *Dividing the commons: Politics, policy and culture in Botswana*. University of Virginia Press.
- Peters, P. (2004). Inequality and social conflict over land in Africa. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 4(3), 269–314.
- Peters, P. (2012). Conflicts over land and threats to customary tenure in Africa today. *CID Working paper series*.
- Petras, J. (1998). The political and social basis of regional variation in land occupations in Brazil. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 25(4), 124–133.
- Petray, T. L. (2012). A walk in the park: Political emotions and ethnographic vacillation in activist research. *Qualitative Research*, 12(5), 554–564.

- Pierce, S. (2013). Pointing to property: Colonialism and knowledge about land tenure in northern Nigeria. *Africa*, 83(1), 142–163.
- Pillow, W. (2003). Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *International journal of qualitative studies in education*, 16(2), 175–196.
- Platzky Miller, J. (2020). *Politics, education and the imagination in South African and Brazilian student-led mobilisations (2015-16)*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Cambridge]. <https://api.repository.cam.ac.uk/server/api/core/bitstreams/eabc694a-0f27-4abf-8f6c-d00e020e06a1/content>
- Plows, A. (2008). Social movements and ethnographic methodologies: An analysis using case study examples. *Sociology Compass*, 2(5), 1523–1538.
- Plumtre, A., Kato, S., Kityo, R., Mutungire, N., Mugabe, H., & Kyamaywa, J. (2008). *Biodiversity surveys of East Madi Wildlife Reserve* [Report for USAID, Wildlife Conservation Society].
- Pochet, F. (2014). Discourse analysis of nature conservation policies in Africa: A Beninese case study. *EchoGéo*, 29, 1–18.
- Polletta, F., & Jasper, J. (2001). Collective identity and social movements. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27, 283–305.
- Porter, H. (2012). Justice and rape on the periphery: The supremacy of social harmony in the space between local solutions and formal judicial systems in northern Uganda. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 6(1), 81–97.
- Porter, H. (2013). *After rape: Justice and social harmony in northern Uganda*. [Doctoral dissertation, London School of Economics and Political Science]. <http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/717/>
- Postlethwaite, J. (1947). *I look back*. T.V. Boardman.
- Prause, L., & Billon, P. L. (2021). Struggles for land: Comparing resistance movements against agro-industrial and mining investment projects. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 48(5), 1100–1123.
- Radcliffe, S. A. (2017). Geography and indigeneity: Indigeneity, coloniality and knowledge. *Progress in Human Geography*, 41(2), 220–229.
- Raeymaekers, T., & Vlassenroot, K. (2009). Reshaping Congolese statehood in the midst of crisis and transition. In U. Engel & P. Nugent (Eds). *Respacing Africa* (pp. 139–167). BRILL
- Ramutsindela, M. (2003). Land reform in South Africa's national parks: A catalyst for the human–nature nexus. *Land Use Policy*, 20(1), 41–49.

- Ranger, T. (1983). The invention of tradition in colonial Africa. In E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger (Eds.), *The invention of tradition* (pp. 211–62). Cambridge University Press.
- Reed, J. P. (2012). Theorist of subaltern subjectivity: Antonio Gramsci, popular beliefs, political passion, and reciprocal learning. *Critical Sociology*, 39(4), 561–591.
- Refugee Law Project. (2007). Rapid assessment of population movement in Gulu and Pader [Briefing paper]. <https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/uganda-rapid-assessment-population-movement-gulu-and-pader>
- Reid, R. (2011). Past and presentism: The ‘precolonial’ and the foreshortening of African history. *The Journal of African History*, 52(2), 135–155.
- Reno, W. (2001). How sovereignty matters: International markets and the political economy of local politics in weak states. In T. Callaghy, R. Kassimir, and R. Latham (Eds.), *Intervention and transnationalism in Africa: Global–local networks of power* (pp. 197–215). Cambridge University Press.
- Republic of Uganda. (2015, March 6). *Report of the sensitization meetings for the re-opening of the common boundary between Amuru/Adjumani and East Madi Wildlife Reserve* [Report signed by the District Chairperson, Amuru and the District Chairperson, Adjumani].
- Reuss, A., & Titeca, K. (2017). Beyond ethnicity: The violence in western Uganda and Rwenzori’s 99 problems. *Review of African Political Economy* 44(151), 131–141.  
doi: 10.1080/03056244.2016.1270928
- Ribot, J., & Peluso, N. (2003). A theory of access. *Rural Sociology*, 68(2), 153–181.
- Rodino-Colocino, M. (2012). Participant activism: Exploring a methodology for scholar-activists through lessons learned as a precarious labor organizer. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 5(4), 541–562.
- Rolandsen, Ø. (2019). Trade, peace-building and hybrid governance in the Sudan–South Sudan borderlands. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 19(1), 79–97.
- Rose, C. (1994). *Property and persuasion – Essays on the history, theory and rhetoric of ownership*. Westview Press.
- Roseberry, W. (1996). Hegemony and the language of contention. In G. Joseph & D. Nugent (Eds.), *Everyday forms of state formation: Revolution and the negotiation of rule in modern Mexico* (pp. 355–365). Duke University Press.
- Rossi, F. (2017). *The poor’s struggle for political incorporation: The Piquetero Movement in Argentina*. Cambridge University Press.
- Routledge, P. (1996). The third space as critical engagement. *Antipode*, 28(4), 399–419.

- Routledge, P. (2015). Territorialising movement: The politics of land occupation in Bangladesh. *Transactions of the Institute for British Geographers*, 40(4), 445–63.
- Rugadya, M. (2008). *Unveiling gender, land and property rights in post-conflict northern Uganda* (Occasional paper No. 4). Associates Research.
- Rugadya, M. A., Nsamba-Gayiiya, E., & Kamusiime, H. (2008). *Analysis of post conflict land policy and land administration: A survey of IDP return and resettlement issues and lessons: Acholi and Lango regions*. The World Bank. [https://mokoro.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/northern\\_uganda\\_land\\_study\\_acholi\\_and\\_lango.pdf](https://mokoro.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/northern_uganda_land_study_acholi_and_lango.pdf)
- Rwakakamba, M. (2016, October 13). Why agricultural productivity is key in saving Uganda's forests. *The New Vision*. [https://www.newvision.co.ug/new\\_vision/news/1437650/agricultural-productivity-key-saving-uganda-forests](https://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1437650/agricultural-productivity-key-saving-uganda-forests)
- Sack, R. D. (1986). *Human territoriality: Its theory and history*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sathyamurthy, T. V. (1986). *The political development of Uganda: 1900–1986*. Gower Publishing Company.
- Schelnberger, A. K. (2008). Decentralisation and conflict in Kibaale, Uganda. In G. Crawford & C. Hartmann. (Eds.), *Decentralisation in africa: A pathway out of poverty and conflict?* (pp. 156–173). Amsterdam University Press. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/CAM/reader.action?docID=420022&ppg=156&pq-origsite=primo>
- Schlee, G. (1989). *Identities on the move: Clanship and pastoralism in northern Kenya*. Manchester University Press.
- Schlee, G. (2010). *Territorialising ethnicity: The political ecology of pastoralism in northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia* (Working paper No. 121). Max Planck Institute.
- Schock, K. (2015). Rightful radical resistance: Mass mobilization and land struggles in India and Brazil. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 20(4), 493–515.
- Schomerus, M., & Allen, T. (2010). *Southern Sudan at odds with itself: Dynamics of conflict and predicaments of peace*. Development Studies Institute, London School of Economics and Political Science.
- Scoones, I., Hall, R., Borras Jr, S.M., White, B. & Wolford, W. (2013). The politics of evidence: Methodologies for understanding the global land rush. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 40(3), 469–483.



- Scott J. C. (1985). *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance*. Yale University Press.
- Scott, J. C. (1990). *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts*. Yale University Press.
- Serwajja, E. (2014). *An investigation of land grabbing amidst resettlement in post-conflict Amuru District, northern Uganda* [Doctoral dissertation, University of the Western Cape].  
<https://etd.uwc.ac.za/handle/11394/4225>
- Sharpe, B. (1998). First the forest: Conservation, “community” and “participation” in south-west Cameroon, *Africa*, 68(1), 25–45.
- Shipton, P. (2009). *Mortgaging the ancestors: Ideologies of attachment in Africa*. Yale University Press.
- Shivji, I. G. (1976). *Class struggles in Tanzania*. Tanzania Publishing House.
- Sikor, T., & Lund, C. (2009). Access and property: A question of power and authority. *Development and Change*, 40(1), 1–22.
- Simpson, A. (2014). *Mohawk interruptus: Political life across the borders of settler states*. Duke University Press.
- Sjögren, A. (2014). Scrambling for the promised land: Land acquisitions and the politics of representation in post-war Acholi, northern Uganda. *African Identities*, 12(1), 62–75.
- Sjögren, A. (2015). Battles over boundaries: The politics of territory, identity and authority in three Ugandan regions. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 33(2), 268–284.
- Smith, J. (2022). *The eyes of the world: Mining the digital age in the eastern DR Congo*. Chicago University Press.
- Snijders, D. (2012). Wild property and its boundaries: On wildlife policy and rural consequences in South Africa. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(2), 503–520.
- Snow, D., Vliengenthart, R., & Ketelaars, P. (2018). The framing perspective on social movements: Its conceptual roots and architecture. In D. Snow, S. Soule, & H. Kriesi (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell companion to social movements* (2nd ed., pp. 392–410). Wiley Blackwell.
- Snow, D. (2004). Framing processes, ideology, and discursive fields. In D. Snow, S. Soule & H. Kriesi (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to social movements* (pp. 380–412). Blackwell.
- Snow, D. A., & Moss, D. M. (2014). Protest on the fly: Toward a theory of spontaneity in the dynamics of protest and social movements. *American Sociological Review*, 79(6), 1122–1143.

- Soff, H. G. (1971). *A history of sleeping sickness in Uganda: Administrative response 1900–1970* [Doctoral dissertation, Syracuse University].  
<http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/26994>
- Sorrenson, M. (1967). *Land reform in the Kikuyu country: A study in government policy*. Oxford University Press.
- Southall, A. W. (1997) [1970]. The illusion of the tribe. In R. Grinker & C. Steiner (Eds.), *Perspectives on Africa: A reader in culture, history and representation* (pp. 38–51). Oxford University Press.
- Spear, T. (2003). Neo-traditionalism and the limits of invention in British colonial Africa. *Journal of African History*, 44(1), 3–27.
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp. 271–313). University of Illinois Press.
- Ssejjoba, E. (2019, February 16). UPDF officer warns Madi community leader. *The New Vision*.  
<https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1494255/updf-officer-warns-madi-community-leader>
- Statehouse. (2015, March 22). “*The Lamogi rebellion against British rule was justified*” — *President Museveni* [Statehouse media release].  
<https://www.statehouse.go.ug/media/news/2015/03/22/“lamogi-rebellion-against-british-rule-was-justified”—president-museveni>
- Statehouse. (2018, August 22). *Government unveils three-point proposal to end Apaa land conflicts* [Statehouse media release].  
<http://www.statehouse.go.ug/media/news/2018/08/22/government-unveils-three-point-proposal-end-apaa-land-conflicts>
- Statehouse. (2021). “*Stop stroking tribal tensions*” - *Museveni* [Statehouse media release].  
<https://statehouse.go.ug/media/news/“stop-stoking-tribal-tensions”—museveni>
- Statutory Instrument. (2011). The Uganda Wildlife (Declaration of wildlife conservation area) (East Madi Wildlife Reserve) Instrument, No. 49. *The Uganda Gazette*, 57(CVI), 377.
- Steinebach, S. (2017). Farmers and pawns: The role of migrants in agrarian conflicts and rural resistance in Sumatra, Indonesia. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 18(3), 228–245.
- Stutje, J. W. (Ed.). (2012). *Charismatic leadership and social movements: The revolutionary power of ordinary men and women*. Berghahn Books. <https://doi-org.ezp.lib.cam.ac.uk/10.1515/9780857453303>

- Tangri, R., & Mwenda, A. M. (2013). *The politics of elite corruption in Africa: Uganda in comparative African perspective*. Routledge.
- Tapscott, R. (2016). Where the wild things are not: Crime preventers and the 2016 Ugandan elections. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 10(4), 693–712.
- Tapscott, R. (2017). The government has long hands: Institutionalized arbitrariness and local security initiatives in northern Uganda. *Development and Change*, 48(2), 263–285.
- Tapscott, R. (2021). *Arbitrary states: Social control and modern authoritarianism in Museveni's Uganda*. Oxford University Press.
- Tarrow, S. (1993). Cycles of collective action: Between moments of madness and the repertoire of contention. *Social Science History*, 17(2), 281–307.
- Tauss, A. (2015). Revisiting Argentina's recuperated factories: Reflections on over a decade of workers' control. *Desafíos*, 27(1), 185–205. doi: dx.doi.org/10.12804/desafios27.01.2015.06
- Taylor, V., & Van Dyke, N. (2004). "Get up, stand up:" Tactical repertoires of social movements. In D. Snow, S. Soule, H. Kriesi (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to social movements* (pp. 262–293). Blackwell.
- Temper, L. (2019). From boomerangs to minefields and catapults: Dynamics of trans-local resistance to land-grabs. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 46(1), 188–216.
- Temporary injunction order. (2012, February 15). [Injunction against UWA evictions or interference in the areas of Lakang, Pabo and Apaa in Amuru District signed by Hon. Judge Wilson Musene]. Miscellaneous application of No. 004 of 2012 (Arising from Civil Suit No. 0062-2011).
- The Daily Monitor. (2015, April 18). *Women undress before Migereko, Gen Aronda*. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/women-undress-before-migereko-gen-aronda-1607736>
- The Daily Monitor. (2017, October 18). Govt hands over Apaa to Adjumani. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/govt-hands-over-apaa-to-adjumani-1722452>
- The Daily Monitor. (2018, July 25). *Rights activists task UN on Apaa land evictees plight*. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/rights-activists-task-un-on-apaa-land-evictees-plight-1770188>

- The Daily Monitor. (2019a, April 16). *Apaa land crisis: Committee asks government to stop evictions*. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/apaa-land-crisis-committee-asks-government-to-stop-evictions-1820350>
- The Daily Monitor. (2019b, May 16). *Oulanyah halts eviction on disputed Apaa land*. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/oulanyah-halts-eviction-on-disputed-apaa-land-1825824>
- The Game (East Madi Hunting Area) Order. (1963). L.N. 352, Game (Preservation and Control) Act.
- The Game (Kilak Hunting Area) Order. (1963). L.N. 364, Game (Preservation and Control) Act.
- The Game (Kilak Hunting Area) (Revocation) Order. (1972). Statutory Instrument No. 55. Government of Uganda.
- The Land Act (Cap. 227). (1998). Government of the Republic of Uganda. <https://mlhud.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Land-Act-1998-as-amended-CAP-227.pdf>
- The Uganda National Land Policy. (2013). Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, Republic of Uganda. <https://www.jlos.go.ug/index.php/document-centre/land-justice/366-uganda-national-land-policy/file>
- Theodossopoulos, D. (2014). On de-pathologizing resistance. *History and Anthropology*, 25(4), 415–430.
- Tidemand, P. (1994). *The resistance councils in Uganda: A study of rural politics and popular democracy in Africa*. Roskilde University.
- Tilly, C. (1986). *The contentious French*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Tilly, C. (1993). Contentious repertoires in Great Britain, 1758–1834. *Social Science History*, 17(2), 253–280.
- Tindifa, S. (2007). *Land rights and peace-building in Gulu District, northern Uganda: Towards a holistic approach* (HURIPPEC Working paper No. 7). Human Rights and Peace Center.
- Tosh, J. (1973). Colonial chiefs in a stateless society: A case-study from northern Uganda. *The Journal of African History*, 14(3), 473–490.
- Toulmin, C., & Quan, J. (Eds). (2000). *Evolving land rights, policy and tenure in Africa*. Department for International Development (DFID), International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), Natural Resources Institute (NRI).
- Tripp, A. M. (2004). The changing face of authoritarianism in Africa: The case of Uganda. *Africa Today* 50(3), 1–26.

- Tumushabe, G., & Bainomugisha, A. (2004). Constitutional reform and environmental legislative representation in Uganda: A case study of Butamira forest reserve in Uganda (Research Series No. 10) ACODE. <https://www.acode-u.org/uploadedFiles/PRS10.pdf>
- Tumwesige, A. (2019, February 11). Apaa land: Museveni to make final decision. Regional news (18). *The New Vision*.
- Turner, R., & Killian, L. (1987). *Collective behavior* (3rd ed.). Prentice Hall.
- Tyler, I. (2013). Naked protest: The maternal politics of citizenship and revolt. *Citizenship Studies*, 17(2), 211–226. doi:10.1080/13621025.2013.780742
- Ubink, J. M. (2008). *In the land of the chiefs: Customary law, land conflicts, and the role of the state in peri-urban Ghana*. Leiden University Press. <https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/12630>.
- Uganda Land Alliance. (2010). *Milestones towards the integration of informal justice mechanisms into the formal system: Findings from Amuru, Apac and Katakwi Districts* (Research Series 00/2010). Uganda Land Alliance.
- Uganda Radio Network. (2015, April 22). *Amuru nude protests undermine women dignity– Acholi Chief*. <https://ugandaradionetwork.com/story/amuru-nude-protests-undermine-women-dignity-acholi-chief->
- Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA). (2000a). *Wildlife protected area system plan for Uganda, Volumes 1-6* [Report for the protected area assessment program, European Union wildlife support project, CA/98/04].
- Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA). (2000b). Controlled hunting areas (north-western). B3.1: Adjumani meeting/workshop report and list of participants on East Madi Controlled Hunting Area. *Wildlife protected area system plan for Uganda. Vol. 5* [Report for the protected area assessment program, European Union wildlife support project, CA/98/04].
- Ulloa, A. (2011). The politics of autonomy of indigenous peoples of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia: A process of relational indigenous autonomy. *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, 6(1), 79–107. doi: 10.1080/17442222.2011.543874.
- Vail, L. (Ed.). (1989). *The creation of tribalism in Southern Africa*. University of California Press.
- Van Acker, F. (2005). Where did all the land go? Enclosure and social struggle in Kivu (D. R. Congo). *Review of African Political Economy*, 32(103), 79–98.
- van Hooft, C. A. (2018). *Nearer to the people: The interaction between decentralisation and the political economy in Uganda* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Cambridge]. <https://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/handle/1810/299011>

- van Overbeek, F., & Tamás, P. A. (2020). Claim-making through subjectivation: A governmentality analysis of associational performance to claim land in the hybridity of peri-urban Bukavu. *Geoforum*, 109, 152–161.
- Vandergeest, P., & Peluso, N. (1995). Territorialization and state power in Thailand. *Theory and Society*, 24, 385–426.
- Veltmeyer, H. (2005). The dynamics of land occupations in Latin America. In S. Moyo & P. Yeros (Eds.), *Reclaiming the land: The resurgence of rural movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (pp. 285–316). Zed Books.
- Verkoren, W., & Ngin, C. (2017). Organizing against land grabbing in Cambodia: Exploring missing links. *Development and Change*, 48(6), 1336–1361.
- Verweijen, J., & Marijnen, E. (2018). The counterinsurgency/conservation nexus: Guerrilla livelihoods and the dynamics of conflict and violence in the Virunga National Park, Democratic Republic of the Congo. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 45(2), 300–320.
- Verweijen, J., & Bockhaven, V. (2020). Revisiting colonial legacies in knowledge production on customary authority in central and east Africa. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 14(1), 1–23.
- Verweijen, J., & Vlassenroot, K. (2015). Armed mobilisation and the nexus of territory, identity, and authority: The contested territorial aspirations of the Banyamulenge in eastern DR Congo. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 33(2), 191–212.
- Vigh, H. (2006). *Navigating Terrains of War: Youth and Soldiering in Guinea-Bissau*. Berghahn Books.
- Vinthagen, S. (2015). *A theory of nonviolent action: How civil resistance works*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Von Oppen, A. (2006). The village as territory: Enclosing locality in northwest Zambia, 1950s to 1990s. *The Journal of African History*, 47(1), 57–75.
- Walker, A. (2009). Now the companies have come: Local values and contract farming in northern Thailand. In D. Caouette and S. Turner (Eds.), *Agrarian angst and rural resistance in contemporary Southeast Asia* (pp. 81–101). Routledge.
- Weschler, S. (2016). *Deep roots and bitter greens: Forced displacement in 20th century Acholiland* [Unpublished MA thesis, MESAAS].
- Western, D. (1994). Ecosystem conservation and rural development: The case of Amboseli. In D. Western, R. Wright and S. Strum (Eds.), *Natural connections: Perspectives in community-based conservation* (pp. 15–52). Island Press.

- Whitehead, J. (2015). Au retour a Gramsci: Reflections on civil society, political society and the state in South Asia. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 45(4), 660–676.
- Whyte, S. R., & Acio, E. (2017). Generations and access to land in postconflict northern Uganda: “Youth have no voice in land matters.” *African Studies Review*, 60(3), 17–36.
- Whyte, S. R., Babiha, S. M., Mukyala, R., & Meinert, L. (2012). Remaining internally displaced: Missing links to security in northern Uganda. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 26(2), 283–301. doi:10.1093/jrs/fes040
- Wildlife Conservation Society. (2008). *Aerial surveys of Kidepo National Park, Lipan Controlled Hunting Area, & Madi Corridor, March-April* [Report of the WCS Flight Programme, Wildlife Survey Report].
- Willis, J. (1992). The makings of a tribe: Bondei identities and histories. *The Journal of African History*, 33(2), 191–208.
- Willis, J. (2003). Violence, authority, and the state in the Nuba mountains of Condominium Sudan. *The Historical Journal*, 46(1), 89–114.
- Willis, J., & Gona, G. (2013). Tradition, tribe, and state in Kenya: The Mijikenda Union, 1945–1980. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 55(2), 448–473.2
- Wilmot, P. (2016). How a Ugandan grandmother fought the President for her community’s land—and won. *Ecologist*. <https://theecologist.org/2015/jun/09/how-ugandan-grandmother-fought-president-her-communitys-land-and-won>
- Wolford, W. (2010). *This land is ours now: Social mobilization and the meanings of land in Brazil*. Duke University Press.
- Wolford, W., Saturnino, M., Borras, J., Hall, R., Scoones, I., & White, B. (Eds.). (2013). *Governing global land deals: The role of the state in the rush for land*. Wiley Blackwell. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cam/reader.action?docID=1420228>
- Worby, E. (1994). Maps, names, and ethnic games: The epistemology and iconography of colonial power in north-western Zimbabwe. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 20(3), 371–392.
- Wright, D. R. (1999). What do you mean there were no tribes in Africa?: Thoughts on boundaries—and related matters—in precolonial Africa. *History in Africa*, 26, 409–426.
- Xavier, N. (1997). *Land privatization, security of tenure and agricultural production: The Ugandan experience* (Working paper series No. 263). Institute of Social Studies.
- Young, C. (1967). *Politics in Congo: Decolonization and independence*. Princeton University Press.

Zibechi, R. (2012). *Territories in resistance: A cartography of Latin American social movements*. AK Press.

### Primary sources

- Aber, P. (1980, May 6). *Re: Amins solider (adwi)* [Acting County Chief, Kilak County to the District Commissioner, Gulu District]. The reorganization of administration (Box P044), Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.
- Absolom, A. (1999, June 7). *Re: The proposed wildlife protected area systems plan* [Letter from the Chairman, Acholi Parliamentary Group to the executive director, Wildlife Authority and the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry]. Wildlife, proposed PA systems plan (Box P0039), Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.
- Acholi District Commissioners Office. (1951-1953). [Correspondence between the District Commissioner, Acholi District and the Provincial Commissioner, Northern Province, and the Game Warden]. Game sanctuaries and reserves, C. Gam. 5 (Box P044), Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.
- Acholi District Council. (1963). *Controlled hunting area, minute 76/63* [Minutes of the meeting of the General-Purpose Committee, Acholi District Council 1963]. (Box P022), Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.
- Acholi District Local Government. (1951-1962). [Correspondence between officials of Acholi District, Madi, West Nile District, and Madi District]. C. Lan. 5, Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.
- Acholi District. (1964). [Correspondence between the Acholi District Land Board, the Ministry of Mineral and Water Resources, District Commissioner West Nile, West Nile police, Kilak County Chief regarding settlement on the east bank of the Nile, February–December 1964]. Tribal hunting, C. Gam. 12/No L.G.30 (Box P022), Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.
- Addington, J., Watson, T., Cronly, H., Steil, Eggeling, W., Pitman, C., & Cowie, M. (1950). *Report of the Uganda National Parks Committee*. The Uganda Protectorate (OP.33720.719). University of Cambridge Archives, Cambridge.
- Adibaku, J. (2019). *Memorandum presented by Madi Community in Zoka to the District Chairman Adjumani on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2019*.
- Ali, M. (2012, February 2). *Re: Land conflict between Acholi of Amuru and Madi of Adjumani and Uganda Wildlife Authority, over Apaar and Zoka areas* [Rt. Hon. Lt. Gen (Rtd). Moses Ali,



3<sup>rd</sup> Deputy Prime Minister/Deputy leader of Government business in Parliament to the Minister of Defense, the Minister of Disaster, Management, Relief and Refugees, the Minister for Security/in charge of Presidency/and in charge of KCCA Office of the President, the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Minister of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, & the Minister of Local Government].

Amuru Division. (1990, June 16). *Re: Request for a new division* [Elders and RCI Chairmen of Amuru Division to Chairperson RCV, Gulu District]. Kilak County Correspondence (Box P0039), Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.

Anderson, R. (1961a, December 1). *Game conservation policy. Your LT.766 dated 27<sup>th</sup> June, 1961* [Correspondence from the District Commissioner, Acholi District, recipient unclear]. C. Gam. 1 (Box P0014), Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.

Anderson, R. (1961b, December 27). *West Acholi/east Madi sleeping sickness area* [District Commissioner, Acholi District to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Lands]. (CTSE 11, Box 22), The Office of the President, The Uganda National Archives, Kampala.

Anderson, R. (1961c, October 19). *Re: Report of the land use team on the east-Madi/west Acholi sleeping sickness restricted area* [District Commissioner, Acholi District to the acting Provincial Commissioner, Northern Province]. (CTSE 11, Box 22), The Office of the President, Uganda National Archives, Kampala.

Anderson, R. (1961d, October 20). *Wildlife development company* [District Commissioner, Acholi District, to the Secretary General, Acholi District Council]. C. Gam.3 (Box P0044), Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.

Apaa community. (2023, February). *Apaa Resident's petition laid before H. E Yoweri Kaguta Museveni on 23/2/2023*.

Apaa Religious Peace Initiative. (2017, December 9). *Re: Report of Apaa community over land disputes* [Chairperson, Apaa Religious Peace Initiative to the Office of the Acholi Religious Peace Leaders Initiative (ARLPI)].

Baldwin. (1912, March 13). *Major Baldwin's report on the situation in the Northern Province* (CO 536/50, Vol. 3, pp. 165–167), Colonial Office, Uganda original correspondence, The National Archives, Kew, London.

Boundary Schedule. (1912). Uganda Order of Council, 1902, Proclamation of the division of Northern Province into Districts, Boundary schedule, No. 453. *The Uganda Gazette*, Vol. 5, No. 20 (CO 612/3), Government Gazettes, The National Archives, Kew, London.

- Brooks, A. (1961, July 7). *Some notes on the Acholi/east Madi elephant sanctuary and sleeping sickness area* [Report of the Game Department Biologist]. In Appendix IV, Report by the Dr. F. I. C on his visit in November 1960 in connection with the West Nile/Acholi Sleeping Sickness restricted area (CTSE 11, Box 22), The Office of the President, Uganda National Archives, Kampala.
- Browning, S. (1910, May 24). [Nile District Commissioner to the Chief Secretary]. In *Sleeping Sickness: Northern Province preventative measures*, Minute papers (A46, Vol. 1, 164), Uganda National Archives, Kampala.
- Chief Administrative Office Gulu. (2007, January 3). *Re: Handover of disaster management of your district* [Office of the Chief Administrative Officer, Gulu District to Chief Administrative Officer, Amuru District]. (Box P625), Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.
- DP [Democratic Party] supporter (presumed). (1962, April 29). [Document listing UPC members who voted for the creation of game reserves in a closed meeting of Acholi District Council in April 1962]. (Box P022), Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.
- Deputy Governor. (1939, February 2). [Deputy Governor, Uganda Protectorate to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, re legislation permitting rectifications to provincial and district boundaries]. Provincial administration (CO 536/202/13), Colonial Office, Uganda original correspondence, The National Archives, Kew, London.
- District Commissioner Acholi. (1950, December 8). *Anaka-Pakwach Road: Game reserve or animal sanctuary*. [District Commissioner, Acholi District, to the Provincial Commissioner, Northern Province]. C. Gam. 3 (Box P0044), The Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.
- District Commissioner Gulu. (1946, June 29). [District Commissioner, Gulu District to District Commissioner, Lango District]. Tribal hunting, Provincial papers, Northern province (Box 2), Uganda National Archives, Kampala.
- Dundas, C. (1941, September 25). Native administration in Uganda, a memorandum by his excellency the Governor. In *Lord Hailey's Report on Native Administration* (CO 847/21/12), Colonial Office, Uganda original correspondence, The National Archives, Kew, London.
- Eden, G. (1911, November: December). [Monthly reports of the Northern Province]. Provincial administration, Northern Province, Minute papers (A46, Vol. 1, 787), Uganda National Archives, Kampala.

- Eden, G. (1912, July 16). [Provincial Commissioner, Northern Province to the Chief Secretary, Ugandan Protectorate]. Northern Province, Administrative divisions 2749, Minute papers (A46, Vol. 947), Uganda National Archives, Kampala.
- Eden, G. (1914, July). *Report on the Northern Province for July 1914*. Northern Province monthly reports, Minute papers (A46, Vol. 1, 791), Uganda National Archives, Kampala.
- Eden, G. (1917, April). *Report on the Northern Province for April 1917*. Northern Province Commissioner's Office monthly reports, Minute papers (A46, Vol. 1, 794), Uganda National Archives, Kampala.
- Edwards, W. (1911). *Inspection report of the Uganda Protectorate police for the year 1911*. Uganda administrative reports 1907-1912 (CO 685/1 11821422), Colonial Office, Uganda: Sessional papers, Administration reports, The National Archives, Kew, London.
- Field, P. (1961, November 24). [Acting Provincial Commissioner, Northern Province to the Ministry of Land and Water resources, re the Acholi District Council's rejection of controlled hunting ground proposals]. (CTSE 11, Box 22), The Office of the President, Uganda National Archives, Kampala.
- Field, P. (1962, January 6). *West Nile claim to land on east bank of Nile in Acholi District* [Acting Provincial commissioner, Northern Province, to the acting Permanent Secretary, Ministry of local government]. Land District Boundaries, C. Lan. 5 (Box 89), Office of the President, Uganda National Archives, Kampala.
- Game Department. (1930). *Annual Report of the Game Department for the year 1929*. Uganda Protectorate, Microform online, The National Archives, Kew London.
- Game Department. (1950). *Annual Report of the Game Department for the year 1949*. Uganda Protectorate, Microform online, The National Archives, Kew London.
- Game Department. (1955). *Annual Report of the Game Department for the year 1955*. Uganda Protectorate, Microform online, The National Archives, Kew London.
- Gibson, P. (1963, November 14). *Settlement on the east bank of the Nile* [District Commissioner, West Nile and the District Commissioner, Acholi, from the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Regional Administration]. C.103/5 (Box P0022), Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.
- Gulu District Local Government. (2006, October 12). Decongestion, return and resettlement working group report to the Gulu DDMC, Re: CR/1061/1 (Box. P628), Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.

- Haddon, E. (1913, April 26). [Report of the Officer in charge sleeping sickness administration measures, included in the report of the Principle Medical Officer]. (CO 536/60, Vol. 3), Colonial Office, Uganda original correspondence, The National Archives, Kew, London.
- Hailey [Lord]., Steil, J., & Ross, J. (1947, August 23). [Draft annotated minutes of a discussion between Lord Hailey, the Provincial Commissioner, Northern Province, and the District Commissioner, Gulu on Acholi administration]. Lord Hailey's notes, Northern Province (CO 1018/81, pp. 1-2), Colonial Office, Uganda original correspondence, The National Archives, Kew, London.
- Hodges, A. (1911, November 13). [Principle Medical Officer to Chief Secretary]. Provincial administration, Northern Province, Report on P. C's tour through Unyoro, Lango, Gulu, Nimule, Gondokoro and the Nile hinterland, Minute papers (A46, Vol. 1, 698), Uganda National Archives, Kampala.
- Hodges, A. (1913, April 26). [Report of the Principle Medical Officer]. (CO 536/60, Vol. 3), Colonial Office, Uganda original correspondence, The National Archives, Kew, London.
- Hunt, R. (1961, October 26). *Re: Report of the land use team on the East Madi-West Acholi Sleeping sickness area: My LC.C.103/5 of the 30<sup>th</sup> September 1961* [Permanent Secretary local government to the Permanent secretary, Ministry of Land and water resources]. (CTSE 11, Box 22), The Office of the President, Uganda National Archives, Kampala.
- Hunt, R. (1962a, January 3). *West Acholi/East Madi Sleeping Sickness restricted area. Your C.TSE.1 dated 27th December* [Permanent Secretary Ministry of Land and water resources to the District Commissioner, Acholi District]. LWR.C.529 (CTSE 11, Box 22), The Office of the President, Uganda National Archives, Kampala.
- Hunt, R. (1962b, January 9). *West Acholi/East Madi Sleeping Sickness restricted area. Your C.TSE.1/1 of 1/1/1962* [Permanent Secretary Ministry of Land and water resources to the Provincial Commissioner, Northern Province]. LWR.C.529 (CTSE 11, Box 22), The Office of the President, Uganda National Archives, Kampala.
- Hunt, R. (1962c, January 27). *East Madi-West Acholi sleeping sickness area* [Permanent secretary for the Ministry of Land and Water Resources to the Provincial Commissioner, Northern Province]. (CTSE 11, Box 22), The Office of the President, Uganda National Archives, Kampala.
- Hunt, R., Barnley, G., Williams, A., Brooks, A., & Mackley, R. (1961, September 12). *Report of the land use team on the East Madi-West Acholi sleeping sickness restricted area.* The

- Ministry of Land and Water Resources, Entebbe (CTSE 11, Box 22), The Office of the President, Uganda National Archives, Kampala.
- Jackson, F. (1911, July 17). [Governor of the Ugandan Protectorate to Secretary of State for the Colonies]. (CO 536/41, Vol. 3), Colonial Office, Uganda original correspondence, The National Archives, Kew, London.
- Jago Pabo. (1984, January 25). *Re: Land application N.A.W 454 dated 12-3-76 by Alensyo obwur at Omee* [Letter from the acting Jago Pabo to the District Commissioner, Gulu District]. (Box P0039), Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.
- Jago Amuru Division. (1990, June 26). *Wang lobo pa jo Lamogi ki pa jo Pabo yam con - the boundary of the people of Pabo and the people of Lamogi of long ago* [Office of the Jago, Amuru Division to the Chairman, R.C.V. Gulu District]. Kilak County Correspondences (Box P0039), Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda [Translated by author].
- KGN Advocates. (2007, October 7). *Re: Notice of intention to commence harsh legal proceeds against you* [KGN Advocates to Major General Julius Oketta, on behalf of Mr. Baru Simon Suru, Gule Simon Dolia, Madrara M. Secondo, Ovuru Sebastiano, Oloa Flamino and Drani Lawere of Ofua Sub- County, Adjumani District].
- Kilak County Office. (1967, June 11). *Touring report, Kilak county, May* (Box P0025), Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.
- Kilak County Office. (1995). *Applications for rural land* [Applications to the senior staff surveyor for Gulu for leasehold titles]. Land policy (Box P006), Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.
- Legal notice 1 (LN.1). (1947). The Uganda Order in Council, Proclamation [Schedule detailing the districts and boundaries of the Northern Province]. (C-series, C2205, Box 17), Uganda National Archives, Kampala.
- MacAllister, R. (1901, April). *Rough sketch of river Nile between Wadelai and Gondokoro showing paths, watercourse, villages and camps, navigable water between Wadelai and Nimule, Fort Berkely and Gondokoro*. Uganda Protectorate Intelligence Report No. 4, Appendix C (FO 881/7929), Foreign Office, The National Archive, Kew, London.
- Management agreement. (2009, November 15). *Management agreement between Adjumani District Local Government, Uganda Wildlife Authority and Lake Albert Safaris Limited trading as Nile River Outfitters, for the management of East Madi Wildlife Reserve Murchison falls conservation area*.

Minutes. (1961, January 21). [Minutes of a meeting held at Paraa lodge on 21<sup>st</sup> January 1961 to discuss the settlement of the east bank of the Nile]. Land District Boundaries, C. Lan. 5 (Box 89), Ugandan National Archives, Kampala.

Minutes. (2006, November 25). [Minutes of a meeting called by Rwot Otinga Atuka Olo yai Olwonga in Awer trading center, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2006, recorded by elder of Pabo, identity withheld]. [Author's translation from Acholi].

Minutes. (2007, April 28). [Minutes of the meeting of Amuru and Adjumani District leaders, elders, UWA and other stakeholders in regard to encroachment within east Madi wildlife reserve held on April 28, 2007 at Amuru District headquarters].

Northern Province Commissioner's Office (NPCO) monthly reports, Minute papers (A46, Vol. 1, 791), Uganda National Archives, Kampala.

Northern Provincial Commissioner's Office (NPCO). (1912-1922). [Various correspondence and reports]. Northern Province, Administrative divisions 2749, Minute papers (A46/947, Vol. 1), Uganda National archives, Kampala.

Northern Province Commissioner's Office (NPCO). [1923-1927]. [Correspondence on the 'Madi infected and restricted area]. Provincial papers (Box 1), Uganda National Archives, Kampala.

Northern Province Commissioner's Office (NPCO). (1924). *Report: Sleeping sickness in Gulu and Madi 87/A*. Provincial papers (Box 1), Uganda National Archives, Kampala.

Northern Province Commissioner's Office (NPCO). (1958, March 10). *Note of a meeting held at the Provincial Commissioners Office to discuss certain matters of game policy* [Meeting minutes]. C. Gam. 3 (Box P0044), Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.

Northern Provincial Commissioner's Office (NPCO). (1961, October 24). [Acting Provincial Commissioner, Northern Province, to the permanent secretary, Ministry of Land, Water and Resources]. *Re: Report of the land use team on the east Madi/west Acholi sleeping sickness restricted area* (CTSE 11, Box 22), Office of the President, Uganda National Archives, Kampala.

Nyero. S. (1983, October 18). *Re: Jago Pabo's program at Apaa on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1983* [Jago Pabo, Kilak County to the County Chief, Kilak County]. (Box P0039), Gulu Archives, Uganda.

Ocaya, A. (1962, May 1). [Report to the District Commissioner, Madi, on the border meeting between Madi and Acholi held in Attiak, Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> April 1962 by the Assistant District Commissioner Madi]. C. Lan. 5, Gulu Archives, Uganda.

- Odur, M (Hon). (2005) *The finance planning administration committee tour on creation of new sub-counties and parishes in Gulu District 2005/06*, CR/1003/3, District Administration (Box P00), Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.
- Ofua Sub-County. (2007, July 11). *Re: Objection to the unlawful occupation of land by Major Gen. Julius Oketta in Ofua sub-county* [Letter from representatives of Ofua Sub- County Local Government, Adjumani to the President of the Republic of Uganda].
- Ojera, C., Justino, C. Kwirino, A., Oywaa, A., Anjella, A., & Jokodino, O. (2006, January 23). *Re: Land dispute between the people of Pabo and Amuru sub-counties* [Pabo Sub-County representatives to the Chairman LCV, Gulu District Local Government].
- Oketta, J. (2007a, August 13). *Re: Personal statement on the allegations by Ofua Sub-County Council, Adjumani District* [Letter from Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta, UPDF representative in the 8<sup>th</sup> Parliament to the President of the Republic of Uganda].
- Oketta, J. (2007b, July 16). *Re: Personal advice on the minor problems of UWA in Amuru District* [Gen. Julius Oketta to the Minister of Tourism].
- Okumu, R. (2015, April 7). *Re: Apaa Land issues in Amuru District* [Chairperson of the Acholi Parliamentary Group to the Prime Minister].
- Okwangi, A. (1985, March 26). *500 acres at Ome West Acholi for Mr Alenysio Obur* [Senior staff surveyor, Gulu to The Secretary, Uganda Land Commission]. (Box D007), Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.
- Onek, A., Lakwo, M., Oceng, D., Oringa, R., Labongo, A., Marino, D., Sitwel, L., Obwoya, J., & Akena, J. (2006, November 5). *Ref: Penyo twero ki miyo koko I kum wi lok madonogo ma giketo gi piny ni: (1) Yero LCI Chairperson me Apaa sub-county. (2) Ayela pa joo Amuru (3) Security (Kit me gwoko kuc) (4) Forest reserve (Bunga agowka)*. (Ref: Request for assistance regarding the important issues of: (1) appointment of a Chairperson of Apaa sub-county, (2) Disturbances inflicted by the people of Amuru, (3) Security and peace-keeping, (4) forest reserve). [Letter from Residents of Ome II IDP camp to the LC III Chairperson Pabo Sub-County]. [Author's translation from Acholi].
- Pabo Division Council (unofficial, presumed). (1952, September 29). *Kilak forest reserve* [A petition of protest from Pabo Division Council to the Chief Secretary Entebbe]. Forestry policy (Box P0013), Gulu District Archives, Gulu, Uganda.
- Petition. (1945, December). [An anonymous petition against the creation of forest reserves in Agoro]. Western Province Report 12, No. 45/45 In 'What the eskari is thinking,' *African*

- Affairs fortnightly review* (CO 536/215 pt. 1), Colonial Office, Uganda original correspondence, The National Archives, Kew, London.
- Postlethwaite, J. (1914a, February). *Gulu District monthly report for February 1914*.
- Postlethwaite, J. (1914b, October). *Gulu District monthly report for October 1914*.
- Postlethwaite, J. (1916, September 1). *The District Commissioners report on the Gulu District for the month of August 1916*. Northern Province monthly reports, minute papers (A46, Vol. 1, 791), The Uganda National Archives, Kampala.
- Residents of Omee II IDP camp. (2006, June 12). *Re: Establishment of a national park in Amuru Subcounty, Gulu District* [Residents of Omee II IDP camp to Gulu District Chairperson].
- Rowlands, J. (1952, June 20). *The proposed Ceri-Kilak Forest reserve* [Office of the Northern Provincial Commissioner to the acting conservator of forests]. Forestry Policy (Box P0013), Gulu District archives, Gulu, Uganda.
- Ruhweza, S. (1967, August 18). *Fishing camps on the Acholi bank of the Nile* [Chief Game Warden to the District Commissioner, Acholi District]. GNR/10 Game (Box P0027), Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.
- Russell, A. (1953, January 12). *Forests: Kilak county* [District Commissioner, Acholi District, to the Lawi-rwodi, African local government]. Forestry policy (Box P0013), Gulu District Archives, Gulu, Uganda.
- Russell, A. (presumed). (1952, November, 4). *Re Petition from the people of Pabo against the creation of a forest reserve on Kilak Hill* [District Commissioner, Acholi District, to the Chief Secretary]. Forestry policy (Box P0013), Gulu District Archives, Gulu, Uganda.
- Sandford, J. (1959, May 25). *Topographical survey- Acholi L86/1* [Provincial Commissioner, Western Province, to the Chief Secretary]. (Secretariat topical, Box 2), Ugandan National Archives, Kampala.
- Sleeping Sickness Ordinance Rules. (1913). No. 66 of 1913. *The Uganda Gazette*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (CO 612/3), Government Gazettes, The National Archives, Kew, London.
- Steil, J. (1947, June 14). Notes on Native administration and political development in the Northern Province. In *Lord Hailey's notes, Northern Province* (CO 1018/81), Colonial Office, Uganda original correspondence, The National Archives, Kew, London.
- Sullivan, C. (1910, December 15). *Gulu station opening* [Assistant District Commissioner, Nile Province to the District Commissioner, Nile Province]. Provincial administration, Nile Province, minute papers (A46, Vol. 1, 351), Uganda National Archives, Kampala.



- Sullivan, C. (1912, March 14). *Report on Guruguru operations* [Letter from the Assistant District Commissioner, Gulu to the Provincial Commissioner, Hoima]. (CO 536/41, Vol. 3, pp. 71–88), Colonial Office, Uganda original correspondence, The National Archives, Kew, London.
- Teko, P. (1982, February). *Internal security/subversive, Pabo, Labala, Kilak county* [Memo from the District Commissioner, Gulu District to the Prime Minister]. The reorganization of administration (Box P044), Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.
- The Uganda Protectorate. (1932–1946). [Various correspondence and reports]. Reorganisation of administrative units (C-series, Box 17, C2205), Ugandan National Archives, Kampala.
- The Uganda Protectorate. (1911). [Correspondence between the Governor General Sudan and Governor Uganda, February 1911–October 1911]. Sleeping Sickness: Northern Province Preventative Measures. Northern Province, Minute papers (A46, Vol. 1, 164), Uganda National Archives, Kampala.
- Toobina, T., & Ochan, S. (2012, April 20). *Re: Memorandum* [Letter from Elders of Pabo on behalf of residents of Apaa and Lakang to the President of Uganda, Yoweri Kagutta Museveni, a memorandum on human rights abuses and historical evidence of Acholi community claims].
- Uganda Human Rights Commission. (2012). [Correspondence between the Uganda Human Rights Commission, the Ugandan Police Force and the UPDF regarding the death of Patrick Olanya, April 2012 – February 2013].
- Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA). (1998, October). *A proposal for wildlife conservation in the former Kilak controlled hunting area and the former Aswa-Lolim game reserve, in Gulu District*. Uganda National Parks policy, CAO/G/GAM 11 (Box P0014), Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.
- Wabomba, G. (1967, May 30). *Fishing camps on Acholi Bank of the Nile* [District Commissioner, Acholi District to the Game Warden Northern Range]. Wildlife, Gam. 1 (Box P0027), Gulu Archives, Gulu, Uganda.
- Wallis, C. (1954). *Report of an inquiry into African local government in the Protectorate of Uganda*. Uganda Protectorate (OP. 33720.352.1), Cambridge University Archives, Cambridge.
- Warner, A. (1933, September 27). [Provincial Commissioner, Northern Province to Chief Secretary in response to Memorandum No. H24/9 on proposed alterations to the Bunyoro Game Reserve]. (Secretariat topical, Vol. 2, Box 2, H.H.024/09), Uganda National Archives, Kampala.

- Warner, A. (1938, March 5). *Annual report of the Provincial Commissioners, Eastern, Northern and Western Provinces, on Native Administration for the year 1937* (CO 685/22), Colonial Office, Uganda: Sessional papers, Administration reports, The National Archives, Kew, London.
- Watson, A. (1918, March). *Report on the Northern Province for January 1918*. Northern Province Commissioners Office monthly reports, Minute papers (A46, Vol. 1, 795), Uganda National Archives, Kampala.
- West Nile District Council. (1961, December 18). *West Nile land claims to the east bank of the Albert Nile ADM/20* [Chairman, General purpose committee, and the Chairman, West Nile District Council to the Minister of Local Government]. District boundaries, C. Lan. 5 (Box 89), The Office of the President, The Uganda National Archives, Kampala.
- West Nile District Council. (ca. 1961). *Memorandum of the West Nile District Council to be presented to and discussed with the relationship commission*. Minute C. Gam. 5, Tribal hunting (Northern Provincial papers), Uganda National Archives, Kampala.
- Western Province Office. (1949). *Western Province, Survey of the war years, 1939-1946*. In Annual Reports of the Kingdom of Buganda, Eastern Province, Western Province, 1939-1946 (CO 685/29, pp. 65-117), Colonial Office, Uganda: Sessional papers, Administration reports, The National Archives, Kew, London.
- Worthington, E. (1946). *A development plan for Uganda*. The Ugandan Protectorate, development and welfare scheme (CO 536/219/4, No. 40287/2D), Colonial Office, Uganda original correspondence, The National Archives, Kew, London.