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Children Born of War in northern Uganda: Kinship, Marriage, and the Politics of Post-conflict Reintegration in Lango society

By

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A Thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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January 2016

ABSTRACT

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This thesis is about the experiences of children born as a result of sexual violence in war and armed conflict. It explores how children conceived in the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) are perceived and how those perceptions affect their everyday lives once they left the LRA and joined the families and communities of their mothers in post-war northern Uganda, and particularly in Lango. These children are offspring of forced wives - girls and young women who were forced into sexual relationships with LRA militiamen. Kony used fear and mysticism to manipulate his followers and control their sex life and hence, re-organise their reproductive choices. Yet, Kony's approach to sexuality and procreation was perceived as incompatible with Lango norms and institutions regulating sex, marriage and motherhood. This gave rise to tensions over the reintegration of formerly abducted women and their children. This study explores the circumstances under which these children were conceived and what happened to them when they left the LRA and joined their mothers' natal families and communities. Moreover, it explores related fields – such as ideas and practices of kinship and gender - influencing the treatment of children conceived in the LRA.

DEDICATION

In memory of my father Dr. John Baptist Otuko (RIP).

To my companion Fred Ebil and my children Jesse, Venus, Noah and Innocent Ebil.

To my precious mum Grace Otuko.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Throughout my study, I have been filled with great admiration at the level of resilience exhibited by the women and children whose lives are the subject of this thesis. I also have great respect for all other former LRA recruits and members of their families and communities who accepted to take part in this journey. I very much enjoyed learning with them, as they unreservedly embraced my project and delved deep into their personal lives and memories. It is my humble hope that through their generosity, this work has opened a new page in the understanding of the lives of thousands of children conceived from sexual violence during war.

Second, without the sponsorship from the School of Law and Arts of the University of Birmingham, this entire project would not have taken off and survived to its completion. I also relied heavily on materials I collected in the course of carrying out my research on ‘Children and War: Resilience Beyond Programmes’ as a Marie Curie International Incoming Fellow at the University of Birmingham – an initiative of the European Commission. I am forever indebted to these two institutions.

In a special way, I thank Prof. Sabine Lee at the Department of History and Cultures and Dr. Benedetta Rossi at the Department of African Studies and Anthropology for all of their support to this project, which remains unmatched. I was extremely lucky to benefit from your expertise as my supervisors. Your patience and dedication in helping me understand and shape my perceptions and ideas about the broader world has brought me this far. I know now better how to listen to sights and sounds, and tell about life. As my mentors, I still continue looking to you for inspiration.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to Monica Betty Adong and Daphne Christine Egwar, two dedicated happy people who offered to support me as research assistants during the entire duration of my fieldwork in northern Uganda. I also thank, profoundly, Mr. Jonathan Odur and his entire team at Facilitation for Peace and Development (FAPAD) for their endless encouragement during the fieldwork and the writing-up process in

Uganda. Through them, I also got access to their programme records, reports and field-based contacts, which became really valuable to the overall project.

I cannot forget many other individuals who were part of this; encouraging me in one way or another so I could continue till the end. Even without mentioning your names individually, I am truly indebted to you all.

In yet another special way, I thank my family for their encouragement throughout the project life. Thank you Fred Ebil, for taking care of our four children so I could be away to attend to my studies for years. I also thank my sister Peace Otuko for her dedicated support to the children in their respective schools – it gave me the much needed peace of mind to know that all was always well with my family. A similar gratitude goes to my mother Grace Otuko. Mum, I know I was always part of your thoughts.

NOTE ON LANGUAGE

Unless otherwise stated, all foreign language citations in this thesis are in Lango, a Luo dialect, largely spoken by the Langi in northern Uganda at the time of the study. All translations are my own, except where specified.

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GLOSSARY OF LUO WORDS AND PHRASES

abor	Adultery or sexual intercourse between unmarried people
acito	I am going
adaki	Burrows used by soldiers (sometimes with low lying grass roofs) at war fronts
adui	Enemy
ajok	A person who commits an un-natural act such as having sex with a prepubescent person.
akide (okide)	A singular noun referring to a person from eastern Lango (okide is the plural noun)
aloti	The after-growth on a tree stump – it is metaphorically used by elders to refer to their newborns
amony	Soldier
araanga	Asking for the consent of a girl in marriage
arege	Potent gin
atekere	Clan
atin luk	A child conceived from illegitimate sexual intercourse
atin onywalo ilum	A child born in the bush (used specifically on children conceived in the LRA)
aunty	Sister of a mother or father (an adaptation of the English word ‘aunt’).
awak	Rotational farm labour
ayela pe	No problem
baba	Father
bin rwot	Come Lord
boda boda	Bicycle or motorcycle taxi
buyu	Rape or to con, depending on the context. In this thesis, it is used in reference to rape
buyu dako	Raping a woman
byelo lutino inge gi	Carrying children on their backs
cente	Money
coo too irao	Real men are seen in battle – metaphorically used to distinguish between cowardly or weak men and strong men. It also suggests that only men (or boys) could be soldiers or warriors.
cul pit	Payment received by a man and his lineage in appreciation of raising a child belonging to another lineage
culo kwor	Blood payment or fued in the event that the payment fails (distinction is clear per context in which the term is used)
cuna (yamo)	Courtship
cune acuna	Courting each other
cwara	My husband
dako too	Widow
dako/mon	Woman/women
dakone/dakomere	His wife

dogola	Door/lineage - depending on the context
dok	Cattle
dyegi	Goats
dyekal/diokalo	Compound
dyer	Friend
etogo	Ritual groups comprised a village's elderly males – with its membership cutting across clan sections represented in that village. It may also refer to the meeting together of these elders for the performance of certain rituals, which concerned relations between the living and the dead. ^a
gaji	Ankole Longhorn cattle
gang Kwan	School
gomesi	Ceremonial suit for women
got (kidi)	Hill or mountain
gwen	Chicken
icoo maber	Good morning/ Did you wake up well?
jago	Sub county local council chief. But may also refer to the head of a clan section in that sub county (i.e Jago atekere).
jan-jago	Chief of a local government parish
jo	Prefix to refer to 'people'
jok	An act considered un-natural – with the offender being referred to as <i>ajok</i>
kem pacu	Face home-wards – (<i>kem</i> is a figure of speech that people in distress used to refer to the direction an enemy takes – especially in times of war. E.g. the enemy is <i>kemo</i> , headed/facing this way)
kide	Adjective referring to east (of Lango)
kwer	Ceremony
kwer pa mon too	Widow ceremony
kweri Lango	Hand hoe
kweri pit	Hand hoe for the upbringing of the bride
lalar	Saviour
lapwony madit	High priest – in the context of the LRA
lim	Brideprice/bridewealth
loc Acholi	Acholi regime
luk	Illegitimate sexual intercourse/sexual intercourse with a person one is not married to
lukiko/okiko	Court of law
mako dyer	Forging a friendship
mama	Mother
medo nyom	Topping up a marriage payment
moo	Trophy child or woman
ngwen	White ants

^a Tosh, 1978, pp. 54-55.

nino a Silindi	Silindi's day (used by former LRA recruits to refer to the anniversary of the founding of the LRA)
nyeka	My co-wife
nyom	Marriage
nyom dyere	Marriage of friendship
nyom me amed	Top-up marriage
nyomo	Marrying
odir	Cricket
olum	Rebel
ot yat	Health center
ot yat madwong (ot yat madit)	Main health center (main hospital)
atin/otino (atin)	Children (child)
otino onywalo ilum	Children born in the bush
pacu	Home
papo	Father
penyo nyako	Asking for the consent of a girl in marriage
poko keno	Separating the fireplace/kitchen – metaphorically used to refer to a new wife forming her own household with her husband, often after a year living with her mother-in-law
por/tingere	Eloping
rucurucu	Confusion, disagreement
rwot	Lord/chief
rwot atekere	Chief of a clan
te kwaro Lango	Lango
tero	Take
ting ting	Prepubescent girls in the LRA camps
tingo luk	Committing the offense of <i>luk</i>
tojo	Dew or 'dew money' – paid as part of a <i>luk</i> negotiation to a girl's brothers for having 'braved the morning dew' to catch her lover in <i>luk</i>
tong pel	The spear (<i>tong</i>) which makes part of a marriage payment
toto	Mother
tu too	West (of Lango)
twoo	Disease
wang-tic	Village
won nyaci	Paramount chief
won pacu	Chief of a village – in the local government structure

ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYMS

ADF	Allied Democratic Front
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
Art.	Article
CAR	Central African Republic
CBOW	Children Born of War
CCF	Christian Children Fund
CPA	Concerned Parents Association
DC	District Commissioner
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration
DP	Democratic Party
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECHO	European Commission: Humanitarian Aid Office
FAPAD	Facilitation for Peace and Development
<i>Fm</i>	Frequency Modulation
GUSCO	Gulu Support the Children Organisation
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRW	Human Rights Watch
HSM	Holy Spirit Movement
ICC	International Criminal Court
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
KICWA	Kitgum Concerned Women's Association
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MC	Missionary Churches
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NRA	National Resistance Army
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders
Rachele	Rachele Rehabilitation Centre
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SGBV	Sexual Gender Based Violence
SM	Sergeant Major
STD	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNLA	Uganda National Liberation Army
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UPC	Uganda People's Congress
UPDA	Uganda People's Defence Army
UPDF	Uganda People's Defence Forces
OC	Officer in Charge
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Countries

Map of Africa showing the location of Uganda



Source: <http://pharmacyclassintoafrica.com/2011/04/26/research-in-uganda/>

Map of Uganda showing settlement patterns of major language groups: the Langi are south of the Acholi



Source: <http://www.safari-in-uganda.com/safariAfrika-land-und-leute/geschichte-und-politik/kolonialzeit>

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

‘We have to fill the world with our children’.¹

In 1998, a group of rebels belonging to the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) attacked the village of Amia Abil in Agweng sub county, Lira district and abducted fifteen-year-old Acen (a pseudonym), her brother and their three sisters. As they made their way into Acholi, Acen was ordered to kill her brother. But a senior commander stopped her, saying, ‘women won’t be allowed to kill’. Instead he ordered one of the rebels to kill Acen’s brother. When they reached the LRA camp of Jebelein in the bushes of southern Sudan,² they were caught up in a cholera outbreak, which killed two of her sisters. In the camp they were trained in military skills and were given guns. Not long after their arrival in southern Sudan, Acen and other girls were lined up and given to men as wives. Those who refused to comply were threatened with death. A man called Ocaya Lagira selected Acen to be his ‘wife’.

Although she was trained as a fighter while in southern Sudan, Acen and other girls were often required to work as carriers of loads, cleaners and cooks for their ‘husbands’ while in Sudan and during LRA incursions into northern Uganda. During one of these incursions, Lagira was shot and died. Acen was seen as a ‘widow’ and ordered to find a new husband on her own. She said, ‘the rule in the bush was that once the man given to you died, they won’t give you another man but they would expect you to get a man or else they kill you claiming you are promoting prostitution in the bush’.

Acen then saw a young Acholi boy called Oyat (a pseudonym) who had also joined the LRA through abduction. She agreed to be his ‘wife’. In 2000, she gave birth to a son.

¹ Joseph Kony, in Watye Ki Gen, 2013, p. 18.

² On 9 July 2011, the southern part of Sudan was granted independence and became known as South Sudan.

Oyat named him Ouma because, Acen explained, at birth the baby presented himself with his face turned downwards. In 2002, Acen again had a son and Oyat named him Omona after his (Oyat's) father. In 2004, Oyat took advantage of his position as a radio signaller to negotiate with the head of the sick bay where Acen, other women and children were hiding to release Acen, her sons and two other mothers and their children.

After leaving the LRA, Acen encountered a lot of changes. Her father and his family were living in an impoverished Internally Displaced Persons' (IDP) camp in Ogur, a sub county in Lira, which is one of the eight districts in Lango region.³ They no longer had cattle or goats or sheep, which had been sources of income for the family. Acen also found out that her mother had converted from Roman Catholicism to a Pentecostal church, a move which Acen's mother later consolidated by convincing Acen's father to set aside a piece of land for her pastor to put up a church.

Acen complained that people in her father's village of Amia Abil in Lira did not welcome them. They called her sons 'kony' (in reference to the LRA leader Joseph Kony) and '*adui*' (rebel). Acen found it difficult to continue living there.

In 2005, Oyat escaped from the LRA and surrendered to the Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF) who handed him to Rachele Rehabilitation Centre (hereinafter, Rachele) in Lira. He was then taken to a radio talk show programme to encourage those still with the LRA to abandon rebellion and come back home. He used that opportunity to send greetings to Acen and her family. Acen's elder brother who lived at Teso Barr in Lira town heard of it and alerted Acen. Later, a man who lived in Acen's village who had taken part in UPDF training in Gulu together with Oyat, and who had since joined the UPDF, returned home with Oyat's contacts and a letter for Acen. Oyat said he wanted to see Acen and her sons. Acen passed the contact and letter on to her elder brother in Lira town.

³ The other districts are Apac, Kole, Oyam, Dokolo, Amolatar, Alebtong and Otuke. The region, measuring about 12,800 square km, is located in the most central northern part of Uganda and flanked by the Itesot to the east, Karamoja to the northeast, Acholi to the north and northwest, and Banyoro to the southwest.

Acen's brother then informed their father about Oyat and they both agreed to meet him. Oyat travelled to Acen's father in Amia Abil village and asked to marry her and to also pay *luk* fine for their sons.⁴ She said, 'my father was very happy but refused to demand *luk* because he said it was not our intention to have children at that time. Instead he agreed that Oyat marries me'.

During Acen's marriage to Oyat, Oyat had also paid a ceremonial dress (*gomesi*) for the bride's mother. But Acen's mother refused the dress, saying things had changed. She saw the traditional marriage transaction of offering a dress to a bride's mother as unchristian. Instead, she asked Acen's father to give the dress to Acen's older sister.

After marriage, Oyat took Acen and the boys to live with him in his home in Gulu town. Acen was very happy to leave Amia Abil and its people and go where she thought she was not yet known and would therefore not be associated with the LRA. But when she reached Gulu, she learnt that Oyat already had two other wives. One lived in Kitgum and the other, also a former bush 'wife' of Oyat, lived in Gulu. Life in Gulu soon became similar to that she had left behind in Amia Abil village. Her new neighbours in Gulu comprised LRA ex-combatants⁵ who had known them during the 'bush' days. Soon everyone in the community came to know about their LRA background. She said that her new neighbours feared her and her sons and often referred to them using stigmatizing names as those that were being used in Amia Abil.⁶

Acen's story is both typical and exceptional among the experiences of formerly abducted girls who – after bush 'marriages' – returned home to their families in Lango

⁴ *Luk* is a customary fine levied on a man (and his lineage) for having sexual intercourse with a girl or woman he is not married to. The fine is paid to a girl's natal family and lineage. A similar fine is paid by a man for a pregnancy/child obtained from illegitimate sexual intercourse, but only for the child of an unmarried woman/girl. Thereafter the child becomes affiliated to the man and his lineage as will be further discussed in chapter three. *Luk* is discussed in detail in chapter three.

⁵ I have used the term 'ex-combatants' to refer to abducted persons who left the LRA and returned into northern Uganda. I found the term applicable to both girls and boys, men and women because all of the respondents in the study stipulated that they were trained to carry out combat roles in addition to other non-combat activities like cooking, cleaning, and providing sexual services for their captors. Additional discussion of the roles of recruits in the LRA is explained in subsequent sections of the thesis.

⁶ Interview: Acen, thirty years old, Orubo village, Layibi, Gulu district, Uganda. 26 July 2013.

or Acholi. On the one hand, it is typical because Acen's life before, during and after her time within the LRA was shaped by patriarchal norms. From the commander of a group that abducted her, and who prevented her from being forced to kill her brother, to the ones who selected her as a 'wife' before and after her 'widowhood', men directed Acen's journey in the LRA. Upon leaving the LRA, patriarchal principles again directed her life. She could only get back to her former LRA 'husband' if she married him according to the local custom; her father and brothers' approval, sealed by the 'husband' paying *lim* (brideprice), was required. In other words, the war exploited pre-existing gender inequalities, which underpinned ideas of marriage, motherhood and kinship in peacetime Lango that Acen again confronted upon leaving the LRA.

On the other hand, her story differed from many others and was exceptional among the cases encountered in this study. Many Lango women did not wish to reunite with their former LRA captor husbands (Carlson & Mazurana, 2008). Some parents also did not wish to hear about former LRA forced husbands of their formerly abducted daughters. Others refused to live with children conceived and/or born in LRA camps (Carlson & Mazurana, 2008). In spite of much specificity that make Acen's case unique, Acen's case exemplifies the multiple effects that the LRA conflict had on the lives of girls, women and children who became voluntarily or involuntarily involved in it. Acen's case reveals the expectations the LRA had of girls and women once they were recruited, and how those expectations, once fulfilled, clashed with perceptions of legitimate marriage and motherhood prevalent in northern Uganda. People in Acen's family and neighbourhood stigmatised her and her children because of their association with the LRA. They questioned the legitimacy of the sexual and conjugal relationships that had been imposed on these women in the LRA camps. The illegitimate nature of these relationships compromised the status of the children who had been born from these unions. It is these tensions between gendered norms of Ugandan life and the integration and reintegration experiences of former forced wives and their children born of war, which will be the focus of this thesis.

1.2. Thesis' focus and objectives

Several authors, Behrend (1999) in particular, have traced the role of spiritualism and especially Acholi cosmology at the origin of Kony's LRA. She explores the use of cosmology as a recruitment strategy that the LRA and its predecessor, the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM), used to convince followers to enlist. But initial calls for mass purification of the Acholi issued by Alice Lakwena (the spiritual leader of the HSM) and Joseph Kony (the leader of the the LRA) failed to yield followers. Following this failure, between 1986 and 2008, more than 60,000 civilians were abducted and forcefully enlisted in the ranks of the LRA (Carlson and Mazurana, 2008: 16). Carlson and Mazurana (2008) state that at least one in three male adolescents and one in six female adolescents in northern Uganda were abducted. A third stage in LRA history came in the second half of the 1990s, as the LRA leadership introduced a deliberate effort to encourage pregnancies and births of children in their camps in the south of Sudan (now South Sudan). The LRA therefore employed different strategies at different times to populate and repopulate its ranks and meet its various logistical and social needs.

Abducted girls and women performed domestic chores for the LRA. At least one quarter of female abductees were also forced to become 'wives' to men within the LRA, with half of them bearing children (Annan, Blattman & Horton, 2006). Dead or escaped abductees and soldiers were replaced with new captives and new births. These experiences have also been well documented (see e.g. McKay, 2004; Mazurana et al., 2002; McKay and Mazurana, 2004; Temmerman, 2009). Whereas some, like Acen, were released at the peak of the war in 2004, this was a rare occurrence. The majority of LRA captives and their children gained their freedom by escaping from their captors either from the LRA bases or during incursions into northern Uganda (Annan & Brier, 2010). Girls and women often returned either with pregnancies or with children. Those who escaped found themselves facing a double uncertainty. On the one hand, escape from the LRA was always a risky venture. Once found out, an escapee was killed or punished severely (e.g. see also Temmerman, 2009). On the other hand, even if they escaped successfully they faced difficulties reintegrating once they returned into their peacetime families and communities, as discussed in subsequent sections of this thesis.

Many women and girls who returned with children or pregnancies saw their natal families in Lango as their obvious destinations. But here these women faced new challenges. The way their local communities constructed womanhood, wifehood, motherhood and soldiering differed from what they had experienced with the LRA.

At the time of the study Kony's approach to sexuality and procreation was perceived as a transgression of Lango norms and institutions regulating sex, marriage and parenthood. In its brigade camps in the southern bushes of Sudan, Joseph Kony had instituted a moral code that oriented and controlled his followers' sexuality and reproductive potential in the 1990s (see also Baines, 2014: 4). Kony used fear and mysticism to manipulate his followers and control their sex life and, hence, reorganized their reproductive choices. In Lango villages, male elders perceived forced sexual relations in the LRA as a 'hijack' of wombs which created tension and brought *rucurucu*, disagreement, in matters of lineage affiliation. This *rucurucu* gave rise to tensions over the reintegration of formerly abducted women and their children.

Relationships on the ground were remarkably complex – the experience of reintegration was not the same for everyone. A few formerly abducted women managed to reconnect with their 'bush husbands'⁷ and father of their children. According to Carlson & Mazurana (2008), 90% of the formerly forced wives did not wish to reunite with their forced husbands. Acen was the only LRA former forced wife out of the eight that participated in this study who was living with her former LRA forced husband and father of her sons. The others had either *tingere* (eloped)⁸ or married men of non-LRA background, with some already estranged and living on their own at the time of the study. Unlike Acen, these women left their children conceived in the LRA with their natal families before joining their new post-war husbands. Most of these caretakers

⁷ The term 'bush husbands' and 'bush wives' have been used by scholars such as Mazurana and McKay (2004); and Coulter (2009) to refer to the conjugal unions constructed by combatants in wars fought in Sierra Leone, Liberia and northern Uganda in the 1990s and 2000s. Others like Carlson & Mazurana (2008) have used the term 'forced wife' to denote the institutionalization of the use of force to control the sexuality of female recruits in the LRA. This study adopts the same by referring to the ex-combatant mothers as forced wives.

⁸ Among the Langi, *tingere* refers to suitors living together as 'husband' and 'wife' without marriage or payment of brideprice to the woman's natal family. A further discussion of *tingere* is in section 5.6 of this thesis.

were maternal grandparents. One of these children had lost her maternal grandparents by the time of the study and was living with her mother and stepfather. Another whose mother had got married was in the care of his mother's brother who shared a compound with the mother's aged parents. What these different experiences have in common is that the reintegration of women and the integration of their children gave rise to tensions in relation to normative notions of gender and kinship.

Scholars like Coulter (2009: 3, 5) were confronted with similar situations when studying the social status of female ex-combatants of the 1990s Sierra Leone rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). Like Acen, Sierra Leonean former forced wives faced rejection, and people were afraid of them, prompting Coulter to explore what had happened to the Sierra Leonean girls when they joined the RUF. She argued that the experiences of the RUF former forced wives had challenged the local moral code and notions of gender and kinship. These assertions were premised on what the RUF movement was believed to have done during the war. The way the girls were initiated into the RUF, the murders they reportedly committed and the use of drugs within the RUF, among others, threatened gendered expectations and roles local communities constructed for women and girls.

Sierra Leonean society is highly patriarchal, so are communities affected by the LRA war in northern Uganda. Ferme (2001: 18-19) posits that transgressions in patriarchal societies are contained in the 'language of intimacy and domestic relations' that defines gender relations within and across kin groups. Armstrong et al., (1995: 333-334) argued that in customary settings, most social connections are based on gendered and generational ideas that see women as caretakers and children as minors in need of care; and adult male as controllers of resources in the customary setting, including land and livestock.

One of the objectives of this study is the analysis of how former forced wives re-negotiated their roles as daughters and sisters in their natal families and how that affected their children. Particular focus is on the obstacles they faced and the strategies they developed to regain their positions in the family and lineage. But this thesis does

not just focus on the women: children who had been born in the LRA camps also faced challenges, which is the main focus of this study. Here, the thesis explores how people in peacetime Lango perceived children conceived in the LRA and how those perceptions influenced the everyday life of these children.

I couched the investigation of the experiences of these children in a detailed analysis of notions of gender, motherhood and kinship before, during and after the war. First, I explore Joseph Kony and his LRA's policies and practices, particularly those associated with control over the sexuality and reproductive potential of his followers and look at how they violated normative beliefs and practices in Lango. Second, I explore how these raised questions of 'status' for the children conceived in the LRA, leading to tension once they accompanied their parents back into northern Uganda. Third, I also examine some preliminary hypotheses about how children perceived and negotiated their circumstances in Lango. While addressing this, I focused on the following questions: Did the abduction, 'marriage' and motherhood of these girls and women in the LRA pose obstacles to their post-conflict reintegration into their families and communities? If so, what kind of obstacles? How were the former forced wives' experiences with the LRA understood by their communities of origin? How did the circumstances of children conceived in the LRA influence the Lango villagers' perceptions of these children's status? How did the mothers' abduction and children's 'illegitimate' status influence their status and rights in their societies? How did these experiences influence their ability to make claims on the resources and support of their families?

1.3. Sexual and Gender Based Violence during the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) conflict

This study contributes to the literature on sexual violence in war and on the experiences of children born as a consequence of wartime rape and 'bush' or forced marriages. An extensive literature exists on the use of sexual violence against girls and women in war zones, but studies on the links between these practices and the notions of gender and kinship norms that regulate sexuality, marriage, and reproduction are few (for exceptions see examples in Annan et al., 2009; Baines, 2014; Baines & Rosenoff, 2013;

Coulter, 2009; Olujic, 1998). This is the case despite the fact that the use of rape as a weapon of war against local populations has become an issue of great international concern, as for example seen in the appointment of a Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict in early 2010⁹ and the July 2010 creation of UN Women.

Researchers in this area have largely focused on the use of rape as a weapon of war; a tool of subjugation that enemy soldiers use against local victim communities (e.g. Coulter, 2009: 12; Enloe, 2000: 11; Manjoo & McRaith, 2011: 11). They argue that in times of conflict, women's wombs are seen as a public asset; for producing offspring to raise and replenish armies. Coulter linked this perception to the metaphoric association of nations with motherhood, such as when nations are referred to as motherland and mother country. She argued that it is such 'motherhood' ideas that nurture the recruitment or targeting of women in war (Coulter, 2009: 12). By recruiting their own women as mothers, a militant group (or nation at war) seeks to guarantee the reproduction of its armies. Conversely, by targeting women in an enemy group, the victim group is weakened. This suggests that, to a large extent, in recent African conflicts girls and women were recruited for their ability to reproduce. The ability of girls like Acen to become mothers can be seen as a means to sustain war; the children they bear are seen as potential recruits for future armies. This thesis suggests that the LRA also integrated girls and women as a means of reproducing the army through procreation.

In much the same way as factories that produce ammunitions and guns are seen as contributing to the war effort, so women's potential to reproduce is also an asset that different parties in conflict with each other strive to control. Hence, Baines (2014: 2) argued convincingly that the LRA used sexual violence to meet its objective of a 'political project of imagining a new Acholi nation'. Baines mainly credited the birth of children in the LRA to the higher project of nation building – the birth of a new nation.

⁹ See Simon, J. 2010. UN Appoints Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. *The White House*. Available from: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2010/02/10/un-appoints-special-representative-sexual-violence-conflict>. [Accessed on 28 September 2015].

Temmerman (2009: 74) reiterates this in her quotes of the LRA leader Joseph Kony as having said: 'I could kill all Acholi and put their heads on the road. For I will deliver a new Acholi generation!' More generally, Manjoo (2008: 137-138) stipulates that in patriarchal societies, women tend to be seen not as individual human beings, but in terms of their roles as 'mothers and bearers of children – bearers of a collective identity'.

This thesis suggests that the LRA's abductions, rapes, and forced procreation were experienced by Lango communities as challenges to peacetime mechanisms of patriarchal control over sexuality and reproduction. In other words, the rape of a girl or woman also violated the social institution of the woman's original society. This is why this thesis sees these social institutions as critical in the shaping of survivors' and their children's experiences after war. Analysing these institutions and the beliefs that support them is therefore a necessary step in the process of understanding the experiences of former forced wives and their children. The experiences of these women and children were a direct result of what they had been through following their abduction and birth respectively, and the length of time they had spent with the LRA, all of which forever altered their opportunities when they were reintegrated or integrated in their societies.

Coulter (2009) and McKay (2004) demonstrated how survivors of the 1990s and 2000s civil wars in Sierra Leone and Uganda were stigmatised and isolated by their families as a result of rape. In Rwanda, Nowrojee's (1996) survivors of the genocidal rape of 1994 faced untold levels of trauma and stigma. She suggested that many contracted Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) and thousands became pregnant and were ostracised by their families and communities. On their part, Liebling et al., (2011) elaborated the stigma and other hardships faced by survivors of rape that were carried out by the Interahamwe and other armies in Eastern Congo. Many, they all wrote, returned scarred: with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, psychological scars, pregnancies and children they had not planned or wished to have under these circumstances. Many were rejected by the families and communities they knew prior to the war.

In Acholi society, rape is seen as a polluting act which disorganises the ‘cosmological equilibrium and the social balance’ inherent within families and clans leading to great social disharmony (Porter, 2013: 14-15). Porter demonstrates how elders within the offended family and clan re-position themselves to restore balance by prescribing a cleansing and forms of punishment to the offender. A similar practice of cleansing and punishment associated with rape has been long noted among the Langi, who like their neighbours, the Acholi, are also Luo speakers (see e.g. Curley, 1940; Driberg, 1923). In Lango this kind of tension, as mentioned above, can be equated to *rucurucu* - great social confusion with the potential to breed chaos. As Okello and Hovil (2007: 442) put it, survivors of sexual violence ‘suffered individual violations that have communal implications’ that brought *rucurucu*. They, together with their children, are in the centre of this social disharmony, which is expressed in the form of stigma and discrimination, in much the same way as Porter’s (2013: 16) Acholi express theirs as mob violence, organised revenge, collective killing or summary execution. But practitioners and researchers tend to overlook this *rucurucu* in the reintegration of former forced wives and their children.

In northern Uganda, relationships between ex-combatants and the local social institutions were sometime mediated from the onset by intermediary institutions such as reception centres and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) through which these survivors returned. But there is no clear evidence in existing literature to show that these third party institutions took into consideration the roles that local social institutions play in regulating sex, marriage and motherhood in the process of reuniting survivors of forced marriages and rape in armed conflict.

Critical aspects of social disharmony that came from rape in the LRA were therefore not addressed. Indeed Annan et al., (2009) observed that rejection by family drove many survivors of LRA rape away into towns to lead a life on their own. Many offered sexual services to men in exchange for financial and social support. The experiences of these women suggest that the *rucurucu* associated with their rape (and birth of children) in the LRA were not addressed. The reason for overlooking *rucurucu* lay in the failure to

consider broader gender ideologies. Sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) did not take place in a cultural vacuum. One cannot make sense of the consequences of SGBV in any given society without considering the gender ideologies prevalent in this society and the social mechanisms through which these ideologies shape people's everyday experiences.

1.4. How gender ideologies shape women's experience

Coulter (2009: 9-12) examined how female survivors of rape in the RUF civil war struggled to reintegrate in post-war Sierra Leone, arguing that very little focus was directed at the local communities and cultural context that shaped the experiences of women during war. She linked her arguments about wartime experiences of girls and women to the gender ideology and relations that existed in their peacetime communities. Olujic, too, (1998: 32) contends that outcomes of sexual violence, which in the LRA case include pregnancy and the birth of children, are rooted in local peacetime meanings of sexuality. Olujic uses the example of war rape in former Yugoslavia to show that rape in war was linked to the ideas of gender, shame, honour and sexuality issues during peacetime. In a 2002 report, Human Rights Watch advances a similar argument by recognising the intersection of sexual violence toward girls and women in the DRC with local custom and practice. It examines notions associated with a woman and her sexuality in wartime and local customary norms and practices in peacetime, arguing that gender specific discrimination existed prior to the war (HRW, 2002: 20). In peacetime, the report stipulated, a woman was seen and treated as subordinate, with her status depending on whether or not she was married. Further, it showed how male heads of households benefitted from accepting monetary payments by arranging a marriage of the victim with the perpetrator. A similar pattern has been identified among Luo-speaking communities in northern Uganda. Porter (2013: 191-196) for example, describes sexual consent in northern Uganda, not as exclusive to a woman and her suitor, but as a combination of spoken and material exchanges involving a couple and their natal families. Any attempt by suitors to establish a stable relationship without engaging in these exchanges may lead to the woman's natal family

and lineage levying a fine of *luk* on her male suitor once caught. This thesis contributes to these debates by focusing on the case of Lango societies in northern Uganda.

Among the Luo-speaking groups of northern Uganda, the concept of *luk* was still widely practiced at the time of the study. In Lango, it was understood as a process in which a male suitor caught with an unmarried girl appeased the offended family of the girl by paying *luk* in monetary or livestock form. But it was also seen as a way in which a biological father could claim his child from a woman he was not married to at the time of conceiving the child. In this case, he would pay livestock and/or money. All of the payments in these disparate cases were never made to the girl, but to her father and members of his family and lineage. A similar fine (of *luk*) was levied upon a man caught with another man's wife. In this case, the fine would be paid to her aggrieved husband, and where a pregnancy resulted, the child would be seen as the husband's offspring.

The consequences of an act of sexual intercourse do not therefore only involve a couple but the extended families as well. Manjoo shows (2008: 137-138) that girls and women threatened by rape are not targeted only as individuals, but also in terms of their relational roles. These relational roles are in turn mediated by cultural ideas and institutions that give men the control over women's sexuality and reproductive potential. In this way, rape and other forms of sexual violence function as an attack against a woman's family or community and not solely against the individual woman and her body. But this notion of control by men also suggests that girls and women are integrated into gender hierarchies that curtail their ability to choose, as seen of Porter's Acholi and the Congolese women cited by HRW. This curtailment of women's ability to choose is replicated during war and armed conflicts as demonstrated by Temmerman, who wrote of the girls who were abducted from St. Mary's College Aboke in October 1996:

They were distributed as wives to the commanders. Those who had been brave on the battlefield were awarded an Aboke girl. Like trophies. For Sarah, it was the most humiliating moment since the abduction. She was given to Lakati, a man the age of her grandfather. She was his fifth wife. Four Aboke girls were sent to Kony's home, the youngest was only thirteen.

Two were assigned to Omona... There was no way she could refuse. If she resisted, she would be killed.¹⁰

In the LRA, recruits were affiliated to households headed by men who, depending on the seniority in rank, set up compounds of those they saw as their 'kin'; in forced wives and offspring. Rules of affiliation and socialisation were established by Kony and implemented by his commanders. Those who were suspected of adultery and abortion were severely punished, just as those who carried out cultural ceremonies from peacetime Lango or Acholi, which had not been sanctioned by Kony. These rules kept the sense of community and 'family' intact. It also ensured that Kony, the military leader remained firmly in charge of the group.

The creation of male-headed 'households' to whom these girls were affiliated as 'wives' ensured a patriarchal undertaking similar to that in Lango and Acholi which served as a form of 'guarantee' to the control Kony and his Commanders had 'hijacked'. They could thus expect to make the girls pregnant, name the children as they wished and raise the women's offspring in their own *pacu* (households). But male elders in Lango saw the abduction and affiliation of girls as 'wives' in the LRA as a form of 'hijack' of the control they (male elders) once wielded over these girls' sexuality and reproduction.

In Lango, ideas of motherhood and affiliation are predicated upon patriarchal idioms of identity as discussed at the end of section 1.5, and in chapter three below. It is these ideas in return communities that interacted with the experiences of former forced wives and their children, mediating their social lives. By influencing the social lives of these women, these factors also influenced the structural aspects of kinship for their children after war. Therefore, this thesis suggests that it is important to understand local notions and practices associated with sexuality and reproduction in an analysis of sexual violence and its aftermath on individuals and communities. As Porter (2013) argues of the Acholi, the sexual abuse in the LRA violated Acholi sense of morality, a front that this thesis explores with respect to ex-combatants of the LRA war and their children in rural Lango.

¹⁰ See Temmerman, 2009, p. 69.

1.5. Children born of war in northern Uganda

Compared to other contexts, in particular the Second World War (WWII), where research has explored some aspects of relevance to children conceived as a result of war-related sexual violence more generally (Mochmann & Lee, 2000; Erjavec & Volvic, 2010; Glaesmer, et al., 2011; Kaiser, Kuwert & Glaesmer, 2015), scholarly interest in children conceived from sexual violence in African wars is relatively limited (see e.g. Carpenter, 2000; 2007; 2010). Other than general acknowledgement in literature on war that they are one of the dire long-term effects of SGBV on girls and women, most researchers simply ‘stumble’ upon such children. Akello et al., (2010: 215-216) for instance ‘stumbled’ upon a twelve-year-old boy during an ethnographic study of distressed children and found his level of articulation on challenges he faced very informative.

Yet most texts on war barely offer a glimpse into the kind of lives children fathered by foreign soldiers in armed conflict for instance lead, indicating their existence, almost as an afterthought. These include those who pioneered work on the Rwanda genocidal rapes of 1994 like Card (1996: 5-18), Nowrojee (1996) and Singular (1999: 87-122); and those who documented and studied rape, sexual slavery and forced marriages in Sierra Leone during the 1991-2002 civil war like Amowitz (2002), Dyan and McKay (2001) and Mustapha (2003: 40-50) are primarily concerned with sexual violence against girls and women in armed conflict. Often they only see consequences of sexual violence for the girls and women who are raped, enslaved and subjected to other sexual abuses. They acknowledge children as mere evidence of the consequences of sexual violence, the same way effects such as HIV/Aids and other STDs, physical, psychological and social wounds are discussed.

Concurrent with these academic works are early journalistic writings about war and conflicts in Africa mostly from the 1990s. For example Temmerman (2009), a journalist, described the experiences of 139 girls who were abducted by the LRA from a school in northern Uganda, elaborating the incidences of sexual violence they experienced but quickly glossing over aspects of pregnancies and births in the LRA

camps. For example, she writes of a visit by a group of parents, Sudan government officials and human rights activists to an LRA camp in Sudan in June 1997, enabling just a glimpse into the existence of these children. Specifically, Temmerman (2009: 125) states, 'after a couple of minutes, the first women emerged from the bush. Some were pregnant others carried small children on their backs or at their breasts. All in all, about 50 women turned up'. And subsequently (2001: 155) referring to a later interview with a former combatant, she submits, 'a girl with a baby said she had been abducted at the age of 13, awarded to a commander as his wife and had given birth in the camp in Sudan.'

Whereas such texts indicate that children conceived through sexual violence in war exist, they barely provide an adequate picture of the lives of these children. They say little – if anything – about how the circumstances of their conception may influence their opportunities both during and after war. This is because their primary aim is to explore the hardships experienced by the women and girls.

Scholars like Carpenter (2010: 138-140) and McEvoy-Levy (2007: 149-179) highlight how marginalised these children are in debates on war and sexual violence. McEvoy-Levy states (2007: 149): 'They reside between the lines recognizing rape as a weapon of war, a tool of genocide, and a gross violation of rights...hidden, denied, and at least temporarily voiceless...and configured out of the picture at precisely the moment in which they are most vulnerable.'

On her part, Carpenter attributes this 'silence' to gender blindness and the conflicts in claims of rights. Her insights suggest that war continued to be seen as a man's world - locking out the female experience of it, including that of motherhood (Carpenter 2010: 138-140). This particular aspect of Carpenter's contribution is relevant to this thesis because it suggests that gendered ideas and practices can be responsible for what these children experience growing up. On the one hand, this suggests that children may find it difficult to claim their rights if the war experiences of their mothers that are associated with their birth are ignored during reintegration. On the other, it suggests that there is a possibility of one group (e.g. mothers or lineage members) denying another (e.g.

children) rights in order to protect their own (mothers' or lineage members') interest. In northern Uganda, some NGOs and scholars suggested that male children conceived in the LRA were more vulnerable to rejection when they joined their matrilineal families because they might want to inherit land belonging to such families when they attained adulthood (see e.g. Apio 2007; Opiyo, June 2015). This suggests a direct link between a child's fate (customarily and socially) to the marital status of his or her mother, reinforcing the suggestion that the experiences of these children are often shaped and reshaped by gendered notions.

The hardships faced by such children are largely a consequence of their 'illegitimate' status at birth. Their 'illegitimacy' results in stigma and discrimination against them. But children conceived in war-related sexual violence are not only 'illegitimate' - they are also seen as the children of 'enemy' fathers, which aggravates their circumstances in the eyes of their mothers' families and communities. Moreover former forced wives often find it more difficult to reintegrate successfully than those who were sexually abused but returned without children. This thesis attributes these experiences to the sexual violence that leads to the birth of these children. Here, the sexual violence contradicts the normative frameworks and perspectives of their mothers' society.

The thesis explores the links between children's experiences and the ideas and practices controlling sexual and reproductive lives of their mothers. The related questions explored in this thesis are: what are the consequences of the birth of children conceived in war-related sexual violence for their mothers? How are these children perceived in their mothers' society? And what are the implications of these circumstances for these children themselves? To answer these questions I first analyse how children conceived in war-related sexual violence are represented and how their integration has been interpreted by scholars working on the LRA conflict. I then examine the claim that children conceived in war-related sexual violence function as a symbolic reminder of wartime atrocities in post-war societies.

Perceptions of children conceived in war-related sexual violence in everyday life and in research

Carpenter (2007) uses the term ‘Children Born of War (CBOW)’ to refer generally to ‘persons of any age conceived as a result of violent, coercive, or exploitative sexual relations in conflict zones’. She posits that CBOW include births resulting from rape and sexual slavery perpetuated by enemy soldiers during warfare, a consideration that therefore includes children of former LRA forced wives in northern Uganda. Carpenter’s definition also includes children who were born as a result of rape and sexual exploitation of girls and women by government soldiers, civilians and even humanitarian workers during the LRA war in northern Uganda (Porter, 2013; Okello & Hovil, 2007). This study however limits the use of the phrase CBOW simply to those who were conceived in the LRA camps by forced wives. This category of CBOW was widely referred to as ‘children born in the bush’ or *otino onywalo ilum*, a phrase which this study found in use during fieldwork in northern Uganda. *Otino onywalo ilum* was widely used by ex-combatants, their families, governmental and non-governmental agencies when referring to children conceived in the LRA. Respondents also said while in the LRA camps, the LRA leaders referred to their children as *labongo bal* or ‘without sin’ or ‘pure’. Since my study focuses specifically on those born as a result of forced marriages in the LRA camps, I have used the phrase CBOW to refer only to ‘children born in the bush’ or *otino onywalo ilum*. My use of both terminologies (CBOW and *otino onywalo ilum*) in this thesis therefore refer specifically to those conceived by forced wives in the LRA camps.

The case of *otino onywalo ilum* of northern Uganda is comparable to thousands of children born of sexual violence in war and conflict zones across Africa. For example, in the 1991-2000 civil war of Sierra Leone, soldiers of the Revolutionary United Front committed rape and other forms of sexual violence against at least 215,000 girls and women, leading to the birth of at least 20,000 babies (e.g. Coulter, 2009; Denov, 2010: 109). In Rwanda, several reports claimed that more than 10,000 children were born of forced impregnation during the 1994 genocide, mostly to mothers of Tutsi ethnicity (Nowrojee, 1996; Mukangendo, 2007: 40).

Scholars like Carpenter (2007) also noted a similar development in Darfur, western Sudan, where the Arab militiamen, with the backing of the Sudan government, carried out brutal attacks on towns and villages of native black Darfur communities since 2004. These men on horseback (Janjaweed) committed rape, with the alleged intention of 'making light babies', whom the locals also referred to as 'Janjaweed'. In the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), there have been abduction and rape in war since 1998 by various groups of insurgents, resulting in birth of children (Diggs, 2012: 64; Liebling et al., 2011).

Available literature suggests that these children face stigma, discrimination and infanticide. Most studies link these experiences to unpopular policies and practices that their aggressor fathers carry out on victim communities in war zones (e.g.; Apio, 2007: 98-103; Carpenter, 2007; Delaet, 2007: 129; Liebling et al., 2011; Mukangendo, 2007: 40), a position that this thesis explores further. Apio (2007) claims that the resulting stigma on these children 'suffuses the entire community where they live', even if a receptor family decides to treat the child well. Other parallel studies report high prevalence rates of symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) and depression among these ex-combatants in northern Uganda (Phuong et al., 2009: 13). This has been echoed by other scholars investigating 'failed' reintegration of LRA ex-combatants (e.g. Akello, 2006: 229-243). Other scholars and practitioners have increasingly stated that ignoring the experiences of CBOW weakens prospects of successful reintegration by their mothers (e.g. Carlson et al., 2008; Watye Ki Gen, 2013; Liebling et al., 2011).

These findings considerably weakened claims of successful reintegration by other scholars. For example, Annan et al., (2009: 27-28) for the most part, discredited findings on stigma and rejection of children 'born in the bush'. Using the argument that LRA ex-combatants return psychologically unscathed, Annan et al., base their findings on a few hundred ex-combatants who have all benefited from some kind of reintegration support at a reception centre in Gulu, concluded that the majority of former forced wives and their children are accepted by their communities and their families. Only a

small pocket, they claimed, have complaints on a few individuals within some families and communities, which after all, tend to improve with time.

Yet it can be argued that assertions by both Apio and Akello on the one hand and Annan et al., on the other depict realities from different angles. While Apio and Akello are looking at the existing social groups that these women were originally living in before their abduction, couching their analysis in the pre-war social environment and relationships, Annan et al., largely ignore this. They tend to interpret the ability of reintegrated women to shape new sexual and social alliances as evidence of a positive outcome. But entering a new alliance (e.g. as a second wife) did not necessarily translate into normalcy for the women and their children. Later studies indicated that these new homes did not only treat these children differently from other children of the new husbands but also re-introduced psychosocial aspects, an issue Annan et al., had largely ignored in their study. For example, an article by Annan & Brier (2010: 152-159) quoted a complaint by a mother in a survival relationship: ‘...My real co-wife was the one abusing me. That I am a rebel and have brought my children who are also rebels to her husband to look after them instead of taking them to their father.’

But in a rather simplistic conclusion, Annan et al., (2010), agreeing with the social workers’ lukewarm explanation, argued that such was the way children by a different father were commonly treated (implying it was an acceptable practice). But this ignored peacetime local gender notions and customary norms and practices associated with marriage and motherhood. In addition, Annan et al., (2010)’s preference for the social workers’ explanation disregarded the opinions of those mothers. Annan et al., did not address concerns around stigma associated with being a child of an LRA member. Leaving this angle unexplored underplayed the experiences and views communities had of the LRA.

The fault line therefore is in the conceptualisation of ‘acceptance’. Annan et al., (2009) base their explanation of ‘acceptance’ of ex-combatant mothers and their CBOW on a pattern of ‘survival’ remedies these mothers seemed to have resorted to: that of forming a new relationship outside the original circle of associates they knew before their bush

sojourns; the common one being seeking a man, mostly as a second wife or concubine to help meet their basic needs. But this form of acceptance did not measure up to that defined by the Acholi or the Langi (who are the case study in this thesis).

Children as symbols of LRA atrocities

Researchers argue that to a receptor group, children conceived by enemy soldiers in war are symbolic of the war atrocities (Apio 2007; Carpenter, 2007; Weitsman, 2008). Their arguments suggest that survivors and victim communities on whom rape is used as a tool of war or a means of subjugating and demoralising local populations could re-imagine the aggressor fathers and their (militant) groups in these children. They then reject the children as they would the aggressor and his group.

Apio (2007: 98-103), for example, explored this among northern Uganda's children 'born in the bush'. As discussed in chapter two of this thesis, the LRA were for the most part unpopular in northern Uganda on account of the mass atrocities they committed against civilian populations. They not only recruited by abduction, but also carried out several massacres, looting of property and maiming of civilians. According to Apio, the receptor groups found it almost impossible to ignore acts of terror that the fathers of such children meted on them. For the mother in particular, Apio argues, the sight of her children brings back the memory of the agony of her conscription into the LRA.

In most cases, the mother did not hesitate to provide a befitting name - a name, Apio explains, descriptive of the ordeals suffered during her time with the LRA. On that basis, Apio claimed that these children effectively served as symbolic reminders of wartime violence to both the mother and the receptor groups after war.

Scholars like Weitsman (2008: 566) have attempted to advance debates related to symbolism, arguing that children represent a complex interplay of identity politics. She reasons that they embody both 'self and other' in a way that individuals and groups are unable to 'disentangle them from the circumstances of their conception', with their identity inextricably linked with those of their rapist fathers, even if the rapist is

unknown or even if the mother unconditionally cares for and raises the child on her own. She further argues that this is because it is only the father's ethnic identity and the shame surrounding the conception that is important. Weitsman further states that the act of sexual violation at conception annuls the women's contribution to their children's identity and upbringing, in other words explaining the emphasis on the 'otherness' of children of SGBV in war by individuals in a mother's community.

Indeed there exist euphemistic references that suggest that individuals and groups in host communities often reconstruct these children in local contexts, with their biological fathers in mind. In Rwanda, they have been called 'little killers,' 'children of bad memories' (Wax 2004, A01), and 'evil genes' (Balorda, 2004). In Darfur, locals have called those fathered by the Arab militiamen '*janjaweed*' (devil on horseback), a term also used to denote the barbarity of their Arab fathers (Carpenter, 2007). In northern Uganda, the study came across similar terms being applied to children fathered in the LRA like the sons of Acen cited at the start of this chapter. These included 'kony', '*olum*' or 'rebel' and LRA.

But this study finds Weitsman's suggestions inadequate for the African case because it ignores the complex politics, processes and meanings associated with control over sexuality and reproductive potential of girls and women in many societies. In particular, it does not take into consideration the complex politics of lineage affiliation in patriarchal Lango. In Lango, girls like Acen 'belonged' to their fathers' clans, which held the right to give them in marriage to a man of another clan. Ordinarily, a Lango clan is made up of individuals whose mothers were married with bridewealth belonging to that clan (Driberg, 1923; Moore, 1979). The payment of brideprice leads to a woman changing her lineage affiliation from the lineage of her father to that of her husband. This change also transfers rights upon her fertility and offspring from her patriline to her husband's patriline in a similar fashion as observed in studies of kinship among the Nuer of South Sudan (Evans-Pritchard, 1965; Hutchinson, 1996). This exchange that takes place between one male-headed group (which provides bridewealth) and another (which gives up rights upon a daughter's sexuality and reproductive potential), defines the status of the daughter's offspring. As long as she remains married to her husband,

any child a Lango wife bears, irrespective of who the actual genitor was, will belong to her husband and his lineage. The right of her husband's patriclan to her fertility is maintained even after his death. Driberg (1923: 174) described these marriage and kinship rules as they functioned in early colonial Lango society. Today's Lango marriage and kinship systems are still largely defined by these norms – although the processes involved and the nature of transactions have kept on changing as will be discussed in chapter three.

Any offspring from relationships that a woman contracted as a widow will be affiliated to her deceased husband's lineage. But rights on her fertility again change hands upon divorce from her husband – signified by the return of her bridewealth by her natal family to her husband. Once a divorce takes place, any offspring she bears thereafter will be affiliated with her natal patriline, or with the lineage of a new husband were she to re-marry and conceive within that new marriage. Those who are born before a particular marriage takes place are never granted recognition in the clan of his or her biological father or even stepfather because they have no right of control over a mother's sexuality and reproductive potential if she conceived that child before marrying her husband.¹¹ Instead such children, referred to as children of *luk* are in principle automatically affiliated to their mothers' patriclans. The concept of *luk* and its implications for children conceived outside marriage are further discussed in chapter three of this thesis.

The different routes of lineage affiliation are underpinned by notions of male control at family and lineage levels. The LRA usurped the sense of this gendered hierarchy. When Acen's sons are stigmatised and discriminated - and referred to as rebel, kony or LRA – people are not merely symbolising their suffering in the hands of the LRA as for example suggested by Apio (2007), they are also reasserting Lango institutions that regulate sexuality, marriage, and the socialisation of newborn children. This thesis examines the influence of these institutions on the reintegration and integration of ex-combatant mothers and their children in Lango.

¹¹ Fieldwork notes in Lango, Uganda. April 2013.

1.6. Lango society: the case study

I found it important to examine how a non-Acholi language group experienced the war. This is because studies of the LRA conflict in northern Uganda tend to focus exclusively on ‘Acholi’ subjects (see for example, Annan et al., 2009; 2010; Branch, 2011; Dolan, 2011: 55; Phuong et al., 2009: 1). This ‘acholisation’ of the LRA conflict is problematic and probably due to the understanding that the war was an ‘Acholi issue’ - a ‘purification’ process based on Acholi cosmology led by Acholi; with Acholiland as its original cradle. Such texts are problematic because they re-imagine the region as settled by just one language group – the Acholi, downplaying the significance of the war on other neighbouring groups. While these identities are culturally and socially constructed, they matter because they shape how people in northern Uganda conceptualise group relations before, during, and after the conflict. Studying the Langi therefore contributes to the understanding of how ideas about ethnicity (and race) are deployed in representations of the LRA conflict. In the sub-section that follows, I present the Langi; exploring briefly how the LRA war re-organised the settlement pattern of this language group, in order to appreciate the meaning and influence of kinship in today’s Lango.

War, displacement and Language in Lango

The Langi are numerically the largest distinguishable cultural group among the Luo-speaking ethnic groups in Uganda. They make up at least 1,485,437 people.¹² At least 81% are concentrated on approximately 12,800 square kilometres, an area recognised as Lango land, located in the most central northern part of Uganda. They are flanked by the Iteso to the east, Karamoja to the northeast, Acholi to the north and northwest, and Banyoro to the southwest. The rest (19%) are found diffused throughout Uganda from secondary migration resulting from cross-marriages and employment in the various private and civil service sectors. Describing the terrain of Lango country almost a

¹² See Uganda Bureau of Statistics. 2002. Population Census: Ethnicity of Ugandans by sex and rural – urban distribution for the population – table B10’. Available from: www.ubos.org/onlinefiles/uploads/ubos/census_census_tabulations/centableB.pdf. [Accessed 2 February 2014].

century ago, Driberg (1923: 48) summed it up as generally ‘flat with gneiss and syenite outcrops’, a few of which could be referred to as hills. One such hill is situated almost five kilometres east of the region’s main town of Lira. It is 4,500 ft. above sea level. The locals called it *got*¹³ Ngetta. This geological outcrop, aside from offering a remarkable view as far as the eye can see, represents a *grid* the Langi believe separates their eastern peoples from the west.¹⁴ Ngetta’s significance for the Langi is summed up in its name, which is to split or separate. This imaginary *grid*, not necessarily a straight line, curves to its east at least 36% of Lango’s population.¹⁵ The Langi in the west referred to this block as *okide* (easterners).¹⁶ The remaining population of 64% that falls in Ngetta’s western flank considered themselves as *tu too* (westerners).

From the second half of the 1980s to 2006, the west of Lango was host to scores of displaced communities from its eastern half. They fled from the cattle rustlers that approached from neighbouring Karamoja region. The Karamojong raids of 1986/87 saw millions of herds of cattle rustled from Lango and neighbouring Acholi and Teso and left an unspecified number of civilians dead (e.g. Human Rights Watch, Sept. 2007: 15; Knighton, 2005: 132; Mkutu, 2007: 52). Although the campaign swept through the entire Lango block, the eastern part remained vulnerable to continuous annual raids as the rustlers seasonally fled semi-arid Karamoja to Lango to locate pasture and water for the livestock. The communities in the west thus received the fleeing Langi from the east, offering them land. Some would later opt for permanent settlement, making purchases of nearby lands. More than a decade later, those that had remained behind would be dislodged by the LRA to join earlier settlers in pockets of safer zones within communities in ‘western’ Lango. Others took shelter at the various Internally Displaced Persons’ (IDP) camps in Lira. When the LRA insurgency ended in 2006 many kept their

¹³ *Got* is a Lango name for hill or rock.

¹⁴ Interview notes: Muzee Quinto Ochile, a Lango seventy three years old, Abako village, Alempi parish, Ayer sub county, Kole district, Uganda. 14 January 2014.

¹⁵ Statistical inference drawn from the 2012 population estimates by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics. Available from: [www.ubos.org/onlinefiles/uploads/ubos/.../2012 statisticalAbstract.pdf](http://www.ubos.org/onlinefiles/uploads/ubos/.../2012%20statisticalAbstract.pdf). [Accessed 2 November 2014].

¹⁶ Interview notes: Muzee Quinto Ochile, a Lango seventy three years old, Abako village, Alempi parish, Ayer sub county, Kole district, Uganda. 14 January 2014.

new settlements in the west but maintained periodic annual visits to ancestral lands in eastern Lango to keep their grips on their lands which had increasingly been rendered vulnerable by encroachers and the disappearances of boundary marks as untamed bushes claimed pre-war homesteads. Among their western hosts, this long-term stay has not shed off their eastern identity where they still are known as *okide*.^{17,18}

The reference to Langi considered living or coming from the east of Ngetta as *okide* is however mainly manifested among the Langi who consider themselves westerners. The *okide* themselves rarely made such a reference. This muting of Ngetta's labeling by the east was also evident in their reference to western Lango. The phrase *tu too* (west) is rarely applied except as a mere reference to direction.

The Ngetta influence has however transcended boundaries of clans, with almost all clans having numerous sections on both sides of the rock. Thus, Pala Amyek (one of the largest of Lango clans) is considered indigenous to both *kide* and *tu too*. Similarly the clans of Otengoro, Ocukuru Ogora and Atek Okwero Amor among others are also crosscutting. Virtually all the 150+ clans in Lango are characteristically spread out and considered indigenous to both west and east Lango. Ngetta's imposition of a grid oblivious of the spread of clan sections shows that settlement patterns in Lango may not be completely homogenous genealogically. For example, Alemi parish in Ayer sub county, located fifteen kilometres west of Ngetta (and Lira town) had a blend of native west Langi and those that migrated from the east in the 1980s, 1990s and the 2000s.¹⁹ There were eight clans whose other sections, perhaps main sections, were also natives in the eastern flanks of Ngetta hill. These were Atek Okwero Mac, Atek Opao Yat, Ocukuru Ogora, Abako Olang, Abako Omilo Abwori, Arak Oyakori, Arak Opelo and

¹⁷ Focus group discussion: nineteen elderly men and women, Abako village in Alemi parish of Ayer sub county, Kole district, Uganda. 15 January 2014.

¹⁸ *Akide* is a singular noun referring to a person from eastern Lango. Thus a person may say, 'He is *akide*' or, 'I am *akide*'. The plural noun is *okide*, while *kide* is an adjective referring to the eastern part of Langoland.

¹⁹ Interview: Muzee Quinto Ochille, seventy three years old, a Lango elder, Ayer (Kole), Uganda. 14 January 2014.

Ayer Odwar Kor.²⁰ In Alemi, members of each clan section irrespective of the east-west origin, came together to take part in their cultural activities such as demanding for and contributing toward *culo kwor* (blood payment) or a marriage. For example, in October 2011, when a son of the Ocukuru Ogora was accused of stabbing to death a peer from the Abako clan, the Ocukuru Ogora leaders collected a mandatory contribution for burial expenses from all adult men and women of the Ocukuru Ogora irrespective of location.

But the Ngetta factor thrived oblivious of the spread of clan sections. *Okide* tend to speak Lango language that their western relations deem as heavily influenced by the non-luo speaking Karamojong neighbours. Some of the words have opposite meanings as illustrated in figure one below:

Figure 1: Examples of language variation between 'east' & 'west' Langi

Word	West Langi	East Langi
<i>Angit</i>	Refers to a near future (of same day). E.g. I will join you later.	The recent past (of same day). E.g. He already came.
<i>Woki</i>	Refers to a recent past (of same day). E.g. She left for her village today.	Near future (of same day). E.g. She is set to come today.

The word *okide* therefore has a linguistic connotation to it. When the elders of Alemi referred to members of their clan sections, which migrated to Alemi as *okide*, the elders transformed the locational aspects of *kide* into an idiom of dialect. Language thus becomes a tool for engendering a category from the point of view of the Alemi people. The Ngetta 'grid' thus becomes less of a locational discourse and more of a linguistic reference. The use of language variation in the transforming of *kide* into an identity *idiom* by Alemi natives on their clan sections coming from the east therefore demonstrates the diverse ways by which individuals within Langi perceive each other.

²⁰ Focus group discussion: Held with nineteen elders of Abako village, Ayer (Kole), Uganda. 15 January 2014.

A changing terrain

At the start of the field study in 2013, people in Lango had resettled from IDP camps onto their old lands. The town of Lira, like many other trading centres in the region, teemed with hundreds of displaced youth operating *bodaboda* (bicycle and motorcycle taxis). It was a new way for anyone to fend a living away from the once insecure farmlands. On average, 51.2% of the population in Lango lived in poverty.²¹ Many ate one meal a day and could not afford to send their children to secondary school. But some were steadily recovering, and had erected some fairly new huts on their old pre-IDP camp lands, ignoring the nearby stumps of old huts. Many homes had a few cattle tethered onto poles by the homestead as opposed to large pre-war kraals that each homestead once boasted.

During fieldwork, I noticed that the war had ushered in some changes that threatened the bounds of kinship that scholars like Driberg (1923) and Hayley (1940) had written about. As Okello and Hovil (2007: 433) had found in neighbouring Acholi, local regard for traditional leaders in Lango had waned. Some of my respondents complained that their lands were constantly under threat from land conflicts, with neighbours and relatives wanting a portion or all of it. In fact, statistics from NGOs like Facilitation for Peace and Development (FAPAD) that operated in Lango showed that on average, 85% of those who sought legal aid had land related complaints.²²

Often cultural leaders were implicated in the land conflicts. Respondents accused their clan leaders of trying to grab their land. Conversely, these clan leaders pointed to their people as lacking respect for their leaders and wanting to do with lineage lands as they wished. Later, the legal officer of FAPAD told me that since the end of the war, land had become highly commoditized since one could sell it to get some little income. I gathered that clan leaders and their subjects were therefore at odds with each other for lack of a clear-cut policy that could individualise ownership, and therefore regulate the sale of land. Both the clan leaders and those they led were fighting for supremacy over

²¹See e.g. Ssewanyana, 2010.

²² FAPAD archives: Case files for clients managed between January 2011 and December 2014.

the other when it came to owning the right to either sell or not sell. But there were also land-conflicts between individuals within and across lineages. Some of these were related to how usufruct right was transferred within a lineage. In Lango society, the largely customary tenure system affiliates land to lineages, with the head of families (ordinarily male) in those lineages playing the role of custodian over the land. In this case, the male head wields the authority to apportion land to his lineage-mates. Individuals not belonging to that particular lineage were not eligible to access or own such lands.

Through this, it became evident that the arrival of children fathered in the LRA could provide grounds for more tension. Thus, children of former forced wives like the sons of Acen could be seen as introducing more pressure on the available resources, including land. Male children especially were at risk of being rejected because, as will be further explained in chapters three, five and six, respondents suggested that as adults they could claim a portion of their maternal clan's land for their own families, further underlining tensions associated with notions of gender.

All of these; displacement and migration, loss of old sources of livelihoods and the adoption of new ones, fights over limited land resource and the waning authority of cultural leaders are indicators of a changing social, cultural and economic terrain in Lango (see also Curley, 1973). Lango is a society in flux with shrinkages and expansion, ins and outs.

Fieldwork for this thesis began in 2013, about six years after the war of the LRA ended in northern Uganda. People were still grappling with the effects of the war. At the start of the fieldwork in March 2013, radio *fm* airwaves in Lango were filled with quarrels and counter quarrels between factions of the more than 150 clan leaders in Lango. Every morning, from Monday to Saturday, popular radio talk shows run by the seven radio *fm* stations in Lira hosted different clan leaders and their supporters to convince the listening Lango public to join their factions. Some radio stations had even joined particular factions, siding with them to help mobilise public opinion. By the end of the fieldwork in June 2015, the quarrel was still going on. The quarrel, which threatened to

split up Lango into two, was about the refusal of the *won nyaci*, paramount chief of *Tekwaro* Lango, and some members of his cabinet to accept a new Constitution of *Tekwaro* Lango that the Council of *Owitong* (clan leaders) had approved. The said Constitution had, in 2005, introduced a five-year term limit for the position of *won nyaci*, which could then be filled by the election of another clan leader from amongst any of the clans of Lango.

This paramount chief, initially a clan leader, had amidst divergent views among members of the Lango people, been installed as the *won nyaci* of Lango in December 2005 by the Council of *Owitong*; filling a position that had remained vacant since 1966 when kingdoms were abolished. The seat, introduced by the British in Lango in 1917 (Ogot, 2009: 359), was modelled on the Buganda kingdom concept of kingship (see chapter two of this thesis). Centralised political authority is alien to traditional Lango. This did not change even with the 2005 re-introduction of a paramount chief whose ability to exert effective control on his subjects remained fluid. In contemporary Lango, the most effective sites of social control can be identified at the kinship and family levels. In the 1970s John Tosh described the centrality of kinship in the regulation of Lango social life (Tosh, 1978: 37-63). Many of his observations are still valid today. In chapter three, I also analyse the institutional set up, albeit in a changing context, which would later confront girls like Acen and their children as they left the LRA and re-entered Lango.

At the time of the study, communities in Lango still drew largely from customary institutions that regulated access to sexuality and reproduction. Participants in this study frequently applied their understanding of customary rules to justify the social welfare status of mothers and their children. Interviews suggested that most of these policies were engendered by physical affiliation practices of families and lineages. These included the residential practices associated with *nyom* (marriage)²³ and *luk* (illegitimate sexual relationships and outside wedlock births).²⁴ Others were *culo kwor* (blood

²³ See chapter three of this thesis for an exploration of the making of *nyom* (marriage) among today's Langi.

²⁴ See chapter three of the thesis for an indepth discussion of *luk* among the Langi.

payment or blood feud - in the event that a payment fails) and that of *cul pit* (compensation for the upbringing of a child) discussed in subsequent chapters of this thesis. In addition, respondents suggested these were underpinned by ideas of gender and re-enforced by rules and practices of inheritance.

I decided that an analysis of specific Lango institutions and ideas of kinship, marriage and motherhood was a precondition for exploring the status and experience of CBOW and their mothers. I therefore prepared a checklist of key aspects of descent, marriage, sense of belonging and children, LRA and around the customary and lineage practices of the Langi. This tool guided me during the face-to-face discussions with children, their mothers and the receptor families, lineages and neighbourhoods. In the section below I discuss this study's methodology.

1.7. Methodology

This thesis focuses on children fathered in the LRA or children born in the bush (*otino onywalo ilum*). Its main objective is to explore how they are perceived and how those perceptions affect their everyday lives once they leave the LRA and join post-war families and communities of their mothers in northern Uganda, and in particular in communities in Lango.

The thesis relied on field findings that were generated from northern Uganda, and specifically Lango, for a total of seventeen months between March 2013 and July 2015. Fieldwork in Lango was split into four phases; March-April 2013, June-September 2013, January-March 2014 and finally November 2014-July 2015.

Overall, I conducted interviews with seventy-eight participants and held two focus group discussions comprising of twenty-four participants over the seventeen months of my fieldwork in northern Uganda. My principal informants were: eight former forced wives who were identified from a total of 204 female ex-combatants who between 2003 and 2006 had passed through Rachele Rehabilitation Centre in Lira, ten children

conceived in the LRA out of thirteen that passed through the centre²⁵, sixteen members of their extended families, four ex-combatants of the LRA, five teachers of schools where some of the children studied, six local council leaders and thirty four men and women – purposively sampled to address key aspects of my study such as gender, marriage and kinship in the wider operations of the cultural institution in Lango.

All the eight former forced wives referred to themselves as Langi. My interactions with these women and their ten children comprised of multi-layered in-depth interviews and participant observation.

Sampling and fieldwork

Being a qualitative study, I relied more on the consideration of ‘fit for purpose’ to arrive at the study sample rather than any conventional formula for arriving at a sample size (cf. Adler and Adler, 2012). I found that working closely with a small group comprising eight former forced wives and their children at the core of my study enabled me to pay attention to and problematise subtle ideas and experiences that may otherwise be difficult to ascertain if the study had merely aimed at recruiting a larger number (cf. Abu-Lughod, 1993: 9). While these eight former forced wives were a core group of informants who belonged to a particularly important social category studied in the thesis, I also based my analysis on a broader set of research participants.

Abu-Lughod (1993: 9), Baines and Rosenoff-Gauvin (2013) and Porter (2013) have used smaller samples of interviewees in order to undertake more in-depth studies on particular social phenomena. Abu-Lughod convincingly explored the experiences of just two women to make a broader argument about Bedouin culture. By embedding herself within a Bedouin community for several years, she explored the world in which these women lived and the options they had. In this way, she attended to ‘internal arguments,

²⁵ This was 3% of the female ex-combatants numbering 204 who passed through the centre out of a total population of 2,479 returnees and their children. Overall, a total of 25,231 children and youth had passed through the eight centres in northern Uganda out of the 66,000 acknowledged by the US department of state, 53% of whom were females and 53% children as discussed further on pages 85-86 of this thesis.

individual lives and complex social dynamics as a means of intervening in vexed discourse about a maligned' group. Similarly, Baines et al., concentrated on two sisters who were struggling to establish the patrilineal identity of their children. Like Abu-Lughod, they also embedded themselves in Acholi families and communities, paying attention to details of contemporary Acholi organisation for more than three years. A similar method was employed by Porter (2013: 33, 34) who, in addition to long-term participant observation while living in Acholi, also carried out in-depth interviews with eight women and their children.

Similarly, this thesis refers extensively to the experiences of the eight former forced wives and their ten children, who act as core case studies. However, the analysis also draws on information obtained from other women and elders in Lango. In addition, I rely on my own participant observation of the experiences of CBOW in post conflict settings. The majority of ex-combatants in northern Uganda are believed to have returned unrecorded directly to their communities. But thousands of others passed through at least eight interim or reception centres in Lango and Acholi. These included Rachele Rehabilitation Center (hereinafter, Rachele), Caritas-Gulu, Caritas-Apac, Gulu Support the Children organisation (GUSCO) in Gulu, Kitgum Concerned Women's Association (KICWA) in Kitgum, Christian Children's Fund (CCF) in Pader, World Vision in Gulu, Concerned Parents' Association (CPA) in Kitgum and CPA in Lira.²⁶

In 2003 Rachele Reception Centre, located on the eastern outskirts of Lira Municipal Council, had opened its doors to demobilised LRA combatants. Like other centres in northern Uganda, Rachele received regular consignments of ex-combatants through a special child protection unit of the Government army; the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF). Other children and youth from Lango were also referred to Rachele by other reception centres operating in Acholi. Some of these children and youth had been 'rescued' by the UPDF. Others had escaped from the LRA by themselves. But some

²⁶ E.g. see Phoung, Vinck & Stover, 2007. *Abducted: The Lord's Resistance Army and forced conscription in northern Uganda*. Berkeley - Tulane Initiative on Vulnerable Populations, June. Available from: <http://hhi.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/publications/abducted-the-lords-resistance-army.pdf>. [Accessed 24 January 2016].

were the products of the sexual relations that had taken place between the LRA recruits. At the time of the field study, Rachele was no longer a reception centre. It had already transformed into a senior secondary and vocational training school for ex-combatants. It had also opened its doors to other regular students. But Caritas Lira, the new administrators, still kept the archival records of the reception centre since its closure in 2006. Overall, Rachele had received 2,479 ex-combatants, 9% of whom were documented as children born to the forced wives while with the LRA.²⁷ It is this archival system that this thesis accessed to identify its primary respondents. I was able to identify children of former forced wives who had passed through the Centre between 2003 and 2006.

Preliminary activities at Rachele included registration of ex-combatants; and for a former forced wife, her child or children, although some returned while still pregnant. Like the other eight reception centres in northern Uganda, Rachele's documentation policy spelt out, among others: the name of the returnee, when the person was abducted, when she regained her freedom and her location of origin or pre-abduction village address.²⁸

In all of the cases, location of origin was recorded as the girl's natal village. If a former forced wife came to the centre with a child, the child would be registered on the slot immediately beneath the mother's and made to share her details of origin. For example, the names of former forced wife Acen and her sons were separately entered into the register. The boys had 'child to Acen' written in a bracket next to their names. They also carried details associated with their mother's natal origin as their own. There was however no evidence that staff at Rachele had attempted to find out the details of the boys' (LRA) father. If they did, then their registration policy deliberately left out the father's details. This was the pattern for all of the children of former forced wives that

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ A June 2007 study by Berkeley-Tulane Initiative on Vulnerable Populations titled *Abducted: The LRA and forced conscription in northern Uganda* showed a harmonised system of documenting ex-combatant by at least eight reception centres. The system required information on demographics, Date of abduction/release/arrival and departure, location of origin and the health and social information of the returnee.

passed through Rachele. Once this was done, staff ventured out to locate the natal families of these mothers for a reunification.

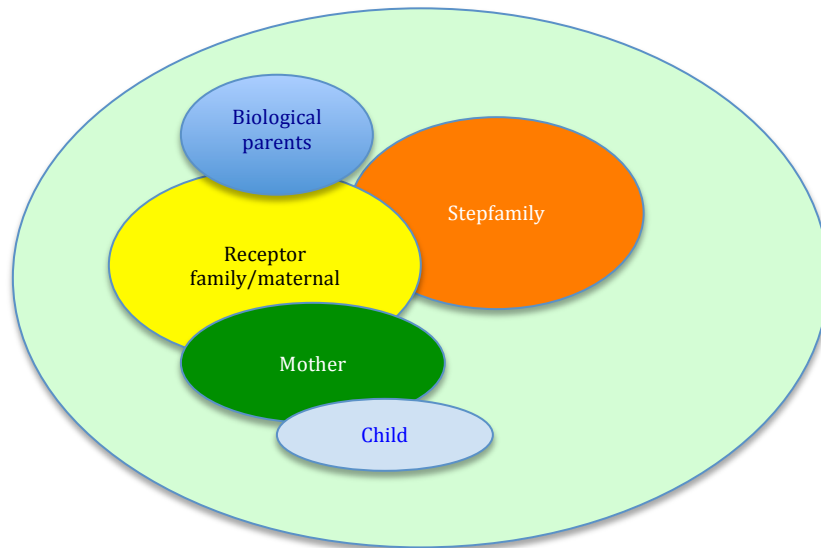
Out of the 204 female ex-combatants that hailed from Lango who were hosted at the Rachele Rehabilitation Centre from 2003 and 2006, thirteen had been forced wives and had nineteen children (nine boys & ten girls) between them with their LRA captors. My aim was to work with those from Lango that would be accessible during the period of my field-based research. Eight women met these criteria. The remaining five had either relocated in places difficult to trace or were outside the country.

The study therefore selected eight former forced wives; two of them had two sons each with their LRA captors while the remaining six had one child each (four boys and three girls). Rachele documentation revealed that all such children followed their mothers when the mothers were reunited with their families. The study therefore used detailed archival information on the mothers to trace them and their children.

Tracing of mothers was often difficult because the names given to the Rachele centre were frequently different from the names they used in the LRA camps or back home. Many abducted girls had created new names for themselves while with the LRA. They did so to reduce the likelihood of the LRA identifying their roots and locating or punishing them and their families if they escaped.

Because I had elected to locate all my respondents and observations around CBOW, they became my entry point to other respondents and observations. From their narratives or observing them, I was able to identify additional respondents relevant in the social lives of these children and so fanned my way outwards such that in the end, each child had several rings of secondary respondents around him or her as depicted in figure two, from his/her closest relations (usually his biological mother and - rarely - father and siblings), to his extended family, step-family, and other close acquaintances.

Figure 2: Rings of respondents for each child targeted



These groups formed the social environment of CBOW following reintegration. As demonstrated in later chapters, the behaviour and relationship that members of each of these groups had with CBOW were complex.

Like Rachele, Governmental and other Non Governmental Organisations that were active in the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) of the LRA in northern Uganda worked at stitching back pre-war relationships between former combatants and their respective kinship networks.²⁹ Former forced wives like Acen explained that they and their CBOW were automatically affiliated with their pre-war natal families.³⁰ These mothers explained that they were taken by the LRA when they were not yet married. They maintained that even in the LRA, they remained unmarried and therefore could affiliate only with their natal families upon return.

²⁹ Evidence from agencies such as UNICEF however showed that thousands of ex-combatants reunited with their families on their own, having gone straight back to the families when they left the LRA.

³⁰ Interview: Acen, thirty two years old, Ex-combatant mother, Orubu village, Layibi Division, Gulu district, Uganda. 16 February 2015.

Evidence suggests that some returning mothers relied on NGOs like Rachele to help them maintain their freedom from their LRA 'husbands' upon exit from LRA. For example, Apili explained that when she handed herself to the UPDF in Pader and they learnt that she had been a forced wife to a high ranking LRA commander, who had since joined the UPDF and lived in Gulu barracks, the UPDF took her and her surviving child to Gulu barracks and attempted to give her back to her former LRA Commander.³¹ Apili explained that she, with the help of Save the Children in Gulu, had vehemently refused and instead demanded to reunite with her parents. When she later entered into a sexual relationship with another man in 2010, Apili left her daughter with her mother in Lira and went to live with him in Gulu. The leaving of children conceived in the LRA with matrilineal families underscores the importance of understanding how notions of motherhood and kinship influence the integration of these children in Lango.

Through documentation, tracing and reunification, old identities were traced by agencies active in DDR and acted out by former LRA recruits and their familial networks. As they did this, they facilitated the integration of CBOW into Lango society, re-imagining them within the framework of local patriarchal ideas of sexuality and reproduction in peacetime (cf. Thomas, 2003: 14).

One of my preliminary activities in Lango in early 2013 was to identify and train two female research assistants to work with. Here, I found it necessary to consult with my old social and professional networks in the region on who I could work with. Before embarking on my study in 2012, I had worked with the local charity organisation FAPAD as its director right from its inception in 2004. As the director, I had been involved directly in setting up FAPAD's programmes and policies and was therefore familiar with a number of its staff who had continued working with FAPAD long after I had left.

FAPAD also had a diverse grassroots presence, which comprised of 1,700 community-based volunteers embedded in their respective communities throughout Lango. I had initially planned to work with some of these resource persons to map out potential

³¹ Interview: Apili, ex-combatant mother, Pece division, Gulu district, Uganda. 16 February 2015.

respondents in their localities, in particular former forced wives and their children. Additionally, I had hoped to employ them as research assistants for the study. But my old position with FAPAD as its director presented an ethical dilemma – a need to distance my project from the influence of old acquaintances who might have felt indebted to me on account of previous working relationships.³² Taylor (2011:15) uses the term ‘intimate insider’ to refer to researchers caught up in similar situations. She notes that such relationships can ‘shape the researcher’s work and influence their positioning in the field...making objectivity incredibly difficult and leaves very little room for analytic distance.’³³ To avoid this pitfall, I changed the criteria for identifying the former forced wives and their children. First, I consulted the Concerned Parents Association (CPA) to grant me permission to use their records of LRA returnees to identify the former forced wives. But CPA had lost all its physical records of the ex-combatants in the process of changing office location a few years earlier. But its director offered to link me to Caritas Lira, an organisation that had taken over the administration of Rachele Rehabilitation Centre. I therefore substituted FAPAD’s grassroots structure with the Rachele Rehabilitation Centre archive for the broad-based mapping of former forced wives and their children that I had planned to conduct.

I also recruited two research assistants who were not in any way linked to FAPAD. I deliberately recruited females because FAPAD had suggested that women with history of sexual violence found it more difficult to open up to men than women. One research assistant had a first degree in Law and the other held a first degree in development studies. I found their extensive knowledge of Lango language and the local social dynamics essential to the fieldwork. My assistants and I developed a checklist to facilitate open-ended discussions with my informants. All these informants generously shared with me their life histories and the experiences of their communities during and after the LRA war.³⁴ The open-ended interviews provided information on relevant

³² See below for additional discussion on ethical considerations with regard to this study.

³³ A further discussion of my position as an ‘intimate insider’ is more broadly explained in section 1.9 below.

³⁴ See figure three below for details of the former forced wives, their children and relatives who were interviewed.

cultural practices as well as on significant historical events that added value to the interpretation and analysis of data.

Ethical considerations

The study applied all guidelines for ethical approval (including consent forms and anonymisation). Guided by the stringent ethical standards of the University of Birmingham for researching human subjects and the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (the approval of which I received), I have, in addition to having sought and documented consent of all participants in my research, also anonymised data on children and their mothers. In addition to parental consent statements, which parents and guardians signed to indicate their approval, all children who offered to participate signed a simplified statement in duplicate in the local language (Lango) and also in English. Each participant retained a copy for his or her record.

Information regarding CBOW and their mothers is highly sensitive, as it may lead to their victimisation, stigma and traumatising (or re-traumatising). To protect the identity of the children and their mothers therefore, I used pseudonyms in my thesis. The complete picture of the pseudonyms I gave to the eight mothers and ten children who form the core case studies of this thesis is found in figure three below.

Figure 3: List of anonymised former forced wives, their children³⁵ and other participants

<i>Mother's anonymised name</i>	<i>Child's anonymised name</i>	<i>Other relatives interviewed</i>	<i>Elders, institutional leaders & teachers</i>
1. Acen: twenty-eight years old - lives in Orubo village, Layibi division in Gulu (2013).	1. Omona: eleven years old, male - lives with his biological parents in Gulu (2013). 2. Ouma: thirteen years old, male - lives with his biological parents in Gulu (2013).	1. Constantino Okori, 78 years, Acen's father, Oromo clan, Amia Abil village, Agweng sub County, Lira, Uganda (2013). 2. Acola Joci (60 years old), Amia Abil village, Agweng sub County,	1. Aboi Sam, 58 years old, Local Council I Chairperson, Imato Ikwoto village, Ogur (2013). 2. Akello Florence, 22 years old, wife of Atine Moses the ex-partner of Tino, Acimi village, Myene sub County in Oyam, Uganda (2013). 3. Alba Alango – 43 years old, a daughter of the Pagak clan of the

³⁵ Although several interviews were conducted with these former forced wives & their children from 2013 to 2015, the ages stipulated here are those of 2013.

		<p>Lira District, Uganda (2015).</p> <p>3. Oyat, 35 years old, former radio signaler of the LRA, Gulu, Uganda (2015).</p>	<p>Acholi in Amuru district; married to a Lango husband and lived in Te Obia parish, Lira municipal council, Lira district (2013).</p> <p>4. Aloyo, 35 years old, Lapaico, Gulu district (2015).</p>
<p>2. Ajok: twenty five years old, lives in Amia Abil village in Agweng sub county, Lira district (2013).</p>	<p>3 Aloyo: nine years old, female - lives with her mother and stepfather (2013).</p>	<p>4 Opio Denis, Aloyo's stepfather, Amia Abil village, Agweng Sub County, Lira district.</p> <p>5 Owani Peter, 52 years old, Amia Abil village, Agweng sub County, Lira district, Uganda (2013).</p>	<p>5. Angelina Lapogo, 65 years old, an Acholi Ajanyi village, Rackoko parish in Pader district, married to a Lango husband, Minakulu sub county, Oyam district (2013).</p> <p>6. Aracha Alphonse, representative to the district council, Akalo Sub County, Kole district (2013).</p> <p>7. Aremo Charles, 70 years old, Aol Kedi village, Acokara parish, Otwal sub county, Oyam district (2013).</p> <p>8. Ariang, LRA Ex-combatant, Gulu town, Uganda (2015).</p> <p>9. Atat Cucuria Auma, 89 years old, Aputi village, Abeli parish, Akalo Sub County, Kole district, Uganda (2015).</p> <p>10. Atine Moses, 26 years old, Jo Alwa wibye acel clan, Acimi village, Myene sub County in Oyam, Uganda (2013).</p> <p>11. Caroline Okodi, 42 years old, Local Council I member, Atoparoma village, Iceme sub county, Oyam district (2013).</p> <p>12. Charles Onyinge, 56 years old, Aboloneno 'A' village, Alutkot parish, Loro Sub County, Oyam district (2013).</p>
<p>3. Abang: thirty years old - lives with her new suitor in his village of Imato Ikwoto in Ogur sub county, Lira district (2013).</p>	<p>4 Ayo Gaby: thirteen years old, male - lives with his mother's sister on his maternal father's lands in Abino village, Ogur sub county, Lira district (2013).</p> <p>5 Ogwal M., eleven years old, male - lives with his mother's sister on his maternal father's lands in Abino village, Ogur Sub County, Lira District (2013).</p>	<p>6 Awor Jennifer, 38 years old, Abang's elder sister, Abino village, Ogur, Lira (2013).</p>	
<p>4. Adong: twenty-three years old - estranged from her husband and so lives in the homestead of her husband's paternal uncle in Omiri village, Iceme sub county, Oyam district (2013).</p>	<p>6. Bua: five years old, male - lives with his mother's brother in the household of his maternal grandfather in Obutu village, Iceme Sub County, Oyam district (2013).</p>	<p>7. Bua Nelson, 20 years old, caretaker of the child Bua, Obutu village, Iceme Sub County, Oyam district, Uganda (2013).</p> <p>8. Obol Isaac Patrick, 45 years old, father of Adong, Obutu, Iceme sub county, Oyam district (2013).</p>	<p>13. Christine Obete, 44 years old, Akaidebe village, Minakulu Sub County, Oyam district (2013).</p> <p>14. Deputy head teacher, Orit Primary School, Ogur Sub County (2013).</p> <p>15. Engena Morris, 42 years old, head teacher, Lira Integrated Primary School (2013).</p> <p>16. Erem Alphonse, 56 years old, Local Council I chairperson, Acimi village, Myene sub county, Oyam district (2013).</p>

5. Tino: twenty-five years old - lives in one of her father's houses set apart from the main compound in Acimi village, Myene sub county in Oyam district (2013).	7 Aciro: eight years old, female - has lived in Mubende district in western Uganda since the age of five years where she works as a baby-minder (2013).	9 Hellen Oloa, 49 years old, mother of Tino, Acimi village, Myene Sub County, Oyam (2013). 10 Oyaro Francis, 53 years old, Acimi village, Myene Sub County, Oyam district, Uganda (2013).	17. Geoffrey, 46 years old, Local Council I chairperson, Barobia village, Acaba, Oyam district (2013). 18. George Adia, Abako village, Alemi parish, Ayer Sub County, Kole district (2013). 19. Grace Aremo, 54 years old, Aol Kedi village, Acokara parish, Otwal sub county, Oyam district (2013). 20. Hellen Oling, years old, Minakulu sub County, Oyam district (2014). 21. Imat Santa Ajok, 62 years old, (an Acholi woman originally from Latomi village, Wol sub county in Agago district), Rainbow, Lira, Uganda (2015).
6. Akello: twenty-eight years old - lives in Bar obia village, Acaba sub county, Oyam district (2013).	8 Olot: five years old, male - lives with his mother (2013).	11 Agnes Olot, maternal grandmother of Olot, Acaba, Oyam (2013). 12 Geoffrey, 46 years old, LCI Chairman, Bar Obia village, Acaba, Oyam, Uganda (2013).	22. Jennifer Ogali, 45 year-old, Aputi village, Abeli parish, Akalo, Kole district, Uganda (2014). 23. Kilara, Gulu town, Uganda (2015). 24. Muzee Aliphayo Okello, 86 years old, Abako clan, Abako village, Alemi parish, Ayer Sub County, Kole district (2013). 25. Muzee David Ogwal, Arak Oyakori, Abako village, Alemi parish, Ayer Sub County, Kole district (2013).
7. Agonga: lives with her new partner in Barlonyo, Ogur sub county (2013).	9 Okabo: eleven years old, male - lives with his maternal grandmother (2013).	13 Joyce, Agonga's mother, 68 years old, Bar lonyo, Ogur sub county (2013). 14 Ocen, father of Eron, Okii cel clan member, Amo yai parish, Okwanng sub county, Otuke, Uganda (2013). 15 Ojede Denis, Agonga's brother, Bar Lonyo, Ogur Sub County (2013). 16 Okabo's father Eron Mark, Awing Ipany village, Amo Yai parish in Okwang Sub County, Okwang Sub County, Uganda (2013).	26. Muzee Igwat, 91 years old, Aputi village, Abeli sub County, Akalo, Kole District, Uganda (2015). 27. Muzee Quinto Ochile, 73 years, Abako village, Alemi parish, Ayer Sub County, Kole district (2014). 28. Obua Elisa, 78 years old, clan leader of the Alira Clan in Ilera village (Apii) of Ayer sub county, Kole District, Uganda (2013). 29. Ocen Moses, 39 years old, Class teacher at Wigweng primary School, Acaba sub County, Oyam, Uganda (2013). 30. Ocepa Alfred, 63 years old, Lango elder, Agwero-wanya village, Adekokwok sub County, Lira, Uganda (2013).
8. Apili: thirty-two years old -	10 Akwero: eleven years old, female - lives	17. Ogwal S., mother of Apili, Lira – Uganda (2014).	31. Odur Daniel, secretary of Oyima

lives with her new partner in Pece division, Gulu district (2015).	with her maternal grandmother in junior quarters, Lira (2015).		<p>Ngila clan, Lira (2014).</p> <p>32. Ogwal Olule Paul, 64 years old, Awitong, Clan leader of Arak Opelo, Obim village, Alebtong district (2013).</p> <p>33. Ogwang Ateku, leader of Bako Ogweti clan, Lira (2013).</p> <p>34. Ogwang Nelson, 39 years old, head teacher, Wigweng Primary School (2013).</p> <p>35. Okodi Caroline, 42 years old, Local Councillor of Atoparoma village, Iceme sub County, Oyam district, Uganda (2013).</p> <p>36. Okol Lawrence-a son of the bako clan, Abako village, Alemi parish, Ayer Sub County, Kole district (2014).</p> <p>37. Omodo Brian, 9 years old, Olot's playmate, Bar Obia, Acaba Sub County, Oyam district (2013).</p> <p>38. Oyie Yuventino, class teacher of Aloyo, Agweng primary school, Lira.</p> <p>39. Philomena Lawino, 80 years old. Akaidebe in Adel parish-Minakulu sub-county, Oyam district (2013).</p> <p>40. Rev. George Okeng, 51 years old, Lango traditional leader, Senior quarters B, Lira municipal, Lira, Uganda (2013).</p> <p>41. Sebina Ayoo, a 33-year-old Acholi woman originally from Agago district - married to a Lango husband, Minakulu sub county, Oyam district (2013).</p> <p>42. Vincent Oling, chairperson of Facilitation for Peace and Development, Lira, Uganda (2014).</p> <p>43. William Ocen, 66 years old, Abako village, Alemi parish, Ayer Sub County, Kole district (2014).</p>
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Transcription and analysis

Upon realizing that my interactions with respondents had reached a point of ‘saturation’ (see Bernard, 2006; Stake, 1995) where further interviews only brought out similar answers, I and my research assistants transcribed, word for word, all of the tape recordings we had captured during fieldwork. Our transcription was first done in Lango language and then translated into English. I then embarked on the analysis, taking note of my informants’ submissions – many of which I quoted verbatim to allow their voices to be heard directly and to underline the importance of their evidence to my study (cf. Spradley, 1980:123).

My approach to the analysis of the information gathered embraced both the “individual-case” analysis and “cross case analysis” (Stake, 1995). These two levels of analysis enabled me to identify patterns, consistencies and differences in data collected from interviews and observations; and to generate hypotheses and theoretical considerations (see also Edwards and Talbot, 1994:45).

In conclusion, my analytical framework relied on additional material (cf. Mitchell in Velsen, 1964)³⁶ to enable me to go beyond simply explaining social structures and systems and instead explore them while ‘in action’. Gluckman (1961: 10) referred to this method as the extended-case method. He postulated that: ‘Problems which are emerging and which involve the basic problems of the endurance, stability and different types of change in a social system existing in space-time can only be tackled through the use of the extended-case method’. Because this method in itself attests to the constant changes and therefore non-static nature of relationships and groups, I have adapted it for this thesis. Thus, I have been able to incorporate case studies of situations observed during fieldwork in the text to illustrate the nature of interactions between Lango individuals, groups, and institutions in relation to CBOW.

But studying individuals who are perceived as children needs the adoption of methods considered suitable for them. A similar view is held for survivors of sexual violence

³⁶ See J. Van Velsen's 'The Politics of Kinship (Oxford, 1964) p. ix for Mitchell's contribution.

such as former forced wives. The study therefore employed methods and tools suitable for investigating the agency of children, their mothers and those who were associated with their lives directly and indirectly (e.g. local lineage and local council leaders). Data collection relied primarily on qualitative methods, involving multiple layers of respondents for each child studied. These respondents represented different sources of information, which I obtained through direct interviews, focus group discussions and observation. I also observed cultural rites like *luk* and marriage to enrich my analysis of the data I had obtained from respondents. Thus, through triangulation, the study assessed respondents' perspectives on the social issues affecting the children (O'Donoghue and Punch, 2003; Audrey, 2013; Altrichter et al., 2008).

1.8. Doing research with children

This thesis is about the lives of children conceived in LRA camps who lived in post-war northern Uganda, in particular those whose mothers referred to themselves as belonging to the Lango language group. As stated in the previous section, the study included child participants, in particular the *otino onywalo ilum*. All of those who participated were below the age of eighteen years as shown in figure three above – meaning they were not yet adults as per international law. This thesis builds on the argument that children can be capable moral interpreters of their own social world (Berry, 1994). The Thesis recognises the agency of *otino onywalo ilum* in any social interaction he or she found himself or herself in, and consequently justified the use of their 'voices' in matters that affect them within a social setting (see for example Alderson, 1995; Komulainen, 2007; Maarit, 2014; Prout, 2000).

International law has universalised the definition of children as persons below the age of eighteen years (UNCRC, art 1; African Charter, art 2). This definition has been adopted by some member states, which modelled their child rights laws on international jurisprudence.³⁷ Uganda for example maintained in its Cap 59, art. 2 of the Children's

³⁷ Many UN member states, including those that have ascended to the UNCRC have different legal definitions of childhood. Germany, for example, refers to children as those under the age of fourteen years. But the UNCRC is still applied to all children and adolescence under eighteen years of age in those countries that have different legal definitions of childhood.

Act: 'A child is a person below the age of eighteen years'. But as Berry argues, in addition to it being reductionist, limiting the understanding of childhood simply to 'age' or biology undermines the rich meaning of 'what is a child' and 'childhood'. The UNCRC itself underscores this reality in its art. 12 by recognising a child as an active agent in the exercise of his or her right. This provision, popularly referred to as the principle of participation 'encourages adults to listen to the opinions of children and involve them in decision-making...' Lansdown (2011:3). Children have been proven to participate in learning and do not only limit themselves to what adults teach them (see also Wartofski in Qvortrup, 1993).

I found this description suggestive of notions of childhood both in the LRA and in return communities in Lango. In the LRA, respondents suggested that any female recruit who had not yet reached puberty was seen as a child and allocated to specific 'wives' of commanders to serve as *ting ting* (prepubescent girls who assisted senior 'wives'). They were not to be taken as 'wives' because they were underage. Prepubescent boys were also attached to specific commanders' compounds as *kuruts* (new recruits) and not given 'wives' because they were still underage (e.g. Baines, 2014). But both *ting ting* and male 'kurut' could be assigned combat duties, introducing a rather mixed language of childhood in the LRA. This shows that international definitions of 'children' did not coincide with notions of childhood found in the LRA.

This study however suggests that this contradiction was a well-orchestrated strategy the LRA leadership employed to protect their authority over the sexuality and reproductive lives of their recruits. The LRA concept of childhood seemed to be a process of negotiation between individuals and the group's leadership based on life events. For example, prepubescent recruits could be trained as soldiers and take part in combat duties on the one hand. On the other, they were seen as too young for sexual activities. Thus, the LRA could negotiate and re-negotiate notions of childhood instrumentally to suit its own ends (cf. Mawson, 2004: 226).

This pattern was also observed in Lango during fieldwork. In particular, study participants, including former forced wives referred to all of those born in the LRA, irrespective of age at time of study as children – hence the term *otino onywalo ilum*. It

was clear from these contributions that other factors other than ‘age’ was the determinant of whether someone could be seen as a child. As Boyden et al., and Mawson posited, the boundaries of what defines a child therefore could be fluid – depending on local social, cultural, political and economic conditions (see also Denov, 2010: 5).

This view crumbles the concept of a ‘universal child’ supported by the international human rights framework, instead making a strong case for contextualising children and their experiences within specific social contexts (Berry, 1994: 3). It displaces the ‘universal child’ ideology, which is based on concerns for the natural vulnerabilities of childhood, replacing it with concerns for socially constructed vulnerabilities (cf. Lansdown, 2005). It is within this frame that people who were conceived in the LRA were referred to as ‘children born in the bush’ (*otino onywalo ilum*). In northern Uganda, being an *atin onywalo ilum* did not connote ‘age’, but rather the circumstance of one’s birth. This thesis acknowledges this by referring to all of those conceived in the LRA as children. Thus ‘children’ or ‘child born in the bush’ (*otino* or *atin onywalo ilum*) will be used to denote those who were conceived in the LRA even if he or she was eighteen years and above at the time of the study.

In fact social science research now considers childhood as a socially constructed notion and not simply as a biological stage (of growth and development). Here, children are understood as active, valuable contributors and members of society. Sociologists have argued that through their interactions with others, children promote their own knowledge and development, and negotiate their own social space, within which they can be perceived as a social construct and not merely as biological beings (see for e.g. Prout and James, 1997). Holway (2014) in particular argues that children must be considered as ‘meaning-producing beings’ in their own right. I found these approaches relevant in all the consultations I held with children.

Understanding a person’s life, involves close interactions with him or her – verbal and non verbal. This is also true of these children, a position that is re-enforced by not just ‘age’ but social factors. By foregrounding the voices of *otino onywalo ilum* alongside

those of their mothers, the thesis supports a rights perspective as ensconced in the UNCRC principle of participation, which provides for a child to express his or her views with respect to any decision affecting him or her.

Children took part in direct interviews – listening, asking questions and providing answers to my questions. I also carried out participant observation in contexts where children spent time with their peers, such as schools and households. All of these contributed to the pool of information, which was analysed in this thesis. In particular, this method was essential in exploring experiences of children conceived in the LRA and the strategies they unfolded in trying to integrate into their mothers' natal families and communities in Lango, discussed in chapter six of this thesis.

1.9. Reflexivity: learning how to see

How we represent and account for others' experiences is intimately related to who we are, ...and the connections need to be spelt out ...³⁸

Self-reflexivity was a crosscutting tool throughout this study (Fine 1989; Stacey 1988; Daniels 1983; Chodorow 1989; Altorki and El-Solh 1988). As an indigenous researcher, I acknowledged the value of both inter-subjectivity and detachment, which enabled me to explore available options to reconstruct myself as an 'outsider from within' (Collins 1986: 29). This covered the selection of language group, geographical area, and interactions with interviewees, all of which were reflected in the interpretation and analysis stages of the study. These factors directly and indirectly interacted with my ethnicity, gender and also my having spent all my life growing up and working among the Langi. As an insider, I understood the local values, knowledge and taboos and was fairly aware of the informal power dynamics inherent in the population (Coglan, 2003; Hermann, 1989; Tedlock, 2000). Being aware of them helped in shaping questions, interpreting and analysing answers.

³⁸ See Haraway in Bolak, 1997, p. 96.

Interpretation of the responses and observations in this thesis therefore drew heavily on my familiarity and practical experience with the local ethnographic environment: first as a native, and second as an employee of two grassroots human rights organisations that were directly concerned with addressing rights and needs of those affected by the LRA war in northern Uganda from 2000 and 2004 respectively.

As a native, I grew up during the upheavals associated with the political, social and economic changes that defined rural Lango, where most of my respondents lived. Before the war, I spent most of my school breaks in my parents' sub county of Otwal, alternating my stay between my maternal grandmother's village of Acokara, in whose house I had been born, and my paternal grandparents' village of Amuku Gungu. I followed other girls to the woods for firewood; to the springs for water; to the two weekly markets of Acokara Sub Station and Otwal Railway Station to sell grains for my grandparents and then used the money to buy meat, fish, salt and soap for them. I blended well with local peers, many of whom were my cousins and I took part in their games and cultural activities. With them, I enjoyed harvesting white ants from my maternal grandmother's many anthills during the rainy season and also learnt well how to find and dig out the *odir*, cricket, from their holes in the ground at the setting of the sun. At the time of the fieldwork, these were still delicacies of the Langi between the months of March and June when we peak the first rains (and for the *odir*, July & August when the sesame starts to flower and the millet harvests are held). They taught me how to ride the rather tall Raleigh bicycle and tell the sounds of the forests and villages. As the LRA war was setting in 1987, I could already comfortably join my village cousins in singing along with the distant drums that we knew were from the village native doctor, 'singing the body' of a patient. I also took part in the *awak*, rotating farm labour on village farms alongside my maternal grandmother and her labour group. Female heads of households in rural Lango like my grandmother often met their farm labour needs by taking part in such loose neighbourhood associations, a relic of rotational farm labour groups from pre-colonial and colonial Lango (Driberg, 1923; Curley, 1973). At the fall of President Obote's Second government in 1985, my family took refuge in these villages until 1986 when the LRA and cattle rustlers from Karamoja started their activities, rendering both villages unsafe.

As a woman socialised in Lango, I had been a participant in many of the local concepts that I had set out to study, in particular the marriage, *kwor* (blood payment) and *luk* (fine for pre-marital sex and children born outside marriage) concepts. In the 2000s, when two of my brothers and three of my cousins made their suitors pregnant before marriage, the suitors' families demanded for *luk* payment. These boys did not have enough resources to either fund their *luk* or subsequent marriages – for those who wished to. During each of these *luk* processes, the *Rwot* (chief) of my father's clan section in Otwal had issued out an order for all clan members to contribute towards the collection of the *luk* requirements. As a woman, I was required – just like my siblings who had gainful employment to contribute towards the gathering of these marriage goods. My contribution to each of these *luk* costs ranged from a hen to goat. In August 2013, in addition to a goat, I also contributed to hiring a bus to transport my brother and his entourage to marry his bride in Mbale – eastern Uganda. I had also made regular contributions towards payment of *kwor* for my patriclan. I had therefore lived with and experienced some of the important concepts I had set out to study.

In the 1990s and 2000s my maternal and paternal lineages had also lost a number of members to the LRA as they abducted and killed civilians in Otwal, Ngai sub counties of Oyam district. While several of these have never returned and were presumed dead, a number of girls survived the forced marriages in the LRA and returned with children. Such deep roots and links in the study population rendered me an 'insider' (Adler & Adler, 1994). During the course of my fieldwork therefore, I often felt as though I was studying my own lineage. But I was aware that this could, to some extent, influence my role as a researcher. Whereas I appreciated the greater exposure and understanding of the local culture - which my insider status had accorded me - I knew I had to distance myself from this level of familiarity 'in order not to lose objectivity.' (Unluer, 2012:1). DeLyser (2001) and Hewitt-Taylor, (2002) also stated that prior knowledge such as that held by 'insider' researchers can be considered a bias. The use of an institutional archive (Rachele Centre) to identify my respondents rather helped in mitigating any emotions that studying a relative could have evoked. I also attempted to explore the experiences of *luk*, marriage and *culo kwor* by research participants who were not

related to me in any way so I could re-familiarise myself with what I thought I already knew as well as learn new areas that I did not know.

My work with Concerned Parents Association (CPA) and FAPAD further placed me in the centre of this contradiction. From 2000, I pioneered the coordination of the Concerned Parents Association, a network of thousands of parents in northern Uganda whose children had been abducted by the LRA. Three years later, after a more intense engagement with ex-combatant mothers and their children in the Gulu Support the Children's Organisation (GUSCO) and World Vision reception centres in Gulu for a master's dissertation, I embarked on directing Facilitation for Peace and Development (FAPAD), a rural Lango grassroots organisation. Through FAPAD's social protection activities, I interacted closely with beneficiaries who included former LRA recruits and their social networks, enabling me to explore and understand the social experiences of post-conflict communities. All of these served as a platform for identifying and interpreting the lived experiences of the mothers and their children in this study.

But as an indigenous researcher, I was conscious that such familiarity could render one neglectful of details of the prevailing local cultures – a feeling that one 'already knows'.

To counter this, I not only applied open-ended inquiry techniques, allowing my subjects to steer the discussions and recording with the help of a voice recorder, camera, and paper and pen all that I was told and had observed. In this way, even what I thought I already knew was still documented for onward use. In most cases, this decision turned out as important to the study because it documented several aspects of what I had initially understood only from my singular lineage position but had attributed to all Langi. Being 'ignorant' and documenting all that transpired helped the study to avoid essentialising experiences and perceptions of individuals and groups. In addition, my supervisors continuously advised me on possible biases about my research data by evaluating my reports based on the strength of field-based evidence and the themes I was advancing in my analysis. Furthermore, the multiple sources of data and methods of data collection, which included multi-layered interviews, focus group discussions and observation, helped in checking inconsistencies that might arise from any form of bias.

I was also constantly aware of the gender ramifications of my study since I also interviewed mothers of CBOW on intimate and sometimes traumatic biographies. As survivors of sexual and gender based violence, these women were more comfortable to open up to me as a fellow woman. This was even more the case when they realised I once worked for FAPAD, an organisation that was known for addressing issues of women's rights. I was aware that any link to my former role in FAPAD could introduce multiple role obligations for me (Adler and Adler, 1997: 28-29). As a former staff of FAPAD, individuals in the community occasionally referred their cases to me for redress. For example, people reported cases of sexual abuse of children, domestic violence and lack of access to safe water sources in the vicinity to me in the hope that I could use my old position in civil society to help them. As an anthropological researcher, I knew I had to occasionally when expected, respond as a way of balancing the 'moral exchange' (Adler and Adler, 1997: 29). And so from the start I had mapped out (also as part of the ethical requirements of the study) a list of service providers in the sub region, to whom I directed my informants for further advice and support. This also re-enforced the ethical dimension of my study as not merely extractive (of information), but also empowering for the subjects of my research. Thus, I found myself assuming what Adler et al., referred to as 'bifurcate roles'; most times being a researcher and sometimes being an activist and linking individuals to resource points.

Interviewing children also made me conscious of how age can influence power dynamics during research. Children are among vulnerable populations that have often been 'studied down' (Rosaldo, 1989; Hertz and Imber, 1993). Even when I followed the ethical rule that required parental consent before engaging a child in an interview, I knew that by doing that, I was reconstructing the boundaries between child and childhood and adult and adulthood. All the children that participated in this study did so only upon the acceptance of their guardians. Once the guardian consented, only then did I proceed to explain the study to the child and obtain his or her consent – which complemented his or her parent's consent. Through seeking parental consent for children's participation, I reproduced inter-generational boundaries, which, for children and adults, are expressions of difference in power and authority. A child's consent is not

considered sufficient for a researcher to interview him/her because children are perceived as in need of care and protection. While I always obtained guardian consent, I also sought (and obtained) consent from the children, and held interviews with individual children alone in an open space on the compound.

But the choice of the Langi was influenced, not just by my interest in studying my native language group, although that in itself is linguistically advantageous as I have been able to communicate directly without the use of transcribers or translators³⁹, but mostly because of the dynamics of the LRA war. Because Joseph Kony, the initiator and warlord of LRA, was an Acholi who took his war across ethnic borders, incorporating Lango girls into his system, I became interested in finding out what a group's experience who was confronted with children born from relations with an aggressor considered ethnically different could be.

Children of ex-combatant mothers in Acholi lacked one of the attributes (ethnic difference) that I was interested in. The Langi, whose involvement in the LRA conflict has been less studied, had been targeted by the LRA right from its conception in 1987. Communities in border sub counties like Minakulu, Ngai, Otwal, Iceme, Aromo and Okwang had to contend with the LRA just like in the hotspots of Acholi. In chapter two, an in-depth historical account of Uganda's geopolitics as a build up to the LRA war, and the eventual war itself is explored, along with the social aftermath of the war.

1.10. Organisation of the thesis

The next chapter, 'General Introduction to the War and the Region' presents a review of the geopolitical history of Uganda with a view to understanding the LRA war. It reconstructs the historical pattern of events and processes, and explores how they contributed to the shaping of ideas of belonging and outsidership in today's Ugandan

³⁹ In his criticism of anthropologists who emphasised language competence at the expense of other skills, John R. Campbell in his 2011 monograph, 'who are the Luo? Oral tradition and disciplinary practices in anthropology and history', *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, (p. 79), wrote, '...the anthropologist's task is not limited to accurately recording and reporting what her informants say or do, we are also tasked with the problem of interpreting and writing-up our fieldwork in a manner which is transparent and which addresses issues other than language.'

society. In particular, it discusses three issues: The struggles of the various language groups in integrating as one country (Uganda) - often complicated by pre-existing political, cultural and economical differences, and the policies of colonial Britain - and how some of these might have impacted on the LRA uprising. Second, the use of ethnicity and religion by various groups, including the LRA, to rally supporters and recruits. Third, sexual violence and the phenomenon of forced wife in Uganda as an enduring tenet of warfare across time and space.

To understand the impacts of sexual violence and forced marriage on the offsprings of survivors returning from the LRA into Lango, it is necessary to examine certain norms and practices surrounding sexuality and reproduction that the Langi identify with. Chapter three, 'Gender and Motherhood in Rural Lango' explores these norms and practices and how they continue to be instrumental in shaping ideas of belonging. Of particular interest is how these ideas influenced perceptions of women and their offspring – a phenomenon better understood by exploring 'patrilineal idioms of inclusion and exclusion' (Schoenbrun in Stephens, 2013: 12).

The fourth chapter, 'Gender and Motherhood in the LRA', explores how the leaders of the LRA appropriated gender and motherhood ideas to set up and sustain a highly militarised masculinity in their camps in Sudan. In particular, it focuses on how the group's leadership regulated the sexual and reproductive choices of their recruits in order to set up and maintain a forced wife system leading to the birth of children. This chapter anticipates and discusses the tensions that develop in the understanding of sexuality and reproduction in the LRA, and ideas and practices of motherhood, kinship and gender in peacetime Lango.

To further contextualise the impacts of sexual violence on ex-combatant women and their offspring in Lango, it is necessary to examine the choices they made to renegotiate their positions in their post-war families and communities. Chapter five, 'Return: Former Forced Wives and the Realities of Motherhood in Peacetime Lango' explores the lived realities of these mothers in post LRA Lango. It analyses how former forced wives re-negotiated their positions in post-war familial networks and communities. It argues that these women, given the narrow options they had, chose to reassert the principles and kinship rules, and the gender ideologies that existed in their societies of

origin as the framework that supported and protected them better. By re-embracing this framework, they interacted with the different perspectives of members of their families and communities and also reproduced the Lango patriarchal ideologies.

Chapter six, 'Children Born of War' advances some preliminary hypotheses about how CBOW perceived and negotiated their circumstances in Lango. It explores the different experiences and approaches that CBOW tried to unfold in their attempt to influence the world around them. It does this by bringing into perspective the experiences these children faced upon returning to their mothers' families and communities. It specifically explores how they were perceived; how these perceptions affected their lived experiences and how they negotiated these realities – often influenced by age and kinship factors.

Chapter seven, 'Conclusion', makes some conclusive remarks on the findings of this thesis.

CHAPTER 2. GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE WAR AND THE REGION

2.1. Introduction

Richard Reid (2011) argued for the necessity of historicising African issues beyond the dictates of colonial and post-colonial intelligence. Modern African politics, Reid (2011: 144,152) summed, are a result of ‘distinct patterns of governance evolving over the long term, not merely as the outcome of post-colonial malaise or the failure of modernity... Africa’s troubled present is severed from its violent deeper past. The two urgently need to be re-attached’.

African wars are often nuanced with aspects of ethnicity and cosmology, which in the case of Uganda’s LRA, were successfully harnessed as power centres for legitimacy. Ethnicity and religion (or spirituality) are not static but evolve (e.g. Reid 2011: 148), playing crucial historical roles across time and space; sometimes venturing into a new direction, as seen below in the embracing of Christianity and Islam by large sections of the Ugandan society. But society may also draw upon old beliefs, as the spirit mediums in Acholi who were themselves professed Roman Catholics demonstrated later in the chapter - re-attaching the troubled present to its deeper past, as Reid advocated. Such dialogues between the past and the present underpinned much of Uganda’s contemporary history and are crucial in understanding the origin and experiences of CBOW in northern Uganda today.

This chapter suggests that the phenomenon of CBOW is itself historical. It examines pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial factors that shaped the LRA war and the emergence of CBOW. It explores how ethnicity and religion were mobilised in struggles for power, between and within the language-groups that live in Uganda today. In this way, the LRA war may be seen as an outcome of such inter-group relations, so that it can be argued that children fathered by combatants within the LRA are symbolic of, as well as an embodiment of such perceptions. At inter-group level, empirical focus is on the Acholi and Lango ethnicities: the former because of their link to the LRA which credited its legitimacy on Acholi cosmology and ethnicity, and because the

paternity of the majority of the CBOW is linked to Acholi ethnicity, and the latter because the Langi provided the case in this study.

2.2. Pre-colonial and Colonial Uganda

Thomas P. Ofcansky (1996: 13) broadly places Uganda's peoples into two linguistic groups, the Nilotic-speaking northerners and the Bantu speaking southerners. It is important to note that historical accounts recognized some Cushitic speaking groups and Central Sudanic groups as long time residents of pre-Uganda long before the Bantu-speaking and Nilo-Saharan-speaking settlements. These accounts indicated that these newcomers (the Bantu speakers in their slow trek from Southern pre-Cameroon and the Nilo-Saharan-speakers descending from the west and southwest of Ethiopian highlands) gradually absorbed the earlier occupants of pre-Uganda and eventually dominated the region (Maxon, 2009: 30-32).

Historical accounts of the Bantu-speaking groups reconstruct the spread of different groups. These included the Baganda in central Uganda, the Banyoro and Batoro to the West, and the Ankole and Kigezi peoples to the South West. Other Bantu groups that tended toward the east were the Basoga, Bagisu and Sebei groups. The so-called Nilo-Hamitic groups dominated the north and northeastern regions, and included the West Nile groups of Madi, Alur and Lugbara; the Acholi to the far north, Langi in central north and Iteso and Karamojong groups to the northeast (Maxon, 2009: 149).

Among the Bantu groups language mostly varied in dialect. Thus, the Batoro, Basoga, Banyoro and the Baganda could speak to and understand each other well. The same applied to the northern and northeastern groups where the dominant language spoken was Luo, with each group shaping its own dialect. Internecine and inter-tribal wars defined the relationships of these groups.

At the dawn of colonialism in 1894, these indigenous language groups with disparate social organisations and political systems were at various stages in a long-term process of migration and settlement. Buganda and Bunyoro had centralised, well organised

kingdoms (Ofcansky, 1996: 14-15); the Acholi had a segmentary descent polity, and their Langi neighbours (Ogot, 2009: 337), still adapting to the new environment, had a decentralised egalitarian system. The Langi system only promoted a sense of shared identity, or 'Langoness', when amassing an army for defence against a common aggression and through seasonal ritual links, which brought together elders (*etogo*) and age-sets from the entire Lango country. As elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, the advent of colonial rule in Uganda influenced pre-existing identities and political structures. In Uganda colonialism experimented unification of more than forty two autonomous groups into a single colony, its indifference to geopolitical variations sowing seeds of discontent within and between these various ethnic social formations.

In most cases British conquest met with suspicions and fierce resistance. The Baganda, under Kabaka (King) Mwanga II, conceded only after the exiling of their king and the Banyoro after the defeat and exiling of Omukama (King) Kabalega who had earlier, upon being flushed out of his kingdom, continued to wage a protracted war, guerrilla style, from neighbouring Lango (Maxon, 2009: 148-151). With the pacification of Buganda and Bunyoro, the British turned their attention to annexing the north and other protracted wars to protect group integrity were seen in Lango and Acholi (Maxon, 2009: 156). Customarily chiefs of almost all of these groups held responsibility for mobilising and leading groups to battle (e.g. Ogot, 2009: 339). Pacification therefore curtailed their roles as military leaders among their own.

The Langi had initially joined ranks with Kabalega of Bunyoro to defend Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom and had given the defeated Kabalega sanctuary to re-launch his war. They repeatedly had to confront the British Baganda loyalists who had better weapons against the 'natives' largely rudimentary weapons (Ofcansky, 1996: 23). The same can be said of the Lamogi chiefdom in Gulu, which was defeated in 1913 (Adimola, 1954: 166-177). By the second decade of the 1900s, Uganda had been formed and pacified, and the tensions between pre-colonial nations were temporarily diffused. This was so mainly because the local chiefs had all been either co-opted or replaced with British appointees (Finnstrom, 2008: 41). Thus it can be said that a combination of African agency and British interests led to the creation of Uganda as a state in a process which

started in 1860, firming up with the declaration of a protectorate over Buganda kingdom in 1894 (e.g. Thornton, 1998; Karugire, 2010; Southhall, 1980; Reid, 2011).

But Tosh (1978: 110-149) also showed how the British reluctantly extended Uganda's borders to include Lango country from 1894. This was triggered by their need to contain incessant raids by the Langi on areas south of the Nile – areas already considered by the British as falling under their protection. Moreover some clan sections of the Langi had offered asylum to the fugitive kings Kabalega of Bunyoro and Mwanga of Buganda along with some Sudanese Mutineers (Karugire, 2010: 90). Superior firepower of the British (or their local agents) and the defeat and capture of these kings however caused a marked shift in the perceptions of the Langi. Surviving clan leaders⁴⁰ saw the futility of their inferior firepower against the British and instead decided to befriend and manipulate the British for their own political ends. For example, clan leaders such as Odora Arimo of Kungu who belonged to the Oyakori clan and Arum of the Jo Ocukuru clan embraced the British. They then used them as a source of firearms to subdue other groups in Lango in the hope that the British would anoint them chiefs of this otherwise egalitarian society. The British indeed granted both clan heads their wishes, offering them rifles and acknowledging their hut-tax collectors' roles. Thus, some local leaders who eventually showed cooperation with the British were retained and took on daily administrative and judicial roles that often reflected what they and their people were akin to even before colonialism (Gartell, 1983: 1-24; Tosh, 1978: 245). For the decentralised Lango society 'where no political boundaries existed, and where ties of clanship or marriage' (Tosh, 1978: 146) linked each community with another, a new political order emerged. People like Odora and Arum used their new rifles to claim territories beyond the ones that had been settled by their clan sections. They then used their new acquisitions to convince the British to give them chieftdom rights over those areas, so that some form of a centralised political order began to take shape for the first time in Lango society. Thus, between 1912 and 1920 the British created thirty seven chieftdoms that traversed different clan sections. They then appointed a Lango man as

⁴⁰ Tosh explained that majority of clan leaders also ruled men of other clans as long as that leader was acknowledged as the village headman and head of his clan section.

chief over each of these chiefdoms⁴¹ which would later evolve into the current local government units of villages (*wang tic*) headed by a *won pacu*, parishes headed by a *jan jago*, sub counties by a *jago* and counties by a *rwot*. Tosh (1978) offered a complete account of this process of centralisation of administration of Lango country, which culminated in the creation of an elective rather than hereditary paramount chieftaincy by the British (see also Ogot, 2009: 359). Individuals took advantage of their military prowess to cause the British to appoint them chiefs. Their new positions were not clan-based but territorial (see Tosh, 1978: 182). They were government chiefs. Thus an administrative unit in Lango was never ethnically but territorially based irrespective of the heterogeneity of clans. An immediate outcome of such a pacification mechanism was the cessation of the hitherto frequent inter-group raids for cattle and women in the region (see Tosh, 1978: 164).

Driberg (1923) and Tosh (1978: 91-92) stated that bands of Lango warriors were known for such raids as far afield as Kuman in the south east of today's Lango and Madi country in west Nile, where they would bring back with them trophy (*moo*) women and children.⁴² The Langi also acquired their *moo* from the Bunyoro King Kabalega as payment for their mercenary duties during fights with Buganda in the late 1800s. These women were later made into wives and the children adopted by their captors. Driberg further stated that quests for girls to be made into wives became a major cause for attacks by the Langi. The Langi, small in number in those days, and with the insatiable need to raise and maintain a large warrior base sought to have many wives who could bear as many sons as possible. Madi women's high-fertility reputation made them particularly attractive to Lango warriors who made frequent attacks on Madi villages.

This manner of acquisition of wives can be compared with the abduction, rape and forced impregnation of women and girls during armed conflicts in contemporary

⁴¹ Tosh noted that the chiefs could only be appointed and removed by the provincial commissioner with approval of the district commissioner – both of them British.

⁴² On 14 July 2013, Obua Elisa, a seventy eight year old clan leader of the Alira in Ilera village (Apii) of Ayer sub county whose maternal grand-mother Atoke Rhodia was a trophy woman from Bunyoro, explained that Rhodia was a *moo* of his grandfather Olol who had fought in Bunyoro. Captured individuals were referred to as *moo*, so that a warrior would say, this is my *moo* (*man moo na*).

African countries. It also suggests that contemporary trafficking of women in Africa is not a new phenomenon, but a practice that was well established in pre-colonial times which did not die out during colonialism (e.g. Lawrence & Roberts, eds., 2012: ix). Today's armed conflicts are characterised by abduction of civilians, many of them girls and women, who are not only forced to become fighters, but often also serve as forced sexual partners of male fighters. In northern Uganda, the LRA abducted thousands of girls and women, and distributed them as 'wives' to commanders of the group between 1987 and 2006 (Baines, 2014; Okello & Hovil, 2007). When the LRA relocated to the DRC in 2006, the group joined tens of other militant groups to continue abducting girls and women and turn them into their 'wives' (HRW, 2002; Liebling, et al., 2011). A similar pattern was also documented of Sierra Leone's RUF in the 1990s, where it abducted at least 215,000 girls and women and forced them to become 'wives' (Coulter, 2009; Dyan & McKay, 2001). Scholars have argued that the use of women and girls for sexual gratification, humiliation and forced impregnation during war was tantamount to sexual violence (e.g. Nowrojee 1996; Coulter, 2009; Carpenter, 2007). The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC)⁴³ re-enforced this argument by gazeting such practices as crimes against humanity.⁴⁴

A similar comparison may be made of children who were born of such unions in pre-colonial Lango and the so-called children born of war that result from sexual violence carried out by armed groups in post-colonial African countries (e.g. Apio, 2007; Delaet, 2007). Thus, whereas the forced wife practice was prevalent and seen as a legitimate means of acquiring wives and offspring a century ago, the global legal system now

⁴³ See *United Nations Treaty Collection*. Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. United Nations.

⁴⁴ The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court Explanatory Memorandum, defines crimes against humanity as '...particularly odious offences in that they constitute a serious attack on human dignity or grave humiliation or a degradation of human beings.' They are not isolated or sporadic events, but are part either of a government policy (although the perpetrators need not identify themselves with this policy) or of a wide practice of atrocities tolerated or condoned by a government or a de facto authority. Murder; massacres; dehumanization; extermination; human experimentation; extrajudicial punishments; military use of children; kidnappings; unjust imprisonment; slavery; cannibalism, torture; rape; political, racial, or religious persecution; and other inhumane acts reach the threshold of crimes against humanity only if they are part of a widespread or systematic practice. Isolated inhumane acts of this nature may instead constitute grave infringements of human rights, or - depending on the circumstances - war crimes, but are not classified as crimes against humanity.

criminalises it. In Uganda, pacification by colonial Britain undermined the legitimacy of warfare and raids as the means to obtain wives for reproduction of offspring.

Anti-colonial resistance was re-ignited after the 1940s, and this time there was some alignment across groups that harboured anti-colonial sentiments, including political activists from both peasantry and old chiefly groups (Ogot, 2009: 361-373). But even as this quest for national independence took centre stage, some individual groups' agitation for either dominance or secession remained strong to 'safeguard the independence of their sub nations against the rest of Uganda' sometimes to the point of sacrificing attainment of national independence if their aim was threatened (Uzoigwe, 1982: 217).

Individuals, kingdoms and political parties pitted against each other in the run up to and after independence. For example, when it became apparent that independence from the British could usher in a Republican Uganda, curtailing the chance of the Kabaka and Buganda to reign supreme over the rest of the country, protagonists of the Buganda monarchy formed a party called Kabaka Yekka (king alone) to engender the political interests and cultural heritage of the Buganda monarchy above the rest of the country (see Uzoigwe 1982: 217; Karugire 2010: 170-198).

Numerous studies of Uganda have argued that such a weakness found its roots in colonial Britain's indifference toward the glaring systemic and structural diversities inherent within the various sub nations that made up Uganda. Instead, Britain aggressively identified only with what seemed more progressive for her *higher* architectural project of annexation, replicating only what was convenient for her in the rest of the country's varied autonomous nations. Of specific interest to Britain, for example, was the Buganda centralised system of administration, which streamlined leadership hierarchically. The Baganda were a numerous people, all speaking the same language and ruled by a single monarch. This helped streamline colonial domination, as Britain did not have to confront numerous Buganda chiefs to annex the kingdom. But in so-called acephalous societies, common in some of the Nilo-Saharan speaking groups, numerous often chief-less clans made it difficult for the colonialist to annex these

groups (John Tosh, 1973: 473; 1978: 109). Thus the British found themselves creating tribes and chiefdoms out of these numerous groups – where none originally existed – and appointing chiefs or Baganda agents in conformity with the Buganda system of centralised government. Such a strategy seemed inevitable for indirect rule (cf. Iliffe, 1979: 323). But it further demonstrated the extent of African agency in the shaping of colonial states (Thornton 1998: 142). Africans were not just passive or antagonistic participants but often took advantage of European contacts to fulfill their own ambitions politically and economically (see also Karugire, 2010).

Britain thus colonised Buganda, then used Buganda and its system of polity for indirect rule over the rest of Uganda's small nations (Maxon, 2009). In a way therefore, it was a double colonisation. Whereas Buganda had only to stave off colonial hegemony of the British, the various other groups outside Buganda had to contend with an additional threat to their integrity – the Baganda themselves. As Uzoigwe (1982: 9) put it: 'As a colonial state, the rest of Uganda was almost literally an extension of Buganda'.

This position was further cemented by the stratification of opportunities along tribal lines, which persisted throughout British colonial rule. For example, the British largely reserved and popularised agriculture and civil service opportunities in the south and emphasized military service for the northern peoples, notably Acholi and Langi (Dolan, 2011:41). This policy led to an irreversible polarisation of the two regions. Scholars variously read this as a measure of 'divide and rule', which froze to some extent 'the play of identities' in the new nation (e.g. Finnstrom, 2008: 31), a position widely acknowledged in the various writings on the troubled history of post-colonial Uganda. Southhall (1980: 640) thus observed that the British used the Baganda 'to establish a colonial territory on the cheap, and rewarded them with a treaty relationship of special privilege which, as long as it was honoured, made it impossible to fit them (kingdom) into a parliamentary constitution (at independence)...'

It is with such a beginning that Uganda set upon its course as a nation. The seeds of hegemony by one sub nation over other smaller ones and the stereotyping of economic and civil service opportunities to ethnicity had been sowed. The rigidity with which

some leaders of various sub nations held onto these stereotypes would define the character of post independent Uganda.

Nevertheless, the threat of domination by foreign powers mobilised the local consciences to oppose this intrusion. African sub nations, after unsuccessful campaigns carried out separately by each society or group, dropped their individual differences to form a common front and oppose colonial hegemony. The Uganda People's Congress (UPC) party won the April 1962 elections. UPC leader Apolo Milton Obote, a Lango from Akokoro in Apac district was summoned by the colonial British Governor to form a government. It was based on an alliance with the Kabaka Yeka (KY) Party, which had Buganda as its bastion. Obote assumed power from the British as the first executive prime minister of independent Uganda, while the Kabaka of Buganda, Mutesa II, had a ceremonial title of 'president' over Uganda – paving the way for the promulgation of an independent Uganda Constitution. On 9 October 1962, Uganda attained independence from the British.

2.3. Post-colonial Uganda

Yet prevailing ideas of ethnicity weakened this new national solidarity. Since for the most part ethnicity had been matched with opportunities during colonial times, any change in the reins of power was envisaged as a threat of one group directed at another. At independence, the cracks widened considerably with some of these social groups working either to assert their autonomy or guarantee their respective interests. This re-awakened the older quest for self-determination by some groups who wished to retain their privileged 'ethnicitised' positions or secede, a trend that would set the new nation along a path of continuous violence and coups as the country tried to achieve national integration in spite of ethnic diversity.

Such divergent interests revolved around other power centres whose authorities competed with the central government headed by Obote (Karugire, 2010: 189, 196-197, Southall, 1980: 640, Mazrui in Ravenhill, 1976 and Mittelman in Ravenhill, 1976). An important example was the kabakaship (kingdom) of Buganda, which had the loyalty of

the Baganda – the most numerous language group in Uganda. As Southhall (1980: 640) observed, it was the ‘lost counties’, which Britain had taken from Bunyoro in 1900 to reward Buganda, which led to an outright confrontation between Obote’s central government and the King of Buganda after a referendum in 1966. The inhabitants of the two counties (Bugangaizi and Buyaga) had voted to return to Bunyoro kingdom. But the king of Buganda, then serving as a constitutional head of state of Uganda refused to ratify their decision, leading to a constitutional crisis in which Obote abrogated the 1962 constitution.

The post of constitutional president, which had been held by the Kabaka of Buganda, was dropped and kingdoms abolished as a means of neutralising their polarising powers. Obote then improvised militarised methods to govern a quasi-military order that was propped with the help of the army commander General Idi Amin Dada. To try and further consolidate power to the central government, Obote in his famous ‘Move to the Left’ launched the common man’s charter, seen by scholars like Mittleman (1976) as an attempt to introduce socialism in Uganda. Others like Mazrui (1976) argued that it was a move to forge national unity in a republican state that would reduce economic gaps between the political elite and the masses – and therefore a threat to the kabakaship and the continuous existence of other kingdoms. At the same time, Obote seeing the importance the military played in keeping him in power, went on to elevate soldiers from Lango and Acholi. He deemed the army more loyal on account of shared ethnicity (Lango) and Luo Language (Acholi). This caused a fall out with Idi Amin, who felt alienated and started recruiting soldiers from his own Kakwa speaking group in west Nile, Nubi and Sudanese regions (Southhall, 1980: 640). At this point in time the Army started evolving as a distinct power, which could upset political balances by choosing who to take sides with. As seen in the role it played between Amin and Obote, it invoked ethnic arguments, and deployed ideas of ethnicity to shape political alignments.

In 1971, Amin launched the first successful coup against his erstwhile friend Obote. To consolidate his hold onto power, Amin used an ethnic and religious rationale to strengthen his supporters and weaken his detractors (Branch, 2011: 57; Southhall, 1980). He cleansed the national army of soldiers from Lango and Acholi as a strategy to

purge out any sympathy for the deposed president Obote, himself a Lango (Branch, 2011:57; Allen, 1991: 371). This ethnic cleansing targeted the elite as well. This incident influenced future insurrections in the country, as discussed in the section on the LRA below. Amin was a Muslim and made significant attempts to islamise the country. For example during his rule, which lasted until 1979, Uganda became a member of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) even though Islam has historically been a minority faith in Uganda.

In 1979, a combined force of Tanzanian soldiers and Ugandan exiles took over power in Uganda, forcing Amin into exile (Acheson-Brown, 2001: 1-11). At least 40,000 Tanzanian soldiers ended up spending more than two years in Uganda and committed rape, murders and other crimes in the country they had helped liberate (Cassidy, 2012: 11). They also entered into consensual sexual relationships with Ugandan women and fathered children. When they returned to Tanzania the women and their children remained in Uganda. Most of these children did not know their biological fathers. Thus, the advent of Tanzanian soldiers into Uganda not only re-introduced peace, albeit short-lived, but also created a 'new breed' of children which could be associated with war. These children, many of who could be categorised as resulting from consensual relationships between their parents, are comparable to children who were born of pre-colonial trophy women in Lango and those now called children born of war in contemporary African armed conflicts discussed in chapter four and six of this thesis.

In 1980, a general election returned victory for Milton Obote and he assumed power for the second time. But a section of disenfranchised former exiles led by Yoweri Museveni rejected the results claiming it was flawed and declared war on Obote's government. A five-year guerrilla war was launched in the Buganda region (Luwero) incurring thousands of civilian deaths. In 1985, a military coup by a section of the government army, the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA), led by Brigadier Bazillo Olara Okello and General Tito Okello, overthrew Obote (Allen, 1991: 370-399). The leaders of the coup were all from Acholi. The mutineers believed that the majority of soldiers of the UNLA who were dying at battle fighting the rebels of the NRA in Luwero were Acholi and not Langi. The regime was rife with looting and vengeful killings that

targeted, among others, the Langi (Behrend, 1999: 24), from which Obote hailed. The new government led by Tito Okello Lutwa, Obote's former army Commander was known as *loc* Acholi (Acholi Regime), showing the extent to which political dynamics were rationalised in ethnic terms.

Communal liability was a highly valued concept among the Langi (Driberg, 1923: 208-209). A felony committed by or against any member of a clan was the responsibility of its members and penalties levied to pacify the offended were a collective duty.⁴⁵ This was also true of the Acholi.⁴⁶ When the Okellos overthrew Obote's second administration, perceptions of collective liability blended with earlier agitation for group supremacy that had historically characterised colonial and post-colonial Uganda and the regime came to be perceived as 'owned' by Acholi people. In Lango, as indeed in the rest of the country, the regime was known as *loc* Acholi (the Acholi regime).⁴⁷ Thus, the glue that held the Langi and Acholi together, for example from common experiences of British policies and the Idi Amin ethnic cleansing of the 1970's, was weakened and age-old animosities that had divided Acholi and Lango-speaking groups in pre-colonial Uganda were resurrected.

After six months (January 1986) however, the Okello regime fell to the rebels of the National Resistance Army (NRA) led by Yoweri Museveni. Okello's UNLA remnants fled northwards. Museveni's NRA then launched a protracted war to clean up the north of fleeing UNLA soldiers and other insurgent groups. The new regime was fast to ethnicise the defeated around Acholi ethnicity and used it to alienate the Acholi civilian population both politically and militarily (Branch, 2011: 63). In the eyes of the Acholi, the tides had turned and the new regime was labeled the '*Nyaranda* regime' (in the belief that Museveni was Rwandese).

⁴⁵ See chapter three of this thesis for further discussion of this.

⁴⁶ Niwano Peace Foundation, (undated). Reconciliation process (*mato oput*) among the Acholi Tribe in northern Uganda: A commemorative address made during the 21st Niwano Peace Prize award in Japan. Available from: www.niwano.org/files/peace_prize/21st/speech_e-pdf. [Accessed 18 February 2014].

⁴⁷ Focus group discussion, nineteen elderly men and women, Abako village in Alempi parish of Ayer sub county, Kole district, Uganda. 15 January 2014.

Most former (UNLA) soldiers that succeeded in making their way home failed to fit into the Acholi social setting and instead turned to anti-social behaviour amongst their own people (Behrend, 1999: 24). Failure to 'fit' within the old social groups has been pursued by scholars as a major ground that nurtured rebellion in the region. Scholars such as Behrend (1999) posited that the UNLA soldiers returned to Acholi impure. The impurity resulted largely from the killings they had committed in the course of war. Group elders required that returnees undergo purification rituals in order to be reintegrated in their communities. Purification would reconcile the spirits of those killed and stave off evil from befalling the group.⁴⁸ The returnees could not therefore mix with any social group until the ritual was completed. But this purification ritual did not take place for two key reasons (Behrend, 1999: 28). First, the returnees did not bring back relics from those they had killed which were an important requirement for the purification. Second, they had been exposed to ways of life that differed from the peasantry lifestyles they had lived before joining the military. Subordinating oneself to a group's purification rituals would therefore greatly curtail prospects of maintaining the high life they had curved for themselves. This thirst for a different lifestyle blended tightly with the waning respect for the group's integrity. They now ravaged their communities for goods to meet the costs of the modern lifestyles they had been accustomed to during the Okello junta. The sense of impurity therefore persisted unchallenged. So the returnees remained 'outside' the groups yet resided within the groups as 'internal strangers' (Washington & Manchestro, 1989: 223; Fortes & Patterson, 1975: 242). For, these soldiers once part of the group now returned and behaved in ways alien to the prevailing customary norms and beliefs.

Group sanctity was intricately linked to Acholi spirituality. The Acholi cultural leadership mediated the balance between the social and spirit realms. But Branch (2011: 62-63) emphasised the failure of these cultural custodians to rein in the returnees and establish moral order on the land when the UNLA remnants entered Acholi. If the soldiers turned their backs to these custodians, then they definitely turned their backs on the group's physical and spiritual sanctity and all that they represented. By defying the elders and failing to undergo the purification rituals, they challenged Acholi notions of

⁴⁸ Tim Allen (2006) notes that afflictions on individuals or groups are often explained in terms of interpersonal causes or spirituality.

belonging. This created new social challenges; the returnees mixed and interacted with the locals, including the elders who were supposed to administer the purification in the first place. It was no longer a case of returning UNLA soldiers; the line separating the 'impure' from 'pure' had been blurred. The contamination thus rendered the entire Acholi social infrastructure helpless. The social system could thus no longer fulfill its expected roles. Age-old practices of conflict resolution within and between groups to re-establish harmony such as those between the Langi and Acholi were suspended. Resentments thrived within and between these groups. The group's normative system had undoubtedly reached a point where it could not on its own fulfill the processes of re-ordering members morally. In these circumstances, spirit mediums from Acholi began to argue that everyone needed purification – a rebirth. The re-birth would basically rely on war as a cleansing mechanism that would sieve out the good from the bad and re-establish moral order.⁴⁹ In this way, the mediums mobilised their followers to perceive themselves as also guilty of the deeds of UNLA soldiers who identified themselves as Acholi. Meier (2013: 228-243) and Behrend (1999) have written extensively on the merit of Acholi cosmology in the run-up to the 1980s-2006 wars. Meier, for example, asserted that the pre-HSM chaos that was rife in Acholi stripped the *Rwodi* (chiefs) of their politico-spiritual powers, afflicted the wider society and overturned the social order so that the 'non-social' entities (spirits and their mediums) automatically emerged and usurped the roles of re-ordering society.

But the influences of the spirit mediums were not limited to the borders of Acholi ethnicity. Although some scholarly accounts (e.g. Dolan, 2011: 55) state that the LRA war crossed into Lango much later (2003) in the conflict, large parts of so-called Lango, which comprised of all sub counties bordering Acholi, were targeted by the LRA insurgency. Earlier, spirit medium Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) - discussed further in section 2.4 below - had recruited massively from Apac district (specifically areas of present Oyam and Kole districts)⁵⁰ and launched numerous attacks

⁴⁹ Behrend (1999) has written extensively on the emergence of the spirit mediums in Acholi and its intended roles and tactics. See p. 1, for example.

⁵⁰ In 2007, Apac gave rise to two more districts of Kole and Oyam. But during the war referred to here, these new districts of Oyam and Kole were parts of Lango that were overrun by activities of the HSM and LRA.

on Lira.⁵¹ The sub county of Odek, the LRA's leader Joseph Kony's birthplace and original cradle for his spiritual practices (Behrend, 1999), borders Otwal and Aromo sub counties; areas that the locals associated with the LRA conflict right from the beginning. The same can be said of Minakulu and Ngai sub counties, all bordering Gulu district. More 'inner' areas of Lango were also targeted, such as Aboke and Iceme, as early as the second half of 1980s where scores of people were abducted, displaced and killed. Ignoring this fact can only lead to gross misrepresentation in the reconstruction of the complete narrative of the conflict. For example, Branch (2011), who had the Acholi ethnicity under his microscope, not only stated that the group was the largest, but also gave the impression that it was the only group occupying the geographical north of the country and hence the only one that had borne the brunt of the LRA war from the onset of the conflict. Yet, Branch went on to fill critical gaps in his Acholi narrative by referring to key political figures from other ethnicities. He, for example, used Omara Atubo, a Lango with neither residential nor genealogical links with the Acholi ethnicity as evidence of a persecuted Acholi.

The choice of Lango-speaking society as a case study for this thesis is therefore also an attempt at widening the boundaries of LRA-related scholarship to other non-Acholi groups in northern Uganda. Other than Lango, the LRA war was also fought in Teso and parts of West Nile. This study shows that the LRA war had direct impacts on groups other than the Acholi right from the start, and that these groups perceived the violence they were exposed to, and at times participated in, as a recent reconfiguration of long-term ethnic tensions with their Acholi neighbours. Tensions experienced and expressed in an ethnic idiom. During fieldwork, participants stated that they were unhappy with their Acholi neighbours because the LRA had committed atrocities in Lango.⁵² Similarly, participants who identified themselves as Acholi but lived in Lango

⁵¹ From 2007 to 2015, Lira district also gave rise to four more districts of Amolatar, Dokolo, Alebtong and Otuke.

⁵² Focus group discussion: nineteen elderly men and women, Abako village in Alemi parish of Ayer sub county, Kole district, Uganda. 15 January 2014.

said they had been blamed for the killings and abduction carried out by the LRA, even when they had also been victims of the LRA.⁵³

2.4. The Lord's Resistance Army

While the authority of cultural leaders in Acholi dwindled, the influence of spirit mediums grew (Meier, 2013: 243). In 1986, Alice Auma Lakwena, a twenty seven-year-old spirit medium from the outskirts of Gulu mobilised followers to join in a military struggle for a re-birth of the people (Finnstrom, 2008: 75; Meier, 2013: 243). With her movement, she sought to: 'purify a nation contaminated by moral pollution, to rid the land of witches, to bring a message of salvation, to restore order' (Ward, 2001: 339). Lakwena's insurrection took advantage of the loss of authority by cultural leaders of the day. The Lakwena spirit engendered both the old Acholi spirituality and Christian beliefs linkable to Alice's Catholic faith (Allen, 1991: 370-399). This served to bridge the gap between Acholi cosmology and Christianity. Such legitimacy was important for mobilisation of followers in a society that had at least 73% of its population professing Christianity.⁵⁴

Many former UNLA soldiers readily joined, not so much for the mysticism that many had earlier disregarded in the call for 'purification' but to form a front to repel what they (UNLA veterans) believed would be a repeat of ethnic cleansing of the 1970s (Behrend, 1999: 25). The Holy Spirit Movement was this mystic rebel outfit. Men, women and youth from both Lango and Acholi joined. As with the UNLA, recruits from non-Acholi ethnicities were also UNLA remnants and simply joined for self-preservation rather than purification. After all, the NRA's 35th battalion in Kitgum district had already demonstrated such likelihood when they carried out mass killings in Kitgum (Kwesiga et al., 2014; JRP, 2013; Eriku & Kwo, 2012). Additionally, the NRA had also issued an order for all ex-soldiers to report to barracks, yet a similar order to Acholi (and Langi) soldiers at the on-set of Idi Amin's regime in 1971 had led to their

⁵³E.g. Interview: Ogwang S., Junior Quarters, Lira, Uganda. 4 January 2014.

⁵⁴ See Uganda Bureau of Statistics. 2001. Available from: <http://www.ubos.org/onlinefiles/uploads/ubos/pdf%20documents/2002%20CensusPopnCompositionAnalyticalReport.pdf>. [Accessed 29 November 2014].

massacre (Allen, 1991: 371). Upon their defeat in 1987, a number of similar resistance outfits sprouted – most of them made up of remnants of the HSM and rebels of the Uganda People's Defence Army (UPDA) (Dolan, 2011: 43-44). One such movement was the Holy Spirit soldiers of Joseph Kony, a 'spirit medium' (Branch, 2011: 62-63) related to Alice Lakwena. Study participants believed that Kony was a medium for several spirits, with the spirit Silindi being the most influential one. They stated that the spirit Silindi entered Kony on the 7th April 1986 and anointed him. On that day, the spirit assigned him to start a new 'Mission' as a soldier. The 7th April of every year was therefore an important day, referred to as '*nino a Silindi*' (Silindi's Day). Respondents said Kony always recounted this historical event during 'prayers'. Often, they explained, the day was a bad one for the LRA because it was always a day of violence. According to study participants, the UPDF and sometimes the SPLA (composed mainly of the Dinka of southern Sudan then) always attacked the LRA on several anniversaries of '*nino a Silindi*'.

But by incorporating a call to arms against government of Uganda in their social and spiritual reboot, these movements ceased to be just ethnic purification rituals. It also was not just a self-preservation strategy – a means of avoiding a repeat of the 1970s ethnic cleansing of Acholi from the national army, as UNLA returnees that had joined the HSM had believed. They had morphed into rebel groups. As rebels they confronted government soldiers, the National Resistance Army (NRA), later known as Uganda People's Defence Forces. By confronting the army that had ushered in the new government of Yoweri Museveni, the rebel movements laid their claim to political power. They thus sought to use ethnicity and religion to re-shape the terrain of political power in the country. They anchored their mobilisation on Acholi ethnicity and spirituality (religion). But Lakwena's quest to shape the political environs using an ethnic cosmological authority was not unique to Acholi society. The prominence of spirit mediums has been historically associated with significant moments in the history of a people – particularly when disastrous events (and diseases) occurred to warrant the spirits to intervene directly through mediums.

Feuds mobilised by spirit mediums have historically functioned as a political means of addressing calamities and restoring social order in many societies in Africa. For example, when Mahdism and, later, the British colonial intentions gained grounds in Nuer-land, prominent spirit mediums emerged to rally the Nuer against them (e.g. Evans-Pritchard, 1940: 187; Omissi, 1990: 114-115). Similarly, in 1905 a prophet called Kinjikitile used his mystic narratives of a sacred liquid which could repel German bullets to mobilise the *maji maji*, a mass uprising of twenty ethnic groups in Tanzania to wage anti-colonial wars against the Germans (e.g. John Iliffe, 1967).

The influence of ethnicity and religion in shaping and re-shaping pre and post-independent Uganda has been well documented (see for e.g. Uzoigwe; 1980 & Karugire; 2010). Historical perspectives have, for example, placed ethnicity and religion as the power centres that regulated the formation of key political parties in Uganda. Old political parties like the Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) and the Democratic Party (DP) have their roots in the Protestant and Roman Catholic churches respectively (e.g. Karugire, 2010). Idi Amin's regime, which lasted from 1971-1979, was generally perceived as an Islamic government. Similarly, the Kabaka Yekka (King Only) political party was founded by the Buganda Monarchy to champion her political and cultural interests. The overtones of mysticism and ethnicity in the HSM and the LRA can therefore be read as playing a similar role. They mobilised political tropes that were familiar to Ugandan societies. They accrued legitimacy to the rebels' strategies and boosted their recruitments.

This quest for legitimacy was demonstrated in attempts by the LRA to introduce doctrines of different religions depending on context. As discussed above, anthropologists have variously linked the idea of 're-birth', which was launched by Lakwena and then Joseph Kony, to popular beliefs in Acholi spirituality (McKinley & James, 1997; McLaughlin, 2004). But the LRA also showed a tendency to incorporate a Christian perspective in the wearing of rosaries and the pronouncement of its ideologies based on the biblical Ten Commandments especially in its early days. But this was in line with the prevailing religious circumstances in Acholi at the time. Joseph Kony had been an altar boy at a Catholic church and was a son of a Catholic catechist and an

Anglican mother (Briggs, 2005: 105-144; Sorious, 2012).⁵⁵ Moreover 73% of Acholi also professed to be Roman Catholics.⁵⁶ The LRA envisaged recruiting from and sustaining its movement within this Christian population. It therefore simply made sense for the LRA to identify with the local perspective, which it did by adapting and preaching the church's doctrines as its own ideology. But this only lasted as long as the LRA restricted its influence within northern Uganda.

In 1993, when the LRA leadership made alliance with the Sudan Government – a country that practices *sharia* (Islamic) law - and established its bases in the bushes of southern Sudan, it also introduced an Islamic undertone into its ideology.⁵⁷ For example, it outlawed and severely punished the rearing and consumption of pigs within and outside the movement. Thus depending on the circumstances, the LRA simply appropriated and deployed the Acholi mysticism, then Christianity and, later, Islamic perspectives as popular mobilisation strategies. Like ethnicity, the LRA used religious ideas as tools for achieving power. With these, they could legitimize their rebellion and enroll recruits. It could therefore morph its ideology in line with the perspectives of those who showed willingness to recognise this legitimacy and offer logistics that it needed to sustain itself.

Yet there was difficulty in recruiting members voluntarily. The only voluntary recruits that stood out were the UNLA veterans who had, by initially refusing to adhere to the lineage based purification (a spiritual procedure), already shown little regard for Acholi traditional spirituality. Besides, the LRA increasingly lacked popularity among the

⁵⁵ The Uganda population and housing census analytical report of the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2006) showed that at 59.2% the Roman Catholic faith takes the largest share of the population in northern Uganda, followed by the Anglicans (Protestants) at 25.3% and Moslems at 8.5%.

⁵⁶ Uganda Bureau of Statistics. 2001. Available from: <http://www.ubos.org/onlinefiles/uploads/ubos/pdf%20documents/2002%20CensusPopnCompostionAnalyticalReport.pdf>. [Accessed 29 November 2014].

⁵⁷ It suffices that at the time of the study, Sudan as was known during the LRA war had newly granted independence to Southern Sudan on 9 July 2011. James Copnall (2014) has written extensively on matters of politics, religion and the various groups in the Sudan before and after this break away. South Sudan has a conglomerate of Christian and African traditional religion the north has always been dominated by native Arabs who are also Moslems. The Arabs have been in control of government since independence in 1956. The Sharia law dominates the justice system in Sudan.

Acholi by the start of the 1990s (Allen, 2006:49). This discord caused a problem for the LRA; they could not swell their ranks easily with new recruits.

The reluctance of the population to offer themselves unconditionally for the cleansing questioned LRA's credibility. At the onset of the war, and indeed throughout its entire course, both LRA and government of Uganda had claimed that the civilian population was collaborating with their enemy. Whereas government branded informants on LRA threats to them as 'rebel collaborators' and matched that with severe punishments, the LRA retaliated on the same population it suspected of betrayal, with severe repercussions including maiming and death (Dolan, 2011: 73). Thus one way of staying relatively safe was to remain 'neutral'. Yet the LRA needed men to fight its war. The LRA resorted to forceful recruitment, mostly of children, some as young as eight years old. Children were easy to manipulate and indoctrinate (HRW, 2003:10). It embarked on terror strategies both for recruitment but also to demonstrate its spiritual invincibility, which the reluctance of the civilian population seemed to challenge.

Joseph Kony's rebel activities were launched in 1987. By 1988, this group that had numerous name changes before finally settling for the Lord's Resistance Army, was already shaping itself as the only outstanding rebel group in the region and relying on abduction as a major strategy of negotiating recruitment from among the Acholi and parts of neighbouring Lango (Behrend, 1999:179-183). LRA's terror activities in northern Uganda were broad and complex, spanning from 1987 to 2006. It swept through the entire Acholi region, straddled large swaths of neighbouring Lango and, in 2003, spilled over to Teso region. Its methods of war were complex and brutal on the civilian population. Doom & Vlassenroot (1999) acknowledged that violence is a defining factor in any civil war. Yet they conclude that the nature of violence perpetuated by the LRA was simply 'blind terror' (Doom & Vlassenroot, 1999: 5-36), which on the surface had no political beneficence. Indeed Dunn (2004: 139-142) denotes the trend of this development where LRA's Kony was waved off simply as a 'madman' pursuing acts of violence and terror without an agenda. These acts of violence rendered LRA an enemy of the population it had set out to 'save' in the first

place. In 2001, the United States of America⁵⁸ included the LRA on its list of terrorist organisations. A similar move was made by the African Union on 22 November 2011.⁵⁹ On 16 December 2003, the Government of Uganda referred the LRA to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for consideration of crimes committed in the context of the LRA war in northern Uganda with effect from 1 July 2002.⁶⁰ The ICC followed this with an 8 July 2005 issuance of arrest warrants for five top commanders of the LRA on allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity.⁶¹ The warrant for Joseph Kony partly elaborated:

Since at least 1987... the LRA has engaged in a cycle of violence and established a pattern of brutalization of civilians by acts including murder, abduction, sexual enslavement, mutilation, as well as mass burnings of houses and looting of camp settlements; that abducted civilians including children, are said to have been forcibly recruited as fighters, porters and sex slaves to serve the LRA and to contribute to attacks against the Uganda army and civilian communities.⁶²

In terms of intensity, LRA's atrocities on civilian population in the north varied – with Acholi being the epicenter along with some parts of Lango such as the sub counties of Otwal, Ngai, Iceme, Minakulu, Okwang, Aromo, Ogur and Apala that bordered Gulu and Pader districts right from the early days of the LRA. These included abductions, maiming, looting, pillaging and massacres. There were also reports of some members of the LRA attempting to practice cannibalism as was seen in the massacre at a place called Omot in Pader district on 23 October 2002 (e.g Lee, 2010). During fieldwork, some participants identified the leader of the killings that had taken place in Omot. He

⁵⁸ See Office of the Spokesperson, 2012. The Lord's Resistance Army. U.S. Department of State. Factsheet. March, 23. Available from: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/03/186734.htm>. [Accessed 20 February 2013].

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ The referral could only affect crimes committed with effect from 1 July 2002, because that was the time when the ICC statute came into force. Any crimes committed prior to that date were therefore not legible.

⁶¹ Warrant of Arrest unsealed against five LRA commanders (Press release). International Criminal Court. 14 October 2005. [Accessed 30 October 2014].

⁶² Extracted from the warrant of arrest for Joseph Kony issued on the 8 July 2005 as amended on 27 September 2005. This can be found on ICC-02/04-01/05-53, No. ICC-02/04-01/5.

had since returned from the LRA and had turned into a habitual drunkard of *arege* (potent gin) at a local bar operated by his former LRA colleagues at the outskirts of Gulu town.⁶³

Whereas acts of mutilation and cannibalism were not widespread, abductions and massacres were rampant and thousands of abducted young girls and women were forced into sexual slavery.⁶⁴ Yet these acts were similar to those that took place in pre-colonial Acholi (Behrend, 1999: 39): where the victor humiliates the group and carries away their assets, children and women. Like Lango warriors of old (discussed in section 2.2. above), victorious warriors in pre-Ugandan Acholi societies often used this to humiliate their opponents. They would take with them as spoils of war women, children and cattle of the losing side. The Acholi called it a 'war of attack' (Behrend, 1999: 39). The LRA used such attacks to both pillage and abduct new recruits. Children, some as young as eight years, and adults were forcefully taken from Acholi, neighbouring Lango and Teso and taken to the LRA bases to be re-socialized into soldiers, conjugal partners and porters (Lanes, 2007: 1991-1992). A further discussion of the experiences of LRA recruits in the group's bases in Sudan is contained in chapter four of this thesis.

Although abductions and killings had been the hallmark of the LRA in Acholi and Lango from the onset, the rage of massacres set in from 1991 onwards accompanied by numerous mutilations and maiming of civilians. By 1995, Kony and his followers had been welcomed by the Sudan Government to set up LRA bases in the southern bushes of Sudan in retaliation against the perceived support Ugandan Government was offering the southern rebel group – the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) against Khartoum. The LRA got military equipments and food from the Sudan government, and

⁶³ E.g. Interview: Oyat, thirty five years old, former signaler of the LRA, Gulu, Uganda. 23 February 2015.

⁶⁴ Respondents who were in contact with LRA leaders claimed that the LRA had zero tolerance for acts of Cannibalism. Oyat in particular claimed that Kony who was holed up on the Imatong ranges in Sudan first heard of the Omot massacre on the BBC, then raised him immediately to order that he (Oyat) relays information to LRA field command to arrest man who had chopped and cooked civilians. According to Oyat, Kony was angry that such a practice would paint a poor picture of the LRA. Oyat claimed that the man was indeed arrested and taken back into Sudan where Kony ordered an immediate firing squad. But he was related to Vincent Otii, who, arguing that they were in a state of war where they needed the man alive, convinced Kony to allow the man to live and fight on.

paid back by fighting the SPLA (HRW, 1997). With these support they also advanced their activities in northern Uganda, carrying out unprecedented massacres, ambushes and abductions, some of which are captured in figure three below:

Figure 4: Some of the LRA atrocities on civilian population in northern Uganda

Incident	Date	Target
Massacre of more than 200 people	22 February 2004	Barlonyo, Lira ^a
Massacre of forty people	4 February 2004	Abia in Apala (Lira) ^b
Murder of twenty eight people during which the bodies were cut up and placed into cooking pots	23 October 2002	Corner Gang Pa Aculu at Opota Trading centre in Omot sub county ^c
Massacre of 412 people	January 1997	Lokun/Palabek (Dolan, 2011: 46)
Abduction of 139 school girls	10 October 1996	Aboke girls
Massacre of 93 people at Odek	20 April 2004	Odek, Gulu ^d
Massacre of 300 people	20 April 1995	Atiak ^e
Massacre of ninety eight people	13 July 1996	Acol-pii refugee camp ^f

^a See www.newvision.co.ug/PA/8/26/493694; article on 'Myths and Facts about Northern Uganda', published April 21, 2006; see also Justice and Reconciliation project. 2009. Kill Every Living thing: the Barlonyo Massacre, FN IX. Available from: http://justiceandreconciliation.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/JRP_FN9_Barlonyo-2009.pdf. [Accessed 16 February 2013].

^b See Justice and Reconciliation Project. Available from: <http://justiceandreconciliation.com/resources/calendar/>. [Accessed 24 January 2016].

^c *ibid.*

^d *ibid.*

^e *ibid.*

^f See UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2004. Humanitarian Update Uganda Feb. Volume VI, Issue II. Reliefweb. Available from: www.reliefweb.int/.../humanitarian-update-uganda-feb-2004-volume-vi-issue-ii. [Accessed 20 February 2013].

Important was that these activities were reportedly being carried out by LRA officers sometimes related to the targeted community. An example is that which took place at Atiak Sub County in 1995 when LRA's senior Commander Otti Vincent who hailed from Atiak reportedly ordered and watched the massacre of fourty five students of Atiak Technical School.⁷²

⁷² See www.newvision.co.ug/PA/8/26/493694; article on 'Myths and Facts about Northern Uganda', published 21 April 2006 [Accessed 16 February 2013].

Otti's action set a precedent where new recruits were forced to murder relatives and neighbours before being led away into captivity.⁷³ Some authors suggest that such murders served to ritualize indoctrination, severing the recruits from their moral and social bonds mentally and physically (Pham & Stover (2009: 1-14). Moreover these were carried out in complete disregard of traditional practices of post-war ritual purification. Those forced to commit murder amongst their own family and neighbourhood faced the most difficulty in negotiating purification. By murdering members of one's kin and kith, a recruit had turned into an enemy of his or her own community. Yet these structures were the ones charged with initiating and sponsoring purification rituals for a returnee. In the absence of sponsors, the impurity resulting from such acts was seen as lasting permanently in society, a state synonymous with that which society found itself at the onset of the HSM of Alice Lakwena. LRA recruits who might have wished to return could therefore prefer to remain in the LRA for fear of lack of options that would guarantee their safe re-entry into old groups. This therefore contributed to a divorce of abductees from their pre-war social groups.

But the actions of Kony and his LRA did not just cause animosity between abductees and their pre-war social groups. There were also tendencies of inter-ethnic tensions between the Acholi from whom Kony and most of his commanders hailed, and the Langi who had also borne LRA's atrocities. Kony's being an Acholi played a significant role in 'acholising' the LRA war in Lango. The Langi, and indeed many other groups that interacted with the LRA prized notions of collective responsibility where a member of a group committed a crime. As they did with the overthrow of Obote II government in 1985 by Tito Okello, the Langi again perceived the Acholi as collectively responsible for the LRA war. During fieldwork, participants in the study used Acholi and LRA interchangeably when referring to attacks that were launched on their respective communities during the LRA war.⁷⁴ Reports by UN and European

⁷³ During fieldwork respondents, including a senior LRA radio signaler claimed that the Atiak massacre of April 1995 was committed by the more senior commander Otti Lagony and not Otti Vincent, with whom Lagony had a dispute. They explained that these two men were not in any way related and that Otti Vincent was under the command of Otti Lagony at the time of the massacre. Otti Lagony, they explained, was not a native of Atiak, but of Koc Goma.

⁷⁴ E.g. Focus Group Discussion: Abako village, Alemi parish, Ayer Sub County, Kole District, Uganda. 15 January 2014.

Commission also suggested that there was an ethnic overtone in the way individuals in Lango perceived the LRA war. These notions became prominent at moments when large-scale atrocities such as the Abia and Barlonyo massacres took place.

UNOCHA stated:

Meanwhile, ethnic tension has persisted, pausing a potential for violence, as inter-ethnic clashes between some groups of Langi and Acholi people broke out after the attack (the LRA is largely composed of ethnic Acholi). On 25 February, a day of mourning for massacre victims in Lira town, mourners turned violent and, according to press reports, five Acholi civilians were killed and others beaten. It is feared that inter-ethnic fighting might become a much more prevalent aspect of the conflict, and this could be very dangerous.⁷⁵

The European Commission reiterated that the skirmishes added ‘a layer of ethnic tension on top of what was already a highly volatile context of social exclusion and minoritisation’⁷⁶ during which the Ugandan Parliament finally declared the north a disaster area.

During fieldwork, at least eight participants living in Lango identified themselves as Acholi. These individuals were either women married to Langi husbands or migrants who had resettled in Lango. Some were offspring of mixed Acholi-Lango parentage. A few, particularly those in rural areas that were heavily targeted by the LRA still hesitated speaking Acholi to the researcher for fear of reprisal. In Minakulu, a sixty two-year-old woman narrated how she and her child chose not to buy food, and felt hungry, at a rural market in Anyeke (Oyam) in 2004 for fear of speaking to food vendors in Acholi dialect. A sixty four-year-old Acholi woman who was married to a Lango husband and lived in Lira town gave a similar example. She said:

⁷⁵ See UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2004. Humanitarian Update Uganda Feb. Volume VI, Issue II. Reliefweb. Available from: www.reliefweb.int/.../humanitarian-update-uganda-feb-2004-volume-vi-issue-ii. [Accessed 20 February 2013].

⁷⁶ European Commission: Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO): Humanitarian Aid Decision F 9 (FED 9).

When the LRA attacked St. Mary's College Aboke in 1996 and abducted the girls, neighbours and those I had known as friends started hating and abusing me. Yet my daughter had also been taken along with those girls. My husband branded me a rebel, calling me Kony's deputy since I am an Acholi like Kony...In the second term of school last year (2013), I greeted a passer-by with *ico maber* (Acholi for 'good morning' which is understood by Lango speakers as well). But the man refused to answer and his mood changed...⁷⁷

Indeed studies such as that of Hopwood (2008) suggest that individuals held others collectively responsible on grounds of ethnicity for the LRA atrocities, even when they continued living within the same neighbourhood. One of her respondents said of the twin massacres of Abia and Barlonyo: 'We were so annoyed with the Acholi people after the massacre that we wouldn't speak to them...'⁷⁸

Although this study did not explore further the influence of language on the reintegration of ex-combatants and their children, there were indications that some respondents tried to avoid speaking to the researcher (who is Lango) in Acholi dialect and struggled instead to make themselves 'sound' Lango.⁷⁹ Even those who were Langi like Acen but had lost their Lango dialect after remaining long in the LRA attempted to drop the Acholi dialect during the interview. Some later stated that Acholi was the *lingua franca* of the movement, which the rebels enforced by corporal means. Other reports by the Human Rights Watch (August, 2010) and the Great Lakes Policy Forum (May, 2011) continued showing that the LRA used the Acholi language as a strategy to assimilate new recruits while separating them from their non-Acholi speaking communities in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Central African Republic.⁸⁰ The longer one remained with the LRA, the better her or his spoken Acholi became, so that upon return many no longer spoke Lango but Acholi dialect. In a society like Lango,

⁷⁷ Interview: Ogwang S., Junior Quarters, Lira, Uganda. 4 January 2014.

⁷⁸ Male focus group discussion member, fifty three, Abia, November 26 2008 conducted by Julian Hopwood in a report by the International Center for Transitional Justice titled *We Cant Be Sure Who Killed Us: Memory and Memorialization in Post-Conflict Northern Uganda*, p. 10.

⁷⁹ E.g. Interview: Oyat, thirty three years old, Gulu, Uganda. 23 February 2015.

⁸⁰ After their defeat by the UPDF in 2006, the LRA completely relocated into the jungles of Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic and parts of western Sudan.

where the sense of collective responsibility continued to be expressed even after the war, language thus became a factor in the (re)integration of ex-combatants and their children as it became easy to associate them with the LRA.

2.4.1. Abduction

There are conflicting accounts of the magnitude of abduction of children and adults in studies of the LRA. This is because sources often relied upon for such statistical documentations in any context, such as local authorities and organised civil society, were either non-existent or extremely weakened. In a region such as northern Uganda in the late 1980s and 1990s, there was total destruction of both cultural and governmental authorities, which resulted in a leadership vacuum in the conflict infested zones. In some cases record keeping was impracticable with the looting and destruction that took place during the war. In addition, the area of LRA influence was very large, covering rural and sometimes inaccessible communities of Acholi and parts of Lango. Some roads were susceptible to ambushes and landmines – which was a further disincentive to any person capable of gathering details of abduction for a long time.

But it is important to note that the affected communities were those that primarily hinged the indelibility and transmission of events on oral traditions. For example, Ogot (1967: 16) recognized the importance of ‘oral evidence’ and successfully utilised it in reconstructing the history of the Luo, where written evidence was wanting. Thus whereas conventional structures of leadership could not function any more, the affected groups would be in a position to identify members of their groups that were abducted. For, even with the shifting dynamics in settlement patterns where a clan could have members hosted in different local governmental units, it had become a practice for each group to elect a subsidiary leader (chief) to oversee each of the units their members were located in specifically for pre-camp days. This organisation was still strong at the time of the fieldwork. In Te-adwong parish, for example, there lived a *jago atekere* who oversaw the wellbeing of members of his clan section living in Amia Abil and other villages of this parish; he mostly officiated in all marriages and burials in his area and solved cases of land wrangles and domestic violence among members of his clan

section. Should any of these cases fail, he was expected to refer them to the *rwot atekere* whose responsibility spanned across all the parishes, bringing together the *jagi* (plural of *jago*) *atekere* of all parishes in Agweng sub county. He also worked with the *jagi* from across Lango to officiate *culo kwor* (blood payment)⁸¹ and high profile marriages and funerals of their clan-mates. In their numerous clan meetings, these men doled out directives to members to continue observing their norms – with errant cases receiving punishment which ranged from caning to monetary and animal (e.g. goats and hens) fines.

Yet, this alternative (of *atekere* membership) was barely exploited by compilers. Allen acknowledges that some form of registration by local councils and community volunteers only began in 1997 and that it carried on in a haphazard manner, which brought to question the accuracy of the statistics (Allen, 2006: 60). It thus follows that most of the statistics that are available are unsystematic and mostly span the period 1997 to 2006, leaving the period 1987 to 1996 largely unaccounted for.

The period spanning 1997 to 2006 owes its enlightenment largely to the sprouting up of organised civil society that set up reception centres (e.g. Concerned Parents' Association or CPA; Gulu Save the Children Organisation or GUSCO; World Vision or WV, and Rachele Rehabilitation Center). CPA also started mobilising parents who had lost children to abduction for psychosocial support. The period saw a surge in mass displacements into IDP camps, where abductions were easy to detect by local camp leaders. But still, the majority of the population would remain in their homesteads and continue experiencing abductions unreported. For, reporting LRA incidences would attract deadly reprisals from either the LRA or the UPDF for alledged collaboration. The UPDF would castigate one as a rebel collaborator while the LRA would carry out untold atrocities for the 'betrayal' (Branch, 2011: 71, 73). In addition, there were no officially designated points for reporting abductions in the first place. This was the norm till the latter half of 2002 when government decreed compulsory relocation into IDP camps.

⁸¹ *Culo kwor* or blood payment is discussed in section 3.6 below.

Dolan (2011: 46)'s chronological mapping of major events in the war points at 1996 as the official date that government first created so-called 'protected villages'. That very year in October at Acholpii refugee camp, the first massacre was officially recognised and publicised in the history of the conflict. Any statistical references to periods before this therefore can only be traceable to incidences that occurred in institutions such as schools managed by the Catholic missions. Even plausible attempts by researchers such as Phuong, Vinck & Stover (2008: 404-411) who relied on statistics of reception centres fell short. Phoung et al.,'s compilation of 25,231 children and youth who passed through reception centres in northern Uganda does not account for those still missing or those returned straight to their communities. Complexities such as re-abduction of the same survivors are also not taken into account. Years earlier Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) had acknowledged some of these weaknesses when it released its first statistical estimates of the war (1986 - 2001) at 28,903 LRA abductions, putting those below eighteen years at 18,399 (children).⁸²

In the same report, statistics on the Allied Democratic Front (ADF), another Ugandan rebel outfit that had launched its campaigns in the southern part of Uganda (Rwenzori) in 1997 indicated 2,036 abductions had taken place with 1,936 of these being children. Obviously, the ratio of children to adults in the ADF situation which stood at 95% is very high compared to LRA's 64%. Based on this however, Tim Allen (2006) concluded that the rate of abduction of children by the ADF (in terms of percentage) was higher than that of the LRA in northern Uganda (Allen, 2006: 64). But this conclusion is simplistic. Allen dwelt too much on percentages while ignoring the obvious discrepancies in sample size of population targeted and total abductions per case. He also ignored the fact that unlike the ADF incidences which were spotted and well documented the LRA insurgency was protracted over a large expanse of area with an almost blanket silence and no documentation on incidences (except high profile ones – e.g. Aboke Girls) for more than a decade. And whereas ADF documentation took place as the incidences occurred, the attempt with the LRA was retrospective for the

⁸² See Norwegian Refugee Council, 2008. Uganda: Focus shifts to securing durable solutions for IDPs. A profile of the internal displacement situation, 3 November. Available from: [www.internal-displacement.org/.../unicef+abducted+children+database+\(november+2001\).pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/.../unicef+abducted+children+database+(november+2001).pdf). [Accessed 13 October 2002].

dark years – based on memory. Families that perished and left no one behind in northern Uganda could not therefore have its abducted tallied. Several other disparate estimates have been authored, with some claiming exaggeration and many simply repeating what others have claimed. A US Department of State statistics placed LRA abduction at 66,000 with approx. 11.5% females and 53% children.⁸³ With all the complexities mentioned, the debate around magnitude of LRA abductions remains contentious and no single source was ever accurate.

In spite of disparities in sources, the number of females seemed indisputably lower than the male abductees of the LRA. The Rachele Centre archive, for example, had just 204 females out of 2,479 ex-combatants that had passed through the centre. This is because female abductees, once pregnant were often confined in the LRA bases in Sudan, minimizing their chances of escape (Dolan, 2011: 55). During fieldwork, former LRA recruits said that from 1998 the LRA set up a camp called Nisitu in southern Sudan and relocated pregnant women, their children and some female prepubescent girls they called *ting ting* who served as baby sitters.⁸⁴ This camp, they explained, was nearer the town of Juba and therefore farther from the Ugandan border than the others. Tied down with pregnancies and little children, the well guarded women and girls therefore found it more difficult to escape or leave the LRA. Combatants who fell in this category often got left out of official tally sheets of governmental and non governmental agencies. But a further argument can be linked to the stigma associated with their bush experience, which would make them ineligible for marriage, causing survivors and their families to attempt to conceal their abduction status. Finnstrom (2008: 191-192) for example reported that the perceptions of some ordinary men had stereotyped female returnees as ‘morally compromised’, ‘not suitable marriage partners’ with the potential of murdering spouses. These sentiments were as well extended to the children they bore.⁸⁵

⁸³ See Office of the Spokesperson, 2012. The Lord’s Resistance Army. U.S. Department of State. Factsheet. March, 23. Available from: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/03/186734.htm>. [Accessed 20 February 2013].

⁸⁴ E.g. Interview: Acen, thirty two years old, ex-combatant mother, Orubu village, Layibi Division, Gulu district, Uganda. 16 February 2015.

⁸⁵ See chapter five & six for further discussions on the experiences of ex-combatant mothers and their children.

Here, Finnstrom's male respondents spoke of the girls as if they were unmarried maidens, and therefore strangers, belonging to another descent group. By choosing to discuss their experiences with former forced wives and their children through the idioms of marriage, the men attempted to distance themselves from any descent relatedness with such girls and their children. To lend weight to their perceptions the men did not refer to any of the maidens as members of any patriclan, so that it was not also possible to genealogically link the girls back to them.

The Acholi are exogamous, marrying only from a different descent group (Girling 1960: 21), a practice synonymous with that of the Langi (discussed in chapter three). Through marriage, a wife relinquished her descent affiliation and took up that of her husband. Marriage therefore transformed her from stranger into non-stranger, from the unfamiliar to the familiar. This potential to switch affiliation with new descent groups is inherent in the gender of abducted girls. But, as demonstrated by Finnstrom's youth above, it had the propensity to be hijacked and used by stigmatised male relatives to distance themselves from any relatedness with former forced wives. Juxtaposed with the UNLA case, the girls therefore became 'impure', unclean and lived as 'outsiders' within the groups.

With such stereotypical perceptions, some families may have preferred to keep the status of an abducted daughter secret from pre- and post-IDP neighbourhoods as a means of protection. It is therefore possible that this biased the statistical reporting in favour of more male abduction. Yet this was easier during the pre-camp days, when homesteads were scattered. With mass displacements in to IDP camps later on, abductions or returns could not go unnoticed by many in a camp. Such a protection was rendered even more difficult because ex-combatants returned with psychological and physical trauma. In addition, some girls came back with children or pregnancies that resulted from 'marriages'⁸⁶ within the LRA rank and file.

⁸⁶ Abducted girls were forced to become wives upon abduction by the LRA, an act contrary to the established norms and procedures of matrimony within targeted indigenous groups in northern Uganda, discussed further in chapter five on marriage.

2.5. Conclusion

At colonial occupation the region of today's Uganda was integrated in the British Empire. Ugandan societies and pre-existing polities thus became integrated in a single colony. But the pacification that came with the forging of this single state comprising of formerly warring ethnic groups, did not do away with certain pre-existing differences, some of which had ethnic undertones as observed. Instead British policies sometimes helped to strengthen such differences. This polarisation continued into self-rule, so that at independence in 1962 the British handed over an already weak state. The situation was compounded by the existence of several power centres that were rooted in ethnicity and religion.

British colonialists often misunderstood pre-existing identities, and local groups tried to manipulate to their advantage the versions of ethnicity that the colonial administration seemed to subscribe to - polarising societies as 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. Over the last century, the status of 'outsiders' and 'insiders' kept changing in what today is Uganda, as its societies were successively integrated in different political formations.

For example, Idi Amin's ethnic cleansing of Langi and Acholi within the army and the labeling of Tito Okello's 1985 regime as *loc Acholi* (Acholi regime) variously treated whole groups as 'outsiders' and 'insiders' based on ethnicity of the opposing individual leaders. In this way, behaviour of an opponent was perceived as the common position of the rest of his ethnicity. This perception was juxtaposed within individual groups as well. The Acholi for example believed the returning UNLA unclean, and therefore a source of contamination of entire lineages. The entry of an Acholi UNLA soldier into his community would associate the entire group with whatever deeds he might have committed and bring calamities on his group, unless he underwent immediate purification upon return. Their stay and mixing with communities while in a state of impurity therefore contaminated entire communities, over throwing the social order in Acholi. Once the entire group became impure, as in the case of the Acholi, normative systems collapsed. This created a vacuum for the non-social - the spirits in Acholi

cosmology - to take charge through spirit mediums, who also continued the narrative of communal liability. In particular, Alice Auma Lakwena of the HSM and her cousin Joseph Kony of the LRA rallied people for a re-birth of the entire group through insurrections, as the only way out. Anyone who survived was automatically purified. Among such groups therefore 'liability' was communally shared.

But the spirit mediums also recognised that other than ethnicity, religion was a powerful mobiliser among the Acholi. Whereas their call for purification aimed at appeasing and mobilising Acholi lineages, they also realised the influences of new religions. Because Catholicism was the predominant faith in Acholi, Kony used the biblical Ten Commandments as the doctrinal basis for his LRA. He later couched it with some Islamic doctrines as he befriended the Sudan government. Kony and his cousin Lakwena therefore instrumentalised ethnicity and religion as tools to legitimise their wars; framed their actions in ethnic and religious discourse; and used feelings of ethnic and religious allegiance to enroll people in their movements. With the call to purify Acholi, they ethnicised the LRA.

As they carried out their 'purification' war and communities became difficult to convince the LRA raided civilian communities in Acholi, Lango and Teso for thousands of new recruits through abduction. Kony launched raids purposely to abduct women, youth, girls and children – many times binding them to his group by forcing them to commit gross atrocities on their own families and communities. These recruits became the parents of CBOW within the LRA. This method became the major one in the 1990s as the LRA made a new alliance with the Khartoum Government, setting his bases in the bushes of the southern part of Sudan. Here, he also added a new islamised tone to the doctrinal basis of the LRA, disallowing the rearing of pigs and work on Fridays.

The LRA especially applied the different forms of religion at different times as the need and direction for cultivating legitimacy kept changing. With the onset of mass abduction and massacres in Acholi, the LRA lost credibility among the Acholi, rendering the ethnicity factor irrelevant for mobilisation. But LRA's activities in neighbouring regions like Lango and Teso continued to be viewed through an ethnic lens, sometimes

leading to inter-ethnic tensions as it did after the February 2004 twin massacres in IDP camps in Abia and Barlonyo.

Yet the involvement of girls and women in armed conflict is much older than the state of Uganda. Pre-Ugandan language groups – in their disparate social and political forms often raided each other for women, children and cattle. The Langi of northern Uganda were especially active in the region in the late 1800s and early 1900s. They incessantly fought the Madi and Kuman taking with them women, children and cattle. The Langi also offered mercenary military services to Bunyoro Kingdom for which they were paid trophy girls and other goods. The women and girls were made into wives and the children adopted into warriors' households. This practice is comparable to the now criminalised use of women and girls for sexual gratification and forced impregnation by armed groups in contemporary African countries. The children they bore are also comparable to the children born of war that resulted from the sexual violence carried out by armed groups on women and girls in many post independent African countries. All three show how sexual exploits were an incentive in the commissioning and perpetration of wars across time and space. They demonstrate how what was a pre-colonial practice kept re-emerging in contemporary times.

With the dawn of British colonialism, inter-ethnic wars were reduced so that it was no longer easy for groups like the Langi to carry out raids on other groups. This also meant there was a break on sourcing for wives through inter-ethnic wars among groups in northern Uganda for much of the colonial period.

In 2004, the ICC issued warrants of arrest to Joseph Kony and four of his commanders for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in northern Uganda. The list of crimes included abduction and sexual violence against women. The indictment is reminiscent of the pacification efforts that put a stop to pre-colonial raids for trophy women and children in Uganda. In old Lango trophy women and girls were seen as legitimate wives and their children treated as legitimate offspring of the households that held their mothers. Second, unlike the trophy wives in old Lango who remained permanently with their Langi husbands, the girls abducted by the LRA later came back

into Lango with children fathered by their captors. To begin to understand the experiences of children born of war in today's Lango, it is important to first understand the local social institutions and how they relate with crucial aspects of gender and motherhood.

CHAPTER 3. GENDER AND MOTHERHOOD IN RURAL LANGO

3.1. Introduction

Viewing motherhood as an ideological concept allows us to reconstruct the historical architecture of its multiple functions, both durable and contingent, as a productive necessity, a cultural form, and a political institution.⁸⁷

Women are relational beings whose identities are shaped by social constructions of gender and childbirth. Already Cohen (1977: 5) and Meillassoux (1981: 38) highlighted the fact that through marriage and childbirth, women were instrumental in the negotiation and renegotiation of kinship bonds, for themselves, their offspring and across lineages/groups. More recently, Baines et al., (2013: 1-19) demonstrated this in their analysis of how female survivors of the LRA war in northern Uganda negotiated their social relationships. Baines et al., explored the struggles of single or unmarried mothers to ‘overcome their displacement from family networks, and ...restore their status through the performance of Acholi notions of motherhood’. In particular, they traced for the paternal lineages of their children and attempted to make claims on those lineages to secure the future of their children in terms of access to land, residence, inheritance and (future) marriage goods.

In particular, Stephens (2013: 13,45) viewed motherhood as a historical institution, constantly changing, that many language groups in pre and early Uganda appropriated to create networks of relationships and mutual obligations that traversed patrilineal groups. By marrying, Stephen’s North Nyanzan woman could establish alliance between her natal family, lineage and those of her husband. Through marriage, she explains, a woman’s lineage benefited economically from bridewealth, which in turn signified formation of a contractual bond between a woman’s lineage and that of her husband. Through bridewealth payment, her lineage was compensated for her loss and new kinship bonds created.

⁸⁷ See Stephens, 2013, p. 6.

By marrying outsiders local women in North Nyanza could also play integrative roles; enabling their husbands to establish alliances in the local community, try to achieve social mobility, and use kinship norms to improve their own and their descendants' social status. But Stephens (2013: 45, 46) text also elaborates how sexual relationships that did not conform to social expectations were viewed as forms of social violence against a woman, her family, lineage and clan.

These ideas of conformity and non-conformity to social norms in a changing society are of particular importance in the understanding of experiences of children conceived in the LRA who return to peacetime Lango. This chapter therefore explains the crucial social context that prevails in Lango. Of particular interest is how these social institutions shape the roles and opportunities of women and their offspring; a phenomenon that has been studied by exploring 'patrilineal idioms of inclusion and exclusion' (Schoenbrun in Stephens, 2013: 12).

3.2. Family, lineage and clan

Acen's natal family in Amia Abil (cited in the introduction chapter) is a typical rural home (*pacu*) in post-war Lango. It comprises Acen's father (*papo*), her mother (*toto*), and two of her married sisters' teenage sons. At the edge of the compound, a longitudinal mound marked by stones indicates a recent burial site for one her brothers. In Amia Abil, like any other rural village in Lango, a family comprises a husband or *adwong ot* (the man of the house), his wife - or wives (*dako* or *mon*) and their children (*otino*). If a son marries, he may put up his own *ot* (house) on the same *dyekal* or *diokalo* (compound). But he would lose autonomy in the process, as the entire household will be referred to as the *pacu* of his father. People in the study visualised *pacu* as male-headed. They reasoned that it is a man who *nyomo* (marries) a girl and brings her to his home and not the other way round. This claim is further illustrated in the roles husbands and wives play in their homes. In Acen's natal home, her father is the primary provider; he is the custodian of the land, the huts, the livestock, and makes the final decisions concerning his family. Her mother, on the other hand, spends most of her time in care-related activities; cooking for the family, weeding the crops in nearby

fields, and ensuring that the yields are harvested and well stored. Her husband occasionally consults her before making important decisions. One of her teenage grandsons dropped out of school and now looks after the family livestock, sometimes helping fetch water from the spring. The livestock was gradually accumulated from the marriage of Acen and another older daughter after the war. Acen's family paints a portrait of the gender and generational strategies that individuals in rural Lango deploy to mark their status in the family. For example, during fieldwork people in Amia Abil village, as in the rest of rural Lango, saw farming and cooking as a woman's work. Men mostly came in to help with the clearing of land and the selling of proceeds, which are considered heavy tasks in need of strong hands and high energy levels associated with masculinity. Men were considered strong and women weak. So weeding and harvesting, considered lighter work, were left to Amia Abil's women. Women and men often even formed separate *awak* or *alea* (rotational labour groups) to solve the labour needs of each household, just as they did in their Lango villages during peacetime (cf. Tosh, 1978:).⁸⁸

The reproductive function of giving birth and caring for the young was also constructed uncontestably as a woman's work. As elsewhere in Lango, the people in Amia Abil still followed the old patriarchal rule in which a married woman and the children of that marriage moved to live with her husband on his own (lineage) lands (see Curley, 1973: 27; Driberg, 1923). The women and children in Amia Abil village lived in homes and farmland with a male figurehead, usually a husband. These homes and farmlands belonged to the husband who held it in trust for his lineage. But there were also those who married and moved away with their wives and children into urban areas. Others migrated permanently to safer areas during the war. For example, Acen's elder brother moved to live in Teso Bar, a suburb of Lira town that also hosted an Internally Displaced Persons' camp in the 2000s.⁸⁹ This category often lived in rented houses. Others bought land and built their own houses on it. Unlike Acen's father who lived on land long held by his forefathers, lineages of husbands who migrated did not have rights

⁸⁸ Fieldwork notes, Lango, Uganda. 26 April 2014.

⁸⁹ This brother later died in 2011.

over rented or purchased property. This pattern of settlement and relationships in Acen's family contributes to the understanding of how people conform to expectations of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005; Connell, 1987)), or how and why men continue to maintain dominant social roles over women and other gender identities in post conflict Lango. In Lango, this is expressed through the recognition that a home, including its lands and livestock, is 'owned' by a man, and that his wife, who subsists in it, reciprocates this 'generosity' by responding to his needs including bearing his children and caring for him.

As a man, the husband 'provides' for his wife and children and ensures they are secure. In turn, the wife bears children for him, and cooks and washes for him; roles that re-enforce her subordination to him while marking his hegemonic position in the home. This social vision of family, although in no way unchanging, is comparable with what prevailed before the war. Here, it simply means that pre-war gendered ideas have continued to influence perceptions and practices in peacetime Lango.

Nonetheless, not all homes could identify with that of Acen's natal family. War and diseases (especially HIV) had left many homes without a direct male head, especially where there were no sons. Among these were homes of widows and other single women. Unlike before the war few men, respondents explained, were willing to inherit their brothers' widows for fear of contracting HIV. Some lived with their children as unmarried single mothers while many were widows left on their own; to be the 'head' of their families, a clear sign of changes taking place in Lango society. In such homes, I found women engaged in roles and activities ordinarily seen as male – that of primary providers and making decisions affecting the family. They had ploughed their farms and were raising livestock, which they referred to as their own.⁹⁰ Such homes also appeared more welcoming to male children conceived in the LRA – an issue further discussed in chapters five and six below. In their widowhood or unmarried status these women make their own decisions and provide for their own needs. In a way therefore, they convert their status of widowhood or single motherhood into an instrumental power that defies

⁹⁰ E.g. Interview: Abang's natal family, Ogur, Lira district, Uganda. July 2013.

prevailing expectations of hegemonic masculinity that define the lives of most men and women in their villages. Researchers have argued that war and other factors like HIV and poverty drastically changed gender dynamics in northern Uganda (e.g. Esuruku, 2011: 25-26). The absence of men and/or the lack of access to traditional sources of authority (farmlands and livestock) reduced the authority of men in most *pacu* as primary providers. In addition to their traditional caregiver role, Esuruku argued, many women became primary providers in the family as well; a re-arrangement of roles that still persists in post-war male-headed homes, and an indication of continuities and changes in the social institution of family.

The homes where ex-combatant mothers and their children lived had a minimum of three family members and a maximum of fourteen members, including children. The home with three members belonged to twenty eight-year-old Akello of Bar Obia village, Acaba sub county, Oyam district and her two children (the oldest, Olot, was a CBOW). It sat at the edge of a marsh, which community around saw as a wasteland. In what could be equated to social displacement, when Akello could no longer bear the stigma associated with having been with the LRA, she went to live on the marsh as a single mother, away from the rest of the village community. Occasionally they paid a visit to her mother in the next village. Akello's mother lived on her deceased husband's compound next to the families of her husband's brothers. The home with fourteen members belonged to the maternal grandfather of five-year-old Bua of Obutu village, Iceme sub county, Oyam district. It comprised three families - the grandfather's and the families of two sons who had recently married.

Generally, study participants described *pacu* as the ideal social unit in which a child was born and nurtured into a 'responsible and contented' adult. In Lango, family is therefore the crucial social unit within which a CBOW integrates. But the *Pacu*, which the study participants lived in and its constantly changing dynamics, was part of a broader social institution in which an individual thrived. As Stephens (2013: 13) argued: 'Motherhood was viewed as an institution for creating networks of relationships and mutual obligation that cut across the dominant patrilineal divides'.

Lineage (dogola)

Respondents stated that their *pacu* (family) was part of a *dogola* (literary, a ‘door’ from which members emerged) in reference to a ‘common recent ancestor’ (see also Curley, 1947: 34-40; Tosh, 1978: 39). Often male respondents were the frequent users, perhaps based on the understanding that a *dogola* was only associated with a male ancestor. Thus, Acen’s father explained that he and his brothers belonged to their father’s *dogola*. In future, he further explained, the surviving sons of each of these brothers may found their own *dogola* if their male children expanded families. Contrary to Tosh’s findings that confined a *dogola* to a specific location – and the loss of it upon moving to a new location - respondents said members of their lineages were dispersed. Some lived nearby, sharing portions of old farmlands, while others lived in urban areas as traders and civil servants (see also Curley, 1947: 34-40). Others had merely migrated to new locations during the war, while some were abducted by the LRA and never returned. Like the *pacu*, the concept of *dogola* is significant in the understanding of the experience of CBOW, especially for male children. Respondents explained that any integration that takes place in a family has implications for a *dogola*, which essentially ‘owns’ and regulates both productive and reproductive assets associated with a family. These include livestock and arable land, which in Lango falls under the customary tenure system.⁹¹ This not only underscores social institutions in rural Lango as predicated on the ideas that individuals do not ‘exist within themselves, without their relations, and responsibilities to others’ (Baines et al., 2013: 2), but also shows how extended kin relations are critical to the everyday sociality and survival.

Clan (atekere)

People in the study stated that several of their *dogola* made up an *atekere* (clan). Acen’s father said his household and those of his brothers belonged to the Oromo clan. In other words all members of an *atekere* saw themselves as patrilineal brothers or cousins. At the time of the study, there were at least 250 clans of Lango (see Tosh, 1978: 46), up from an initial documentation of 150 clans by Driberg (1923). Each of these clans had

⁹¹ See Uganda’s Land Act, Chapter 227.

its own symbols, which essentially comprised clan cry and taboos; strategies which individuals used to 'control their own social reproduction as they sought to build sustainable and durable communities' (Stephens, 2013: 14). In addition, some of the people still branded their cattle, a practice which became rare after the mass loss of livestock in the 1980s (see also Tosh, 1978: 39-40). The philosophy underpinning this symbolic acknowledgement can be traced to the central and legal role cattle historically played in shaping the genealogy of descent within each clan as discussed below.

Study participants also said their wives and children, by virtue of marriage, affiliate to their *atekere*. Since patrilineal brothers and cousins are children of a marriage, they explained, then marriage, *nyom*, was the means of becoming a clan member. Among the Langi, cattle (or brideprice) has been central in the survival of the clan through ensuring a link between ancestor and the yet to be born. At the time of the study, marriage in post LRA Lango remained a process that transferred rights of control over a woman's sexuality, and eventually her offspring; from her patriclan to her husband's patriclan in a similar fashion as seen amongst the Nuer (Evans-Pritchard, 1965; Hutchinson, 1996). These claims have also been documented by earlier studies such as that by Hayley (1940: 40-41). Hayley stated that an *atekere* composed of people whose mothers were married with cattle belonging to the group of related *dogola*. Moore demonstrated how the origin of *lim* (cattle for the brideprice) mattered in the anointing of a person as a member of a particular clan. The direction of transfer of cattle has always been fixed. It moved from a father's side to a mother's side. But there were exceptions to this rule. A youth may, for one reason or another, fail to get *lim* from his patrilineal relations. In this case, he had the option of taking his claim to his maternal uncles who may offer him cattle to secure a wife. His patriclan was expected to reciprocate this gesture by automatically ceding the lineage of his children to that of his mother's brother - an agreement in which no ceremony or procedure was necessary. But other than being seen as a kind act, the switch in offspring affiliation was really determined by the source of *lim*. In his time of study, Hayley's young men were also ceding their patriclans (father's clan) for another if they used cattle belonging to other clans. He observed this among nephews (sisters' sons) who turned to their mothers' brothers or fathers for help with brideprice. Moore (1969: 386) emphatically identified with this position, stating that all

of the children whose mothers were married in that way were automatically affiliated to the lineage of their maternal brother's lineages. This switch of lineage based on the source of bridewealth is not however clearly captured in existing literature on the Langi as evident outside of the nephew-uncle relationship. But it would appear that were it to occur outside the circle of kinship, the same might yet apply. If cattle was the currency that determined lineage in this latter case, one would expect the children of a poor youth in need of brideprice, and having been granted some by a good neighbour neither related to him by kinship nor clan, to automatically be members of the neighbour's lineage.

On the one hand, this tendency in which the patriclan of a child is rendered flexible by the source of its mother's bridewealth, could be said to offer a negotiating front for prospective husbands to make or break alliance with their clans. Were he unhappy with his current situation, he could stretch it further by marrying using *lim* linked to a friendlier source and break his future offspring's relationship with his patriclan. On the other hand, it demonstrates a latent tension between patriclans competing over rights of affiliation. Were he to venture to his mother's brothers or some other clan, then the lineage of his offspring would switch to that which provided the cattle. The source of bridewealth thus becomes a site of *rucurucu* - friction, tension and competition for the right to a woman's sexuality and reproductive ability. By ignoring or failing to get cattle from his patriclan, a youth thus abdicates his father's line and by accepting his maternal father's help, he embraces and promotes his mother's line (although he himself remains affiliated to his father's lineage).

Depending on the source of bridewealth, a child may therefore fall in the descent group of its father or mother's father. Although the study did not come across any actual case or claim, this also implies that a child could fall in a lineage outside any of his or her blood relations. It would thus appear that flexibility and expansiveness in lineage choices is greater for certain groups of children than others. For the female child, unlike her brother, she gets the option to change her lineage to her husband's through marriage and then reclaim her natal lineage with a divorce. Divorce though, does not alter the patriclan of the offspring she had in her marriage, a practice underlined by the rule,

which prevents her from taking her children with her. The children will remain in their father's household. Respondents reasoned that a divorced wife who took her children with her back to her father's house brought *rucurucu*, making her patriclan susceptible to *culo kwor* (paying for blood feud). Should death or grave injury come to any of the children in a home not belonging to their father's lineage, they explained, the father's clan is entitled to a compensation of *kwor* as a means of pacifying the *rucurucu*. *Culo kwor* is further discussed in section 3.6 below. Respondents also considered sexual intercourse with unmarried girls a *rucurucu*, a breach in the ordering of access to a woman's sexuality and reproductive ability.

During the study, five of the eight ex-combatant mothers identified their fathers' *atekere* (clans) as their own. The remaining three said they were not members of their fathers' clans anymore because they had contracted new marriages on returning from the LRA. Upon marriage, they explained, they had automatically ceded their fathers' lineages for their new husbands' lineages. For example, Acen said before Oyat took bridewealth to her father she belonged to the Oromo Clan of Lango. But she dropped that and took on the clan of Pachwa (or Pacua) of Acholi because Oyat belonged to Pachwa. Another mother, Ajok of Amia Abil village in Agweng sub county in Lira district also said that before she married her post-LRA husband, she was a member of the Bako Ogwetiang clan of Lango because that was her father's patriclan.⁹² This, she explained, changed when her husband took bridewealth to her family and she took on his clan of Omolatar. But others like Akello of Acaba sub county in Oyam district maintained that they still belonged to their fathers' patriclans because their fathers were not given any bridewealth.⁹³ These included Abang who was living with another man in his home.⁹⁴

Generally, informants explained that marriage not only altered a woman's lineage from her father's to that of her husband but also determined that of her offspring. Her

⁹² Interview: Ajok, twenty five years old, Amia Abil village, Agweng sub county, Lira, Uganda. 10 July 2013.

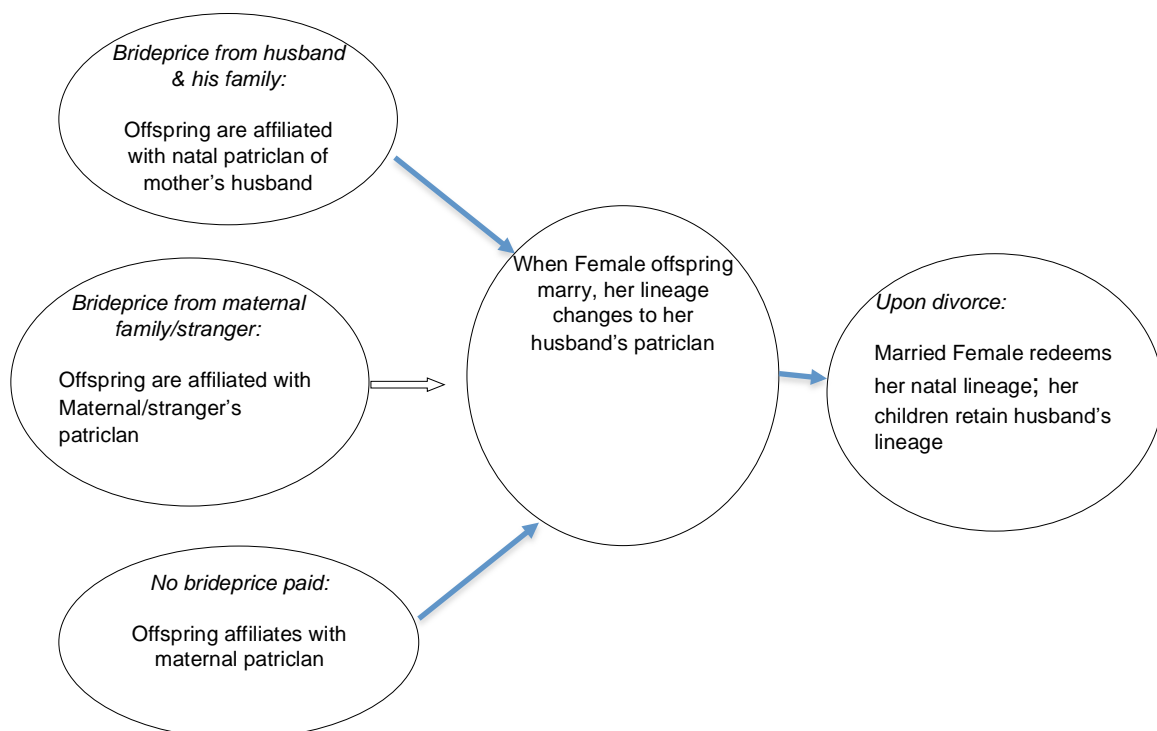
⁹³ Interview: Akello, twenty eight years old, Bar Obia, Acaba sub county, Oyam, Uganda. 15 July 2013.

⁹⁴ Interview: Abang, thirty four years old, Imato Ikwoto village, Ogur sub county, Lira, Uganda. 23 July 2013.

offspring conceived in the marriage are automatically affiliated to her husband's lineage even if they had a different genitor. This rule applies to all of the children conceived during her marriage. A similar rule applied to the children of a widow conceived after the death of her husband. Her children would still affiliate to her deceased husband's lineage.

But Hayley (1947: 40-41) also stipulated that there were other ways of joining a clan. War captives in pre-colonial and colonial times, he explained, were legitimised into a clan once a clansman offered him cattle for a marriage. But as discussed below, children of unmarried daughters could also be seen as members of their mothers' natal patrilineages (see also Curley, 1973; Driberg, 1923; Moore, 1969). Study respondents used the term *otino luk* to refer to these children (the concept of *luk* in peacetime Lango is further discussed in section 3.5 below).⁹⁵ Figure five illustrates the claims of the study participants in respect to their lineages and that of their children.

Figure 5: Illustration of patrilineages of offspring in married & unmarried sexual relationships in peacetime Lango



⁹⁵ *Otino luk* in plural.

Informants said the offence of *luk* (illegitimate sexual relationship) and its suits were still very common at the time of the study, even among ex-combatants engaged in peacetime sexual relationships. During fieldwork, at least five ex-combatant mothers said they had given birth to other children with their new lovers after the war. All of them said these peacetime births were children of *luk*.⁹⁶ Yet no such reference was applied to children conceived in the LRA, raising a number of questions: What is the lineage status of CBOW? Is it perceived as similar to that of children of unmarried daughters in peacetime? Of what importance is membership in any one of these lineages? To answer these questions, there is need to further understand how kinship functioned in peacetime Lango. The thesis addresses these questions in subsequent sections and chapters.

3.3. Marriage (*nyom*)

Typically the Langi use marriage as a means of replenishing and shaping membership of lineages and subsequently, clans. In negotiating a *nyom*, individuals and their lineages deploy livestock and money to negotiate for the right of control over the sexuality and procreative ability of a girl in another clan. Once *nyom* is concluded, a husband then *tero* (takes away) his new wife to his home. The removal of a wife by a husband symbolizes his newly acquired right over her sexuality and reproductive ability. Any offspring she produces within the marriage then becomes a member of her new husband's lineage. At the time of the study, the Langi were still observing these rules.

I witnessed five *nyom* (Lango marriage) during fieldwork. Two of these were of relatives while the remaining three were of friends.⁹⁷ Each of these was elaborate in ceremonies and expenses. Men and women committed a lot of time and goods to secure their spouses. Study respondents described marriage as a point at which their family life

⁹⁶ Field notes – Lango, Uganda. March 2013 to January 2014.

⁹⁷ In one of the marriages, I was part of the groom's entourage and we traveled up to Mbale town on the slopes of Mt. Elgon for the ceremonies, taking along marriage goods and a bus full of the groom's family, lineage and friends.

cycles restart. Marriage, they explained, was central in the life of each Lango man or woman.⁹⁸ Lango youth that had hit puberty were deemed ready to play their roles in populating and re-populating the group. They called new births *aloti*, in reference to new shoots on a tree stump. Until recently, a boy of fourteen or fifteen years marked entry into puberty by joining an *etogo* (village ritual group) of his father (Tosh, 1978: 54-55).⁹⁹ He would be taken through the requisite rites of initiation. Upon graduation he was deemed an adult, ready to marry a girl who had at least hit puberty (Tosh 1978: 58). But by the 1990s, *etogo* system had faded. Instead, there was a rapid growth of the child rights movement, which saw the state recognizing adulthood from the age of eighteen years. It became criminal across all social groups for persons below the age of eighteen years to engage in sexual relations, including marriage, an act legally known as defilement in Uganda's Penal Code.¹⁰⁰ This though has been slow in making its marks as families only considered the 'offence' once the customary negotiation of *nyom* failed.¹⁰¹

During fieldwork, families - especially those in rural Lango - still continued giving their daughters away in marriage according to local custom. Lango marriage continued to be exogamous and familial involvement was still highly valued, as it had been earlier in the twentieth century (see Driberg, 1923: 156). The choice of a spouse was a complex process and often followed a defined pattern. It extended beyond the potential groom and bride to embrace their respective familial networks. Familial involvement insured against unknowingly marrying enemies, witches and wizards.¹⁰² Friendship with families of witches and wizards was for example, not desirable because their trade was

⁹⁸ E.g. Interview: Obua, twenty years old, brother of an ex-combatant mother, Obutu village, Iceme sub county, Oyam district, Uganda. 25 July 2013.

⁹⁹ See Tosh (1978) for an elaborate description of *etogo* and the ritual meetings (also referred to as *etogo*) for the performance of certain rituals concerning relations between the dead and the living.

¹⁰⁰ See for example the Penal Code (Amendment) Act, 2007/Uganda Legal Information Institute, retrieved on 5 November 2013.

¹⁰¹ See Malinga, J., 2010. Defilement Crime on the rise in Uganda, Katine. Available from: theGuardian.com/katine/2010...6/Uganda-katine-defilement. [Accessed 5 November 2014].

¹⁰² Interview: Ocepa Alfred, sixty three years old, a Lango elder, Agwero-wanya village, Adekokwok sub county, Lira, Uganda. 05 July 2013; Interview: Rev. George Okeng, fifty one years old, Lango traditional leader, Senior quarters B, Lira municipal, Lira, Uganda. 11 July 2013.

considered a threat to group security. A wife's mother was expected to help her daughter during childbirth. Yet were she a witch, she might use the afterbirth to 'tie' the womb of the new mother so she would not have any more children. If that happened then the process of populating the lineage with new offspring would be interrupted, as the new mother would become sterile.

Respondents saw the inability of a woman to conceive as a big misfortune. To ensure a son never married a barren wife, a man's mother hosted the new wife at least until she showed signs of a pregnancy (see also Curley, 1973: 46). By then, the young bride would continue to be assessed and to be familiar with the ways of her husband's clan. Some respondents said their husbands moved them to a separate compound only after giving birth to their first child.¹⁰³ They called it *poko keno* (separating the fireplace or kitchen). Often, a husband's father apportions him land to settle his new family, underlining the virilocal behaviour that was observed by early ethnographers like Driberg (1923) and Hayley (1940). Marriage in Lango was still as much about forging a friendship (*mako dyere*)¹⁰⁴ between lineages and clans, as it was about expanding group membership (Tosh, 1978: 105). Respondents explained that youth who were obliged to marry based on familial friendship networks (*nyom dyere*) often did so to maintain the stability of familial friendships. Respondents stated that limitation of individual agency in the identification of brides was, to an extent, a contributor to polygyny among the Langi.¹⁰⁵ A boy urged to marry a suitor he might not desire more oft than not worked hard to raise bridewealth to marry a wife he desired in addition to the first one. Ironically, the undesired wife would be instrumental in the bridewealth raising through her industry on the farm which demonstrated her subordinate position in the gender hierarchy of this patriarchal society.

¹⁰³ E.g. Interview: Adong, twenty three years old, Ex-combatant mother, Omiri village, Iceme sub county, Oyam district, Uganda. 1 August 2013. Adong and her husband lived with her mother-in-law for one year. Her husband then went looking for his father who gave him land to set up a compound for his new family.

¹⁰⁴ Minutes of the meeting that was held at Idep – Awila on the 10 April 2013 between Okarowok Orum and Oyima Ngila.

¹⁰⁵ Interview: Rev. George Okeng, fifty one years old, Lango traditional leader, Senior quarters B, Lira municipal, Lira, Uganda. 11 July 2013 in Lango.

But a youth could also identify his own bride and inform his family about it. The most usual way for a youth to find a bride in peacetime Lango was a gradual secret courtship, *yamo* or *cuno*. A boy and a girl would take time secretly exploring suitability to each other. In the process sexual intercourse often occurred and the girl would tell her brother first, if she had any. But if she chose to stay away with the boy in the night, her mother would be the first to guess and launch a search on her own. A similar trait was documented in old Lango both in the manner of picking suitors and the subjective role of the bride (Hayley: 1940: 149). In section 3.5 below, this is further discussed in the context of illegitimate sexuality, in order to understand its implications for children that result from it.

Other options cited by Hayley included the use of coercion. Often it started with an abduction of a girl during a dance to be kept for not more than a week in the youth's village. There, he would try to woo her to accept him. No sexual intercourse however took place and she was left to go unharmed if she refused the youth's advances. But like the case in today's Lango, the success of this courtship depended greatly on the girl's cooperation. Any acceptance would be sealed with sexual intercourse. The following morning she would inform her brother who would, through his mother, inform the father. A look at the bridewealth raising system among the Lango helps to understand this rather unusual confidante choice. A brother depended on his sister's marriage as a source of his own bridewealth (see also Hayley, 1940: 23). Any prospect would therefore directly affect his fortune. This made his sister his greatest 'asset' in the sense of marriage prospects. A girl was raised in the knowledge of that and therefore preserved her honour to remain marriageable. Her fate decided her own brother's fate and it seemed reasonable that she took it upon herself to arrange both fates. Her passivity in this regard was not to be thought of since it would fault her own prospect of marriage, and subsequently her brother's.

In all of these cases, the same procedure of ascertaining background of suitors still occurred. Beneath the surface, this thesis argues, the joint venture was however more than just an innocent poke into the character of the suitors and their people. This joint venture embodied varying interests in the polity. Lewis (2001: 15) observed that

expectations of a couple and their marriage are often embedded in wider social circles. In Lango, marriage was a process that altered the social standing of a couple and those linked to them. Through marriage, a youth graduated into a man and a girl, a woman. A girl's brother got wealth for his own brideprice. Marriage also brought prospects of forging a relationship with new families and their descent groups as indeed was underlined by the reference to marriage as *mako dyer*¹⁰⁶ (forging friendship) and, to in-laws, as *dyer* (friends-in-law). The collective aura, which underpinned Lango marriage, also served a symbolic role of reminding all and sundry that a clan was the overall beneficiary. During fieldwork, clan flags, clan totems, clan cries and distinctive ceremonies often dominated the Lango marriages I attended. This complexity was often reflected in the reciprocal manner in which the groom gathered the brideprice.

A suitor's familial participation in the choice of a spouse reflected their stakes. Within the stakes was the recognition of the *aloti* (re-populating) process, for self-fulfillment of the clan. This gave a marriage a more public and therefore 'collective' outlook. The merging of self with the collective has been a key feature of marriage throughout Lango history. Tosh (1978: 45) demonstrated, in what he referred to as 'the principle of corporate action by a clan', the extent to which collective action dominated the processes of thought, deed and utterances among the Lango. Historical accounts by Tosh further suggested an origin in the Lango belief that 'shades', vengeful spirits of the dead, could only be controlled by a community of clan sections acting together. Individual lineage or a ritual specialist was not therefore considered potent. This concept was possibly linked to the belief that spirits predestined every event with consequences permeating family and lineage boundaries (Tosh 1978: 54-55). According to Tosh, it was considered an entitlement for a man to expect his agnates to contribute to his son's brideprice (*lim*), just as he did for their sons. Through such reciprocities, a Lango clan found its perpetual balance. This functionalist element was dominant in all aspects of 20th century Lango social life, both in good and bad times, and has persisted into the 21st century.

¹⁰⁶ Minutes of the meeting that was held at Idep – Awila on the 10 April 2013 between Okarowok Orum and Oyima Ngila.

3.4. Brideprice (*lim*)

Typically the Langi sealed *nyom* (marriage) with payment of *lim*. A prospective husband makes this payment to a girl's natal family (See appendix one for an example of a list of *lim* that was featured in one of the marriages at the time of fieldwork). Whereas Moore (1969), Hayley (1940) and Driberg (1923) laid emphasis on cattle as the currency of gaining lineage membership, developments since then have relaxed the currency. There has been a persistent tendency to change the currency of marriage payments from cattle to something else for most of the second half of the 20th century, spilling into the 21st century. One of the earliest documentations of such a tendency was by Hayley (1940) in the 1940s when he cited the colonial government as having laid down a law that monetized in shillings the cost of *luk*.^{107,108} This was based on the then prevailing market price of cattle in Lango. Yet parties to *luk* continued transacting payments in the form of cattle and goats. They only took up the government's monetized option whenever negotiations failed and only if the aggrieved later referred the case to the state.

Another significant change took place between 1986 and 1988 when cattle rustling perpetuated by the youth from Karamoja, Lango's eastern neighbour, deprived Lango kraals of millions of cattle.¹⁰⁹ The situation worsened with the coming of the LRA as the rebel group plundered whole communities, taking with them whatever cattle had escaped the rustlers. Cattle became scarce and could not be used for brideprice. For a long time, families could no longer afford to marry with cattle and many had to resort to pigs at some point. This was considered a great humiliation as recounted in various folk songs, which urged families to let their daughters 'go for free' instead.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ In this case, *luk* refers to a customary fine paid to an unmarried woman's family by a lover for illegitimate sexual intercourse and for any pregnancy that happens – as will be discussed in section 3.5.

¹⁰⁸ Throughout this thesis 'shillings' will refer to the Uganda shillings.

¹⁰⁹ See for example Lango to correct historical distortions. Available from: www.newvision.co.ug/news/633981-lango-to-correct-historical-distortions. [Accessed 5 November 2013].

¹¹⁰ E.g. Local Lango musicians. *Jo Abwot Ogik group/Ikuka* - 1986/1995.

The scarcity of cattle gave rise to tensions in marriage arrangements. It threatened the 'cohesiveness' of kin groups, leading to a *rucurucu* (social crisis). A youth could no longer see the need to rely on another, whose kraal stood empty, to raise his *lim*. The tension primarily affected relations between junior and senior men (e.g. sons and fathers). Sons whose fathers could not provide cattle did not feel obliged toward them. The fathers' (or elders) authority was consequently decreased, together with old forms of social control over junior men. This did not change even when government, with support from World Bank, invested more than US\$10 million to re-stock Lango, Acholi and Teso with cattle.¹¹¹ All of these groups had lost considerable quantities - in hundreds of thousands - to rustling alone.¹¹² A few households in Lango would later acquire one Ankole Longhorn cow in this way. The Langi saw both the quantity (one cow) and the breed (Ankole-Longhorn), which they disdainfully referred to as *gaji*, (on account of its long curvy horns) as insignificant. People in Lango considered their habitat as naturally tailored for the short horned Zebu breed that they had lost. This perception helped to re-grade the colonial monetized option that had hitherto been largely ignored. Thus more families whose daughters and sons wished to marry saw the monetized option as the only viable one. Negotiations were done in cattle terms and the value would be converted into shillings for the groom and his people to pay.

This demonstrated that cattle were a currency, which could be transformed into other forms as long as the perceived value was retained. Thus cattle or pigs or goats and their value in shillings stood in different light until they were used as brideprice. In which case, they acted as a seal for the clan that was paying out to the other. This therefore means that as Lango society continues to get exposed to internal (e.g. diseases) and external (e.g. rustling and money) shocks, individuals in Langi may be forced to continuously redefine brideprice in terms of nature and size. Changes in the quantity and quality of *lim* however did not affect the function of brideprice, which remained a

¹¹¹ See New Agriculturist. Available from: <http://www.new-ag.info/02-2/focuson/focuson7.html>. [Accessed 22 January 2016].

¹¹² According to Lango Community Trust, Apac, one of the two districts of Lango then had its stock reduced from 428,127 in 1980 to 22,268 in 1993.

fundamental institution regulating the transfer of rights over women's productive and reproductive capabilities, and the lineage affiliation of Lango children.

Ownership, perhaps even symbolically, of cattle among the Lango was linked to a clan, most probably for security reasons. Driberg stated that in each village, a kraal was maintained with individual owners marking the herds with their respective clan symbols, a practice that had somewhat faded as observed during the fieldwork of this study in Lango.

Moore (1969: 390) demonstrated that there were networks of claims that gravitated toward the numerous individual kraal holdings within a descent group. Moore's conclusion described the Lango cattle endowment system as '*circles of stock claimants*'. Her thoughts were provoked by Gulliver's (1955) concept of 'stock associates' in reference to his findings on the Jie and the Turkana of Kenya which referred to the 'circle including all people with whom a man maintains 'well-recognised reciprocal rights to claim gifts of domestic animals in certain socially defined circumstances.' This implied that there were variations within a Lango clan system. Variations often engendered elements of inequality in claims.

Moore (1969: 385) posited that it was up to a man to manipulate his membership in *atekere* (clan) in order to guarantee a position within the polity. Membership of a descent group alone therefore did not entitle one to certain privileges within that group unless one met certain preconditions. This suggests an element of competition within groups. In the Lango system, a household could represent a kraal system and therefore the point of reciprocity. Several such households with direct ownership of a kraal system could bunch up together to form a circle of stock claimants as described by Moore. Families that had no direct ownership of a kraal system would therefore automatically be marginalised. The peripheral nature of the familial-kraal system would in turn be reflected on the reduced chances of its individual members to have their claims endowed. Whereas some individuals were prioritised, others were looked at as peripheral. Moore (1969: 389) further posited that prioritisation could be influenced by 'individual character, emotional preferences, and accidents of family composition,

wealth, and competing claims'. A father might reason that his son was closer to him than a sister's son. And he could rely on his son's honesty in time of need. A man with a small herd thus prioritised his son's marital needs over and above those of his agnates. But he could also potentially sponsor the activities of any one of his agnates.¹¹³ It was often a group affair, with the closest kin having an upper hand in benefiting. The closer a youth was to a male elder who controlled cattle, the easier it was to access cattle from the group to seal a marriage. The Lango concept of collectivity was therefore premised upon reciprocal obligations ensuring that individual had stakes in the cultural, economic and political life in the polity. It is this roving spirit of collectivity, which shaped the concept of *nyom* among the Lango people.

The stability of the marriage 'collective' as spurred on by reciprocity began to unravel in the latter half of the 20th century. There was destabilisation brought about by contextual changes, which rendered the kraal system helpless as already discussed of the cattle rustling mostly by raiders from Karamoja. The advent of formal education also gradually claimed many youth away from the rural Lango settings and hence further from the influence of familial circles. These new opportunities offered non-traditional alternatives to individuals. Those with ability to earn could turn to the market place as an important source for re-stocking.

Men with formal education and a job were therefore more predisposed to buying cattle than most. An educated Lango man, who had a source of income from his trade in the city more often than not, identified his bride and provided his own brideprice before involving his kinship circles in officiating at the marriage ceremony.¹¹⁴ Thus commenced an era where there was a high correlation between looking for one's own bride without familial involvement and payment of own brideprice. Women who were married this way were however considered a liability to the clan as they more often than

¹¹³ Interview: Ocepa Alfred, sixty three years old, a Lango elder, Agwero-wanya village, Adekokwok sub county, Lira, Uganda. 5 July 2013.

¹¹⁴ Interview: Rev. George Okeng, fifty one years old, Lango traditional leader, Senior quarters B, Lira municipal, Lira, Uganda. 11 July 2013.

not, owed their marital status primarily to their husbands.¹¹⁵ The ‘collective’ therefore found itself irrelevant since such families would have no interest in the reciprocal undertakings. Like the state, educated Lango became a threat to the once prolific idea of reciprocity symbolised by the kraal system. A man’s ability to fund his own marriage therefore highly correlated with the threat to the authority of male elders. Yet at the time of fieldwork, suitors, irrespective of how they put together their payments, still presented them as a collective endeavour that involved calling upon the support of their lineage.

This sometimes led to the relaxation of options for a youth to acquire the requisite brideprice. A man whose patriclan was unable to support his need of cattle for a wife could extend his search to his maternal uncles (Driberg, 1923: 155). This would however, as observed by Moore (1969: 386) penalise his clan by transferring the youth’s solidarity, and the membership affiliation of his offspring, to the maternal patriclan – in which case, the mother’s clan gained. Marriage was therefore a site of collective action, as exemplified by *lim* arrangements.

But Hayley’s account pointed out a new source of influence in colonial and missionary dictates, which widened the ‘collective’ concept. This included presentation of the bride and groom and the bridewealth before the government *Lukiko* (court) to enable documentation to take place where formerly none existed (Hayley: 1940: 19). Written records would secure claims in the event of a divorce, to the relief of jilted husbands. Hayley’s account is pre-emptive of Peterson’s (2006: 983-985) explicit exploration of the powerful undercurrents the act of book keeping triggered in the making and unmaking of marriage in colonial Tanganyika. Peterson’s missionaries could, on the basis of the written record, gain control over converts’ conduct. It became an entry point for converts to take their marital woes to them for arbitration; gradually subjecting conjugal behaviour to what Peterson terms ‘outside authority’.

Similarly, the power of the written record by the *Lukiko* spanned further than simply ascertaining clarity for the sake of bridewealth refund. One may not need to look further

¹¹⁵ Interview: Rev. George Okeng, fifty one years old, Lango traditional leader, Senior quarters B, Lira municipal, Lira, Uganda. 11 July 2013.

than Hayley's anecdote of a case of a husband who took his refund demand to the *Lukiko*, which *Lukiko* upon attempting to unsuccessfully revamp the failed marriage, ordered the wife's brother to refund the bridewealth (Hayley: 1940: 154). Thus, like Peterson's missionary converts, by registering their marriage and its bridewealth with the *Lukiko*, men and women had also passed to the *Lukiko* the right and power to arbitrate on disagreements associated with their marriage. A girl who was convinced that her suitor had turned disloyal and would not marry her could also seek recourse in the *Lukiko* for *luk* payment (Hayley: 1940: 151). Again, her brother would be her primary medium in communicating the matter to their father so as to process the case with the *Lukiko*. Forced sexual intercourse (rape) would be treated in the same way. When that happened the *Lukiko* would order recompense on its terms, 30 shillings in the colonial days. In a way, the *Lukiko* system could be credited for working based on normalised systems of local groups like the Langi, even if an outside authority had instituted it.

To help address the *rucurucu* that might arise, the colonial government had constituted the court at parish and sub county level and populated it with its appointees irrespective of lineage alliances. It provided them with new tools (ink and paper) with which to reorganise the conjugal lives of the locals. The indelible clarity, which ink and paper effortlessly enabled in the event of bridewealth refund, served as a point of entry for other aspects of marriage making and unmaking. Gradually, Government would widen the scope of this right and power. It went ahead to constitute the District Commissioner (DC) and Missionary Churches (MC) to preside marriage based on British laws. This move introduced a new source of standards, which the Langi could opt for to conclude the making of a marriage, if they so wished. Thus, for the first time in the history of Lango people, there were three options through which men and women could be matrimonially joined. The first and the oldest, already elaborately addressed, was the customary marriage, which could be preceded by *luk* were the suitors to commit sexual intercourse before the ceremonies. During fieldwork, the researcher witnessed one such marriage in which the bride's family and lineage included compensation for pre-marital

sexual intercourse in the marriage goods (see appendix one).¹¹⁶ This was the same system for which the *Lukiko* was established in a manner that saw government, as an external force begin to regulate marriage among the Langi.

The appointment of the DC and the MC was meant to operationalise the second and third options, which were all premised on British marriage laws (Hayley, 1940). In 1904, the colonial government had introduced the Marriage Act, which served to guide both the prospective couples and the designated government Registrars.¹¹⁷ The Act, which became the parent law for all related subsequent regulations in the history of Uganda, was in agreement with the church in most aspects including criminalising polygyny as bigamy. Whereas there were indications of disparities in values such as these ones, these two latter arrivals sought to co-exist in many ways with the customary system. Hayley (1940: 151) contends that converts were obliged to first conclude the bridewealth payment before they could wed in church. Peterson (2006: 998) also recounted a number of incidences in which Tanganyika missionaries received bride-wealth for the local girls they adopted. The primacy of this one factor (bridewealth) was further recognised in the pre-contractual preparations before both types of Registrars. The DC and MC were destined by law to make a twenty one-day prenuptial announcement on an impending wedding to the public. This was to allow whoever had any misgivings to raise them well before the marriage was contracted. One of the main impediments was the non-fulfillment of customary marriage payments. The MC further complemented this primacy by minimising penalties for non-wedded converts simply to ineligibility for Holy Eucharist. This kind of co-existence was interpreted by the Langi as embodying the invincibility of their customary system. The fact that the two latter arrivals could only comfortably procure marriage upon ascertaining all was well customarily caused the Langi to loosely refer to them as *nyom me amed*, a top-up marriage.¹¹⁸ This also demonstrated its position in marriage regulation as peripheral compared to the *Lukiko*. Whereas all customary marriages were unquestionably

¹¹⁶ List of marriage goods generated by a clan that was sent to the biological father of their daughter's seven-year-old child in 2014. The lovers had eventually wished to marry each other. The list shows separate demands for *nyom* (marrying the mother) from that of *luk* of the mother and *luk* of the child.

¹¹⁷ See Uganda Marriage Act 1904.

¹¹⁸ Field notes: Lango, 25 March 2013.

registered by the *Lukiko* – due to its relevance in record keeping, the MC and DC only registered marriages contracted as *nyom me amed*. Nevertheless, both dimensions served to impose another player in marriage making and unmaking. Insofar as peacetime unions are concerned, these accounts and analysis may apply to both historical and modern rural Lango.

3.5. Illegitimate sexual intercourse (*luk*)

Although *nyom* is the ideal way of getting a spouse in Lango, historically not all sexual relationships between men and women conform to this social expectation. During fieldwork, there were many cases of men and women engaged in relationships without any *nyom*. Some were living together as though they had contracted *nyom*, and even had children in the relationships. Others were living apart while engaging in sexual acts, sometimes leading to birth of children. Some were already married to other people but engaged in sexual relationship outside marriage. Respondents said these were relationships of *luk*, and that those who were already living together had *por or tingere* (eloped). *Luk* and its constituent element of elopement have been widely discussed among other language groups in Uganda. In Acholi, Porter (2013) presented it as a common enough occurrence both before and after war, often attracting retributory fines from a woman's family. On her part, Stephens (2013: 46-47) used the example of North Nyanza speakers to suggest that elopement was an act of violence on a woman and members of her lineage. She argued that the non-payment of bridewealth meant there was no contractual bond between the woman's lineage and that of her husband. This deprived her lineage of compensation for losing her and also denies the grooming of new alliances and identities that come through her marriage. This 'act of violence' brought by the elopement of Stephen's Nyanza woman was comparable to that which *luk* brought in peacetime Lango.

Driberg (1923: 212), writing at the onset of the 20th century, defined *luk* as the offence of 'illegitimate intercourse' with an unmarried woman and girl who had reached puberty. But adultery was also referred to as *luk* (see also Tosh, 1978: 47). This interpretation of *luk* – of people in Lango perceiving sexual intercourse with unmarried

women as illegitimate – bears significance for understanding how the Langi perceived the sexual relations that took place between men and women in the LRA. For a long time *luk* has been seen as a major cause of tension and quarrels between families and lineages (e.g. Tosh, 1978: 77).

The study found that more youthful respondents saw *luk* simply as the payment of a fine by a man for having a premarital sexual relationship with a girl or another man's wife, and that if such a relationship resulted into a pregnancy an additional payment was made for the child. But responses of older persons, particularly fathers of ex-combatants and cultural leaders often showed that *luk* was a means of giving a child born outside wedlock, a lineage.¹¹⁹ This descent principle attributed control over an unmarried girl's sexuality and reproduction to her natal patriclan. Any child she bore in a premarital relationship therefore automatically became affiliated to her natal patriclan. It is only through the sanctioning of a marriage that the right of control over her sexuality and reproductive ability was transferred to another lineage (see section 3.3 above). By siring a child with an unmarried girl, a lover therefore ignored a girl's natal patriclan and its custodial right of control over her sexuality and fertility. Like Kony and his LRA movement, this premarital genitor's action is comparable to an attempt at usurping right of control over a girl's sexuality and fertility from her patriclan.

The study observed an example of *luk* and its suits, occasioned by a twenty two-year-old youth of the Jo¹²⁰ Oyima Ngila who had been caught in the hut of a nineteen-year-old woman of the Jo Okarowok Orum clan.¹²¹ Peace between the girl's family and lineage and that of her lover was sanctioned by payment of the *luk* suit. At the *luk* meeting held on the compound of the Okarowok girl's father, the head of her clan section complained that the Oyima boy (whom they had arrested in the early morning from the girl's hut) had sneaked into their daughter's hut at night. He further explained

¹¹⁹ E.g. Interview: Rev. George Okeng, fifty one years, Cultural leader, Senior Quarters B, Lira Municipal, Lira, Uganda. 11 July 2013.

¹²⁰ *Jo* is a prefix referring to 'people'.

¹²¹ Minutes of a joint meeting that was held between Okarowok Orum and Oyima Ngila on the 10 April 2013. Permission for use of the minutes by this study was granted by leaders of both clans. But the names of the young couple have been altered.

that the girl's father had noticed him and had sent his wife (the girl's mother) to check and affirm the boy's identity. The girl's mother had then gently summoned the girl outside the hut and she had provided the identity of the youth. At dawn, the girl's brothers and father's agnates had arrested the boy and kept him. They then reported the case to the local council (LC) chairperson of their village. The girl's father then extracted the boy's father's name and clan from the boy. Using the telephone contacts which the boy had given them, the girl's father had called the boy's father, warning him that they would jail the boy for trespassing if he (boy's father) did not hurry to solve the *luk* case. The boy's father lived about seventy five kilometres away from the *luk* scene. The girl's family and the LC chairman had kept the boy as a prisoner with them until the next day when his father, his father's brothers (one of the brothers travelled with his wife) and the head of the Oyima Ngila clan section went and negotiated for *luk*.

The payment of *luk* has therefore been the customary means by which offenders like the Oyima boy used to pacify a girl's family and lineage even if they wished to later marry the girl. Study informants said that a man caught in an illegitimate intercourse was liable to meeting three subdivisions of *luk* depending on the circumstances, to cover the act of sexual intercourse, getting a girl pregnant and having an affair with a married woman.¹²² The anticipated payment of money and livestock by the Oyima boy to the Okarowok lover's family was aimed at fulfilling the first condition and hence, pacifying a woman's natal family. Respondents said sexual intercourse with an unmarried girl could attract a *luk* of three goats and a hen, depending on the outcome of the negotiation. The *luk* of a pregnancy came in the form of a heifer, three goats, two hens, cash payment for youth who 'braved the morning dew' to apprehend the offender¹²³, and a spear. But once a girl was confirmed pregnant, another payment was sanctioned, also in the form of a cow or six goats. Often both *luk* payments were sanctioned

¹²² Interview: Rev. George Okeng, fifty one years old, Traditional leader, Senior Quarters B village, Lira, Uganda. 11 July 2013.

¹²³ The *tojo* 'dew money' was introduced in the latter half of the 20th century. It is possible that it replaced an older practice where the youth, often brothers of the girl, were probably gratified with a beer or goat(s). The Pedi Cung Kal clan section in contemporary Acaba demands a goat from the payment. For majority in contemporary Lango the size of the cash depended on the family of the girl but it was negotiable as demonstrated in the dialogue between Oyima Ngila and Okarowok Orum during a *luk* meeting on the 10 April 2013. Also see Interview: Atine Moses, twenty six years old, former peacetime lover of Tino (of Acimi), Acimi, Myene sub county, Oyam district, Uganda. 30 July 2013.

together, if the pregnancy came to the notice of the girl's family ahead of the *luk* negotiation.

Two of the mothers said their natal families had successfully sued their peacetime lovers for the babies that resulted from their sexual relationships. Others said their ex-combatant acquaintances from Acholi, had also faced similar suits associated with peacetime relationships.

For example, when he left the LRA, Oyat said he immediately reunited with his second 'bush wife' - an Acholi like him.¹²⁴ In addition to a child they had in the LRA, the couple also had another post-war baby. A year into the fieldwork however, this ex-combatant mother left Oyat and went back to live with her natal family in Pader.¹²⁵ She took with her both children. Oyat then asked for the custody of the children. But her family demanded Oyat pay *luk* as a condition. Oyat paid one cow for the child and one cow for the act of *luk* on the mother. But no payment was made for the older child they had in the LRA. He was then given the children. By the end of the field study in January 2015, the boy and his older sibling had gone to live in Gulu with their stepmother. The payment of two cows that Oyat made to the family of his Acholi ex-lover in Pader was synonymous with the *luk* practice in Lango. Like the Okarowok and Oyima case, it fulfilled the first and second conditions for pacification of a woman's natal family. It also legitimized the child as a member of Oyat's lineage. But Oyat and the children's stepmother said they could not understand why the children's maternal family had not asked for *luk* payment for the older boy who was conceived in the LRA camps. As cited in the Introduction chapter, Oyat also experienced a similar refusal when he wanted to pay *luk* for the two sons he had with Acen in the LRA. In chapters five and six, the suitability of children conceived in the LRA for *luk* suits is argued within the framework of the prevailing descent system in peacetime northern Uganda.

¹²⁴ Interview: Oyat, thirty five years old, former radio signaler of the LRA, Gulu, Uganda. 23 February 2015.

¹²⁵ Interview: Acen, thirty two years old, Te Gwana, Gulu town, Uganda. 19 January 2015.

But even with peacetime *luk* the levying of suits sometimes failed, prompting offended individuals to take matters in their own hands. Driberg (1923: 212) stated that a man caught in the act of adultery with a married woman could be speared on the spot by the enraged husband leading to a blood feud. This enragement was still evident in post-colonial Lango, where husbands sometimes ended up murdering both lovers on the spot. If he was allowed to live, which was always the position sanctioned by custom, then the offender paid a heifer and a bull to the woman's husband. Any child born from such a union would also belong to the woman's husband by virtue of marriage. But offended husbands have increasingly set their own demands; different from the kind of payment customarily made.¹²⁶ For example, in 2012 in Otwal sub county in Oyam district, a husband whose wife was caught in an illicit sexual act with a fellow local government councilor levied a suit of *luk*, which was paid in cash, an amount which he used to buy a second hand car that he later put on the road as a taxi.¹²⁷

From the outside, this manner of justice portrayed the female as victim - shifting all guilt to the man. This victim/perpetrator discourse of *luk* was clear and non-negotiable in Lango. The girl was always the 'victim' and the boy, the offender. Yet to consider girls simply as victims would on the one hand defeat the purpose of Lango discourse on *jok* and on the other, conceal the politics, which lead to and actually underpin the *luk* processes. It was taboo for a man to have sexual intercourse with a girl who had not reached puberty. This was *jok* and it was not in any way associated with *luk*. The underage girl would therefore be seen as a victim and the offender treated as they would an *ajok* (a person who commits an act considered un-natural). This age-old Lango (and LRA) practice of criminalizing underage sex resonated with the formal legal trappings in Uganda, as the child rights movement started mobilising along with international child rights jurisprudence specifically toward the end of the 20th century. The state recognised sexual intercourse with a girl below the age of eighteen years as a capital

¹²⁶ E.g. Interview: Rev. George Okeng, fifty one years, cultural leader, Senior Quarters B. Lira, Uganda. 11 July 2013; Interview: Ocepa Alfred, sixty three years, a Lango elder, Agwero-wanya village, Adekokwok sub county, Lira, Uganda. 05 July 2013.

¹²⁷ The adulterous act of the married councillors was framed into a song by a village band as, 'a song about people who broke the law: a Councillor who was caught with another man's wife'.

offence with a maximum penalty of death in the courts of law.¹²⁸ The grave nature of punishment uttered by the state was agreement with that which the Lango custom prescribed for an *ajok*, a death sentence. This was victimhood, in which a girl considered still a child, was neither biologically ready nor mentally able to make informed decisions.

Victimhood is often understood as a ‘non-agentive’ situation in which an individual or a group is faced with a suffering not of their making (cf. Jeffery and Candea, 2006: 289). In this case, the perception of a girl as being underage nullifies any likelihood of her possessing any active agency in matters of sexual relationship. It is therefore her age, which disqualifies her from being considered as *an equal* or a willing partner when a boy or man commits sexual intercourse with her. Yet this kind of *victimhood* contrasts with that presented by the adult Okarowok girl who received the twenty two year old Oyima Ngila boy and ushered her into her hut.

In the case of the nineteen year-old, she was ready for marriage. Her defiance of norms, well knowing her parents were aware of what was taking place, was at the same time aimed at invoking the same norms, which would ensure her a future. Hers was a calculated move to force some kind of permanency in the relationship by inviting her own people to witness an illegitimate meeting with her lover, a secret between two people. The deliberate act was demonstrated further when her mother, sent by her father, called her outside the hut to find out if a boy was in the hut, a fact she confirmed along with the identity of the youth. By so doing, she had knowingly invited her family, who also later invited her paternal uncles and aunties to take part in what was meant to be a secret meeting. Thus, she had done the laying of the trap so her suitor could be held by her brothers who would later demand for *tojo*, the ‘dew’ money. The dew money was meant to compensate youth of the girl’s clan who spied, discovered and eventually braved the early morning dewy bushes to apprehend the couple – even if this was never the case, as in the Okarowok-Oyima case.

¹²⁸ See Uganda’s Children Act 1998, (Chapter 59).

In what is akin to familial cross-gender relationships described by Jean-Klein (2000: 100-127), individuals act out their gender identity and moral status reciprocally and recursively. The Okarowok girl thus did the spying and kept the unsuspecting lover in her hut till morning. By doing this, she recast a new narrative on *luk*, making it no longer secretive, and no longer exclusively a man's spy world and by so doing ascertained her own future as a married woman.¹²⁹ With her action, she unveiled the cover off a secretive private affair and invited a collective, her family and her lover's. Where a collective was involved, *luk* the normed system would be invoked, completing the public transformation of the relationship. Her lover, were he reluctant in proposing marriage, would now be urged on by her people and held to account. But the girl was also well aware she would not be part of the negotiation meetings. To further ensure this end was met, she relied on her mother and aunties who would be her ears and eyes in the negotiations. From the time her mother summoned her outside to ascertain the identity of the youth, the girl found a confidante who later mobilised the girl's paternal aunties to be at the negotiation. During the negotiation of *luk* by male elders of the lovers' families and lineages, these women would sit at the periphery of the meeting, following the procedures and gesturing in agreement or disagreement. Thus, the muting of a girl's role in the making of *luk* could be considered merely a political maneuvering which was aimed at passing her off as 'good' marriage material by her family.

But male suitors like the Oyima lover played a similar card, though with a slightly different reason. At twenty two years of age and with no reliable source of income or cattle of his own to guarantee brideprice, one could say the Oyima boy deliberately invited the *luk* suit upon himself. This way, his family would get involved and provide for a means to take the Okarowok girl as his wife. For, he could have chosen to meet his lover elsewhere. His quick revelation of identity and reluctance to escape in the night was a deliberate ploy to hold his family to account. Through his arrest, his father and clan would be forced to contribute toward his matrimony. Thus, like the girl, his singularly act of secrecy (*luk*) was cleverly crafted to materialise into a commitment by his family and clan.

¹²⁹ See chapter five for a discussion of the importance of *luk* as a precursor to marriage.

During fieldwork, respondents said suitors often used many other ways to persuade each other's side to comply with established social norms. For example, ex-combatant mother Ajok who returned from the LRA with a pregnancy said after weaning her baby, she started a courtship with a young man she met at the IDP camp she returned to.¹³⁰ Like her natal family, this suitor and his family had also lived in Agweng sub county, but had not known that Ajok had been with the LRA. It was only when he had *tingo luk* (committed *luk*) and got her pregnant, Ajok explained, that she decided to reveal her LRA past to him.

Concealment gave them mileage in meeting the perceived qualities a suitor and his people might wish for in a wife. Thus, they could mute their condition as a mother of a CBOW until a certain point in their relationship when they deemed it safe as guaranteed by the Lango marriage-making norms. That safety came in the form of a pregnancy. To this end, the least a suitor could do was pay *luk*. Like bridewealth, *luk* could, for example, also contribute toward funding the matrimony of a girl's brother (see chapter five). This position was further underpinned by the physical absence of girls during customary suit meetings in which their familial networks and not *the girls* claimed damages. Like the Okarowok case, girls' familial networks were the offended and the originator of the suits, hence the inclusion of charges for 'trespass and the dew'. Faulting the girls would fault their natal families as well and reduce the girls' chances of contracting *luk*, just as it would their chances of later getting married. The sense of victimhood may also therefore be seen as an entry point for mutual understanding between individuals and groups. If the aim (end) of these pretensions was to simply market the girl to her suitor's network, the indisputability of its means served the important function of distinguishing between the offended and the offender.

The muting of a girl's character during *luk* was synonymous with that which happened during marriage-making. In marriage-making mothers and brothers took on full responsibility of any premarital babies conceived with an old lover so as to free their daughters and sisters from encumbrances that lowered their eligibility for marriage with

¹³⁰ Interview: Ajok, ex-combatant, twenty five years old, Amia Abil village in Agweng, Lira district, Uganda. 10 July 2013.

new lovers. For example, Ajok explained that her mother took care of her CBOW so her new post LRA suitor could marry her.¹³¹ Similarly, ex-combatant mother Adong's eligibility for marriage was raised upon the weaning of her CBOW to be cared for by the brother who would later use her bridewealth for his own marriage.¹³² This helped urge on the relationship, further muting the likelihood of any resistance from the man's side. But, as seen in section 3.2 above, taking responsibility of a daughter or sister's child from a premarital sexual relationship with another man was not simply about increasing the likelihood of her marriage to a new suitor. Rather, it was done in compliance with the local policy of affiliation. New lovers were not expected to affiliate or take with them children of their brides' pre-marital sexual relationships.

'Luk' payment in the case of paternity claims

A father of a *luk* child had to meet all the required payment fully before he could lay his claims. Piecemeal payments were accepted but lineage reversal only took effect upon the completion of the fine. But practices of partial payments especially when there were lengthy breaks before completion led to confusion and disagreements between parties concerned and reflected on the quality of a child's everyday life. An example of a protracted *luk* process was that of eleven-year-old Okabo and his younger brother.¹³³ This started in the year 2001 between the maternal family of the child Okabo that lived in Barlonyo and his father's family in the next sub county of Okwang.¹³⁴ In 2001, when Okabo was conceived and the pregnancy was noticeable, his mother's brothers and father demanded for *luk* from Okabo's father. The case was heard before the Local Council (LC1) of Okabo's mother's village in Barlonyo. Okabo's father was accompanied by his brothers, uncles and head of the Okii Cel clan section at Okwang

¹³¹ Interview: Ajok, ex-combatant, twenty five years old, Amia Abil village in Agweng, Lira district, Uganda. 10 July 2013.

¹³² Interview: Adong, twenty three years old, Ex-combatant mother, Omiri village, Iceme sub county, Oyam district, Uganda. 1 August 2013.

¹³³ Focus Group Discussion: Okabo's father Eron, mother, father, paternal uncle, grandfather, Awing Ipany village, Amo Yai parish in Okwang sub county, Lira, Uganda. 18 April 2013.

¹³⁴ One could reach Okwang by taking the Barlonyo route and crossing the Moroto river (locals shortened it to 'moto'. Okwang shared its northern and eastern borders with Pader district of Acholi.

sub county. But like the Okarowok girl, Okabo's mother, Agonga, was not eligible to attend. Instead her father, brothers and his agnates and the *jago* (chief of the clan section at sub county) of his Ocukuru Ogole clan were the complainants. The LC court mediation concluded that Okabo's father pay a *luk* fine of six goats.¹³⁵ Payment was made for three goats although one died on the way and was not eventually counted. Okabo's father then promised to pay the balance of three goats and even replace the dead one. In April 2013, this balance was yet to be paid. Although the Okii Cel side argued that their partial payment (three goats), already reversed Okabo's lineage to his father's, his mother's side refused to acknowledge such a change until the full payment was met. The contestation was further manifested in the double naming of Okabo. On the one hand, Okabo carried his paternal grandfather's name and on the other he had that given to him by his mother's people. Each side believed that the name they had given Okabo, which the opposing side never acknowledged was a solid confirmation that the boy was a member of their clan. Were the payment of *luk* to be completed, such a contestation would be dropped and Okabo would retain only one name acknowledged by all parties. The name would be that which his father gave him and he would have a permanent home in his father's household.

The study also observed cases where *luk* children whose compensation had been made being sent away even when they were reluctant to leave. This happened to Adong's estranged husband. As a child his father had paid *luk* to his mother's family because his parents were not married. But his father had not *tero* (taken) him. So he had grown up with his mother's family.¹³⁶ But when he got married, he was ordered by his mother's brothers to leave. So he took his new wife and child and relocated to his father's lands. During the fieldwork, Adong's husband had chased her away and married another wife to stay on the land. But Adong said she was relieved that at least her son whom she had in the marriage would inherit some of his father's land. Thus the unresolved politics that the Langi associate with access to a woman's procreation ability continues impacting on

¹³⁵ Field notes: Lango, Uganda, 18 April 2013.

¹³⁶ Interview: Okodi Caroline, forty two years old, Local Councillor of Atoparoma village, Iceme sub county, Oyam district, Uganda.

her child's life as exemplified in naming practices, and rules of residence and inheritance.

These behaviours help in understanding the social processes and forms that characterise contemporary rural Lango. The endless suits for *luk* and the associated naming and re-naming of children and the pressure to relocate to a father's lands were some of the behaviours that individuals and groups in Lango used to express their sense of political self and other. Thus, failure or inability for one's parents to marry before his or her birth automatically set him or her aside as a child whose lineage status was subject to renegotiation.

The renegotiation, whether it took place successfully or not, directly determined where a child eventually lived; whose lands he or she would farm; where the source of his brideprice would be; who would be the custodian of her sexuality rights and acquire her bridewealth when she became an adult and what opportunities he or she would have in the course of his/her life. But in childhood, it could also broaden the opportunities for that child.

This was seen in Myene sub county of Oyam district in 2013.¹³⁷ Tino, an LRA ex-combatant (from the *Jo Alwa* clan) had a son with Atine (of the *Jo Omola Acol* clan) who owned a produce buying business at the trading centre. Even though Atine had paid a cow for his son's *luk*, the three year old was considered still too young to be taken away from his mother who lived in her natal family homestead. Atine however regularly sent money and grocery to the mother for the child's upkeep. He also paid for his son's medical bills whenever the child visited a clinic. Atine was set to relocate the boy to his home once he reached the age of eight years, so he could send him to school and ensure he had the same care as the rest of his children. Tino however had a younger one-year-old son whose father's identity she refused to disclose. The younger boy's *luk* was therefore not paid. Unlike the older boy's father, the second son could not receive money and grocery toward his upkeep from his genitor. The renegotiation of the first son's lineage therefore augmented the mother's ability to look after her son.

¹³⁷ Field notes: Acimi, Myene sub county, Oyam district, July 2013.

Similarly, this uterine brothers' case also demonstrated the elasticity of a child's options in the event any of them was requiring help from kinship ties; for example in amassing brideprice. As an adult the older brother would in the first instance be expected to ask for help from his father (and paternal kin network) and then fall back on his mother's brothers were his father's kin to fail him (cf. Tosh, 1978: 49). But in the event that his younger brother needed similar help, he would have to rely on his maternal kin only. Whereas the older boy displayed a broader social network of kinship (from both mater and pater), the younger one had a much narrower one in form of his mother's kin.

Non-fulfillment of 'luk'

During fieldwork, the study came across many children whose *luk* rituals had not been honoured. The reasons for the collapse of *luk* were varied. For example, some respondents like Agonga of Barlonyo and her family said they knew the men responsible but that the men refused to comply with the demands of *luk*.¹³⁸ Often those men denied having had sexual relationships with the women in the first place. For example, the father of Acen was raising a grandson whose alleged biological father refused to acknowledge the affair that led to the boy's birth.¹³⁹

Some lovers had reportedly conceded only after a protracted struggle by the mothers' families. For example in Acaba sub county, upon returning from the LRA Tino had a son with Atine, her new post-war lover, who was a local businessman also of Acaba. At the time of the study Tino lived in her father's household with her son. She said after protracted demands by her father, her ex-lover Atine finally conceded and paid a cow to her father as *luk* for the boy.¹⁴⁰ This was confirmed by both Tino's father¹⁴¹ and Atine.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ E.g. Focus Group Discussion: Acen's father, (eighty years old) and five other members of his household and neighborhood that had been present during the marriage, Amia Abil village, Agweng sub county, Lira, Uganda. 13 February 2015.

¹³⁹ Interview: Constantino Okori, seventy eight years, Acen's father, Oromo clan, Amia Abil village, Agweng sub county, Lira, Uganda. 12 July 2013.

¹⁴⁰ Interview: Tino, twenty five years old, Ex-combatant mother, Acimi village, Myene sub county in Oyam district, Uganda. 16 July 2013.

The study found that most maternal families like that of Tino fought to have their daughters' ex-lovers pay for *luk* of children out of fear of the limited land resources at their disposal.¹⁴³ They worried about the strain male children put on the ever-dwindling land resources, especially when they grew into men and required their own share to settle down with their own families. Encouraging biological fathers to invoke *luk* was therefore the preferred option by some maternal families in addressing future land crises.

The government of Uganda also penalised refusal to pay for *luk* among communities that practiced it as an offence. Offenders were liable to pay 600 shillings to the aggrieved party. At the time of the study, complainants were taking their cases of *luk* to the magistrate grade I. All of these cases were heard in closed chambers in line with the Children's Act (2009), which provided for confidentiality. Ms. Achot, who at the time of the field study, practiced as an advocate in the Lira Magisterial area said that although cases were lodged in court for *luk*, magistrates often preferred to award 'special damages' to the maternal side. This, she explained, ensured that the complainant got paid a reasonable amount of between 200,000 shillings and 300,000 shillings rather than the 600 shillings which is stipulated in the books of law.¹⁴⁴ Achot further explained that the child would be physically handed over to the biological father by the magistrate. In the colonial days, the *Lukiiko* court which represented the British Crown at County level set the amount payable at thirty shillings. Maternal grandfathers and uncles who were aggrieved could then take their complaints to the nearest *Lukiiko* and lodge a suit against a boy for refusal to pay for *luk* (see Hayley, 1940: 151).

¹⁴¹ Interview: Oyaro Francis, fifty three years old, Tino's father, Acimi village, Myene sub county in Oyam district, Uganda. 16 July 2013.

¹⁴² Interview: Atine Moses, twenty six years old, Jo Alwa wibye acel clan, Acimi village, Myene sub county in Oyam, Uganda. 30 July 2013.

¹⁴³ E.g. Interview: Oyaro Francis, fifty three years old, Tino's father, Acimi village, Myene sub county in Oyam district, Uganda. 16 July 2013.

¹⁴⁴ At the time of the study 600 shillings was equivalent to 0.2 US Dollars.

But, like Acen's sons, some maternal families also could refuse to accept *luk*, even when the offenders offered to pay. Some simply refused to even alert the families of the biological fathers of the existence of their *otino luk*, initiating a form of 'adoption' as further discussed in chapter six of this thesis.

There were also cases of mothers accused by their natal families of refusing to identify the lovers who made them pregnant. Their natal families complained that their daughters had deliberately concealed the identities of the men responsible. For example in 2013, ex-combatant mother Tino, who lived in Acaba at the time of the study, had a second son with a man she refused to identify to her natal family.¹⁴⁵ In spite of her father's insistence of the importance of invoking *luk* ritual for the child, Tino kept the identity of her son's biological father to herself and continued living with the child in her father's household. Because her natal family had no one to direct the claims of *luk* to, her son's *luk* was therefore not invoked. In the past, Hayley (1940) wrote, concealment of a father's identity was often linked to incestuous relationship, an act which was seen as *jok*.

Moore (1969) and Driberg (1923), in their analyses, offered that by later marrying the mother of a *luk* child a genitor was able to affiliate his *luk* child without honouring the *luk* ritual of that child. Although the study came across a similar practice in the example of Acen's marriage to Oyat, this assertion contradicted the Lango doctrine on access to a woman's 'fertility right'. This can only be enforced through the seal of *lim* (bridewealth) or *luk* (ritual for the child). This explains why lovers who wished to marry women who had their *luk* children had to pay *luk* for each child before later paying brideprice for the mothers.

During fieldwork, the researcher witnessed one such marriage in which the bride's family and lineage also asked for *luk* of the bride and *luk* of her child, seven years after the birth of the couple's daughter (see appendix 1).¹⁴⁶ Unless *luk* ritual is fulfilled

¹⁴⁵ Interview: Oyaro Francis, fifty three years old, Tino's father, Acimi village, Myene sub county, Oyam district, Uganda. 30 July 2013.

¹⁴⁶ Appendix 1 shows a list of demands generated by a clan that was sent to the biological father of their daughter's seven-year-old child in 2014. The lovers had eventually wished to marry each other. The list

therefore, a claim over a woman's fertility right (in this case her child born before marriage) cannot be applied retrospectively, not even through the ritual of *nyom*. This study suggests that the affiliation of *otino luk* to their biological fathers without invoking the ritual of *luk* is evidence of a local concept similar to adoption that offered another means of affiliating children to extra-maternal lineages. In other instances, the study saw children being temporarily affiliated based on the local concept of *cul pit* (compensation for upbringing of a child). All of these concepts may on the surface be seen as outright affiliation processes comparable to that of *luk* or marriage. Yet, as will be further discussed in chapter six, both 'adoptive' and *culpit* measures are provided for within the jural principles of lineages/clans.

3.6. Blood payment (*culo kwor*)

If a person was murdered, the deceased person's lineage could demand *culo kwor* (payment of blood feud) from the murderer and his clan to pacify the resultant *rucurucu*. *Culu kwor* also took place if a person who was not a lineage member died in one's home – including death from a sickness or a pregnancy-related complication. The host clan was expected to pay *kwor* to the lineage/clan of the dead person. At the time of the study, respondents explained that lineage leaders uttered the rule of *kwor* (blood feud) to underline the need to comply with affiliation rules. Respondents explained that the fear of *kwor* often caused families and their clans to regulate who could live in their homes. Individuals who did not have affiliation to a lineage were often not welcome; the reason a divorced woman often left her offspring with their father's family. This helped a mother's family and clan to avoid *culo kwor* in the event that a death or injury occurred to the children while with them. It did not matter whether death or injury was a result of natural causes.

But it was also possible that both patrilines applied the rule of *kwor* simply to safeguard their rights to the social and economic assets. Female children are seen as a potential source of bridewealth. Boys could be relied upon by a dying lineage to ensure

shows separate demands for *nyom* (marrying the mother) from that of *luk* of the mother and *luk* of the child.

continuity of a family line. But male children could also be seen as a source of tension in families that have large numbers of sons and scarcity of land and cattle. Respondents argued that once they grow into adults, boys were a liability. They would expect to have a share of these resources so they can marry and settle their families.

Once *kwor* occurs, members of the offending group often share the responsibility of generating the compensation. If they failed to pay, they also jointly face the wrath of the offended. Any compensation paid would ‘belong’ not to the offended person or family, but to the clan (see also Tosh, 1978). The portrayal of ‘common’ ownership of such proceeds however would on the one hand be misleading, and on the other, defeat the purpose of reciprocity as discussed in section 3.4 above.

At least six *kwor* came to my notice between January and May 2013 in Lango. Clan heads were obliged to use the available radio stations in Lira to mobilise their respective membership for clan gatherings that were aimed at raising compensation to pacify the offended clans. Other clans like the Ocukuru Ogora frequently sent out calls to their youths who had eloped with girls to marry. Marriage, the leaders explained, would prevent the misfortune of *culo kwor* should a girl die. A similar practice in neighbouring Acholi, also called *kwor*, was reported to have failed and flared a revenge attack that left fifty four huts torched and 200 people displaced in March 2013.¹⁴⁷

The study found that male respondents who honoured *luk* of children born outside wedlock also linked their compliance to the fear of having to *culo kwor* (pay compensation for the dead) or face blood feud, should death occur of a mother or her child during pregnancy or at birth.¹⁴⁸ They explained that should an unmarried pregnant lover die, her family was liable for compensation of seven herds of cattle by her lover. A similar payment was also exerted separately for her baby should it die. A lover and

¹⁴⁷ See The Monitor. 2013. Children miss school over inter clan fights. *The Monitor*, 25. Available from: <http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Children-miss-school-over-inter-clan-fights/-/688334/1729546/-/exlh15z/-/index.html>. [Accessed 22 April 2014].

¹⁴⁸ E.g. Interview with Jennifer Ogali, forty five year-old woman who paid *luk* which was imposed on her 21 year old son for making a girl pregnant, Aputi village, Abeli parish, Akalo, Kole district, Uganda. 15 December 2014.

his family were targets of blood feud raids, also called *culo kwor* if they failed to meet the costs in herds of cattle. At the time of the field study, there were local radio announcements by heads of several clans appealing for financial contributions from clan members to enable them meet the costs of cattle for *culo kwor* of individuals that had died or been killed at the hands or homes of members of their respective clans.¹⁴⁹ Both of these practices are rooted in the jural principle that recognises both the unmarried mother and her child as affiliates of her natal family. A death associated with a pregnancy or birth was seen and treated as murder by her family, ushering in a case of *kwor* (blood payment). For it was his attempt at usurping the woman's fertility right that led to her death and the loss of her child.

To underline the seriousness of this practice, many families sent their pregnant daughters away to stay with their lovers until after a successful birth, even if their *luk* was not yet sanctioned. After birth, the new mother would then return to her natal family, leaving behind her child should the payment of *luk* of the child be concluded. An example was seen in the case of Okabo's mother Agonga, an unmarried ex-combatant who lived in Barlonyo in Lira and was carrying her fourth pregnancy with a new lover.¹⁵⁰ Her brother who was also the figurehead of her natal family had ordered her lover to keep her until she was able to deliver her child safely, even if he did not intend to marry her.

The researcher witnessed a similar case of *luk*, which was brought upon the family of Ogali of the Ocukuru Ogora clan in Aputi village, Abeli parish in Akalo sub county in November 2014.¹⁵¹ Ongel, their twenty one-year-old son, made pregnant Kia (anonymised), a nineteen-year-old girl of the Okarowok Atar clan. Her family and members of her patriclan then descended upon Ogali's family home and demanded for *luk*. Ogali and his wife asked for more time to enable them put together the payment.

¹⁴⁹ E.g. Radio Unity, Voice of Lango and Radio Rhino, all of which were based in Lira read out not less than four appeals for *culo kwor* contributions for four different clans between April 2013 and July 2013.

¹⁵⁰ Interview: Agonga, Okabo's mother, Barlonyo, Ogur, Lira district, Uganda. 16 April 2013.

¹⁵¹ Field notes: *Luk* proceedings at the home of Ogali Patrick, forty two years old, Aputi village, Abeli parish, Akalo sub county, Kole District, Uganda. 6 November 2014 and 30 November 2014.

The girl's family accepted and, as customs demanded, ceded the girl to the care of Ogali and his family – in case anything should happen to her and her unborn child. Ogali and his wife explained to the researcher that customs provided for *kwor* compensation (blood payment) by the patriclan of the boy to a girl's patriclan to avert a feud should either or both mother and child die before or during childbirth. After a month, they paid one cow for the girl's *luk* and another for the *luk* of her unborn child. Ogali and the girl's family hoped that after a safe birth, Kia would leave the baby with Ogali's family and then return to her own natal family since her suitor had not shown any further interest in marrying her. But should she continue staying with Ogali and his family without a marriage and a death occurred of her, Ogali's family would be charged with *culo kwor*. This, Ogali explained, was a situation they would try to avoid by sending Kia back to her parents after the birth of her child.

Respondents, including ex-combatants, said they knew more fathers in their villages that opted to pay for only the *luk* of the child compared to those who also went ahead to marry the mothers. The study also found that fulfillment of *luk* protected a lover from *culo kwor* of a baby should it die during pregnancy or its birth. But it did not offer the same protection upon the death of a pregnant mother. In the event of her death therefore, a lover was liable to paying both the *luk* and the *kwor*. As seen in the cases of Ogali and Agonga, parties to *luk* often underlined the seriousness of *culo kwor* by handing over a pregnant mother to her lover and his family for the entire duration of her pregnancy.

Where and with whom individuals lived was therefore dictated by the descent affiliation status with compliance safeguarded by such stringent policies as *culo kwor*. As will be later seen, this underlying interpretation of *kwor* formed an important framework for the understanding of why individuals and groups in Lango could not easily embrace and settle with a child whose descent affiliation was ambiguous or confirmed to be of another clan. Insofar as individuals and groups in Lango associate *culo kwor* with lineage/clan affiliation, *culo kwor* can be seen as mutually re-enforcing the policy of *luk*.

The underpinning policy of descent therefore streamlined the right of affiliating a *luk* child also physically (*where* and *with whom* a child lived). It safeguarded the principle of transferring rights to a woman's sexuality and reproductive potential, ensuring that it was not hijacked by biological fathers who might take their *luk* offspring to live with them without first invoking *luk*. For example, the study found that all of the peacetime *otino luk* of the five ex-combatant mothers lived with their maternal families. But as seen in the case of Okabo of Barlonyo, respondents also identified cases where individuals attempted to affiliate children without honoring the *luk* policy, an act which some elders attributed to the decrease in the influence of cultural norms and institutions within the legal pluralism of contemporary Uganda.

3.7. War and its effects on social institutions in Lango

This thesis suggests that ideas of gender and motherhood that underpinned pre-LRA social institutions continued to be influenced by the traditional social institutions. But it also acknowledges that these influences have waned or suffered marked changes in the wider context of war and displacement. Like thousands of other families in rural Lango, Acen's family, presented at the beginning of the chapter, was uprooted from their home in Amia Abil in 2002. Together with her sister and two brothers, she had been earlier, in 1998, abducted by the LRA. While her parents relocated to Agweng IDP camp, some of her siblings took refuge in other IDP camps in Lira. As Baines et al., (2013: 2) put it, the war disrupted 'the spatial and temporal rhythms of daily life in the homestead and village...'

Mass internal displacement in rural Lango, as in Acholi (Baines & Rosenoff- Gauvin, 2013: 2), threatened the social structures and socio-cultural notions that defined personhood in Lango. So did the plucking out of young boys, girls and youth and confining them in the LRA, so that they were out of reach of familial and lineage norms and regulatory structures. As Baines et al., elaborated,

Fathers, aunts, and uncles were no longer able to perform their familial roles as providers, disciplinarians, and heads of households; daughters and sons no longer had traditional responsibilities, moral obligations, and dependence

on the familial social structure; and all forms of familial relations were put under extreme strain by violence, insecurity, immorality, lack of productivity and poverty.¹⁵²

Inhabitants of IDP camps were simply individuals and families crammed together, irrespective of previous affiliations (see Okello & Hovil, 2007: 442). The customary structures (families, lineages and clans) were therefore weakened and unable to sustain a presence and authority to sanction adherence to moral codes and conduct of individuals and groups.

Through displacement, hundreds of thousands of people in rural Lango lost access to their land, however temporarily. But they also lost access to their livestock; not only through rustling and plundering by the LRA and the cattle rustlers from Karamoja, but also through loss of brideprice when their daughters were abducted and/or could not marry. In Lango land and livestock are two important marks of patriarchy, for which potential beneficiaries patronized male owners in the hope that they could be seen favourably. Customary land in Lango only passed onto a son of the man of the house, or a male relative. A daughter could only own it indirectly through her sons when they inherit. The same principle occurs for the livestock – they were for the marriage of a son, or a male relative. A daughter's role was to supply it through her brideprice. Acen's father said while in Agweng IDP camp, he lost his livestock and could not access his lands and live off it. Yet, he explained, he could not replenish the livestock because two of Acen's sisters had children from premarital relationships while in the camp and their lovers refused to pay *luk* or marry them. Acen's father felt cheated but explained that he could not force the men to pay. The loss of land and livestock deprived men of the means of exercising authority in the family and lineage. As Baines et al., (2013: 2) put it: 'The result of displacement was to fray familial kinship networks and social organisation that disrupted customary gender and generational roles and relations'.

The loss of production resources further weakened the structural aspects of hegemonic masculinity in families, leading to what Okello & Hovil (2007) have described as

¹⁵² See Baines et al., 2013, p. 2.

‘identity crisis faced by men who feel their traditional roles disrupted by an inability to look after their families’. As discussed in the sections on *nyom* and *lim* above, land and cattle were sites of male authority – a man married a woman and provided for her because the *lim* belonged to men not women. But in the state of war and displacement, men could no longer protect and provide for their families, so that women became the main providers, threatening the identity and roles of men, and triggering a ‘collapse of masculinity’ (Dolan, 2003) many of whom turned to drunkenness to cope with their loss.

Yet studies show that this ‘collapse of masculinity’ triggered sexual abuse and exploitation of girls and women in the IDP camps as their fathers and husbands could no longer offer the necessary support and protection. As girls and women moved out of the camps in search of water and food, they were exposed to sexual violence by UPDF as well as abduction by the LRA. In addition, husbands and fathers were unable to provide better accommodation for their families, forcing children to share huts with unrelated children away from their parents and exposing girls to sexual violence (Okello & Hovil, 2007). Other studies have also linked increased levels of sexual violence against girls and women during and after war to the frustrations and alcohol abuse resulting from loss of status by men in the social hierarchy (Baines et al., 2013). As Baines et al., (2013: 8) also noted, as the pre-war social restraints waned, there was a boom in coercive or early marriage of women and girls with men who were seen as more capable of providing food and other basic needs, mostly UPDF soldiers and older men or ‘sugar daddies’. All of these sexual unions of *luk*, rape or coercion led to births of children across the region (Baines et al., 2013: 8).

The confusion of displacement created ‘missing links’ (Whyte et al., 2013), which made it difficult to trace lineage elders, for aggrieved fathers and brothers to take their complaints of *luk*. Thus, family and lineage were not only fractured socially, but could also not ‘find’ and make use of social institutions of redress such as *luk* or *nyom*. But landlessness and the loss of livestock had also disempowered elders who lacked the means of sanctioning *luk*, which needed livestock. Young men who committed *luk* with unmarried girls either had no livestock or money to meet its costs or simply refused to

pay, leading to social violence on the girl and members of her lineage (cf. Stephens, 2013: 47).

At the same time, a biological father could not be called to order because either he and his family were unknown, or were seen as too powerful (UPDF and LRA). Moreover in the complexity of the war, he could not invoke *kwor*, after all there were no elders to direct claims to, and no livestock to warrant a payment – impunity therefore persisted. During fieldwork in Acimi village in Myene sub county, respondents recalled the rape of a thirteen-year-old girl by a UPDF soldier in 2004 as she went to the well outside Acimi IDP camp. The girl had reported the incident to her father who in turn raised a complaint to the UPDF commander at the camp. Respondents explained that the commander had instead threatened to withdraw his troops if the man went ahead with his complaint. Civilian elders, afraid that the withdrawal of the troops could expose the camp to LRA attacks, had reprimanded the victim's father - telling him to withdraw his complaint. The girl, however, had conceived a set of twins, one of which died along with her during childbirth. Her mother who happened to have been breastfeeding her own six month old baby then took on the surviving twin, an act which angered her husband. He went ahead and threw a spear at his wife, killing her instantly. The man was arrested and jailed, leaving five children in the care of the oldest, a twelve-year-old.

Although this case showed the existence of some form of justice remedy by government in the arrest and jailing of the victim's father, it also revealed the lack of avenues that existed – governmental and non governmental – to mitigate and address incidences of rape and sexual violence in displaced communities. Although Uganda boasts of a strong law against sexual violence directed at children and the rape of women – either of which can attract a maximum penalty of death upon conviction in the Ugandan High Court - there was a general absence of support services, including psychosocial and legal services to victims and survivors of sexual violence in northern Uganda.¹⁵³ Reports also suggest that survivors were often silenced in the 'interest of their security' as was the case in the rape of the thirteen-year-old girl of Acimi (e.g. Baines, 2005). In addition, others simply feared stigma associated with sexual violence, while some kept silent for

¹⁵³ See the Uganda Penal Code Act.

fear of being seen as wanting to unfairly benefit from compensation. But many simply saw no need to report as, in addition to lack of police presence, there were extremely minimal judicial processes in northern Uganda (Amnesty International, 2007).

During fieldwork, there were indications of changes in *luk* policies by certain groups in Lango, which required the mother of a *luk* child and her natal family to pay a *luk* fine to her patriclan if her lover failed to pay. Akello, a twenty eight-year-old ex-combatant mother who lived in Bar Obia village in Acaba sub county of Oyam district, with her widowed mother complained that her natal patriclan had been harassing her mother to pay up the *luk* of Akello's peacetime one-year-old love child. This, she explained, was because her lover ran away to live in Lira town before he could comply with *luk*, so that the clan held her family accountable.¹⁵⁴ Akello's mother corroborated this, saying she later took a goat to the head of their clan section as payment of what would have gone to the clan had Akello's lover honoured *luk*. The researcher however did not find this practice in any other community in Lango. Other than Akello's patriclan, individuals representing other clans of Lango found the practice new and strange. A representative of Akello's natal clan later explained the genesis of that practice in their clan. He said during the war, many families ignored their parental roles of inculcating good morals in their daughters and so many girls had ended up with many *otino luk* whose fathers were unknown.

3.8. Conclusion

People in post-LRA Lango have continued to rely on ideas of gender and motherhood that existed before the war to shape their social institutions, which remained highly patriarchal, in particular the institutions of family, lineage (*dogola*) and marriage (*nyom*). *Dogola* (literary referring to a 'door') was the smaller and closest to a person. They used marriage as a main means of replenishing and shaping membership of lineages and subsequently clans. Typically the Langi sealed marriages (*nyom*) with the payment of brideprice (*lim*). A prospective husband makes this payment to a girl's natal family. In negotiating a *nyom*, individuals and their lineages deploy livestock and

¹⁵⁴ Interview: Akello, twenty eight years old - lives in Bar Obia village, Acaba sub county, Oyam district, Uganda. 15 July 2013.

money to negotiate for the right over the sexuality and procreative ability of a girl in another clan. Once *nyom* is concluded, a husband then takes away (*tero*) his new wife to his home. The removal (*tero*) of a wife by a husband symbolizes his newly acquired right of control over her sexuality and reproductive ability. Any offspring she produces within the marriage then becomes a member of her new husband's lineage. They are entitled to benefiting from reproductive and productive assets of their father's lineage. A prospective husband has to follow the prescribed rituals and procedures of *nyom* in a woman's clan to acquire rights over her offspring.

At the time of the study, the Langi were still observing strict rules of affiliating their children to the clans of their fathers, if their fathers paid *lim* (brideprice) to their mother's lineage. Informants emphasised that marriage continued to not only regulate the relationship between husband and wife, but also determined the lineage affiliation of a woman's children. If *lim*, comprising a range of items, was not paid, a child remained a member of the mother's patrilineage. Marriage in post LRA Lango therefore remained a process that transferred rights over a woman's sexuality, and eventually her offspring. This rule applies to all of the children born to a married woman. They become automatically affiliated to her husband's lineage even if they have a different genitor.

A similar rule applied to the children of a widow conceived after the death of her husband. Her children would still affiliate to her deceased husband's lineage. All of these policies were still active in Lango during the study. Lineage membership in Lango was therefore still being determined by the exchange of rights over a mother's fertility with cattle from his or her father's side, marriage being a ritual of exchange.¹⁵⁵ The exogamous unions and the politics of source of livestock underline the idea of exchange. Political power inherent within a descent group mediates this exchange of livestock, money and other items of economic value and fertility rights in a process that is brokered by intergenerational and interpersonal behaviour within and across familial circles. The absence or subjugation of any one of these elements will lead to *rucurucu*

¹⁵⁵ Insofar as an individual was known to have been born within the marriage and not before it was contracted.

and reflect on a child's legitimacy within Lango. Ex-combatants who wished to reunite had to contend with this process.

But *luk* also plays multiple functions associated with regulating access rights to a girl's sexuality and fertility. It served as a powerful tool for avoiding *rucurucu* between the lovers' natal families and patriclans, in the event that men engaged in sexual intercourse with unmarried girls. It also served to pacify husbands whose wives were found in extra marital affairs.

Through sanctioning payment of fines by a man who is caught having sexual intercourse with an unmarried girl, the girl's family and patriclan are appeased, averting potential violent quarrels and fights. A similar payment to a married woman's husband by her extra marital lover pacifies a husband. Should an unmarried girl become pregnant, payment of *luk* for the child would be expected. The Langi referred to children born as a consequence of these circumstances as *otino luk*. The *luk* payment does not however apply to the child of a wife's extra marital relationship. This is in line with the Lango descent principle in which any child fathered in an adulterous relationship belonged to the husband's family and lineage. No *luk* ritual could overturn that.

In Lango, *otino luk* automatically become affiliated to the patriclan of their mothers. But once the child's *luk* is successfully sanctioned by his or her biological father, this affiliation switches to that of the genitor. *Luk* therefore serves as a tool for re-aligning the descent affiliation of a woman's offspring. But unlike in marriage, it comes in as an amendment – solving the problem faced by biological fathers who do not follow the normative custom of marriage as a means of affiliating a lover's offspring. To ensure compliance to lineage doctrines and practices, the Langi still adhere to the social institution of *culo kwor*, a retributory sanction that is levied upon the lineage in whose hands or home, a non-lineage member dies. Another, *cul pit* (compensation for the upbringing of a child) was also still in practice.

The continuing relevance of these rules show that Lango society continues to hold itself together largely based on ideas of gender and motherhood. These rules and norms were challenged by the shock of displacement and abduction of family members, which led to the weakening of kinship networks and, with it, customary gender and generational roles and relations. In chapters five and six, the relevance of these ideas and institutions to the lived realities of ex-combatant mothers and their children conceived in the LRA will be explored.

CHAPTER 4. GENDER, MOTHERHOOD AND ETHNICITY IN THE LRA

4.1. Introduction

LRA's founder Joseph Kony and his commanders used a combination of ideologies and norms to structure, organise and sustain the group in its camps in the southern bushes of Sudan (now South Sudan). The LRA was not simply an outright military organisation of adults trained to fight wars. Rather, its recruits lived in a family-like setting similar to those in villages in northern Uganda. These recruits comprised of a large population of prepubescent girls and boys, and adolescent girls and women who were forced to become wives, leading to the birth of children in the LRA camps. Here, forced marriage was a strategy that the LRA deliberately used to create and sustain morale and nurture loyalty among its soldiers (e.g. Carlson & Mazurana, 2008). In essence, they used force on their recruits to replicate traditions of marriage and motherhood (Toy-Cronin, 2010).

As Baines (2011: 481) argued, Kony and his commanders reproduced a profoundly gendered structure that '...transgressed boundaries of sociality in the most intimate of ways, forcing their female prisoners to become 'wives' and mothers to their children; the male prisoners ...to be husbands and fathers.' Men, women and prepubescent recruits were expected to adhere to strict and often highly gendered (and militarised) roles and expectations in the LRA. This chapter explores how the leaders of the LRA deployed this highly gendered structure in their military camps in Sudan and how they regulated the sexuality and reproductive outcomes of their recruits. In particular, it focuses on how the group's leaders arrogated to themselves control over the sexuality and reproductive potential of their recruits and used forced marriages (and the resulting childbirths) as a means of sustaining their military aims.

4.2. Social organisation in the LRA: settlement

The journey of recruits of the LRA was couched in rituals and directives that the leadership of the LRA introduced and perpetuated within its membership. For example, respondents said at a certain point in their long walk toward Sudan, recruits were

anointed with Shea butter and had eggs pressed on their faces to graduate them into the LRA, and into the life of a combatant - and later into that of wifehood and motherhood, among others. Many were forced to kill other children and adults to bind them further to the LRA (see also Baines, 2011: 484-485; Temmerman, 2009). In a stark reminder of ceremonies the Luo speaking groups in northern Uganda performed following death and burial of kin, girls like Acen whose forced husbands died or were killed were taken through certain rituals as they prepared to take on other forced husbands (e.g. cf. Driberg, 165-170). As a rule, 'widows' did not have the choice about whether or not to take another 'husband', but they did have a choice of who that man was depending on the circumstances, as will be discussed in section 4.3 below.

Forced 'widows' had their heads shaved and were undressed and sprinkled with water before being anointed on the forehead with Shea butter. Acen and other respondents explained that their old clothes were then burnt and new ones given, a sign that they had transited into a new life.

Experiences of study participants who lived in the LRA camps in Sudan before the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) started driving them out toward the end of 2002, showed that these beliefs and instructions were not spontaneous. They were imposed by the LRA central command in an organised quasi-military system that 'resembled village life in Acholi' (see also Baines, 2014: 4-5). According to study participants, the LRA military model was organised in a hierarchical form that comprised five brigades by the time the UPDF launched their Operation Iron Fist (OIF) in 2002.^{156, 157} There was the Central Command (Command Alter), which was headed by General Joseph Kony. The Command Alter was deputised by four Brigades, namely; Sinia (or Cinia), Stockree, Gilva (or Gilba) and Trinkle.

A number of study participants used diagrams to depict the way they remembered the brigade camps in Sudan and how they related to each other. All of the diagrams, one of

¹⁵⁶ Interview: Acen, thirty years old, Orubo village, Gulu district, Uganda. 16 January 2015.

¹⁵⁷ Interview: Apili, thirty two years old, Gulu Town, Gulu, Uganda. 20 January 2015.

which is reproduced in appendix two, showed that each of the five brigades had distinct hierarchical features of military formation up to the last rank of junior soldiers (see also Baines, 2014: 4). Study participants argued that these hierarchical military formations also dictated the pattern of settlement and organisation of the LRA camps, which were named after the military brigades that ran them. The inhabitants of Sinia comprised of members of the Sinia Brigade; those of Gilba, Stockree and Trinkle also set up and occupied homonymous camps. All of these camps were organised cyclically to the Command Alter, a camp that was settled by Joseph Kony and the members of the Command Alter.

The LRA therefore used their military rationale to structure and organise camps. At the same time they factored in ideas of family as practiced in peacetime Lango and Acholi (see also Baines, 2014; Carlson and Mazurana, 2008). Each of the five camps was made up of a constellation of households. Apili who was abducted from a school in Apac (later known as Kole district) in October 1996 said that she was allocated to Commander Odonga (a pseudonym) who was a deputy in Joseph Kony's Command Alter.¹⁵⁸ She and all of the 'wives' of Odonga therefore lived on the compound of the Command Alter. Her drawings suggested that Kony's household, which held tens of 'wives', *ting ting* (prepubescent girls who served as *apidi*, babyminders) and their children fathered by Kony, was located in the centre of the Command Alter settlement.¹⁵⁹

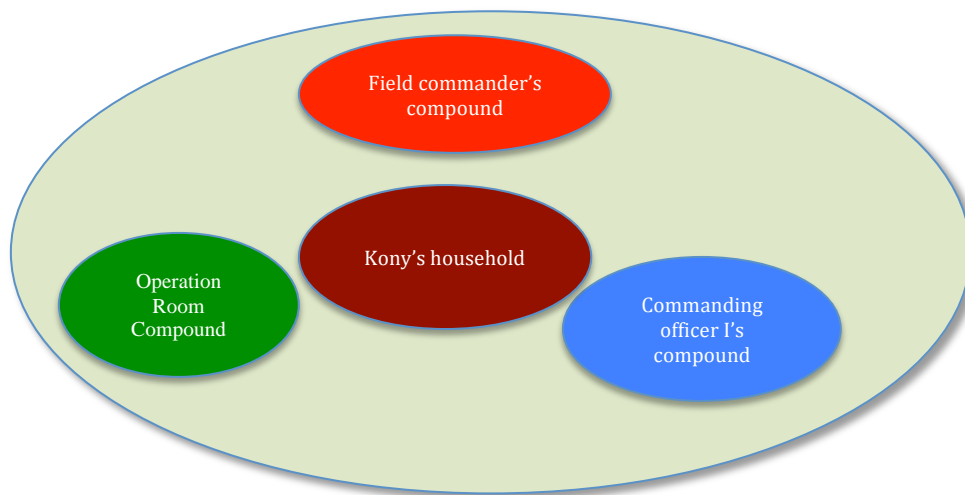
It was surrounded by groups of huts that had special functions in Kony's military organisation - roughly arranged in concentric circles. First, was a constellation of huts belonging to his immediate escorts. This was followed by that of his Officer-in-Charge (OC), whose household was also surrounded by the huts of his escorts and protégés. Next were the households of the Coy, often five on average, with their own constellation of escorts and protégés as well. Finally the junior soldiers, often comprised of new recruits and those who had not yet made a mark in the military world of the

¹⁵⁸ Interview: Apili, Gulu Town, Gulu, Uganda. 20 January 2015.

¹⁵⁹ Interviewees also generally believed that before the LRA was driven out of Sudan in 2012, Kony also maintained other 'wives' and their babies in Juba and Khartoum, and that this often explained his long absence from the camps.

LRA, ensured a solid ring of small low-lying huts or *adaki* on the margins of the entire Command Alter settlement. Any externally originated aggression would therefore have to confront the *adaki* boys first before finally creeping into the centre of the brigade. This meant, the higher the rank one held, the safer one was together with one's household. Also the better the conditions. Conversely the lower the rank a recruit had, the more exposed he or she was to enemy attack. A similar pattern was repeated in the rest of the four Brigades, which stood at strategic angles protective of the Command Alter.

Figure 6: Ex-combatant Apili's visualisation of the Command Alter camp



If the escort was hardworking militarily and had come of age, his 'boss' would reward him with a higher rank and a *ting ting* girl that had come of age as a wife. Apili said most junior soldiers often worked hard during raids in order to be on the commanders' good books and get promoted so they could move up the LRA hierarchy. This would come with benefits, which included relocating hut or household inwards and being given a 'wife' or 'wives'. In order to impress commanders and be rewarded, she said, many committed gruesome murders and massacres, which may have accounted for the high level of atrocities in the LRA. Forced marriage was a strategy that the LRA deliberately used to create and sustain morale and nurture loyalty among its soldiers (e.g. Carlson & Mazurana, 2008).

These observations re-enforce arguments that LRA created a system of coerced military masculinity for its survival (e.g. Baines, 2011: 478). Kony and his commanders used militarised strategies, to recreate a forced familial where men continued to maintain dominant social roles over girls and women. Accounts of ex-combatants also suggest that the sense of ‘family’ was further propagated by the sharing of space and food. Wives and children often shared a hut and took turns spending a night with their ‘husband’ in his own separate hut. Study participants further said a soldier’s ‘wives’ were responsible for providing meals for their ‘husband’s’ households. These included the escorts whose huts stood on a husband’s compound. For example, Apili said her household had a combination of eight wives, some *ting ting* girls and fifteen escorts or junior soldiers. These all ate from the same pot, just as family members in peacetime northern Uganda did. Apili’s bush ‘husband’, like other ‘husbands’ with households, had assigned a chief escort from among the fifteen junior soldiers to ensure that the food needs of the fifteen soldiers in the household was taken care of. Whenever any of these fifteen escorts was given a ‘wife’, the new ‘wife’ would be required to help the ‘wives’ of that household to prepare meals for everyone in the household.

Study participants also suggested that as women started having many children, large gardens were opened up to meet food demands that could no longer be fulfilled by the Sudan government. They explained that in 1999, the Sudan government fell out with the LRA, allowing the UPDF to start invading the LRA camps, as will be further discussed below. Acen said most households grew staple foods that they were familiar with in northern Uganda, including potatoes, sesame and peas. Brigade commanders, she explained, were in-charge of organising labour rosters to meet the demands of highly placed LRA officers, a feature which also defined relationships in peacetime villages in northern Uganda. In Lango villages, subsistence farmers rotated their labour on each other’s fields. As Acen recalled, ‘the brigade commander would say to junior officers, their wives and junior soldiers, ‘on such and such a day, you will all go and work on the farm of so and so...’

Thus, the commanders mobilised their recruits to convert the surrounding land into crop farms to sustain their food needs. But the ownership of fields by specific households

whose heads were male also showed a shift in the LRA ideology, as they began to see themselves as less of a military outfit and more of a form of social institution. Tagging farms and their proceeds to male owners of households rather than the brigade meant that an LRA man and his household could have some degree of independence in acquiring food comparable to that in peacetime Luo communities in northern Uganda. In both settings, men could own land and its proceeds.

The LRA therefore ran a quasi-military settlement. They tried to create a differentiated society with some aspects that mirrored those in peacetime northern Uganda. On the one hand, they maintained military ranks and the decorum of military barracks. Kony held the authority to commission raids. Whenever that was done a brigade commander would assemble the required band of soldiers put together by the various brigade leaders and liaise with their respective logistical and command units to launch the mission. On the other hand, they could set up and maintain compounds, have wives who could then bear them children and have them raised in these camps. They could even own farmlands and grow their own food.

Study informants who had lived in the LRA camps in Sudan in the latter half of the 1990s and the early 2000s stated that Kony had initiated *Ot yat* (health unit) a basic health facility in all LRA brigade camps. They explained that the settlement in Jebelein was equipped with *Ot yat madwong* (Main hospital), which was at the Command Alter compound. Each of the four Brigades also had a smaller *Ot yat*. The LRA identified recruits who had medical background to run these health centres. They recalled that a 'Doctor' Maruku Oguni who was based in Juba regularly supplied the LRA with medicines. His son Oboni, they explained, had joined the LRA early in the conflict and was said to have been instrumental in linking the LRA to his father who was already based in Juba. The health units in the camps were managed by four male 'doctors' known as Acato, Ocol, Juma Saidi Acire and Onen Ofail. Respondents recalled that Onen Ofail served as the head of the facilities. They were also convinced that all of these were men with a medical background. The LRA also had a female nurse called Agnes. Respondents recalled that she had joined the LRA in the 1980s.

Study participants also stated that a form of *gang kwan* (school) was put in place by the year 2000. Former teachers from Uganda managed this school. They were assisted by former schoolgirls (see also Temmerman, 2009), three of whom participated in this study. Children who were born in the camps attended the *gang kwan* from the age of three years.

Respondents also suggested that the LRA kept an organised record of all its recruits, including those born in the camps. Acen said that in her Sinia Brigade, a register was maintained by an adjutant, who, she explained, relied on daily updates of four officers at the rank of Sergeant Major (SM). Every morning, Acen further said, the SM first visited every household in Sinia to physically head-count all of the inhabitants. He would then report to the adjutant who then fed the information to Kony's Central Command.

Kony arrogated to himself and his commanders high levels of control over the everyday lives of their recruits in the camps. They closely regulated the behaviour of their recruits, punctuating their control with punishments and rewards to consolidate their authority. This included instituting a system of resolving conflicts, which recruits were required to adhere to (see also Baines, 2014: 7). Petty quarrels and suspicions that one was planning an escape or thinking of committing 'adultery' were often resolved at the lower levels of the hierarchy. But once a person was caught in the act of escaping or was confirmed to have committed *abor*, ('adultery'), he or she was taken directly to the Brigade Commander for a trial. Some of the verdicts were sent to Kony for his approval. Offenders received punishments including beating and death. But by enforcing these rules, they also defined the LRA as an entity in its own right; meant to be autonomous from any pre-recruitment influence the recruits might have carried with them.

This quest to consolidate his power in the LRA also extended to the outlawing of some rituals and practices once they were performed without his authority. Individuals who were found practising rituals that they believed in while still in Uganda contrary to the orders of Kony were also taken to Kony. An example was that of Aloyo, an Acholi

woman who at the time of the field study lived in Go Down in Gulu town.¹⁶⁰ Aloyo stated that she and her forced husband were a part of Sinia brigade in Sudan, and that in 2000 they had a set of twins that died shortly after birth. After burial, the couple had secretly approached another man called Muzee Luyel who worked as the cattle keeper for the LRA.¹⁶¹ Like everybody else, the couple was aware that before he was abducted from his village in Gulu, Luyel had been a great native doctor (commonly referred to as ‘witchdoctor’). But Kony did not allow him or any other person to practice native medicine in the LRA. In the cover of the night, the couple however decided to secretly perform a ceremony for dead twins as done in Acholi with the help of Luyel. When Kony heard of it, he ordered that both the couple and Luyel be beaten in front of the entire assembly of Sinia. Aloyo explained that all three of them could not sit upright for weeks because of the beating. By carrying out their peacetime rituals these recruits attempted to identify and maintain a cord with their peacetime communities in northern Uganda. But like escape from the LRA, these were attempts at defiance by recruits, the severity of which was seen in the punishment Kony and his commanders gave offenders.

Such cases also therefore showed the struggles of Kony and his commanders in attempting to completely claim their recruits by severing them from their old notions of identity and belonging. Kony often disallowed ritual practices that were ordinarily performed by cultural leaders in peacetime Acholi, and so challenged Acholi notion of belonging. Kony’s refusal to allow the rituals thus demonstrated that lineage leaders in northern Ugandan villages of these recruits had no jurisdiction both inside and outside the confines of Acholi. Cultural rituals and practices that were familiar to recruits from peacetime northern Uganda like the ceremony accompanying birth and death of twins performed by native doctors like Luyel in the example mentioned above had therefore lost grounds in the LRA as well. That recruits practiced these rituals therefore suggested a resurgence of the authority of lineage leaders – however symbolic, which in turn violated the boundaries of authority in the LRA. Disallowing the practices therefore also

¹⁶⁰ Interview: Aloyo, thirty five years old, Lapaico, Gulu, Uganda. 19 January 2015.

¹⁶¹ Interview: Aloyo said at the time of the field study, Muzee Luyel had returned and resumed his old life in Paimol sub county in Kitgum.

demonstrated the invincibility of Kony's policies over that of peacetime northern Uganda.

But by denying the couple and the native doctor their ritual, Kony breached these people's peacetime belief system and notions of identity. His action disregarded the position and roles of lineage leaders who were the custodians of these belief systems and notions of identity in the peacetime communities of his recruits. By overruling such practices and belief in the LRA, he thus continued defying, even symbolically, these custodians. Here, his actions were not any different from that of the UNLA remnants who, from the perspective of Acholi lineage leaders, had turned their backs on their lineage elders in Acholi villages, and refused to undergo purification rituals; mixing with the population and contaminating the entire Acholi fabric. The elders and civilians in northern Uganda, who practiced such rituals, were not pure (Baines, 2014: 6). In essence, the transformation processes of re-birth or purification undertaken by the Spirit mediums at the initiation of the war were not yet complete (see chapter two). This notion of Acholi rebirth in the LRA camps is further discussed in section 4.5 below.

4.3. Affiliation in the LRA

Women and girls were allocated to brigades of their forced husbands, and their children were automatically affiliated to their brigades upon birth. Girls who were deemed too young (prepubescent) were equally affiliated to the brigades of LRA men who often turned them into forced wives when they came of age. Acen said when she was given to Lagira as a forced wife, she became a member of Sinia, which Lagira headed at that time. After the death of Lagira, she still remained a member of Sinia brigade because Oyat, her second forced husband also belonged to it. But some LRA 'caretakers' could also give a *ting ting* girl away to another household or junior soldier. Some men in the LRA could therefore usurp and mimic the role that fathers and brothers played for their daughters and sisters in peacetime Lango.

But study participants also said that *ting ting* girls were sometimes given to men in other brigades. Once that took place, a girl and her future offspring ceased to belong to

her caretaker brigade and became a member of her new forced husband's brigade. This suggests that allocation of women and girls to brigades was based on which brigades their forced husbands or caretaker households belonged to. This feature mimics a Lango (and Acholi) customary rule that rendered wives members of their husband's patrilines, while unmarried girls remained affiliated to their fathers' patrilines, only switching to a husband's upon marriage (see Moore, 1969).¹⁶² Yet, as discussed in chapter five below, respondents maintained that their pre-war lineages (clans) never changed while in the LRA.

That notwithstanding, ex-combatants also stated that once a woman in the LRA was 'widowed' and she 're-married', she and the children of her dead forced husband would remain in her first household. Often she 'remarried' a man who belonged to the same brigade as her deceased forced husband. As a 'widow', she was also sometimes free to choose a man rather than be given one.¹⁶³ This, again, is an appropriation of the Lango (and Acholi) customary rule in which a widow and her children were expected to continue living in her deceased husband's household, a condition which was often enforced by the wife being inherited by one of her husband's agnates (wife inheritance) in order not to jeopardise the security of land, cattle and other (future) prospects such as bridewealth that were owned by the deceased man and therefore his lineage.¹⁶⁴ A similar reason may therefore underline the practice in the LRA where a forced widow and her children remained in the household and brigade of her deceased first forced husband. This increased the chances of her 're-marrying' in the same brigade and thus maintaining the numerical and military strength of the group, along with her children.

Forced 'widows'

By rule, 're-marrying' as a 'widow' started with the *kwer pa mon too* (widow ceremony). All of the ex-combatants in this study stated that they had all either

¹⁶² See chapter three for further discussions on descent ideologies among the Lango.

¹⁶³ Interview: Apili, thirty two years old, Gulu town, Uganda. 20 January 2015.

¹⁶⁴ Interview: Muzee Igwat, ninety one years old, Aputi village, Abeli sub county, Akalo, Kole District, Uganda. 9 January 2015.

witnessed or heard of the LRA's *kwer pa mon too* and practices. Abang of Imato-Ikwoto village in Ogur sub county who returned with two sons, said she only heard from ex-combatants who escaped after her that her forced husband had died during a battle in 2004.¹⁶⁵ She therefore had no experience of what women who were 'widowed' while in the LRA went through. But former forced wife Acen had as explained below.

Oyat, a thirty five-year-old former radio signaler and 'husband' of two 'wives' in the LRA said his first 'wife' in the LRA was a young *dako too* ('widow') – referring to Acen.¹⁶⁶ He recounted his experience of marrying the *dako too* in the LRA:

When I saw her in 1998, she was a little girl of maybe fourteen years. But Kony gave her to Commander Ocaya Lagira to serve as a *ting ting*. Lagira already had very many wives. Two of them were later taken to Nisitu with their children. Acen went along with them to help them with chores. But after Lagira was shot dead in 1999, Acen confessed that Lagira had turned her into a wife. I think he took her as *dakone* (his wife) at least three times... That already made her a widow according to Kony's instructions. After Lagira's death, Acen and other widows were re-attached to new households where they could be treated well. After about two months, Kony noticed that many husbands had died and yet many other men had no wives... the number of boys to girls was very high and yet even our commanders were greedy. Because of their power, they always allocated most of the girls to themselves at the expenses of less senior soldiers. I, for example had no wife. I could not even get one if I wanted to because there were rules that needed to be followed. Otherwise, they would accuse me of *buyu dako* (raping a woman) and I get killed...¹⁶⁷

Oyat explained that when Lagira died, Acen was temporarily re-affiliated to the household of Captain Eresu (a pseudonym). Eresu served as the 'Officer in-Charge of Support' for Sinia. After Acen had lasted five months in her 'widowhood', Kony summoned a 'prayer'¹⁶⁸ under the giant tree that served as an assembly point and ordered the 'catechist' called Abonga to mobilise all of the women whose 'husbands' had died for a *kwer* (cleansing ceremony). Respondents explained that the frequency of

¹⁶⁵ Interview: Abang, ex-combatant mother of two sons, thirty four years old, Imato-Ikwoto village, Ogur sub county, Lira, Uganda. 23 July 2013.

¹⁶⁶ Interview: Oyat, thirty five years old, former signaler of the LRA, Gulu, Uganda. 23 February 2015.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Respondents referred to all of the meetings that were ordered by Kony as prayers.

such a *kwer* depended on the population of widows. It often took place upon the return of a group from the war front, when it would be clear that certain ‘husbands’ had died in battle. In the pre-war days, Abonga had been a catechist of the Catholic chapel of Awach in Gulu. When Kony discovered that the new recruit he had abducted was a catechist, he put him in charge of a similar role in his ritualistic activities. Abonga became the LRA catechist and Kony *lapwony madit* (high priest). A few people were allowed to witness what took place at the ceremony. But after two days, Oyat saw that Acen had a shaven head and a new dress, just like other ‘widows’. Apili, the thirty three-year-old former forced wife who was attached to Odonga, a senior Commander of the Command Alter also explained that during such a *kwer*, the women were confined at an assembly point. After the ceremony, Kony then declared the women free to *cune acuna* (court) with other men. Unlike fresh recruits, Oyat explained, they were to be courted and not allocated or forced into a sexual relationship. If a girl liked the idea, she would inform her caretaker who would advice the brigade commander to offer her to the new suitor. Oyat explained that courtship was only possible for ‘widowed’ women whom Kony had declared free to be courted. Any attempt to court any other girl or woman or *ting ting* attracted a severe punishment as all of these categories were only distributed upon the instruction of Kony (see also Baines, 2014: 7). But Kony cautioned that all of these ‘widows’ had to find a ‘husband’ at some point in time. Otherwise, respondents explained, a woman would be seen as a prostitute and severely punished.

In a stark reminder of peacetime courtship discussed in chapter three, Oyat intimated that a number of suitors started approaching Acen for her hand. But Acen explained that she did not like any one of them – all together four other men had approached her. Some of them, she said, approached her caretaker to cause him to advice her to accept them, but he encouraged them to ask her directly.

A few weeks after her passage, Acen went to fetch water from a water hole that sat near the doorway of Oyat’s hut. Oyat explained that he approached her and told her he was interested in her. During fieldwork, Acen still recalled her relief when Oyat proposed to her. She said she thought he was the better one of those that had approached her by that time. She had immediately advised Oyat to go to Eresu, her caretaker, and ask for her

hand. Oyat said he visited Eresu that evening. A river tributary separated Eresu's compound and Oyat's compound but both were within Sinia. Eresu welcomed him with tea, Oyat recalled. He told Eresu that he had visited him to ask for the hand of Acen. Oyat said that Eresu told him, '*ayela pe* (no problem). Let us drink tea then I will send for Acen so she can have a say in this.'

During the field study Acen recalled that she later appeared and knelt before Eresu and Oyat. She recalled that Eresu did not ask her any question. Instead he had said to her: 'Acen, I know Oyat really well. He has a good record and can treat you really well. I hope your talk with him will end well'.

Eresu then left them alone to discuss and make up their minds. In the end, Oyat explained, Acen asked for at least a week to make up her mind. But their *cuna* (courtship), he said, lasted three weeks. After that, Acen told him (Oyat) to go back to Eresu and confirm that she had accepted Oyat as a *dakone* (his wife). Eresu agreed with them and ordered them to go to the *Ot yat* (clinic) in the Sinia Brigade for STD and HIV tests, a rule which Kony had instituted to control the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases in his group (further discussed in section 4.4 below). Here, they were informed by the 'doctor' that they were both healthy and given a written medical report. The couple then took their medical report to Eresu, who took them to Raska Lukwiya, the Brigade Commander of Sinia. Eresu explained to him that the couple wanted to 'marry' and had tested negative for HIV. He gave the medical form to Lukwiya, who ordered the doctor that had tested the couple to report before him to confirm the authenticity of the report. Once that was done, Lukwiya declared that Acen had become Oyat's 'wife' and that she was to leave Eresu's household within a week, to start her wifely duties with Oyat.

After two days, Acen explained, the junior one of Eresu's two 'wives' walked Acen to Oyat's hut, just as a new wife's sisters often do in peacetime northern Uganda (see also Curley, 1978). Oyat then gave Acen the clothes he had recently bought for her from Juba from the sale of his charcoal.

Other than this mimicry of a peacetime bride's sisters, the behaviour of Eresu - the caretaker and Raska - the Brigade Commander, are reminiscent of the roles played by brothers, fathers and elders in a peacetime suitor's familial and lineage circles in northern Uganda. By playing their roles, they usurp the position of these people in peacetime Lango. Thus, from all fronts – whether by allocating girls and women to forced husbands or handing over a forced 'widow' to her new 'husband', the LRA commanders arrogated to themselves roles which were comparable to those performed by a peacetime bride's people.

4.4. Gender terror in the making of motherhood in the LRA

Kony did not encourage sexual intercourse with *ting ting* because they were underage, Apili explained.¹⁶⁹ The rules demanded that girls that had not yet had their first menstruation be allotted to caretaker households as *ting ting*. They would then be given out as 'wives' upon coming of age. Ex-combatants said those who went against this rule and had sexual intercourse with underage recruits were often punished severely, sometimes by firing squad.¹⁷⁰

Like Acen, all of former forced wives in this study said they were initially simply allocated to men in the LRA either as a *ting ting* or as an outright 'wife'. But unlike Acen, none of the other eight mothers became 'widowed' while still with the LRA. Most respondents also recalled that even pre-abduction marriages were not recognised in the LRA. Oyat in particular said:

Even those ones who were abducted when they were already married in Uganda were forcefully separated. Those who sneaked to meet each other were punished. I still remember a couple that had been abducted from Gulu had been torn apart and the wife given to a commander. But she would sneak to meet with her husband. These people were found out, brought before Kony and killed by firing squad...¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ E.g. Interview: Apili, ex-combatant mother, Gulu district, Uganda. 16 February 2015.

¹⁷⁰ E.g. Interview: Interview: Oyat, thirty three years old, Gulu, Uganda. 23 February 2015.

¹⁷¹ Interview: Oyat, thirty five years old, former signaler of the LRA, Gulu, Uganda. 23 February 2015.

As in the case described by Oyat above, Apili recalled that in 1997, when she was still fresh in the LRA bases in Sudan, an Acholi couple that the LRA commanders had discovered had been married before their abduction were separated and the woman given to another commander. But after a while, they were accused of sneaking to see each other to commit *abor* (sexual intercourse by unmarried people). Apili said a meeting was ordered in which the couple was brought before Kony and condemned to a killing by firing squad in front of the people.¹⁷² Baines (2014: 7) also found that those who were related were separated and strategically placed in different homes and compounds 'to encourage the development of new relations of dependence' in the LRA. Those found in breach, she stated, were severely punished.

The taking of girls and women as wives by gun wielding men in the LRA and the constant threat of violence facing those who refused to comply demonstrated a clear power imbalance between the girls and their male captors, the LRA. This gender inequality meant that girls could not often independently choose to engage in sexual relationships or to control their reproduction (cf. Blanc, 2001: 189). Blanc (2001: 189) posits that power relations between women and men can directly lead to violence or the threat of violence within a sexual relationship. The environment within which these girls and boys (or men) were recruited and taken as 'wives' and husbands was that of war. Violence pervaded all relationships (see also Baines, 2014; Carlson and Mazurana, 2008). Both male and female captives, finding it risky to escape, often remained with the LRA, at least until conditions allowed for one to gain freedom.

In the meantime, many would try to abide by the rules of the LRA so as to survive in the system. Respondents said many of the boys who were junior soldiers - the lowest rank in a brigade, often saw violence as a way of showing how good they were as fighters to the LRA commanders. As discussed above a good fighter was often rewarded with a rank, which increased his or her chances of surviving. A higher rank gave access to a 'wife' and a safer location in the inner compound of a brigade. For example, Oyat was elevated from a junior soldier to a second lieutenant at the age of

¹⁷² Interview: Apili, 32 years old, ex-combatant mother, Gulu town, Gulu district, Uganda. 16 February 2015.

seventeen years and made a radio signaller. He also then set a compound and took on two 'wives' and twelve junior soldiers. In addition to the food ratio that came from the Sudan government, he also owned a field of crops, so he could get enough to eat. Kony also allowed him make charcoal, which he sold in the town of Juba and used the money to buy clothes and other basic supplies for himself, his 'wives' and children.

Informants like Apili emphasised that youthful junior soldiers often became ruthless to civilians during war to prove themselves to their commanders so they could be awarded girls and other privileges that came with higher ranks as seen in the case of Oyat. The wishes were guaranteed by rules which girls like Acen had to follow. If a commander wished to give away a *ting ting* to a junior soldier, respondents said the *ting ting* would have to comply or be punished. Blanc et al., (1996: 1) argued that sexual activities of girls and women are often '...governed by a complex set of social norms ... (that may) not only define the boundaries of acceptable and negotiable behaviour (but) also constrain individual action with respect to social activity'.

Forced conjugal associations in the LRA camps were therefore strictly regulated (see also Baines, 2014: 2,7). Unless a girl was 'widowed' as Acen was after the death of Lagira, her first forced husband, former forced wives had to wait to be distributed officially to the men who would become their 'husbands'. Through these rules, Kony and his LRA created and perpetuated a new order by which Kony and his commanders could regulate the sexuality of boys, girls, men and women in the LRA.

Other rules included the criminalization of same-sex relationships. For example, Apili recalled that in early 2000, Kony found out that a Second Lieutenant who had two young 'wives' was also having sexual intercourse with a male junior soldier who served as his guard. The boy was summoned and he confessed to Kony that his superior was forcing him to have sexual intercourse with him. Kony arrested the commander, removed his 'wives' and children from him and condemned him to death by firing squad.¹⁷³

¹⁷³ Interview: Apili, 32 years old, ex-combatant mother, Gulu town, Gulu district, Uganda. 16 February 2015.

The ‘widowhood’ rituals, associated courtship (*cune acuna*) and the criminalization of same sex relationships are strategies that Kony and his commanders deployed to continue regulating these people’s sexuality. He could have a say on when a ‘widow’ was free to find another lover. He also identified sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) as threats to his purification campaign and put in place mechanisms to detect and prevent their spread. As in the case of Oyat and Acen elaborated in section 4.3 above, study participants said Kony ensured a ‘widow’ and her new suitor were first tested for HIV before ordering a union. They explained that he even went to the extent of socially isolating those he suspected of having STDs. Those who had unauthorized sex behind Kony’s back, they further explained, often suffered the consequences. Oyat gave an example of a captain who was called Obwona *alias* Onyamo:

A new batch of recruits had arrived from Uganda. Among them were some seventy young women. When Kony saw them, he ordered that those women should not be allocated to any man and that no one should sleep with any of them. We all then understood that those women were not healthy. Still, Onyamo sneaked to these women later and raped one of them. But, the Spirit in Kony knew what Onyamo had done. So Kony called a meeting and brought all of the seventy women before him. He asked them that, ‘*anga ikin wu ame ki buyu?*’ (Who among you has been raped?) A woman came out and identified Onyamo as the man who had *buyu* her. Kony ordered that Onyamo be caned 250 strokes. Later, Onyamo developed syphilis and he was badly off. Kony called a meeting and said, ‘Do you see now? I told everyone not to touch those women...’¹⁷⁴

In other documented accounts (e.g. Temmerman, 2009), soldiers who had sex with girls without following the due process of acquiring one, were given severe punishment, including death. Girls who were deemed too young for ‘wifehood’ were first affiliated to an LRA household as servants until they hit puberty. They would then be taken as a ‘wife’ by the head of that house or given away to another man. This latter option was common where the existing ‘wife’ (‘wives’) of that household became jealous and aggressive toward the girl.

¹⁷⁴ Interview: Oyat, thirty five years old, former signaler of the LRA, Gulu, Uganda. 23 February 2015.

Former forced wife Ajok who had returned with a six-month pregnancy in 2004 and was rehabilitated by the Rachele centre said that she was abducted at the age of thirteen years and, like many other girls, deemed too young to be given as a 'wife'.¹⁷⁵ She was then attached to the house of a man called Kilara, whose 'wife' had a new baby and who therefore needed the help of a *ting ting*. But Kilara's 'wife' grew unhappy and constantly abused her because she suspected that her 'husband' could take on Ajok as a 'wife' once she came of age. A year later, Kilara saw that his 'wife' increasingly mistreated Ajok. To ensure some form of peace in his household, Kilara was forced to give Ajok away as a 'wife' to another junior soldier in his Brigade.

The negative behaviour of the older 'wives' to a prospective 'co-wife' showed that there was power inequality even among women and girls themselves. Women such as Kilara's 'wife' used their leverage as 'senior wives' to discourage 'husbands' from taking up additional 'wives'. Because of the immense power propped with (threats of) violence that their husbands wielded over them, such 'wives' could only marshal their agency to protect their 'conjugal' territories by scaring away potential 'co-wives'.

Power imbalance amongst women was sometimes boosted by a wife's military rank as well. Whereas her seniority in the command structure of the LRA did not protect her from adhering to the 'conjugal' rules of the LRA, she could still use it to scare away potential 'co-wives' her 'husband' might be eyeing (see also Temmerman, 2009: 71). In this way, women and girls also used their agency to reorganize their households and those of other women and girls. For example, with her hostility, Ajok's mistress caused Kilara to send away Ajok. She thus secured the boundaries of her household from expanding with a new 'wife' and her offspring. At the same time, she also caused another household to open its doors to Ajok.

The existence of such tensions between girls and women who shared the fate of being abducted and forced to become 'wives' can be linked to their individual fear of losing the protection and care by their LRA 'husbands'. Women and girls who became forced

¹⁷⁵ Interview: Ajok, twenty five years old, Amia Abil village, Agweng sub county, Lira, Uganda. 10 July 2013.

wives in many conflicts often found it easier to survive and meet basic needs than those who were not (e.g. Denov, 2009: 112-113).

Incidences of jealousy were therefore rampant among 'bush wives' of an LRA officer as mothers tried to protect their share of resources such as food in their own and their children's interests. Although no definite examples were given informants said recruits often settled their scores of jealousy whenever they returned into northern Uganda to launch attacks. At such moments, a particularly angry woman, often supported by her sympathisers, could harass or kill her competitor(s) behind commanders' backs. Often commanders would believe that these persons had either escaped or been killed during confrontations with the UPDF.

Women in the LRA could thus appropriate and creatively deploy hostility to secure their domestic interests in much the same way as the men did in securing the right to these women's sexuality. In the context of violence therefore both men and women used some degree of violence itself to negotiate access to resources.

But the fact that Acen and other respondents could not independently decide to have sexual relations and bear children showed that their sexuality was at the mercy of their male captors. They could not openly or directly negotiate their way out of or into sexual intercourse. This was a preserve of Kony and his commanders. This inability of girls to control the factors associated with their sexuality also reflected on their helplessness to address what Blanc et al., (1996) described as 'reproductive outcomes' of their sexuality and sexual activities. These included the decision to cause a pregnancy leading to births of children. In the case of Acen, this was further re-enforced by the naming of children contrary to the patriarchal practices in her natal community in Lango. Her Acholi bush lover, Oyat, named the children according to his wish, yet he had neither paid *lim* (bridewealth) nor *luk* to her family and lineage in Lango. One was named Ouma, according to the way Acholi named children who, at birth, presented with their noses facing down. The other was named after Oyat's father.

These commanders therefore nurtured a highly militarised understanding of masculinities on prepubescent girls and boys, and the men and women in their camps. The abducted relied on their abductors (commanders) for protection while at the same time suffering and being readily killed by the same superiors. Prepubescent recruits relied on the commanders and their 'wives' to stay alive and be fed. Girls and boys were forced to take up sexual partners at the whims of Kony and his commanders and their pregnancies were regulated. Girls and women were forced to conform to these militarised masculinities according to the rules and expectations of the LRA (Butler 1999). The LRA therefore deployed their ideas of gender, generation and motherhood to regulate their military agenda. In the LRA, being male or female mattered because Kony and his commanders relied on this differentiation to hold together the LRA.

Not all male combatants within the LRA had equal access or authority over women's sexuality and sexual activities. Various researches suggest that men with higher ranks were often the first to secure sexual rights with girls for themselves. They also had more 'wives' than their junior counterparts. These men owned the right over these girls and women's sexual and reproductive abilities. But reproductive outcomes such as motherhood could have reciprocal effects on the balance of power within the sexual relations (Blanc, 2001: 190). By giving birth to children, girls like Acen had more authority in their LRA households than those who had no children (see also Baines, 2014: 10). They had access to *ting ting* and the right to more domestic supplies. Violence thus transformed their status from that of ordinary recruits and forced wives to mother. Ex-combatants in the study stated that when some girls saw that mothers in the LRA transformed into 'civilians' and were treated better, they tried to also get pregnant. By doing this, girls and women used motherhood to re-negotiate their positions and quality of life in the LRA.

But as they repositioned themselves by begetting children, they also fulfilled Kony's prophesy of the re-birth of Acholi. Yet this process of getting a new breed of Acholi went against the perspectives of people in the peacetime villages of these recruits. It clashed with the expectations of families and communities from which these girls hailed and returned to as mothers. On the one hand, many of these women had been taken

away while still a child, and simply seen as a daughter and a sister in their pre-abduction familial networks. But they would leave the LRA as a mother, accompanied by their own children often returning into their old familial networks in northern Uganda. This will be further explored in chapter five.

On the other, their broader involvement in the LRA contributed to the violence the group meted on communities these recruits hailed from (see chapter two). Through their farming, cooking and bearing of children, the women and their children nourished the LRA. They became producers and reproducers of war logistics, sustaining the LRA machineries for many years. Like Acen, other study participants identified combat as an activity they directly participated in. Other scholars also associated thousands of girls with it (e.g. Temmerman, 2009, McKay and Mazurana, 2004). They were ordered to kill other recruits or be killed. Their experiences included being trained into fighters and being forced to kill other people. Some were ordinary soldiers and others were made into commanders in the LRA. They thus became direct combatants in a war between their captors and their natal communities in northern Uganda. Their combat roles conflicted with notions of gender in peacetime Lango. On the one hand, women and girls in the LRA did chores, which were also seen as women's work in peacetime Lango. On the other, the girls and women trained and fought as soldiers; work which was seen as masculine back home in Lango.

In Lango a warrior was always a man, a perception idiomised in historical terms like *coo too irao* (a *man* proves *he* is a fearless warrior at battle - *emphasis mine*).^{176,177} But the household roles, which the LRA nurtured, were akin to those practiced in the local communities that these girls came from in Lango. The LRA thus offered space for girls and women to both reproduced and yet radically defy gender boundaries that characterized peacetime Lango. This blurring of gender roles challenged the moral codes within Lango (cf. Coulter, 2009).

¹⁷⁶ Interview, Atat Cucuria Auma, eighty nine years old, Aputi village, Abeli parish, Akalo Sub County, Kole district, Uganda. 2 January 2015.

¹⁷⁷ Although some few women in Lango have recently started joining the security sector like the army, police and the prisons, it is still male dominated and has not changed the general perception that associate active combat with men.

4.5. The locking and unlocking of the wombs of girls in the LRA

Study participants who had been with the LRA in the late 1990s stated that Kony conferred upon women who fell pregnant and those with children the status of ‘civilians’ and ordered their guns to be removed (see also Baines, 2011: 478). But those who were neither pregnant nor with children kept their guns and were referred to as *amony* (soldier) just like the male combatants. Participants said that Kony had ordered that mothers were not to carry both babies and guns. This order, they said, was preceded by two other announcements of Kony that had come in early 1999 and 1997.

Four of the participants had attended the meeting of 1999 in which Kony or the spirit in him called Silindi¹⁷⁸ had announced that the wombs of women would be opened and a great number of children would be born. Kony or the spirit that spoke through him had further said that the rain would come in drizzles and that whomever would be hit by a drop of that rain would conceive and have a child. Study participants believed that this was a divine revelation, and that it indeed came to pass. They claimed that the spirit Silindi had locked the wombs of most women before 1999, so that the rate of births in the LRA was low. Baines (2014: 4) also referred to spirit ‘Silindy Mackey’ as having ‘instructed men and women to marry and proliferate in Sudan’. This, she states, led to the institutionalisation of marriage in the LRA. Rules, she further stated, were put in place to regulate sex.

Through Silindi, Kony and his commanders could decide if girls could have children or not and when. Kony and his commanders could thus regulate their recruits’ sexuality and reproduction. They could decide how and who could get access to female recruits so as to affiliate their offspring if Silindi decided they could conceive. As will be discussed in chapter five, for groups like the Langi that predicated their social organisation on ideas of gender and motherhood, this claim brought *rucurucu*, tension in post-war families, lineages and communities. Kony and his Commanders had

¹⁷⁸ Behrend (1999) alluded to a similarly named spirit, Silly Silindi, as one of the spirits that had possessed Joseph Kony at the onset of the war in 1997.

sabotaged peacetime views of motherhood as an institution for initiating and maintaining 'networks of relationships and mutual obligation that cut across the dominant patrilineal divides' (Stephens, 2013: 13), discussed in chapter three of this thesis. In particular, from the perspectives of fathers, brothers and male elders in Lango, these claims by Kony and his commanders created tension over control of the sexuality and reproductive potential of daughters and sisters.

Through Silindi, he and his group had claimed control over these girls' sexuality and reproductive outcomes in complete disregard of the normative descent beliefs and practices that existed in the families of these girls in Lango. The existence of such a tension has been noted by Baines (2015: 5) in her study of the Acholi. She argued that LRA actions duplicated and violated Acholi sociality, in particular of customary practices regarding marriage. As seen in this thesis, her arguments also drew on the absence of 'consent' between 'husband' and 'wife', and the formal customary processes of marriage in Acholi lineages.

Study participants said that before Kony announced that Silindi had opened wombs in 1999, children who were born and living in the LRA camps were possibly not more than 200. Kony himself had at least fifty children. But after Kony's announcement, study participants said that most of the women became pregnant with an average monthly birth rate of eighty babies. Acen, for example, said:

From 1999, women started conceiving in great numbers because Kony wanted it. Kony had said to us that, 'women are now free to conceive. People will now start having children...there will be some rain, which will come in drizzles. Once a drizzle hits you, you know you will have a child'. We all believed him and that he was the one that had prevented women from conceiving. We all knew that it was the doing of the spirit that lived in Kony called Silindi. Silindi had all along locked our wombs and only a few women could give birth if the spirit so wished. Kony's announcement meant Silindi had finally relented and we could now conceive. Every month at least eighty children were born from the year 2000. When I gave birth to my first son in May 2000, seventy nine other women also had their babies. But before this prophecy in which Silindi relented, there were may be just ten babies born in a year. The *ting ting* were also given just the major role of constantly offering prayers. But this changed when women started giving

birth to so many children. They now left praying to become baby-sitters for commanders' wives.¹⁷⁹

Testimonies such as this suggest that Kony appropriated spiritualism and punctuated it with violence to institute his ideas on his recruits. Abortion was illegal in the LRA. Accounts of ex-combatants suggest that Kony was always suspicious of couples that fell pregnant before weaning their children. Women who failed to space children were however often punished along with their husbands. Respondents stated that Kony often ordered the punishment of such couples. Ariang, a former Second Lieutenant in the LRA testified on the strict rule, which Kony imposed on the spacing of children by couples.¹⁸⁰ Ariang identified himself as a Karamojong who was integrated in the UPDF and was based in Gulu at the time of the field study. He narrated his experience when his forced wife Akello conceived too soon after the first child. When their first child was seven months old, Akello had fallen pregnant again. Kony had heard of it and sent word to the Brigade Commander to call the couple to order and ensure that both the seven-month old child and the pregnancy were sustained. If any of the two died or 'disappeared' (referring to abortion), the parents would receive similar punishment. The Brigade Commander then called an assembly of the whole camp and caned Ariang and Akello. Ariang was given 150 strokes and his 'wife', Akello, seventy strokes so as to remind them to space children well in future.

Similarly, ex-LRA captain Kilama stated that in 2000, his 'wife' had conceived, yet she was also breastfeeding their five months old daughter.¹⁸¹ Kony was unhappy but did not punish them. Instead the LRA leader had reprimanded them with the words, '*latin ioko dang pe otoo, latin iyic bene pe orweny*' (the baby outside must not die, the one inside must not disappear). As will be discussed below, from 1999 as the LRA reduced on their incursions for recruits in northern Uganda following the Nairobi Peace Agreement between Sudan and Uganda¹⁸² Kony looked inward for alternatives. He wanted children

¹⁷⁹ Interview: Acen, thirty years old, Ex-combatant mother, Orubu village, Layibi Division, Gulu district, Uganda. 16 February 2015.

¹⁸⁰ Interview: Ariang, Gulu, Uganda. 19 January 2015.

¹⁸¹ Interview: Kilara, Gulu, Uganda. 19 January 2015.

¹⁸² See Peace Agreement between Uganda and Sudan, 1999. Available from:

to be born and to grow up healthy and fit so as to meet future LRA needs. He thus imposed strict rules to regulate childbirth or at what point a couple could 'decide' to have another child.

During field study, participants also revealed that from the time the spirit Silindi announced, through Kony, that women were free to start conceiving Kony also started helping 'couples' that took long to conceive. They believed that from 1999 while the LRA settlement was still in Jebelein, Silindi had shown Kony how to make certain concoctions to help women conceive. They explained that a worried 'husband' could send a report to his immediate superior to submit a request to *baba* ('father' – referring to Kony). Oyat, who said he helped some junior soldiers under him to forward their requests, recalled that the men would say, 'my wife is like this, like this... please send word up there so I can be helped...'

Kony, he explained, would then prepare a specific day to help a number of 'barren women'. Kony would say, 'I want those with this particular problem (of barrenness) to get ready on this day. Silindi will be blessing their bodies... On that day, I will be going to anoint them so they too are able to *byelo latin ingei* (to carry children on their backs) in a few months from now'.

Informants said Kony would mix his concoctions and anoint each of those women with it. Sometimes he made use of the seasonal Kit River near their settlement in Jebelein. Later, informants said he also used a river that flowed from a hill to the eastern part of Palutaka. He would choose a shallow spot where the flow of water was not very fast, pour his concoction in the water and order his patients to wade in it for a cleansing. Oyat said after that, he would see women who had taken a bath during such ceremonies falling pregnant and having babies. Kony therefore endeavoured to regulate sexuality and marriage in the LRA using rules of affiliation that he kept in check with mysticism and fear. This thesis suggests that in addition to the argument that sexual relations and forced marriage were a way of reproducing a 'new Acholi' (see Baines, 2014: 2). It also

http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/file/resources/collections/peace_agreements/sudan_uganda_12081999.pdf. [Accessed on 23 June 2016].

signalled his attempt to stamp 'childbirth' as an alternative means of recruiting new members into his LRA. In this way the wombs of girls and ideas of motherhood were hijacked and redeployed into an instrument of power to prop up the LRA.

The announcement of the opening of wombs so 'couples' could have children and the orders for 'couples' to observe LRA standards of child spacing came at a time when the dynamics of war had started shifting significantly. There was a change in their relationship with Khartoum as Uganda got permission from Sudan's government to enter into Sudan and fight the LRA deep in the bushes of Sudan. Study informants told of how Khartoum had eventually withdrawn its support of military and food aid to the LRA following the Nairobi Peace Agreement with the Uganda government in 1999. Here, both countries had agreed not to support insurgent groups fighting against the other. The LRA had significantly reduced its operations in northern Uganda. They suggested that instead of launching raids for more recruits into northern Uganda, the LRA started looking inwards for food through farming and raids. They also raided Dinka villages in the southern bushes of Sudan so as to try and sustain their food needs (see also Temmerman, 2009).

With the declaration that wombs would be opened to give rise to new life, Kony or Silindi had transformed motherhood into war machinery for the LRA. This shift in Kony's recruitment policy is in line with Enloe's (2000: 11) argument that women's reproductive abilities have been seen as a 'public duty' through which armies are raised and replenished in many conflicts. Coulter (2009: 12) linked this perception to the metaphoric association of nations with motherhood, such as when nations are referred to as motherland and mother country. She argued that it is such 'motherhood' ideas that nurture the recruitment or targeting of women in war.

By recruiting women as mothers, the group or nation guarantees the source of its armies in the offspring of those women. Conversely, by targeting women in an enemy group, the victim group is deprived of its source of recruitment and weakened. This also applied to the LRA whose leader Joseph Kony was quoted by Temmerman (2009: 74)

as having said, ‘I could kill all Acholi and put their heads on the road. For I will deliver a new Acholi generation!’

Kony had earlier often toyed with the idea of a new nation (see also Baines, 2014: 6). In one of his several meetings in 1997, which he used to ‘welcome’ the abducted students of St. Mary’s College Aboke, to his camps in Sudan, informants recalled that Kony had told them that the Acholi communities that lived in northern Uganda were Acholi ‘B’. The true Acholi were Acholi ‘A’ and comprised of those who would be born in the LRA camps.

Study participants further explained that Kony often addressed them as the fountain of purity that would give rise to ‘Acholi A’. By so saying, Kony and his LRA continued the narrative of Acholi purification or rebirth that had been advanced at the onset of the HSM and the LRA in the 1980s.

The ability of girls like Acen to become mothers was therefore seen as a means to sustain war by the LRA. Their motherhood status thus became a tool of levying a war in much the same way as the factories that produced ammunitions and guns. All eight former forced wives who participated in this study said they were all paired up with male recruits as *dako* (‘wife’) and they referred to their male forced husbands as *cwara* (‘husband’) while with the LRA. Once pregnant the women were restricted from joining others in attacks on enemies. Instead, they were confined in a women’s camp to ensure safety of the pregnancy and proper care of newborn babies.

This is reminiscent of the old c19th and early c20th practice in Lango, where girls were taken from other neighbouring language groups such as the Madi and Banyoro for their reproductive abilities so the Langi could populate their warrior bases as discussed in chapter two above. The children born in this way thus became part of the weaponry to fight enemies as Temmerman (2009: 73) further noted of Kony’s own children who were born and growing up in the LRA camps in Sudan, ‘he also had many children, all born in the movement. One of his sons named Salim Saleh was five and he was already a corporal.

This trend seemed to have continued in the LRA even after the group was flushed out of Sudan to seek new bases in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Central African Republic (CAR). In 2014, The Guardian, quoting Sam Kavuma, a Ugandan army general wrote:

Salim Saleh, reported to be 22 (years old), is understood to have spent his entire life in the bush with his father's force, which continues to defy international efforts to hunt them down. Previously the son was in charge of the group providing security to the father, but now he has an added responsibility of field command.¹⁸³

This example suggests the need for new recruits as an important motivation for advancing the institution of forced marriage and childbirth in the LRA. Moreover this thesis did not find any explicit evidence of claims on these children by families of abducted people in northern Uganda. Similarly, these children were not visible in the agenda of global child rights groups, particularly those that advocated for the prevention of the use of child soldiers and sexual violence in the LRA. Children of forced wives were therefore not visible outside of the group; propelling the institution of forced marriage and motherhood as a new way of recruiting combatants. The LRA thus turned to the offspring of forced wives as recruits for their war. The enemies were not only the Uganda government soldiers. But they also mostly targeted civilian communities to kill, abduct and plunder. When the women re-entered their pre-abduction communities with their children therefore their contribution to the LRA war machineries was not lost on receptor communities. In the case of Acen's sons the community in Amia Abil referred to them as 'kony' after the name of the LRA leader Joseph Kony, in what could be comparable to what people in other conflicts referred to children of forced marriages and rape.

For example, people in Sierra Leone referred to children fathered in the RUF as *rebel pikindem* - rebel children (Coulter, 2009: 115). Coulter's Sierra Leoneans thought that

¹⁸³ Agence France-Presse in Kampala. 2014. Joseph Kony has named son as his deputy, says Uganda army. *Guardian*, 18 May. Available from: www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/18/Joseph-kony-son-deputy-uganda-lords-resistance-army. [Accessed 3 January 2015].

the *rebel pikindem* had ‘bad blood’ like their parents. Similarly, in Darfur, local communities referred to them as ‘Janjaweed’ - devil on horseback (Weitsman, 2008: 567). ‘Janjaweed’ is a term that Darfuri people used to refer to the government backed Arab militiamen from northern Sudan who, since 2004, have carried out mass rape on Darfuri men and women, giving rise to a mixed race children (Carpenter, 2007). In Rwanda, children born during the 1993 genocidal war were called ‘enfants de mauvais memoires’ - children of bad memories (Goodwin, 1997), ‘children of hate’ (Nowrojee, 1996: 79) and ‘little killers’ (Wax, 2004). But people in Lango also used the term *otino onywalo ilum* (children born in the bush) as a general reference to these children.¹⁸⁴ As offspring of forced wives (and future fighters against communities of their mothers), people in these peacetime communities perceive them as different from other children as will be discussed in chapter six.

Like the women in those conflicts, the wombs of girls like Acen therefore became pawns in the LRA war. To a large extent, they were recruited for their ability to reproduce and by that, they became part of the LRA. Scholars such as Manjoo & McRaith (2011: 11) have made similar arguments, suggesting that sexualized violence can sometimes be used as a tool in war. Coulter (2009: 9) further linked these wartime experiences of women to the gender ideology and relations that existed in their peacetime communities. For girls like Acen, their wombs became tools of war against their own peacetime communities in much the same way that old Lango abducted Madi and Banyoro for their fecundity (see chapter two above). In old Lango, the offspring of these trophy women from Madi and Bunyoro were seen as lineage members in the same way as Acen’s sons were said to be Kony or LRA, effectively linking these women’s fertility to ethnicity and war. As discussed earlier, LRA fathers who took on the responsibility of naming and affiliating children of their forced wives further re-enforced this tendency. But their doing that also defied long established beliefs and practices associated with lineages and ethnicity back in Lango, putting the children in an ambiguous social position once they entered Lango with their mothers as will be discussed in chapter five and six.

¹⁸⁴ Field notes, Lango, Uganda. March 2013.

4.6. War and the social dilemma of the LRA in Sudan

...*Onwongo myero adwok wu oko pacu, ento ngom ducu rom aroma* (I should let you go back home, but world over, all land is the same).¹⁸⁵

In 2000, the LRA started setting up new camps, and abandoned their first settlements in Jebelein, Aruu and Nisitu (or Nicitu). The LRA saw these old settlements as new frontlines and therefore often left just a small section of youthful junior soldiers behind to delay the advancing UPDF. At this point the scantily populated camp became strictly a military garrison without any signs of household style or family social life.

The LRA first moved to Lubanga Tek, and in the latter part of 2000, as the rumours of war became stronger, started opening a series of other new settlements called *Bin Rwot* (Come Lord), *Lalar* (Saviour) and *Kem Pacu* (Face homeward). The names of these last three camps suggest a sense of fear that LRA's Kony, who himself named these camps, had. Informants believed that Kony was already certain that the UPDF would fight his group in his own camps and yet the Khartoum government had already deserted him and was working with Uganda. They said that in one of his addresses to camp inhabitants, Kony had prophesied that they were destined for bad times and that he had seen very many of them, including babies, killed.¹⁸⁶ This prophecy, informants argued, came to pass shortly when the UPDF raided the LRA bases in Sudan in 2002. From the interviews, it was clear that ex-combatants continued to believe in Kony as a spirit medium.

Kony expressed the fear for the safety of his followers in the names he gave the new settlements. The name *Bin Rwot*, explained some of the participants, called upon the 'Lord to Come' to their rescue. *Lalar* (Christians in Acholi also refer to Jesus as *Lalar* – Saviour), they again explained, suggested that they would be 'safe' in that particular settlement. And, *Kem Paco*, they said, indicated that they were to tend toward 'home'

¹⁸⁵ Former forced wife Apili, 32 years old, Pece, Gulu, 16 February 2015 - quoting LRA leader Kony during a meeting she attended in the LRA base in Sudan in 1999.

¹⁸⁶ Fieldwork notes, Lira, Uganda. 26 April 2014.

(referring to northern Uganda). Apili explained, 'It was named that way to give us the sense that we were not far from home.' This last settlement was the closest to the Ugandan border and was barely settled by the time the UPDF started raids on the LRA camps in Sudan in 2002.

Respondents said the LRA commanders started using the names of their old villages and sub counties in northern Uganda to refer to the sub-units under their immediate command. Acen for example recalled that Kony started calling his household as Odek, while Raska Lukwiya the brigade commander of Sinia used Patiko to refer to the compound of his sub-group. Acen explained that this was because before the war, Kony and his family lived in Odek sub county while Raska lived in Patiko. Acen and Oyat therefore belonged to Raska's Patiko sub group. Informants said they began to quickly adjust, as Apili for example explained:

... Shortly before the war, Kony *proposed*¹⁸⁷ that commanders look for large expanses of suitable land to set up their own villages and name them after places they came from in Acholi. We all began referring to ourselves and our households using those Ugandan village names...whenever someone visited Kony's part of the camp, people would say, '*acito Odek*' (I am going to Odek). But outside the camp setting, the community of Odek was also constructing a new village, which was separated from other villages belonging to other commanders by valleys. We had hoped to settle these new villages once they were fully constructed, but this did not happen because the UPDF chased us out of Sudan.¹⁸⁸

As the war got closer to the new LRA camps, informants explained that these sub groups started to identify and build new settlements, which had homonymous names. These new settlements took the form of a regular village. Here, homesteads and farmlands were widely spaced in a similar fashion as those in northern Uganda. Kony's 'village' was called Odek and all of those who moved to put up homesteads in it were members of Kony's Command Alter. Physical features such as valleys and hills marked

¹⁸⁷ I deliberately emphasised the word 'suggested' because throughout the field study, this was the only time an informant insisted that Kony did not 'ordered'. This suggested that commanders and their juniors were therefore free to choose to create separate villages. This also suggests that the LRA was seeing itself more as a civilian community than a military outfit.

¹⁸⁸ Interview: Apili, thirty two years old, ex-combatant mother, Gulu town, Gulu district, Uganda. 16 February 2015.

Odek boundaries with other landmasses belonging to Patiko and other sub groups. But informants said, even with this transformation, the cyclical patterning of LRA settlement still persisted to provide cover for Kony's unit, so that Odek community was placed in the centre of the new 'nation'.

Study participants said once the construction of homesteads was complete, the LRA had hoped to shift to these up coming villages permanently. This attempt to demonstrate a transformation from a quasi-military community into a civilian population was however halted by the invasion of the UPDF in 2002 as Uganda launched its 'Operation Iron Fist', a military intervention deemed to wipe out the LRA¹⁸⁹, putting an end also to the transformation of brigade names to village names.

Having failed to wage a successful war and return to northern Uganda with his 'pure' nation of Acholi 'A', Kony's LRA therefore moved to found its own new nation. The creation of village-like settlements was therefore a step in establishing this new nation. This came at a time when the LRA had almost ceased raids in northern Uganda and could no longer enjoy military friendship with Khartoum. They therefore began to morph into a 'native' social group that had its own lands and customary rules.

According to informants who took part in establishing this new status quo, inhabitants dropped the use of military terms such as brigades and coy. Names of brigades such as Command Alter, Stockree, Gilba, Trinkle and Sinia also remained relics of a not so distant past as inhabitants replaced them with the new geographical labels depicting the northern Uganda origin of commanders.

But the study did not find evidence of any attempt to introduce and perpetuate lineage identities similar to those found in northern Uganda. This also conformed to Baines' (2014: 7) finding that the LRA did not tolerate kinship lineages – instead speaking of the 'LRA as one family.' This refusal to acknowledge and reproduce lineage identities

¹⁸⁹ See Operation Iron Fist agreement renewed amid tensions, 2003. Available from: <http://www.irinnews.org/report/46151/uganda-operation-iron-fist-agreement-renewed-amid-tensions>. Accessed on 23 June 2016.

of the recruits suggest the continuous struggle of Kony and his commanders to sever recruits from their old social bonds and create a completely independent entity – an autonomous ‘pure’ nation. As discussed in section 4.2 above, anything that identified the recruits with the ‘impure’ lineage leaders in northern Uganda was outlawed, except those sanctioned by the LRA leader.

Informants explained that they never heard Kony, or any of his commanders openly talk about their clans or lineages. Some respondents said they were aware that Raska Lukwiya, who was the brigade commander of Sinia, belonged to the Puranga clan of the Acholi, but he never referred to it openly. Informants such as Acen only got to learn about the clans of their ‘husbands’ unofficially.

She said,

The LRA gave girls to men without bothering to find out if they were related. But because I am a Lango, I knew that both Lagira and my second husband Oyat, all belonging to Acholi, could not belong to my clan... I also only found out that Oyat belonged to the Pachwa clan after having our children. The rumour of war was strong and Oyat was not sure about his safety and the future of our sons. One evening, he told me about his family and clan. He hoped that one day, if all went well, I could help the boys find his people.¹⁹⁰

Apili corroborated this, saying:

Some men never used their own names while with the LRA. But once they got children, some revealed to the mothers who exactly they were before they joined the LRA. In confidence, they told them where they came from because of fear that they might die and such information be used to help their children trace for their relatives in northern Uganda.¹⁹¹

The unofficial and secretive sharing of lineage identities by LRA soldiers with their forced wives suggests that they still felt a part of their old social networks back in northern Uganda. It pointed to the possibility of recruits, irrespective of hierarchical

¹⁹⁰ Interview: Acen, thirty two years old, Orubo village, Gulu town, Uganda. 19 January 2015.

¹⁹¹ Interview: Apili, thirty years old, Gulu, Uganda. 20 January 2015.

positioning, identifying with their families and communities back in northern Uganda rather than the LRA. But as later seen in chapter five, the information shared was often not adequate, making it difficult for former forced wives and children who might wish to reunite with their former forced husbands and fathers to successfully trace for each other.¹⁹²

4.7. Conclusion

The combination of norms and ideologies that Kony and his commanders used to set up their camps and regulate the sexual and reproductive lives of their recruits in the Sudan's countryside, 'the bush', led to forced marriages and the birth of children in these camps. Accounts of ex-combatants suggest that the LRA had a set of policies for regulating the sexuality and reproductive abilities of girls and women. LRA recruits had no choice over if, when, how, and to whom they could be 'married'.

The manner in which girls and women were affiliated and socialised, as wives or *ting-ting*, in the LRA suggested an attempt by the group to create and advance a quasi-military system. Kony used his military organisation to set up settlements, which served as homesteads and villages for his recruits. As the LRA stay in South Sudan neared its end, Kony increasingly sought to adopt and replicate in the military camps the names and characters of the villages he and the brigade commanders originated from in northern Uganda. Households under his immediate command were referred to as comprising the community of Odek, named after Kony's sub county of origin in northern Uganda. Similarly, his commanders also named their immediate settlements after their respective places in northern Uganda. Kony's idea of creating a new breed of Acholi was beginning to take shape in Sudan, especially as they started reducing their activities in northern Uganda from 1999. Rather than militarily remove from their Ugandan villages the Acholi 'B', as he called them, and replace them with Acholi 'A' (children being born in the LRA), he would occupy a new territory and install there his 'pure breed'.

¹⁹² E.g. see the case of Abang and her sons in section 5.5.2 of this thesis.

Recruits were affiliated to households headed by men, who depending on the seniority in rank, set up compounds of those they saw and referred to as their kin; in wives and offspring. Rules of affiliation and socialisation were established by Kony and implemented by his commanders. Those who were suspected of adultery and abortion were severely punished, just as those who carried out cultural ceremonies from old Lango or Acholi, which had not been sanctioned by Kony. These rules were meant to create a sense of community and 'family' in the South Sudan LRA camps/villages. It also ensured that Kony, the military leader remained firmly in charge of the group.

With his claims of being the medium of the spirit Silindi, Kony used fear and mysticism to consolidate his invincibility as the sole authority of the group. He manipulated the complex cosmological background of his northern Uganda Luo recruits to fulfil his interests. Through this, he claimed he could even control his followers' sexuality and reproductive abilities. His alleged link with the spirit Silindi could therefore enable him to lay claim on the offspring of his followers. Motherhood and the birth of children thus began to be seen as another way of enrolling new recruits rather than relying on abduction of people in northern Uganda. He described the children being born in the LRA as a new and pure breed of Acholi people.

Through abduction and affiliation of girls as 'wives' the LRA took control over these girls' sexuality and reproduction away from their fathers and male guardians. The creation of male headed 'households' to whom these girls were affiliated as wives in the LRA camps ensured a patriarchal undertaking parallel to that in Lango and Acholi, which served as a 'guarantee' that the new system would 'work' as effectively as the old one. They could thus expect to make the girls pregnant, name the children as they wished, and raise the women's offspring in their 'households'.

In Lango, motherhood and child rearing are predicated upon ideas of gender, marriage and kinship. These ideas shaped the experiences of reintegration of ex-combatant mothers and their children. By influencing the social lives of these women, these factors also influenced the life of their children after war. Among the Langi women's wombs

have always been linked to ideas of kinship either through *nyom* (marriage) or by birth. The hijack of wombs by LRA was therefore an attack on lineages and what they represented. It destabilised local Lango perspectives on gender, marriage and motherhood, exposing CBOW to further stigma and threats to their wellbeing.

The LRA's mimicry of patriarchal practices associated with lineages and clans in Lango therefore underlined two significant outcomes for CBOW. First, the wombs of these girls had become a recruitment ground for fighters that targeted their mothers' communities. Wombs were associated with populating lineages and therefore clans. CBOW were thus as much a part of LRA as their fathers, hence the stigmatizing references such as 'Kony' and 'rebel'. Second, the LRA defied the local lineage norms in Lango. In the eyes of fathers, siblings, mothers and lineages, the forced impregnation of these girls had subverted local social norms of gender and motherhood. How this tension played out in the lives of CBOW and the endless struggles by their mothers to re-negotiate their positions in the families and societies they returned to is the subject of the remaining chapters of this thesis.

CHAPTER 5. RETURN: FORMER FORCED WIVES AND THE REALITIES OF MOTHERHOOD IN PEACETIME LANGO

5.1. Introduction

Sexual violence in the LRA broke all conventions of interacting between men and women and is therefore experienced as a crime or wrongdoing perpetrated against her family and his...¹⁹³

Upon leaving the LRA, all the eight former forced wives interviewed re-entered their families and communities with their children. They viewed their natal families as the primary reunification unit. But the post-LRA relationships were remarkably complex and different for everyone. Here, their perspectives competed with the different perspectives of other people in their families and communities. People understood their experiences as forced wives and mothers differently, and this affected their 'choices' and strategies for reintegration. As they struggled to come to terms with what they went through as recruits, forced wives and mothers in the LRA, they also confronted parents, siblings and elders in the family, and other individuals in their neighbourhoods. Male elders in their family attempted to reassert their control over the returning women's productive and reproductive capabilities. Many, in particular fathers, brothers and male elders, saw the sexual violence the women had experienced as undermining the control they once wielded over these women's sexuality and reproductive potential.

These people saw the children of former forced wives as problematic because their perceptions had been shaped by patriarchal idioms of identity, which turned newborns into lineage members only when specific rules had been respected and conditions fulfilled. From the perspective of these elders, these women had left as young daughters and sisters, returning as mothers, with children; a transformation they had not participated in. There was therefore a problem with defining the status of these women and the children conceived in the LRA.

¹⁹³ See Porter, 2013, p.145.

One of the key objectives of this study is to analyse how former forced wives re-negotiated their positions in post-war familial networks and communities. Study findings suggest that these women understood how other members of their natal families and lineages were affected by the forced marriages they, as daughters and sisters, had been subjected to in the LRA. As they entered into these families, they became active agents of their own transformation. Many of them, given the narrow options they had, chose to reassert the principles and kinship rules, and the gender ideologies that existed in their societies of origin because ultimately they supported and protected them better - once they were back. As daughters and sisters, they thus mobilised support from members of their families, who were actually the most likely people to offer support so they could create a viable life. As they interacted with these people, they reproduced the local patriarchal ideologies.

Here, the 'narrowness' of options suggests a form of coercion these women face. The post-LRA experiences of the eight former forced wives were defined more by what they had experienced as forced wives than any other role they played while in the LRA. It is within this limited gender perspective (of having been a forced wife and consequently a mother to *atin onywalo ilum*) that the former forced wives attempted to maneuver space for their reintegration. This post-LRA space – occupied by parents, siblings, lineage elders and other individuals in the neighbourhood – was largely shaped by patriarchal idioms of identity which assigned and enforced gender roles by which girls and boys were perceived (cf. Baines 2011:479-480). Here, boys and girls, men and women were expected to behave in a certain way in order to be rewarded. As Baines (2011:478) argued their 'choices' were 'scripted by structures of coerced, ...[hegemonic] masculinity that strip them of the right to choose'.

This contextual (cultural) environment in which conformity to gender roles and expectations are rewarded is 'a space of coercion in which people are stripped of moral choices' (Baines, 2011:479) in order to gain protection and some form of support. In this chapter, I used this approach in conceptualising the influence of kinship and gender ideas on the agency of former forced wives. The approach is informed by the 'grey zone' concept – originally proposed by holocaust survivor Primo Levi (1988) – and

used by Baines (2011) to explain identities and agencies of survivors in the post-war environment of northern Uganda. For Baines (2011: 480), the grey zone is 'a space of coercion in which people are stripped of moral choices...which can be extended to consider agency in other states of extreme coercion...[such as the patriarchal environment that confront former forced wives and their children in Lango].

Here, they attempted to reassert the prevailing patriarchal norms that re-enforced a form of hegemonic masculinity. As they did this, they 'crossed moral boundaries that contradicted the principles of equality ... of human rights...they did so to live...' (Baines, 2011:480). Those who conformed were rewarded with some form of protection and support. By doing this, they served to 'overcome or cover up the perceived loss of power and influence' by the men and elders of their families. Their choices may not conform to the principles of human rights but these women relied on them to re-negotiate protection and support in reintegrating. It is within this framework that I analyse the experiences of former forced wives and their children.

More generally, this chapter addresses the following questions: How do these mothers re-negotiate their positions once they are back in the villages? What are the stakes for the various groups of people involved in their reintegration? What are the implications of their actions for children conceived in the LRA?

5.2. Exiting the LRA

When recruits succeed in leaving the LRA, they curtail the grip Joseph Kony and his commanders had on their sexuality and reproduction. Leaving the LRA was an important strategy that former forced wives like Acen could exploit to begin to disentangle themselves from the control the LRA leadership had on their sexuality, reproductive potential and the children they bore. For many mothers, their exit put a stop to the physical violence they experienced in their forced unions, but they still continued experiencing it symbolically when they confronted the different perspectives of male elders, brothers, mothers, potential suitors and other members of the communities. Male relatives for example, saw the violence these women had suffered as

a threat to the control they once wielded over their daughters and sisters' sexuality and reproductive potential.

To begin to re-negotiate their lives, an LRA recruit had to first leave the group, a strategy that they all attempted to execute from the time they were first abducted. Many succeeded before the LRA could sexually exploit them. Others had tried, been caught by the LRA and punished, often by a death sentence, they explained (see also Baines, 2004: 6; Temmerman, 2009). But while some made active choices others may not have done. Thousands of recruits were simply too terrified of their captors after witnessing and taking part in meting punishment on failed escapees. All of those who took part in this study fall in this last category, and the longer they stayed, the more likely they were to be allocated to forced husbands and give birth to children.

Respondents stated that sometimes they, including forced husbands, helped each other escape or desert the LRA. For example, Oyat explained that when the war escalated in 2004, he used his position as a radio signaler in the LRA to contact the head of the LRA Sick Bay called Tulu Olak, in whose care most women, children and the weak were. He asked Tulu to release Acen and her sons.

The many struggles to leave the LRA right from the start can be seen as an effort to put a stop to the violence they suffered as recruits and forced wives. But also to liberate their sexuality, reproduction potential and offspring from the claims of Joseph Kony and his commanders. Those who escaped immediately therefore denied the LRA any form of physical control over them. Although this thesis did not find any reliable evidence that the LRA created lineages and clans – as understood by the Langi, it can be argued that LRA's policies on sexuality and reproduction competed with peacetime Langi's notions of control over sexuality and reproduction, discussed in chapter three.

Former forced wives could thus be seen as having left Kony's LRA 'clan' and all it represented and returned into their old clans and what they represented. This comparison is inevitable because LRA's policy on sexuality and reproduction directly

breached that which prevailed in peacetime Lango, a principal means by which the Langi continued to shape their lineages after the war.

By leaving the LRA, a woman denied any form of association with the group, attempting to loosen the LRA's grip on her sexuality and reproductive ability from the perspective of her male relatives. By so doing, she also demonstrates to the various members of her family and lineage that in her interpretation the LRA's control over her was not legitimate - it was imposed against her will. This awareness continues to manifest and influence her choices and actions as she struggles to re-position herself as a daughter, sister and mother in her post LRA family and community.

5.3. The social costs of forced marriage in return families and communities

Although all the research participants stated that their natal families were happy to see that they had survived the LRA, the majority said this welcome was short-lived. Rejoining their natal families and communities pitted the lived realities of their sexuality in the LRA against that of peacetime Lango. The way their local communities constructed womanhood, wifehood, motherhood and kinship significantly differed from what they had experienced in the LRA. As a result, they faced innumerable obstacles, which compromised their reintegration. They explained that some family members did not want to associate with the children they had returned with from the LRA. But one mother stated that her family welcomed and lived harmoniously with her two sons. At the time of the study, this mother who had left the LRA in 2004, stated that her sons lived in their maternal family as though they were sons of her deceased father and mother. They were seen as heirs to the household. This case is further discussed in chapter six below.

Still, at community level, all eight mothers said they were unhappy about the way people related with them. They complained that members of their communities referred to them as 'Kony's wife', 'LRA' and *adui* (rebel). They explained that whenever a theft occurred in the community, people were quick to accuse them. They further claimed that whenever their children were involved in a fight with peers, the parents of those

peers accused their children conceived in the LRA of being responsible for the fight. Those who were raising livestock said people often accused them of keeping animals they had lost to the LRA during the war. Former forced wives stated that they found it hard to find suitors and/or marry. Many were often taken as mistresses by those who already had wives and children.

All of these experiences demonstrate how people in the familial and community networks perceived these women and their children. Yet what these different experiences have in common is that the reintegration of women and the integration of their children gave rise to tensions in relation to normative notions of gender, generation and kinship. There were tensions associated with the fraying of gendered expectations and roles that families and local communities held toward these girls and women. These tensions were seen in dynamics of exclusion and inclusion. Just as those who had not complied with LRA's regulations on sexuality and reproduction were excluded – often by being killed - those who complied and returned into Lango as mothers also faced various forms of exclusion – marked by stigma and discrimination. By leaving the LRA and returning into their families and lineages in Lango, these survivors thus affirmed the reality of the breaches of control over their sexuality and reproductive abilities as forced wives in the LRA.

While acknowledging that former LRA recruits, regardless of gender, age and reproductive status faced considerable levels of stigma and discrimination (e.g. Carlson & Mazurana, 2008), this study suggests that the graveness of stigma and discrimination on former forced wives in particular is due to the tension associated with control over their sexuality and reproduction. They had left as young girls – many of them prepubescent – and returned as women with children, no longer recognisable to parents (see also Women's Commission 2001, 2002). These changes from girl to woman and mother had taken place in the LRA, away from the girls' families, lineages and communities. The families and lineages, and other members in the community, had not been part of these changes that they were now confronting. The main shapers of the changes had been Kony and his LRA commanders. Not being part of these changes therefore meant they and their (abducted) daughters and sisters could not play their part

in affirming the realities of gender and motherhood in Lango. In Lango villages, male relatives perceived the abduction and forced marriages in the LRA as a form of hijack of the control they had over their daughters and sisters' sexuality and reproduction ability. To them, the hijack created tension and brought *rucurucu*, great confusion and disagreement in the way they saw these mothers and their children. How this tension was seen and managed, shaped the reintegration of formerly abducted women and their children. The strategies former forced wives used to diffuse these tensions and re-negotiate their positions as daughters and sisters are explored in subsequent sections.

5.4. Undoing the LRA 'marital' status

None of the former forced wives in this study left the LRA as a 'couple' but as individuals. They also entered their receptor families and communities as unmarried people, even though the mothers had their children with them. In addition, forced wives and forced husbands like Acen and Oyat rarely returned at the same time. In many cases therefore, the sexual unions forged by Kony and his commanders ceased to exist once they left the LRA.

But evidence suggests that the struggle to re-negotiate control over one's sexuality was sometimes curtailed by re-abduction (e.g. McKay, 2004: 20), and forced reunification to the ex-LRA 'husbands'. In addition to hiding in safer locations to avoid re-abduction, some returning mothers enlisted the help of other parties to maintain their disassociation from their old LRA status. As seen of Apili's experience, they could for example rely on NGOs like Rachele to help them maintain their freedom from their former forced husbands. In this case, Apili explained that when she handed herself to the UPDF in Pader in 2004, they learnt that she had been a forced wife to a high ranking LRA commander, who had since joined the UPDF and lived in Gulu barracks. The UPDF took her and her surviving child to the barracks and attempted to give her back to the former LRA Commander.¹⁹⁴ This action suggested the endurance of Kony's influence beyond the LRA-controlled camps and into peacetime northern Uganda.

¹⁹⁴ Two out of the three children Apili had in the LRA were killed during battle with the UPDF in 2004.

Here, in some instances, the UPDF officers arrogated to themselves the authority to make and unmake sexual relations. In doing this they further assumed the position of the male elders in a woman's natal family and lineage – and attempted to exercise control over a girl's sexuality and reproductive abilities. But in the particular case of Apili, a re-unification with the forced husband did not materialise. This was because women like Apili reasserted traditional kinship rules to discredit their old relationships in the LRA. Apili explained that she, with the help of Save the Children in Gulu, had vehemently refused and instead demanded to reunite with her parents. By rejecting the UPDF officers' plan and re-entering into her natal family with her child, Apili reiterated kinship norms meant for children of *luk*. But as will be discussed in chapter six, these children were perceived differently from children of *luk* in Lango.

But the role of local and international NGOs in 'freeing' ex-combatants from the control of the male commanders of the LRA stretched beyond just confronting forces like the UPDF. They also offered temporary reception services, and tracing and reunification support. Rachele, for example, documented the names of ex-combatants, when they were abducted, when they left the LRA and their location of origin and used the information to reunite the ex-combatant with receptor families and communities.¹⁹⁵ In all of the cases, location of origin happened to be the returnee's natal village and patriclan. Children conceived in the LRA were registered on the slots immediately next to their respective mothers' and given the same details of mother's natal origin as their own. But the documentation left out any mention of the child's biological father. This was the pattern for all of the children of former forced wives that passed through Rachele. Here, these NGOs active in DDR therefore worked in concert with returnees to repair pre-war relationships between the former combatants and their respective family and kinship networks. They provided temporary safe havens to former forced wives, helping them maintain freedom from the forced marriages they had left in the LRA. But importantly, through documentation, tracing and reunification, old identities that supported local patriarchal ideologies were legitimated by these agencies and re-

¹⁹⁵ A June 2007 study by Berkeley-Tulane Initiative on Vulnerable Populations titled *Abducted: The LRA and forced conscription in northern Uganda* showed a harmonised system of documenting ex-combatant by at least eight reception centres. The system required information on demographics, date of abduction/release/arrival and departure, location of origin and the health and social information of the returnee.

assigned to ex-combatants and their familial networks. Former forced wives were cast as daughters and sisters of their pre-war lineages, and not as 'wives' of their wartime partners. These old identities reaffirmed the positions, authority and roles of male elders, brothers, and senior female relatives in Lango kinship networks. This reaffirmation also immersed CBOW in local social contexts, assigning new identities to them within the framework of local patriarchal ideas of sexuality and reproduction in peacetime.

Women who resisted forced reunification to their LRA partners invoked affiliation to their patrilans and, as will be discussed in subsequent sections, reasserted patrilineal doctrines including that of *nyom* and *luk*. In other words, they reminded those who tried to force them to return to their forced husbands that the LRA had not met the customary requirements to transfer control over their sexuality away from their natal patrilans. Their LRA partners were unknown to the women's natal families and lineages; no *nyom* or *luk* had been invoked to trigger the onset of transactions that would transfer rights in a woman from her patrilan to that of her potential husband. Therefore former LRA partners could not make legitimate claims to live with them and treat them as wives in their own households. The example of the UPDF officers exemplifies an attempt to extend relationships that had been forged in the LRA into post-LRA Lango. This attempt failed because the LRA-imposed relationship had not been sanctioned by Lango kinship and marriage institutions (see chapter three). In the post-LRA context, as had been the case before the onset of the LRA conflict, any harm happening on a non-lineage member living in one's home could attract *kwor*, blood feud, from the dead person's patrilan unless she was married following Lango rules. Hence, their LRA partners could not affiliate these women to their lineages - and consequently as the women were reintegrated in their natal villages they dropped their LRA status as (forced) wives of LRA officers and militants and re-appropriated their pre-war identity as daughters and sisters in their post-war families and lineages. But something had changed: many of these women returned as mothers of CBOW. Somehow, this had to be accommodated in their society.

As daughters and sisters, they were expected to follow the kinship rules and the gender ideologies that existed in their society of their origin. By doing so, unmarried daughters and sisters in Lango obtain some support from their families and lineages. This support was all the more vital to the women who were coming back from the LRA camps. More than ever, these women needed their family's support to lead a viable life. But by abiding by lango kinship and marriage rules and norms, they ultimately contributed to the reproduction of the Lango patriarchal ideologies.

The transition between these two normative orders (LRA camps and natal villages) was not as clear-cut as the discussion above may suggest. For example, ex-combatant mothers still referred to forced husbands as *cwara* – a term married women in Lango used to refer to their husbands. They also referred to other women who were 'wives' of their polygynous forced husbands as *nyeka* – a term a woman married to a polygynous man in Lango used to refer to a co-wife. They thus referred to their old sexual relationships as though they were still taking place. By continuing to refer to their forced husbands as *cwara* and other women as *nyeka*, former forced wives cast Kony's influence over their sexuality as still active. They portrayed that they were still living lives affected by their sexual experiences in the LRA. They, for example, complained of the stigma family and community members levied upon them because they had been sexually active in the LRA. Stigma on former forced wives came in various forms (e.g. Baines et al., 2013; McKay, 2004; Carlson & Mazurana, 2008; Okello & Hovil, 2007). For example, they were referred to as 'Kony's wife', even though they had been allocated to other commanders – as *adui* (rebel), and as 'LRA'. Some mothers complained of being accused of having benefitted economically from the 'victim' status attributed to them by NGOs. Two of the mothers said they had bought and tried to raise some goats, which individuals in the neighbourhood saw as a mockery of their own loss of livestock during the war.

But as former forced wives are acknowledging their struggles with the power Joseph Kony and his LRA still had over their sexuality and offspring after the war, they are also showing the powerlessness of their pre-war families and lineages. By explaining incidences of stigma and discrimination, and using the language of marriage (*cwara*,

nyeka) to refer to their sexual experiences in the LRA, women also shared their struggles with the researcher and those they came into contact with, including siblings, parents, lineages and their clans.

Study findings suggest that even as they used idioms of marital relationships such as *cwara* and *nyeka*, former forced wives were often reluctant to refer to their forced sexual relationships in the LRA as marriages. They insisted they had not *really* been married while in the LRA because their forced husbands never paid any brideprice to their natal families. Five out of the eight former forced wives who took part in this study said they were still single women because neither their lovers in the LRA nor those they got after the LRA had paid any brideprice to their fathers' households in Lango. Their post-LRA partners also believed that they could not yet call themselves wives and husbands unless they paid brideprice. Instead, they said they had got themselves into a situation of *luk*, an illegitimate union, which had led to illegitimate pregnancies and births.¹⁹⁶ As they distanced their LRA unions from any form of legitimacy in peacetime Lango, they also reaffirmed their legitimacy as bonafide members of their patrilineal clans.

5.5. Reaffirming lineage affiliation norms

During the study, all eight former forced wives identified with their natal lineages. But those who, like Acen, had contracted new marriages said they became re-affiliated to the clan of their husbands when their husbands took brideprice to their natal families. By identifying with their natal patrilineal clans, and later their post-war husbands, these former forced wives affirmed the reality of descent affiliation in Lango, casting sexual relationships in the LRA as fictitious unions that had no authority to alter a woman's lineage affiliation as the Lango customary marriage would.

They demonstrated and broadcasted the authority of their patrilineal clans over their sexuality and reproduction by returning to their natal families in accordance with the rule that regulated people's residence. Their behaviour was not in any way disputed by families

¹⁹⁶ The concept of *luk* and its importance for CBOW will be further discussed in chapter six.

and lineage members of these mothers. But by so doing, they joined their daughters in re-affirming the legitimacy of Lango descent norms. In this way, patrilineal doctrines were mobilised by ex-combatants and their natal affiliates faced with an attack on these principles. The reassertion of these principles enabled the former forced wives to rely on the support and solidarity of their natal families and communities, and therefore increased their resilience at a difficult moment. They used this reassertion of belonging (in the form of adherence to Lango principles of alliance and descent) to continue the processes of disentangling themselves from the *rucurucu*, confusion brought by the LRA, and so re-discovered their pre-war gendered, hierarchical familial relationships. By affirming their affiliation to their patrilans, they reaffirmed the reality of peacetime cultural norms and values in Lango.

5.5.1. Marriage (*nyom*) status

Four of the eight former forced wives said they began looking at themselves as married only after their post-LRA husbands took brideprice to their (girls') families in Lango. One of these couples had been a forced wife and a forced husband and had two sons in the LRA. The remaining three said they had instead got married to new husbands who had not been in the LRA. But the four mothers deployed certain strategies to get married to their post-LRA husbands. Their strategies ranged from concealment of LRA background from their new suitors, getting involved in *luk* relations, and mobilizing siblings and parents to 'adopt' their children conceived in the LRA. Appropriation of any of these strategies depended on the specific circumstances they faced on the ground. All of the eight mothers used at least two of them. Adong of Iceme for example, said she accepted her post-LRA suitor's proposal. But she could only marry him after weaning her son and looking for where to leave the child because her new husband could not take the child along, in accordance with the local affiliation rule. After weaning the boy, her brother took him in as his own since, she explained, he was the one who was set to receive her bridewealth for his own marriage. Ajok of Amia Abil, on the other hand, did not tell her post-LRA suitor that she had been abducted until they became involved in *luk*, which led to a pregnancy.¹⁹⁷ She explained that she feared her

¹⁹⁷ Interview: Ajok, twenty five years old, ex-combatant mother, Amia Abil village, Agweng sub county, Lira district, Uganda. 10 July 2013.

new suitor and his family could have refused to marry her had they known earlier. Still, she explained, her father-in-law was unhappy when he later discovered she had been in the LRA and even had a child. After marriage, she also had to cede her daughter conceived in the LRA to her (Ajok's) mother in order to join her new husband and their newborn child.

As these examples show, ex-combatant women mobilised those who were primarily important in their social and cultural life to address the *rucurucu* linked to their sexuality and reproductive outcome. By levying fines of *luk*, taking over parental roles for children conceived in the LRA, accepting bridewealth, and documenting the processes; parents, siblings, elders of their patrilines and representatives of the local councils coalesced to free their daughters and sisters of the *rucurucu*, re-evaluating her position in the family, lineage and community. Here, the former forced wives and the parties concerned deploy cultural norms and values to mediate the negotiations. They put together the *luk* or brideprice they require, including cattle, goats, hens, hoes and money. They then demand these from the groom and his people, reciprocating it with the giving away of the bride to her new husband, upon payment. Because of norms regulating lineage affiliation and ownership of assets such as land and livestock, a woman's brothers and parents may take care of her child conceived in the LRA. Brothers like that of Adong, expected to use their sisters' bridewealth or *luk* payment to later marry junior female members of their lineage. But to increase her marriageability they freed the women of the responsibility over the children conceived in the LRA by adopting the children. For were she to marry, the rule of re-affiliation – complicated by that of *culo kwor* (blood payment) – would not favour these children, and the new husbands might not be willing to take care of another man's child. Were the children female, these brothers could hope to benefit from a future marriage that would give them access to bridewealth. These children were seen as a future investment to boost the lineage's kraal (in which different individuals have different rights). Further discussions on adoption and other options available for children conceived in the LRA and how these affect their prospects for integration are contained in chapter six below.

For a former forced wife therefore, payment of *luk* and marriage are symbolic of the liberation of control over her sexuality from the LRA to her natal family and lineage, and in particular the male elders; it is a form of resilience for her, her parents, brothers and senior women and men in the lineage and community. But former forced wives suggested that their families easily accepted new suitors who had no LRA background, oblivious of the reality that they themselves faced in the LRA. For example, Apili, who had also returned from the LRA in 2004, explained that her LRA partner had already been captured and incorporated into the UPDF by the time she returned. He had also already made countless unwelcome trips to Apili's parents in Lira. Apili's mother, who took responsibility for Apili's daughter born in the LRA, never wanted to see her daughter's former forced husband.¹⁹⁸ Apili said all of her relatives feared that she would go back to her forced husband, a man whom Apili's mother referred to as 'grandfather'. Apili instead got married to another man from Gulu. She said although her mother was not happy that she had married a man from Acholi, a language group that Kony identified with, she (Apili's mother) and all of her other relatives were relieved that at least he was not her forced husband. This shows that individuals in Lango were still 'acholising' the LRA war even long after the war ended (see chapter two for additional discussion on this).

But there were also cases of former LRA forced wives and forced husbands who said they had grown fond of each other and went ahead to invoke *nyom* so they could live together as husband and wife. From the point of view of the control Kony and his commanders had over the sexuality of their recruits, their accepting to marry each other after leaving the LRA is not in any way a justification of the forced relationships they experienced in the LRA. According to McKay (2004: 26), after leaving the LRA ex-combatants may find that their former relationships are stronger than those with individuals in peacetime community and decide to adapt it to the existing context. This was seen in the case of Acen and Oyat when they decided to reunite by following the old Lango marriage norms in 2006. Oyat said he only became Acen's husband when he

¹⁹⁸ Interview: Apili, thirty two years old, ex-combatant mother, Gulu town, Gulu district, Uganda. 16 February 2015.

convinced Acen's natal family to allow him to marry Acen in 2006.¹⁹⁹ He said he returned in March of 2005 and was immediately absorbed into the UPDF to help fight the LRA. Using the local radio station – he had first sent greetings to Acen and his sons so they could hear and know he had survived the LRA. Later, through Matata, a friend in the UPDF who hailed from Lira, he started the process of tracing Acen's location. He sent letters through him, which were passed by Acen onto her patrilineal brothers so they could gauge Oyat's suitability and help engage her parents to accept him. Acen's brother Oriang, who lived in a camp in Starch factory in Lira town, had questioned his sister Acen and had found that Acen indeed wanted to marry Oyat. When Oyat was ready to travel to Acen's family to introduce himself, Oriang accompanied him to Acen's parents in Ogur.

Acen's father was not happy to know that Oriang's visitor was Oyat. He was very bitter with the LRA. Oyat, explained that:

He was so bitter with me. He told me that I was responsible for abducting Acen and that I forced her to become my wife in the LRA. He said that my presence before him was an insult to him. I had already tried so much that I long had given up trying to explain that I had also been a victim of the LRA abduction, at the age of only fourteen. I had even told him that Acen and I had courted each other before taking and caring for her in the bush. I told him that I conspired with my immediate supervisor to cause her release in 2004. Instead the old man kept on saying to me, 'Why have you come to laugh at me? You abducted my children and I lost my two sons in your hands...' ²⁰⁰

By saying all of these words, fathers like that of Acen denounced the actions that Kony and his commanders had committed against their daughters and their families. With their words, they protested that the LRA leaders had arrogated to themselves authority over their daughters' sexuality and reproduction. They made it clear to their daughters' suitors that LRA's policy 'mocked' and disempowered them and cost them immeasurable losses. By resisting, such fathers desisted from playing roles comparable to that which the UPDF officers executed when they tried to reunite Apili with her forced husband. Their statements indicated that they were not accomplices to Kony and

¹⁹⁹ Interview: Oyat, thirty five years old, former signaler of the LRA, Gulu, Uganda. 23 February 2015.

²⁰⁰ Interview: Oyat, thirty five years old, former signaler of the LRA, Gulu, Uganda. 23 February 2015.

his commanders and thus continued the project of dismantling the LRA leaders' claims to their daughters' sexuality and offspring.

But Oriang continued 'talking' to Acen's father. The elderly man then gradually began to accept that Oyat indeed was not at fault for his (Acen's father's) tragedy at the hands of the LRA. Instead Oyat had tried his best to protect Acen, leading to her release along with the children. Finally, Acen's father accepted. As he later said: 'Acen confirmed to me that Oyat had helped her escape. At least she returned from the LRA, unlike my other children who were all killed'.

Here, the role Oyat played in Acen and her sons' escape was pivotal in changing Acen's father's mind. Acen's father then summoned his surviving son and nephews. He consulted them and then demanded that Oyat starts with paying for *araanga* – also known as *penyo nyako* (asking the girl for her consent). By demanding for *araanga*, Acen's father portrayed that Oyat was 'not of LRA' but of an Acholi lineage and clan. For, the invocation of *nyom* required the consent and participation of his familial and lineage members. Acen's father said *araanga* would cost Oyat 150,000 shillings. Oyat had only 50,000 shillings on him that day. When Acen was summoned before them, Oyat gave her the money as a way of 'asking for her hand'. She accepted the proposal by taking the money and passing it on, to her father. Her father took the money and said Oyat needed to pay another visit for *medo nyom* (topping up the *araanga*) at a later date. After a month, Oyat returned to Acen's family in Agweng sub county and paid an additional 100,000 shillings to complete Acen's *araanga*. Acen's father then asked for a pen and paper and together with his son and nephews, listed down what they wanted in brideprice and read it out loud for Oyat and his entourage which included his father. These were:

1. *Dok* (cattle): six
2. *Dyegi* (goats): six
3. *Kweri pit* (hand hoes to repay those that were used to till the land that raised the bride): six
4. *Kweri Lango* (hand hoes for the lineage): four
5. *Gwen* (hens): four
6. *Tong pel* (a spear): one
7. *Cente* (money): 500,000 shillings

8. *Cente me Opwoc* ('thank you' money for bride's father): 50,000 shillings
9. *Cente me agulu* ('pot/saucepan money' to appreciate the bride's mother for her cooking which raised the bride)
10. *Gomesi a toto* (traditional suit for bride's mother): one
11. A coat for Bride's father: one

Oyat and his father accepted these demands. Months later, Oyat, his father, sister, brother, father's brother and a clan leader returned to Agweng to deliver the items. At a large ceremonial gathering in which Acen's father slaughtered a goat to feed guests, these items were handed over. Acen's father had invited the local council chairman of the village (LC) and the head of his clan section in Agweng. He had also invited Acen's maternal and paternal relatives. The LC and the clan leaders entered the items received in their records. But Oyat had not met all of the conditions. Instead of six cows, he had only raised three with the promise that he would later pay up the balance. He also had not paid the *cente me agulu* (pot money).²⁰¹ After a brief consultation between the men from both sides, Acen's family agreed that Oyat be declared Acen's husband. The remaining items would be paid later.

A letter was then drawn and signed by these leaders to acknowledge the items received as bridewealth and the balance to be paid. It also declared that Acen had become Oyat's wife and a member of the Pachwa clan of the Acholi. Acen had henceforth given up her membership of the Oromo clan of her father and became affiliated to that of her husband. She was declared free to go with Oyat to his house and people. A copy of the letter was given to Acen's father. Oyat's father took another copy and a third remained with the Witness.

As lovers in post-LRA northern Uganda, Acen and Oyat entered a courtship the way peacetime lovers did. Acen confided to the researcher that by the time Oyat was asking for her parents' consent she was already several months pregnant although her siblings and parents did not know. The element of secrecy is always nurtured by lovers in rural

²⁰¹ Acen's mother explained that pot money was given to a bride's mother as a token of appreciation for having tirelessly cooked and fed the bride into adulthood. This money was supposed to go to Acen's mother for the same purpose.

Lango at the onset of their relationship.²⁰² This and the involvement of other individuals such as Matata and Acen's paternal cousins in their post-war courtship and negotiation with Acen's family showed that they were in sync with what ordinarily defines *nyom* in Lango. All of these people represented their own individual stakes in the processing of the marriage between Acen and Oyat. The successful negotiation of *araanga* and the brideprice transformed these stakes into physical assets when Oyat eventually paid money for *araanga* and herds of cattle, goats, hens and hoes. The food and drinks that came with the occasion also fulfilled the expectations of all who had gathered to witness the marriage.

Acen's younger brother could eventually marry using her bridewealth, and her grandparents could have their goats.²⁰³ Similarly, her father could have his coat and her mother the *gomesi* suit.²⁰⁴ The Witness could also have his one goat and the Local Council Chairman his fee. In addition, land belonging to Acen's family could now be tilled with the hoes paid by Oyat. To acknowledge all of these, Acen and Oyat were declared husband and wife, as they too had staked. Acen and her offspring would henceforth be affiliated to Oyat and his Pachwa clan of Acholi. Her productive and reproductive capabilities were now controlled, to some degree, by Oyat and his Pachwa family.

A similar argument can be advanced for all of the other three respondents that got married the local customary way upon their return from the LRA. Bridewealth paid by Ajok's husband, for example, to her family of the Omolatar clan reaffirmed her affiliation to her father and his lineage of Omolatar. They levied brideprice and accepted its payment, demonstrating that Ajok, her reproductive and productive rights had never shifted from them, even when she was taken by the LRA. In this way, they

²⁰² Minutes of the meeting that was held at Idep – Awila on the 10 April 2013 between Okarowok Orum and Oyima Ngila.

²⁰³ Focus Group Discussion: Acen's father (eighty years old) and five other members of his household that had been present during the marriage, Amia Abil village, Agweng sub county, Lira, Uganda. 13 February 2015.

²⁰⁴ Acen's mother however gave Acen's older sister her *gomesi* (traditional suit). She had recently turned into a born-again Christian and thought accepting such gifts was unchristian.

refused to acknowledge Kony and his LRA's stakes on Ajok when she was with the LRA. With that also came the recognition that her sexuality and reproductive potential were 'owned' by the Omolatar and not by the spirit Silindi, Kony, the commanders and forced husbands.

Similarly, Adong of Iceme who had been abducted in 2004 and returned with a pregnancy also renewed her membership to the Atek Okwero Wee when she introduced her new suitor to her family and he paid her brideprice.²⁰⁵ The same may be said of Apili when she introduced her new lover to her family in Lira in 2010. The exchanges enabled fathers like that of Acen and other members of their patrilines to reaffirm their positions as male elders with control over sexuality and reproductive potential of their daughters and sisters, and in that way nullified any claims that Kony and his commanders had made on the women.

A similar argument can be advanced on boys and former forced husbands like Oyat who sought to marry the old Lango customary way. Members of their natal families and patrilines gravitated around them to put together the necessary logistics to ensure they got married the customary way. As they did this, they redeemed their old authority and stakes, which the LRA had dislodged with its policies of abduction, sexuality and reproduction. In all of the cases, marriages were witnessed and documented by a local government (LC) and a local clan leader that had been invited by the host families. With their actions and interpretations, all of these individuals contributed to ensure the marriages happened. In the process, they also demonstrated the end of Kony and his Commanders' control over former forced wives. Their post-LRA marriage thus nullified the LRA's hold over their sexuality and reproductive capabilities. By doing this, suitors like Oyat and their fathers and lineages, had taken back control over brides' sexuality and reproduction.

Importantly, Acen and Oyat's example showed the importance of brideprice in post-war Lango. But it also elaborates the confusion and tension that the LRA introduced through its version of 'marriage' and how after leaving the LRA, former forced spouses acted

²⁰⁵ Interview: Adong, twenty three years old, Omiri village, Iceme sub county, Oyam district, Uganda.1 August 2013.

strategically to re-negotiate a marriage that would be seen as legitimate within the existing customary norms and values.

5.5.2. Illegitimate sexual relationships (*luk*)

But the study also identified attempts by some male ex-combatants to pursue *luk* (payment of a customary fine for illegitimate sexual intercourse and for any resultant pregnancy) as a strategy at renewing their relationships in their natal families and lineages. Some thought it could help them negotiate for a reunion with the children they had fathered with forced wives in the LRA. By invoking *luk*, these ex-combatants implied that they perceived their sexual relationship in the LRA as illegitimate.

None of the cases in this study however materialised into a successful *luk*. That is, no *luk* negotiations or payment was sanctioned. For example, when former forced wife Abang who had returned with two sons from the LRA wanted to look for the family of her son's father in Pader, her mother refused.²⁰⁶ Abang and her older sister had explained that their parents had given birth to three daughters and no son. Their mother, they further explained, had therefore worried that their late father's lineage would come to an end. The arrival of the boys had offered the possibility to regenerate and perpetuate her husband's direct bloodline. The option of accepting *luk* for her daughter and her sons would have been more costly to her natal family, therefore. Once the boys were seen as representing a much-needed balance in the lineage system, the door for searching the biological father's family was shut, and with it the option of invoking *luk*.

For the majority of girls and women who passed through the LRA system however, *luk* was never an option. Had maternal families of CBOW opted for *luk*, they would have faced a myriad of complexities. Other factors notwithstanding, *luk* may only be

²⁰⁶ Interview: Abang, thirty four years old, ex-combatant mother, Imato-Ikwoto village, Ogur sub county, Lira district, Uganda. 23 July 2013.

processed upon the identification of the ‘offender’.²⁰⁷ This was not possible in the case of the LRA, as it was mostly strangers who had taken the girls during raids. Immediate recourse to *luk* in the cases such as that of Akello of Bar obia village, Acaba sub county, Oyam district was therefore not tenable because the majority of the LRA fathers were unknown to the mothers’ natal families. Where girls remembered the names – which tended to be similar in the Luo belt of northern Uganda, they were not certain about the location of the men’s families.

Refusal to acknowledge luk

Study participants who involved siblings and parents at the peak of their courtship (including *luk* and *nyom*) therefore challenged the authority with which Kony and his men had taken and distributed women as ‘wives’ in the LRA. This cue was emphasised by parents like that of Acen, who refused to levy the suit of *luk*. To them, levying the suit would be tantamount to acknowledging that ‘courtship’ in the LRA could be seen as legitimate within the Lango normative marriage system. It could equate LRA unions to peacetime unions and automatically render former forced husbands eligible to benefit from the status of *luk* and all the benefits that accrued. Such benefits included the potential affiliation of any offspring of *luk* to the father’s patrilineage as discussed in chapter three. Respondents who refused to accept *luk* payment from former forced husbands saw that ordinarily *luk* offenders had to fulfill certain conditions in order to qualify for it, conditions which the environment in the LRA did not enable ‘lovers’ to meet. For example, Acen’s father said, ‘he who gets your daughter pregnant must pay for *luk*. But with Oyat, once I understood that the situation in the LRA caused him to defile my daughter’s purity, there was no way I could again ask him and his people to pay *luk*’.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ A father would most often instruct the girl’s mother to interview her daughter and the youth to verify identity then report back to the father as demonstrated in minutes of the meeting between the *jo* Okarowok Orum and the *jo* Oyima Ngila held on the 10 April 2013.

²⁰⁸ Interview: Muzee Constantino Okori (eighty years old) and his wife Acola Joci (sixty years old), Amia Abil village, Agweng sub county, Lira District, Uganda. 13 February 2015.

Luk presupposed the consent of both lovers, so that a man who took a girl or woman without her consent found it difficult to invoke *luk* or even regularise the union. People like Acen's father understood sexual relationships in the LRA as a desperate attempt at survival. To them, girls and some men like Oyat had no choice in the sexual relationship that they had. Recruits had to comply with whatever Kony and his men ordered so as not to be killed, he explained.²⁰⁹ To them, a good *luk* case was comparable to that of the Okarowok girl and the Oyima boy, cited in section 3.5 above. These offenders were often understood as having agency in choosing to indulge in illegitimate sexual relationships. These are the cases that fit Lango notion of *luk* – not the circumstances that took shape under LRA control.

Sexual unions in the LRA fell under the rubric of *jok* (offences considered un-natural, including sexual intercourse with a prepubescent girl) and rape or defilement, a capital offence in both the Lango customary law and today's formal criminal justice system in Uganda.²¹⁰ Until recently, both attracted a death penalty. Informant, Imat Santa, a sixty-two-year-old woman who lived at Rainbow near Lira at the time of the field study stated that *luk* is only invoked when the sexual act is not with a child or with a relative. All of these would not qualify, she explained, because they are all seen as acts of *jok*.²¹¹ This was underlined by the refusal of peacetime families and communities to invoke *luk* on the LRA lovers of their daughters. At a focus group discussion with six people who lived near Acen's natal family in Amia Abil village, one participant stressed the irrelevance of *luk* in relation to the sexual relationships that took place in the LRA after the war:

...While in the LRA, Oyat and men like him were just like a neighbour's cock that mounted my hen. You see, while the owner of the cock always has no claim over the chicks that hatch, the one that owns the hen does. So asking for *luk* would be like asking the owner of the hen to give away his

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ See Chapter 120: The Penal Code Act (s. 129).

²¹¹ Interview: Imat Santa, sixty two years old, Rainbow, Lira, Uganda. 26 March 2015.

chicks to the neighbour, simply because the neighbour's cock mounted the hen.²¹²

This statement stresses the reality of how girls and women's sexuality and motherhood continued to be perceived as 'owned' by men in a similar way humans own hens and chicks, irrespective of who owned the cock that was responsible for the chicks. Importantly, it underscores an automatic affiliation of children conceived in the LRA to the mothers' patrilines. It also demonstrates that familial and lineage networks refused to compare relationships in the LRA to *luk* since the possibility of an LRA father redeeming his offspring through payment of *luk* was inconceivable.

By refusing to see sexual relationships in the LRA as eligible for *luk*, some former forced wives and their families and communities continued to challenge Kony and his LRA social concepts (see chapter four). When the clan leaders of former forced wife Akello of Acaba in Oyam, asked her family to pay a fine of one goat to them for failing to sanction the *luk* of Akello's son conceived in the LRA, the family refused to pay.²¹³ They instead replied that if their clan insisted, then they (clan leaders) could look for Joseph Kony, the LRA leader and asked for the *luk* payment from him.

Parents like that of Acen and Akello refused to acknowledge *luk* and in the process rejected Kony's claims on their daughters, sons and their offspring. As far as these fathers were concerned Kony's LRA 'clan' and its claims simply did not exist. This was also emphasised during fieldwork where informants said they fully understood *luk* as an illegitimacy, which could only be redeemed by a *luk* suit instituted by members of one's clan (girl's natal family and lineage) against another clan (boy's natal family and lineage). This can be explained by the role which *luk* payment played in changing lineage affiliation of the offspring of *luk* as seen in chapter three above.

²¹² Focus Group Discussion with six respondents in Amia Abil Village, Agweng sub county, Lira District, Uganda. 13 February 2015.

²¹³ It was not clear from this mother and her family if the leaders of her patriline had known that her son had been conceived in the LRA.

5.6. Collapse of strategies

But in some cases, mothers who were not successful in exploiting the above options outside of the LRA, turned to other modes of surviving which they identified as falling outside of the normative cultural framework in peacetime Lango. These included prostitution, elopement, and relocation. Many former forced wives disregarded Lango kinship norms and adopted behaviours that were seen as ‘immoral’ in order to survive in what Human Rights Watch (2003: 70) referred to as ‘survival sex’ (see also Coulter, 2009 & Denov, 2010: 188). Families and lineage members largely frowned upon these women, because they were perceived as contravening the gender and kinship notions in Lango, just like Kony and his commanders did in the LRA. The poverty and insecurity they returned to forced many to ‘demonstrate a proclivity to resume violence’ – against themselves, and against their familial and lineage networks (Baines, 2011:481). This not only showed the progressive weakening of Lango social norms and values, but in these specific cases it led to the dissolution of relationships between familial and lineage elders and their daughters.

These options deprived kraals of an important source of replenishment as the mothers failed to marry and bring bridewealth. On the other hand, once they became pregnant, their children became a source of insecurity to the women’s natal families, where they might also expect to be raised and, upon reaching adulthood, given a portion of land. These options therefore reproduced the form of social violence that the mother, her natal family and her lineage had experienced in the broader context of war, abduction and displacement.

Eloping (‘tingere’)

In some cases, mothers left their children behind with the natal families and eloped (*tingere*) with a lover – to live in his home and even bear him children without invoking *luk* and *nyom* (marriage). For example, former forced wife Abang of Imato-Ikwoto village of Ogur said she already had two daughters with her new lover and had even

moved to stay with him and his wife.²¹⁴ But he had not taken any move to pay *luk* or marry her. Her lover had simply *tingere* (eloped) with her. Respondents explained that the incidents of *tingere* where a woman may move into her lover's house and vice versa was becoming rampant. They blamed this on the poverty of young men and their families to put together brideprice (see also chapter three). Although the practice on both ends was seen as contravening the normative customary rules, people said the *tingere* of a man into his suitor's house unsettled the gender norms. They explained that such a man who *tingere* made it impossible for *luk* to be invoked. *Luk*, they explained, could only be sanctioned for women or girls who *tingere* but not male suitors.

This hardship in invoking *luk* in the event that a man was the one who eloped into his lover's house can be linked to the local understanding of gender. By *tingo* her lover into her house, a woman upsets the local notions of patriarchy. Her action suggests women, and not men, were in control over the sexuality and reproductive lives of their lovers – a suggestion that could stand, were she to be fined of *luk*. But insofar as women eloped into a man's house, the status quo in the relationships between men and women was not questioned. For Abang, her natal family expected a payment of *luk* from her lover.

Abang explained that her *luk* was not paid because her parents had died and she only had sisters for siblings. If she had brothers, she further explained, they would put the man to task to pay *luk*, and marry her or risk losing her and her daughters since he had no right to affiliate her and the offspring he was siring with her. At the time of the study, *tingere* was very common even among women who had not been in the LRA. Several clan heads had sent radio announcements to the seven local *fm* stations, appealing to sons of their respective clans who had eloped with a girl to immediately clear *luk* and marry the girls so as to avoid any *kwor*. People attributed increase in *tingere* to loss of respect for lineage elders, and loss of livestock during the war - so that young people could no longer afford to put together brideprice; often taking many years to do that.

²¹⁴ Interview: Abang, thirty four years old, ex-combatant mother, Imato-Ikwoto village, Ogur sub county, Lira district, Uganda. 23 July 2013.

Rejection and marginalisation

Akello of Acaba in Oyam district is a typical example of a former forced wife whose strategies to disentangle herself and her offspring from LRA's grip failed to yield the desired outcome after the war. Although she and her mother successfully refused to pay a fine to her patriclan for her son conceived in the LRA (see section 5.5.2 above), she explained that after leaving Rachele, and receiving an Amnesty certificate, an Amnesty Commission official presented her to the community at a meeting and implored the villagers not to reject her for her HIV positive status. The revelation of her HIV-positive status, she further explained, caused people in the community to shun and abuse her and her child. They accused her of bringing the *twoo* ('disease') back from the LRA and wanting to spread it by mixing with them. She thus opted to stay away from the community, and put up her home with her children on a marshy patch that no one wanted at the edge of the village.²¹⁵ By locating her new home on a marsh, this mother also demonstrates the reality of how local ideas of gender mattered in acquiring a productive resource in a patriarchal society. She lives on the marsh because as a single woman without the support of a male guardian she cannot get any other land. She was rejected due to her HIV positive status and could only settle on very marginal land – her agency was extremely limited. As a woman, she could only find and possess land that was not claimed by any lineage to be passed down generations; often land that was deemed to be of no value, and that no one wanted.

By physically removing themselves from locations where they were most likely to interact with those who stigmatise them, women like Akello of Acaba continued to express their struggles to dismantle LRA's control. But by 'staying away' from people in their communities, such women also portrayed a failure of the 'normative strategies' that people like Acen and Apili used to rebuild old relations in family, lineage and community.

²¹⁵ She had a second child – a daughter with a secret lover after wards, and together with her mother, paid a fine of a goat to her patriclan because her secret lover had not paid *luk* to the annoyance of the clan elders. Fining a girl and her family for the collapse of *Luk* is a new phenomenon in Lango and warrants further studies to understand its significance for the existing social institutions.

Passing

The study found that some mothers who returned straight into their original villages with barely visible pregnancies used that as a strategy to bargain for a switch in the status of their children born in the bush with that of *luk*. In some cases members of these women's families encouraged this behaviour. Many lineage leaders too, feigned ignorance of the existence of any former forced wife or a child conceived in the LRA, even when they lived in the same household or village. Respondents stated that former forced wives found it difficult to get new marriage partners in peacetime Lango because they were seen as having been sexually active in the LRA. For a girl to say she has a CBOW was an admission that she could not be trusted by a lover; and risked being seen as a potential murderer. It was a form of impurity comparable to how the LRA themselves saw the Acholi in northern Uganda, as impure. Therefore, a mother of a CBOW who found herself still able to hold onto such information continued to keep it away from the public in order to raise her marriageability. For example, Ajok's ability to conceal her former forced wife status earned her a marriage, while Abang's well-known LRA status could not. Like most former forced wives whose LRA background was known to their new post-LRA lovers, Abang's lover was yet to pay *luk* or marry her. A similar experience was seen with Adong, who had two children with different fathers upon her return from the LRA. But none offered to marry her. Another example was that of Adong of Iceme and her natal family.²¹⁶ Upon her escape from the LRA, she had spent a few weeks at the World Vision in Gulu, where they discovered that she was pregnant. She was transferred to Rachele centre in Lira. After a few weeks, she was handed over to her family in Iceme. Her pregnancy was not yet visible and the family kept it to themselves. When the pregnancy started showing, Adong had already lived and interacted with other people in the village for several months. Even though they knew she was an ex-combatant, they believed that her pregnancy was a result of a recent love affair in the village. Her child was thus perceived as an *atin luk* (although the potential father had not been identified) even after her brother and his new wife adopted the child. Adong's marriage collapsed after two years when he discovered that she was a former forced wife in the LRA. Attempts to hide the status of being a mother

²¹⁶ Interview: Adong, twenty three years old, Omiri village, Iceme sub county, Oyam district, Uganda. 1 August 2013.

to *atin onywalo ilum* were sometimes aimed at benefiting the children themselves. As will be discussed in chapter six, some mothers often fought to prevent their children from accessing information that associated them with the LRA. By doing this, they protected their children from the harms and vulnerabilities associated with being conceived in the LRA.

5.7. Conclusion

Desertion or escape from the LRA and return into Lango was a new journey for former forced wives and their children. Their experiences of stigma and discrimination in post-LRA Lango illuminate their struggles to overcome the effects of the LRA's temporally circumscribed control over their sexuality and reproduction. Through their struggles, they showed how social institutions like lineage, *nyom*, and *luk* – key institutions associated with the control of female sexuality and reproductive outcomes in peacetime Lango – functioned when ex-combatant mothers and their children returned home. With their arrival as mothers with children, they triggered a series of negotiations aimed at re-normalising their status and that of their children.

Following their abduction, these women had been exposed to forced sexuality and forced 'marriages', occasioned by a violent transfer of rights on their sexuality and reproductive abilities from their male guardians (fathers and brothers) to male LRA militants. The women who survived the LRA conflict and returned to their families and villages knew that reintegration would be easier, and support more forthcoming, for them and their children if they renegotiated their status according to ideas of gender and motherhood. Reunification with natal families; denouncing of LRA unions; adoption of children by close relatives; invoking affiliation to natal patriclan; getting into new relationships with the aim of marrying 'properly'; and trying to invoke the concept of *luk* - these were some of the most common strategies that these women used to carve out a viable post-conflict existence for them and their children.

These strategies made sense to many women and their familial and lineage networks. For male elders, the LRA had hijacked control over the wombs of their daughters and

sisters. By forcing these girls and women to become the ‘wives’ of LRA militants, Joseph Kony, his commanders and the Spirit Silindi (which spoke through Kony) had challenged customary principles of marriage, which these male elders in Lango controlled. The claims of Kony and his commanders therefore clashed with the concepts of lineage and marriage in Lango. Lango families and communities did not recognise sexual unions in the LRA as legitimate because they undermined the kinship ideologies which many people in peacetime Lango continued to observe and practice.

By abducting boys and girls, Kony had removed them from Lango kinship structures undermining the prospects of these abductees of one day getting married. Mothers, fathers, brothers, uncles, sisters and lineages were denied their roles (and the symbolic and material returns that come with these roles) when youths in their family get married. In particular, the non-payment of brideprice was a major disruption for Langi kinship institutions. It challenged the Lango concept of marriage and the opportunities that marriage made available to a broad range of social actors (classificatory ‘mothers’, ‘fathers’, ‘brothers’, etc). The negotiations that followed the reintegration of these women into their families and villages had major consequences for the children born to these women and fathered by combatants in the LRA.

As their mothers struggled to re-negotiate their positions and disentangle themselves from the claims of Joseph Kony and his commanders, children too, faced specific challenges. They had been conceived and born in the LRA – but now they were extracted from this initial setting and integrated in a new context where they had to acquire a new status and establish new relationships. Chapter six explores some of the challenges and the struggles of these children to come to terms with the realities of their new environment.

CHAPTER 6. CHILDREN BORN OF WAR IN LANGO

6.1. Introduction

The number of children conceived in the LRA is unknown. So is the number of children who left the LRA with their mothers and returned to their villages in Lango at the time of this study. Objective research difficulties and the sensitivity of the topic only made it possible to focus on a small sample of CBOW. Due to the smallness of the sample, this thesis can only advance some preliminary hypotheses about how CBOW perceived and negotiated their circumstances. Findings suggest that each of them had different experiences and approaches. The experiences of girls were also somewhat different from the experiences of boys. All of the children in this study had their own individual strategies that they tried to unfold in their attempt to influence the world around them, a world which they had very little power to shape and control. Because of their young age, their ability to influence the choices made by adults was extremely limited. But if their relative age-related powerlessness was a condition that they shared with all other children, CBOW faced additional limitations inherent in their stigmatised identities. They were not only powerless as children; they were particularly marginalised because of the circumstances of their conception and birth, and how these circumstances were perceived in Lango society. In this coercive (patriarchal) environment, they too – like their mothers (see p. 178/9) – had to maneuver space in a cultural environment where newborns could only turn into lineage members and benefit from familial and lineage support and protection upon fulfillment of certain conditions and rules. Already their mothers' coerced actions (discussed in chapter 5.0) determined their welfare to a large extent, leaving very little room for even older children to make any independent choices in their integration.

This chapter brings into perspective the experiences these children faced upon returning to their mothers' families and communities. By exploring the experiences of these children within the local gender and identity framework this chapter demonstrates what it means to be a CBOW in Lango. It specifically explores how they were perceived; how these perceptions affected their lived experiences and how they negotiated these

realities – often influenced by age and kinship factors. Many times, they acted in concert with others, and at other times on their own.

6.2. Memories of lived realities in the LRA

Unlike former forced wives and other former LRA recruits, *otino onywalo ilum* who participated in this study could not explicitly recall their experiences in the LRA. This was partly because the children were either too young when they left the LRA or had been born outside of LRA-controlled contexts. In the latter case, the mothers had been pregnant when they left the insurgent group. The study did not interact directly with children who had attended the *gang kwan* (school) in the LRA: those who participated in this study were too young to have attended the *gang kwan*, and no former *gang kwan* pupil could be contacted during field-based research (see chapter four).

The study found that it was public knowledge that eight of the ten children that participated in the study were known to be *otino onywalo ilum*. Those in the know included the children's peers in the neighbourhood and in school. Others were people in the neighbourhood, local council officers and some lineage leaders. Besides members of their host families, the children also frequently interacted with these individuals. Findings suggest that these interactions significantly influenced the way these children perceived themselves and therefore their lived realities in Lango.

Respondents said that in cases where a combatant returned when people had already left the IDP camps for their old villages, and she was pregnant or had a child with her, the local people automatically knew her child was fathered in the bush. In Oyam, a Local Councillor for example said of a mother, 'when Akao returned with a child, we automatically knew he was *atin onywalo ilum* since she had left home without a child and was still very young. But later on her mother also made known to me that Akao's child had no father because she came back with him from the bush'.²¹⁷

²¹⁷ Interview: Geoffrey, forty six years old, LCI Chairman, Bar Obia village, Acaba, Oyam, Uganda. 30 July 2013.

In some cases, people in the community were aware of the existence of *otino onywalo ilum* but could not identify specific homes or children as one teacher at Wigweng Primary School in Oyam explained:

Honestly... it is hard to know because first of all I am a new teacher here. Secondly these parents never open up to teachers about their children. But I think there must be some few in this school because this area was also affected by LRA activities, and I have heard that one former student from (the nearby) Acaba technical school returned with a child born in the bush.²¹⁸

Interviews with some children, their mothers and guardians also suggested that there was a deliberate attempt by mothers and some guardians to shield their children from knowing about their links with the LRA. This was common among women who had returned pregnant or with children too young to recall having been in the LRA. None of them suggested that they had at any one time told their children the story of their birth. Some of them said the children were too young to know about such things, and that they were considering letting them know when they became adults.

Other mothers went to great length trying to safeguard the information from their children. For example, Acen said her neighbours in Gulu had told her two sons she had in the LRA that they were *otino onywalo ilum* (children born in the bush).²¹⁹ But when her sons asked her about it, she had denied, calling her neighbours liars. Instead she had explained to her sons that they had been born in Lira hospital. The boys knew about this hospital because they had often passed by it on their way to Acen's natal home in Agweng (formerly Ogur). They were thus easily convinced; as the elder boy said in Acholi, the language spoken by his father, '*mama na owaci ginywala ki i dakatal Lira* (my mother said I was born in Lira hospital)'.²²⁰

²¹⁸ Interview: Ocen Moses, thirty nine years old, Class teacher at Wigweng primary School, Acaba sub county, Oyam, Uganda. 30 July 2013.

²¹⁹ Interview: Acen, thirty years old, Orubo village, Layibi Division, Gulu town, Uganda. 26 July 2013.

²²⁰ Interview: Ouma, thirteen years old, CBOW, Orubo village, Layibi Division, Gulu, Uganda. 26 July 2013.

By refusing to acknowledge the connection between the LRA and their children, mothers like Acen tried to avoid re-evoking the memory of a painful experience. They tried to sever ties with the LRA and what it had entailed for them. But as will be discussed later in section 6.5 below, mothers like Acen also sought to distance their children from the LRA in order to manage the stigma that people were directing at their children for being *otino onywalo ilum*. For Acen's sons, their little fights and quarrels with peers were judged as incumbent on LRA misdeeds because they were children born in the LRA. Here, Acen refused to accept the truth to her sons as a strategy to protect the boys because the truth would hurt them. She explained that no one wanted to be associated with the LRA. She further said when her sons became adults and could handle the stigma of being a CBOW; she would tell them the truth. Mothers like Acen, thus, showed that they were aware of the risk such information could have on the psychosocial wellbeing of their children. Moreover, by reinventing a 'normal' past for their children, they endorsed normative concepts of marriage, motherhood, and childhood in Lango, and attempted to re-socialise their offspring in peacetime institutions.

Findings suggest that the adults' behaviour influenced the behaviours of these children. Like their mothers, they were not merely passive victims, but active agents in shaping their relationships with others. They participated in negotiating their integration in their families and communities. In their attempt to resist the discrimination that was targeted at CBOW, they behaved as expected of children born out of wedlock, and acted in accordance with *luk* rules. In so doing, they contributed to reproducing Lango kinship norms. However, local people did not refer to CBOW as 'children born outside wedlock' (*otino luk*), but as 'children born in the bush' (*otino onywalo ilum*). Moreover, this study did not come across any CBOW for whom *luk* was actually paid. Hence, local communities resisted the women veterans and CBOW's attempts to re-define their identities and pass as *luk* cases: when they were aware of their past and could recognize them as returnees from LRA camps, their relatives and neighbours treated them as persons with an LRA background – and adopted an altogether more marginalising behaviour toward them than they would have in *luk* cases.

6.3. Residence of *otino onywalo ilum*

This study found that the residence of all of the ten children studied was influenced directly and indirectly by Lango rules of residence for mothers and children. Records at Rachele and oral interviews showed that they all were settled with their mothers' natal families upon leaving Rachele. But at the time of the study six of the children were no longer living with their maternal grandparents. One CBOW girl had been given away as a baby-minder to another family. Another one, also a girl, had moved in with her mother and stepfather into their new home. Two boys had joined their biological parents when the couple was reunited and married upon their return from the LRA camps. Another boy had left with his mother and a sister born of *luk* to live on their own on the marshy edge of his mother's natal village. Yet another boy was in the care of his mother's married brother who still lived in the same compound as his parents (the CBOW's maternal grandparents). As will be further discussed in subsequent sections, each of these cases was influenced by local ideas of motherhood, gender, generation and kinship.

But the LRA war being a recent one meant that most *otino onywalo ilum* were too young to provide any meaningful responses as to why they lived with their maternal grandparents rather than their mothers or fathers. Still, conversation with some older children (eleven - thirteen years) suggested they lived with their mothers' natal family because their mothers had married and could not take them along, since they were not children of their mothers' new partners. For example, Ayo Gaby, the thirteen-year-old son of ex-combatant mother Abang, when asked why they did not live with their mother and her new lover in his home answered:

Mama (mother) is not staying at home. She stays with her husband... We cannot stay with a person who is not our father, ...but we always go to see her because she is even near home. But we prefer to live with our *aunt*y (mother's sister at his maternal grandparents' home). Where *mama* is, is not our home.²²¹

²²¹ Interview: Ayo Gaby, thirteen years old, son of Abang, Lira Integrated Boarding and Primary School, Kakoge A, Ojwina Division, Lira Municipality, Uganda. 26 July 2013.

Abang's younger son, the eleven-year-old Ogwal M., interviewed separately and at different times, said:

...*Aunty* is alone at home with Whitney (the aunt's *luk* daughter). *Mama* stays with her husband. For us, we stay with *Aunty*. But *Mama* sometimes comes home. We also go there when *Aunty* sends us with a message, but we come back... For me, I will stay with *Aunty*. That is where home is and I am not going anywhere. But I see her (his mother) always and even her children come home to visit.²²²

Unlike their half sisters who were fathered by their mother's new partner and lived with both parents, the boys understood that they could not make any claims on their stepfather. He, they explained, was not their father. Although they were not able to explain why having a different father restricted them from residing with their mother, the boys' explanation showed that they were to some extent aware of the prevailing practices associated with children's residence in Lango society.

The reasons Abang's sons gave for living with their mother's natal family rather than with their mother and her new partner suggested that CBOW status did not interfere with Lango rules concerning the residence of children of unmarried women, when these women later marry. In particular, Abang's sons behaved as children born of *luk* whose fathers had not yet paid the *luk* – in these circumstances they would be considered members of their mother's patriclan. With their responses, older *otino onywalo ilum* like Abang's children showed that they were aware of the existence of customary barriers that prevented them from joining their mothers in their new partners' homes. They understood that they could not make claims on people who were not seen as eligible for such claims according to local kinship rules. In the same way, those people could also not make claims on these children; not as minors and, later, not as adults (see chapter three).

²²² Interview: Ogwal M., eleven years old, son of Abang, Lira Integrated Boarding and Primary School, Kakoge A, Ojwina Division, Lira Municipality, Uganda. 26 July 2013.

The importance of reciprocal claims in the integration of CBOW in Lango was also demonstrated between former forced wives and their siblings. Here, mothers used their marriage prospects to negotiate residence for their children within their natal families, usually the mothers' brothers. For example, four-year-old Bua, the son of ex-combatant mother Adong of Iceme sub county in Oyam, lived with his mother's brother and his wife. The couple shared a homestead with Adong's parents and other children. This new role as the guardian of the child was in line with the local customary rule of residence. This uncle, and not Bua's maternal grandparents, had direct parental responsibility over him because the uncle had used Adong's bridewealth from her post-LRA marriage to fund the brideprice that he had to pay for his own marriage.²²³ From the perspectives of the suitor and his people and Adong's family and the elders of her patrilineage, her marriageability increased because they all did not expect a new wife to move into her husband's home with her CBOW. The child was thus expected to live with his maternal uncle and perceive himself as a member of the broader household. The child was being raised to appreciate this transformation. He referred to his mother Adong by her name and to his maternal grandparents, like everybody else did - as *mama* (mother) and *baba* (father). But as discussed in chapter three, there was still a risk of the boy being seen as a burden once he attained adulthood as he might expect to inherit family land where he would settle down with his own wife. He might also expect to be supported in collecting brideprice to marry his wife. By contrast, female CBOW were seen as potential sources of bridewealth on their marriage, and for this reason the families in which they integrated were more reluctant to let them go. To underline the importance of their decisions, respondents also cited the fear of having to pay *culo kwor* (blood payment), often in the form of cattle, in the event that the child died in a home he or she was not entitled to live in.

Payment for having raised a child of another patriclan (Cul pit)

But this study also found an exceptional case of former forced wife Ajok's nine-year-old child, Aloyo, who had no one remaining in her maternal grandparents' homestead

²²³ Interview: Bua Nelson, twenty years old, caretaker of the child Bua, Obutu village, Iceme sub county, Oyam district, Uganda. 25 July 2013.

and moved in to live with her mother and stepfather. The exceptionality of this case is provided for in local lineage norms under the rubric of *cul pit* (compensation for the upbringing of a child not belonging to that lineage). The elders of the mother's lineage would make a substantial contribution to the costs involved in raising the child and would be asked to authorise any future marriage - for which they would receive bridewealth. Arrangements are also made to guarantee that the stepfather's lineage would not have to pay blood money (*culo kwor*) in the event of the child's death. In the case of the child Aloyo, a short stay had been procured with her mother's sister who was herself also married elsewhere.²²⁴ Ajok explained that her daughter could not cope in this aunt's home, an issue that was put before a meeting after the funeral rites for the grandmother in 2012. Such a meeting, often convened by the area *rwot* (chief) of the dead person's patriclan, is a common practice following a death in Lango. The family and lineage use this meeting to address matters that may arise – including that of *culo kwor* where applicable, claims and counter-claims of debts the dead lives behind, and the wellbeing of dependants – including inheritance. In the case of this grandmother, the *rwot atekere* of the Bako Ogwetiang in Ogur assembled the surviving members of the family and their extended relations, which included Ajok's husband and his father. Ajok explained that all of the dependents of her deceased mothers were then allocated to her (Ajok's) siblings. The child Aloyo was given to Ajok's eldest brother. But this brother had many other children to look after, and so decided to send the child to live with his older sister.

According to Ajok, her daughter failed to cope in this second household and relocated on her own to Ajok's marital home. This forced her husband and his family to consult with Ajok's elder brother in whose hands Aloyo had been entrusted as guardian. Both Ajok's husband and his father on the one hand, and Ajok's brother and his family on the other agreed that the child could continue living with her mother. Here, the child's failure to cope in her aunt's home can be seen as a negotiation tool which she cast upon her maternal uncles, her mother and her step family to circumvent the residence rule. Her behaviour forced a re-negotiation, which saw her re-joining her mother. The

²²⁴ Interview: Ajok, twenty five years old, Amia Abil, Agweng sub county (formerly part of Ogur), Lira district. 10 July 2013.

renegotiation enabled the two clans to invoke conditionality within the broader Lango jurial rule in order to tame issues of incompatibility. A dialogue between the Bako Ogwetiang clan of her mother's brothers (to whom the child belonged) and the Omolatar clan of her stepfather caused them to redraw temporary boundaries of association in a trade-off that allowed the child to live with her mother and stepfather in what may be termed a win-win situation for either clans.

The child's stay was conditional upon demands from either side. Whereas her lineage remained the same, her stepfamily was expected to consult the maternal uncles whenever she fell sick or in the event a decision about her future was to be made. As explained by Ajok's father-in-law, in the event that any misfortune such as death occurred to the child when the stepfamily had informed the uncle, the stepfamily and their clan of Omolatar would not be penalised to pay *kwor* (blood feud). The stepfather and step grandfather further explained that as members of the Omolatar they were absolved from such a liability on condition that the Ogwetiang would be informed on the welfare of the child. For example, when asked if they would not be in trouble with the Ogwetiang if the child died, the step grandfather stated:

What you are talking about has ever happened. The child fell sick and there was need to get medical help, so I sent Denis (the step father) to the mother's (natal) home to talk to the child's uncles. They responded positively and we joined hands to take the child to hospital...but in case of a severe case, we always communicate early to avoid misunderstanding and bad relationships between us.²²⁵

The other important decision concerning the girl would come at the time when a man asked for her hand in marriage. Both clans knew that when that time came, her clan would be the one in charge of all processes as required by custom. Thus, the Omolatar stepfamily would merely perform a messenger role between the prospective marrying clan and the child's clan. On the other hand, the Omolatar expected their contribution as caretaker to be reciprocated by the Ogwetiang. This would come in the form of *cul pit*, compensation to the host family for raising the child. The step grandfather expected this

²²⁵ Interview: Owani Peter, fifty two years old, Amia Abil, Agweng sub county, Lira, Uganda. 12 July 2013.

to be levied upon the bridewealth her marriage would bring in to the Ogwetiang kraal.²²⁶ It was not clear how many herds they expected, perhaps just as well because one could not tell what the size of the girl's bridewealth could be once she married. But a clan leader of Ocukuro Ogora who stated that it was a widespread practice said most families automatically paid *cul pit* of a heifer. But again, this underlines a gendered tendency to the negotiation. It is possible that a boy would find it rather hard to impress upon the two sides the need for a shared space with the mother (or in another clan) were his patriclan unwilling or unable to pay for compensation since he was more of a liability to his clan. Instead of fetching bridewealth like a girl would, a boy instead required brideprice to pay for a wife and a piece of land to settle down on. For such a child, an option within the framework of the rule of residence, that is, the right to live in a particular home or lineage, ceases to make sense as will be seen in the sub-section below on disputable cases.

Visits

The study found that children who lived apart from their mothers due to customary barriers were paying routine trips and sleepovers at their mothers' new homes. Although host families still made sure that visitors were kept safe to avoid *culo kwor*, paying short visits was not frowned upon because it did not threaten any of the other descent rules. A host home was not expected to consider visiting children as part of its patriclan and cling to them for their bridewealth. Similarly, a host home was not threatened that a visiting male child could claim its lands. For example, Abang's sons, Ogwal and Ayo, were happy to occasionally visit their mother and the children from her new relationship.^{227,228}

²²⁶ Interview: Owani Peter, fifty two years old, Amia Abil village, Agweng sub county, Lira district, Uganda. 12 July 2013.

²²⁷ Interview: Abang, thirty four years old, Imato Ikwoto village, Ogur sub county, Lira district. Uganda. 23 July 2013.

²²⁸ Interview: Ogwal M., eleven years old, Lira Integrated Boarding and Primary School, Kakoge A, Ojwina Division, Lira Municipality, Uganda. 26 July 2013.

Through visitor status, the boys adhered to old Lango lineage customs, but they also demonstrated an alternative route, which a child could use to remain in a relationship with its mother. A visitor status in Lango was always above most restrictive observances of the host home. As a visitor, a daughter or a son was most likely absolved from most domestic duties such as fetching firewood and thus less likely to cross the incompatibility boundary. A visitor was also not linked to any long term gendered interest in the group such as acquisition of land, were he to grow into adulthood and marry. This therefore was a simpler means by which any child living apart from its mother could always use to get her acquaintance throughout its life. Whereas this outlook portrays an unsettled pattern as a continuum in the welfare of a child of *luk*, it serves to continually define the lineage of a child. But, as will be discussed in section 6.5 below, these boys still complained of stigma from members of the homes they visited. They, for example stated that their mother's 'co-wife' constantly abused them – calling them rebels and 'Kony'. Their mother's sister further explained that, for that matter, she rarely encouraged them to visit. Instead, she said, their mother and her three daughters often paid the boys a visit.

Disputable cases

There are cases in which a CBOW cannot be placed in the care of either relatives from his or her maternal patrilineage or his mother and her new partner. These children may be sent off to work as domestic helpers and caregivers in the families of distant acquaintances and strangers. These realities happen to children irrespective of their birth status, and in all societies faced with war and extreme poverty. For example, there were also cases where a family (the men), influenced by other factors, simply refused to acknowledge a *luk* child as one of them such that the child was rendered 'status-less' (in the sense of perception of descent). Some of these children may end up living on their own – a situation that also explains the massive number of children on the streets in post-war urban Lango.²²⁹ In the process, rules of *cul pit*, *culo kwor*, taboos, residence, bridewealth and brideprice are undermined or disregarded. In most cases, the protection

²²⁹ Archival files at the Social protection department of FAPAD, 2005-2013.

and care for children that underscore these rules and their practices may also not be guaranteed.

For example, Tino who had an eight-year-old daughter from the LRA complained that her father had been extremely abusive to her daughter. She explained that he was always angry with the child, often referring to her as the child of a rebel. Tino explained that her father's constant abuse caused her to send the child away at the age of five years, to work as a baby-minder in Mubende district in western Uganda.²³⁰ This situation is different from that of Ajok's daughter in two ways. First, the mother lives with her paternal family, which in principle was also her daughter's patriclan and the legal place for her to live and grow up in. But this prospect is cancelled by the inability of the child's grandfather to accept her. Second, this option ignores *cul pit* and other factors of incompatibility. By doing so it overrules any prospects for inter-clan processes. Instead Tino, on her own, introduces a bilateral arrangement with her married sister's family. She thus replaces a group (collective clan) process with an individual process. Once this takes place, the descent is no longer an element driving the decision making process.

Tino's offering her daughter as a child-minder introduces a transactional element into the bargain, which can only take place at individual level. She replaces the cross-clan dialogue representing the collective (that was demonstrated between Ajok's husband's lineage and her paternal lineage when her daughter was accepted to live with her), with a private dialogue. She replaces the obligations that are expected of a child's patriclan in a *cul pit* with the labour that the child will be undertaking in that household as a baby-minder. Thus, it is now left to Tino's daughter to validate the negotiation, which she does by being a child minder, simplifying the reciprocal win-win conditions that accompanied that of Ajok's daughter. In return Tino's daughter would be given board and food. This of course comes at a cost as such children, already employed full time, may not be enrolled in school. Tino's eight-year-old daughter, for example, having been in 'employment' for four years and with the baby she looked after already grown up, should have enrolled in school a couple of years back according to Uganda's education

²³⁰ Interview: Tino, twenty five years old, Acimi village, Myene sub county, Oyam district. 16 July 2013.

policy.²³¹ She however continued as a domestic worker in her aunt's home in Mubende. Boys may also qualify to be in this bracket of child minding equivalent such as cattle herding and tilling of farms.

6.4. Gender

Female children were perceived and treated rather differently from male children. These differences of treatment meant that different children had different opportunities. While some felt welcomed, others encountered varying degrees of stigma within their host families and communities. Some children were easily accepted because they happened to be either boys or girls. Boys, in particular, found it easier to assimilate in families that had no male children and harder to join families which already had sons. Respondents largely linked this to security of land and livestock. For example, Abang's sons were accepted unconditionally into their mother's natal family because Abang's parents had only daughters. During fieldwork, Abang's elder sister who had returned home after their mother's death to take care of the boys and of family property complained that for a long time they had suffered threats from land grabbers in the neighbourhood, many of who were members of their patrilines. Abang's sister had thus taken her complaint to the local council court so as to extract a restraining order to protect the land. She hoped that she would be able to keep the land grabbers at bay until the boys attained adulthood so that as men, they could protect the lineage's land. She also attempted to farm most of the land because, as she explained, leaving it fallow would encourage the grabbing. With the fraying of authority within kinship structures in post-war Lango, many families complained of being victims of land grabbing – sometimes by people in the same patriline.

The two sisters (Abang and her elder sister) explained that when the boys arrived from the LRA, their dying mother had forbidden Abang to look for the paternal relatives of the boys. Abang explained that other ex-combatants, who left the LRA after her escape,

²³¹ Right to Education Project, 2012. Right to Education Country Factsheets, Uganda. *Right to Education Project*. Available from: http://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/RTE_Country_Factsheet_Uganda_2012.pdf. [Accessed 4 December 2015].

had told her that the boys' father had been killed in battle. She said that before her escape with the boys, their biological father had explained to her how to find his people in a village in Pader district. But when she made an attempt to search for them, she explained, her mother, a widow, had stopped her; forbidding her from ever talking about him or letting his relatives know about the boys. Instead, the widow had adopted the boys and decided that they should inherit her late husband's estate, so his lineage would not die out. She (the widow) had then teamed up with a clan leader to re-name the boys; one was named after her husband and the other one after the clan leader - a close agnate of the widow's deceased husband. Additional discussion about changing names concerns the management of stigma and is in section 6.6 below.

The boys used only these new names in all settings: at home, with their friends, and at school. Abang's widowed mother, Abang, and her sons, worked in concert to accomplish their different aims. The new names were part of their strategies – for the widowed grandmother renaming the boys made it easier to get heirs for her deceased husband and safeguard the land; for Abang, the renaming process made available a home where her sons could grow up enabling her to move in with a new lover; and the new names gave the boys a home that they could call their own. They therefore repositioned themselves in the family, lineage and community.

Here, the widow and her daughters tried to turn to their advantage local gender ideologies – and their implications for inheritance norms - to protect themselves and the boys. The arrival of the boys gave the widow an opportunity to continue her late husband's *dogola* (lineage) and reposition it in the clan and community. But it also gave the boys the option to be fully integrated in a Lango lineage and own land, and access other family resources.

This widow's strategy is illustrative of how women facing threats of losing access to their late husband's resources (such as his lineage's land) may protect themselves. Here, she used her status as a mother, a widow, and a grandmother to 'engage with the heart of patriarchal ideology to convert (her grandsons) into immediate sources of

instrumental power' so her late husband could posthumously acquire heirs, and so that she and her daughters could safeguard their land (Stephens, 2013: 12).

By responding to the new names recognised in their natal mother's lineage they could call themselves rightful 'sons' of their mother Abang's patriclan. As heirs to a dead man's estate, they thus helped to re-start a narrative of strength, recognition and respect for the family in the lineage, clan and community. This form of familial acceptance enjoyed by Abang's sons was also observed for children in other female-headed homes.

Homes that were headed by women were generally more welcoming than those headed by men. In some cases mothers opted for being on their own so they could be heads of their households and make decisions affecting their children. Thus, Akello of Acaba in Oyam district migrated to the edge of the village on a marsh to set up a home and be in a position to make choices for herself and her children. Her five-year-old son, Olot also explained that he loved his maternal grandmother – who also lived on her own - because whenever he visited her, she took good care of him; bathing him every evening and placing him by the fireplace for warmth. Outside the category of CBOW, the study also found similar practices in the rest of Lango. Childless elderly couples adopted children of their unmarried sisters (and in some cases sonless couples adopted children of their unmarried daughters), gave them their names, and made them heirs to their estates. This was seen in the case of Alba Alango (An Acholi woman) and her Lango husband, Mr. Alango.²³² They both lived on land and property they had inherited from Mr. Alango's maternal grandparents. Mr. Alango had been adopted in his childhood by this couple when they found they could not have their own offspring.

But most male-headed households, which already had male children, behaved rather differently toward returning male CBOW. People in those homes stated that they felt the children were more burdensome if they were boys. Recent studies have attributed such a perception to tensions associated with control of productive and reproductive assets, in particular land and livestock 'owned' by the family. The studies showed that receptor families rejected male children conceived in the LRA because they suspected

²³² Interview: Alba Alango, forty four years old, Te Obia Parish, Lira Municipal, Uganda. 3 February 2014.

that the children would claim part of their land as adults (Opiyo, 2015). Whereas this casts land and possibly livestock as factors of exclusion, it is not exclusive to children conceived in the LRA. At the time of the study, there were numerous land conflicts that pitted brother against brother and father against son. Land shortage was a general problem that affected all families. It was not only *otino onywalo ilum* who were caught in land issues, rather they became part of these struggles when they returned to Lango with their mothers.

6.5. Stigma and discrimination

Many children faced hardship in the homes and communities they lived in. Throughout the field study, respondents directly and indirectly indicated that *otino onywalo ilum* suffered varying levels of stigma both within the host family and in the community, and that this significantly affected the welfare of the children. The children themselves pointed out some of these sufferings and how they were trying to overcome them. They unfolded strategies to make life more liveable. Some identified with their absent LRA biological fathers as a resistance strategy to cope with the stigma that was directed at them. For example, five-year-old Olot whose mother had given birth to him shortly after returning from the LRA and was constantly called a child of Joseph Kony (although his father was another member of the LRA) explained that he wanted to become a soldier like his father. Although Olot's young age curtailed any further probe into the possibility that he was acting strategically, his response is suggestive of seeing 'soldiering' as a source of strength, a weapon-of-the-weak, so people could leave him alone. For, it was common knowledge in his household and neighbourhood that Kony and his LRA were much feared for the atrocities they committed.

With the exception of Adong's child Bua, who was seen as a *luk* child, people in the neighbourhood of all the other children in the study regularly told the children about their LRA links. For example, people in Abang's village complained about Abang's sons being conceived in the LRA, by referring to them with stigmatising statements like 'rebel', 'kony' (in reference to Joseph Kony) and 'LRA'. In addition, their deceased grandmother had organised a Christian prayer to welcome the boys and their mother

back from the LRA in 2007. Most people in the village attended this prayer. Their LRA background was therefore no secret in the village. They complained that individuals in the village, including their mother's co-wife, referred to them as 'kony' and 'rebels', time and again.

But findings also suggest that mothers and relatives also faced stigma from other members of their neighbourhoods. In the case of Abang's sons, their female relatives (mother's sister and her daughter) shared some of the stigma. By being related to them and living with them under one roof, these relatives were seen as 'contaminated' with the stigma carried by these children. For example, neighbours who were in conflict with the family over land accused the entire family of being in possession of a gun from the LRA. By accusing them, these neighbours portrayed the entire family as dangerous to the neighbourhood. These perceptions posed a threat to Abang's family's security, introducing a risk of losing their land if enraged neighbours decided to have them evicted from the neighbourhood. But as adult family members became the targets of stigma, they felt discriminated against and understood the circumstances of CBOW. This made them develop a stronger feeling of empathy and solidarity toward the CBOW. As in the case of Abang's sister who became an ally and protector for her family's CBOW, some adults related to CBOW believed that erasing the CBOW's stigma would improve their own situation, too.

But not all CBOW in Lango lived in families that had sympathetic 'wise' persons (Goffman, 1990). Because stigma against one family member could 'contaminate' those related or close to him/her, some mothers tried to distance themselves from CBOW and start a new life. These 'distanced' CBOW often ended up living separately from their mothers. For example, Tino's daughter in Myene sub county of Oyam district²³³ faced stigma from her maternal grandfather, forcing her mother to send her away to work as a child-servant or domestic helper at five years of age.

As a result of stigma *otino onywalo ilum* are left out from benefiting from opportunities on an equal chance with those who are not identified as CBOW. Older children who,

²³³ Interview: Tino, twenty five years old, Acimi village, Myene sub county, Oyam district. 16 July 2013.

like Abang's sons, were aware of their LRA background understood that this was at the origin of the public stigma directed against them. Some attempt to unfold strategies to reposition themselves more favourably, including by adhering to rules of residence and not exposing themselves as *otino onywalo ilum* when they move to new areas as further discussed below.

But stigma is often internalised by affected individuals. *Otino onywalo ilum* who felt stigmatised often adopted a behaviour that confirmed stereotypes about CBOW. This, the children did through talk and gestures. Talk is often seen as bearing a child's emotions and inner self and thus, assumed to reveal matters in which a child has an experiential stake and therefore right over its expression (Perakyla, 1995). On the other hand, gestures and other observable actions and reactions of a child provide a means of understanding a child (e.g. Goldin-Meadow, Wein & Chang, 1992). For example, a child, especially the older ones who were facing severe stigma from the neighbourhood, could withdraw from his or her normal activities and behave differently each time he or she was reminded of his or her stigma. This was the case with Gaby, who made it obvious he was reacting to his stigma by staying indoors and not talking to anyone whenever a neighbour called him a 'rebel' or 'kony'. Such a withdrawal can be considered as a form of 'defensive cowering' (Goffman, 1990), fear or even embarrassment over perceived inadequacy, which also shows the existence of self-stigma among *otino onywalo ilum* in Lango.

Exploring if *otino onywalo ilum* like Gaby were having self-stigma necessitated employing a combination of research techniques. The researcher often had to pay attention to the subtle hints dropped during conversations with them. For example, Gaby stated, '...this school is okay and the teachers and children are also okay...' ²³⁴

This reading 'in between' meanings was possible because the researcher's conversation with other contacts (aunt and mother) in that 'other' location had already taken place. His aunt and mother had complained that the boys faced hostile peers, neighbours and a

²³⁴ Interview: Ayo Gaby thirteen years old, CBOW, Lira Integrated Primary School, Lira, Uganda. 26 July 2013.

stepmother who often rebuked them for being *otino onywalo ilum*. These people, they complained, often referred to the boys as *adui* (rebel), ‘kony’, ‘LRA’. Gaby’s statement - hesitatingly brought out - validates his aunt and mother’s adult views that they were happy in school.

His younger brother Michael also represented his experience at school as positive by contrast to his situation at home:

...My school is okay and I like it very much... I also have very many friends with whom I always sing every Saturday and Sunday in the choir...but I don’t have friends at home because at home, the other children fight us and this is why Auntie [mother’s sister] wants us to always play only from home during holidays...²³⁵

Michael’s comments allow us to compare the situation in the two locations (home and school). His talks of fights and the attempts of their aunt to protect them by restricting their movement suggest the existence of stigma in their family neighbourhood. As will be further discussed in section 6.6 below, restriction of movement while at home and keeping the information about their experiences in the LRA secret (at school) in new locations are some of the ways that stigmatised *otino onywalo ilum* and their families may invoke for protection. Gaby for example successfully keeps out any mention of the LRA, ‘my father is not there in Ogur, but he is somewhere that you don’t know about...it’s far. It’s mother who brought us when we were still young. So I cannot remember the place, but he is still there...’²³⁶ When asked if he thought his father could one day come to see him, Gaby cautiously said, ‘I don’t know because he does not know home. But when I grow up I will find him’.

In addition to demonstrating the efforts some children may make to distance themselves from stigmatizing information or situation, Gaby’s statement also suggests a yearning for his father. Here, Gaby’s adult goal of ‘finding his father’ indicated his longing for his father. But it also showed how narrow his options as a child were because the adults

²³⁵ Interview: Ogwal M., eleven years old, Lira Integrated Boarding and Primary School, Kakoge A, Ojwina Division, Lira Municipality, Uganda. 26 July 2013.

²³⁶ Interview: Ayo Gaby thirteen years old, CBOW, Lira Integrated Primary School, Lira, Uganda. 26 July 2013.

in his life defined his choices. While some children expressed the desire to explore certain options that they thought could give them a better life, adults often curtailed those options, forcing some children to choose to wait until they attained independence that comes with adulthood.

Unlike the boys however, some children in the study did not know their birth history. For example, the mother of Aloyo, a nine-year-old girl in Ogur sub county and her stepfather had successfully kept the girl's birth history a secret from her and the neighbourhood.²³⁷ When mothers and members of their families prevent their children and the public from accessing the stigmatising information, they form a 'protective capsule' (Goffman, 1990: 46) – protecting the child from stigma.

Other children though have had to face the stigmatising public as attempts by people in their families to act as a 'protective capsule' collapsed. The example of Acen's sons mentioned in section 6.2 above suggests that their neighbourhood was a mixed one; populated with both new and some few old (LRA) acquaintances. Thus, the possibility of re-inventing a protective capsule in the new location was weakened. The boys thus continued experiencing stigma. From these lived experiences, claims of stigma on account of being a child of an LRA combatant are made. Together with their mothers and the sympathetic other, such as Civil Society groups, *otino onywalo ilum* re-affirm their public status as stigmatised persons.

But why would children such as Abang's sons who were duly accepted by people in their mothers' natal families continue experiencing public stigma? This study suggests that adoption into their mothers' patrilines were effective strategies that helped CBOW to restore their 'spoiled identities'. This did not necessarily erase the stigma of having been conceived/born in the LRA, but gave them a new acceptable social status within their societies. A comparison can be made with a child of *luk*, who even after his or her father pays the *luk* fine continue to be referred to as *atin luk* for the rest of his or her life.

²³⁷ See Interview: Ajok, twenty five years old, Amia Abil village, Agweng sub county, Lira district. 10 July 2013.

This demonstrates the importance of muting the status of *otino onywalo ilum* (born in the bush) from the wider public.

Managing stigma and 'discrimination'

Some children found life more bearable when they moved to places where their LRA links were not known. By doing this, they escaped public stigma as long as their contacts remained ignorant of their birth status. An example was seen with children who went to boarding schools outside of their community. Abang's sons were some of those. The boys were happy at school as opposed to when they were at home in Ogur, where they had to confront stigma from peers and adults on account of being *otino onywalo ilum*. At school, they were not stigmatised because the students and teachers were not aware of their LRA background.

Their alternating of residence between their rural based home in Ogur sub county and the boarding school, some forty kilometres away, demonstrates the role information plays in the management of stigma for CBOW in Lango. While at home during school holidays, they were exposed to stigma from neighbours and their mother's 'co-wife' because their birth background was known and applied during their everyday interactions in the community. But during school time, their discredited status did not affect them because the school community was not aware that they were *otino onywalo ilum*. Here, they took advantage of change of location to live their everyday life by passing as ordinary children in mainstream society, free of stigma.

Goffman (1990: 40) stated that stigmatised individuals (and their associates) often control the stigmatising information from being accessed by the public, so that they pass as acceptable within the locality. But, he argued, this is only possible for as long as the discreditable information is withheld from the public. Passing was therefore a common strategy among *otino onywalo ilum*. Stigmatised CBOW in this study used at least two strategies to pass. First, some like Adong's son were seen as *otin luk*, others like Abang's sons rotated between home (where their CBOW status was well known in the village) and a boarding school in Lira town (where no one, except the boys, were aware

of their CBOW status). Here, this thesis also considers the muting of CBOW status in a boarding school as irrelevant. No one in school was interested in a mother's sexuality and reproductive outcome, because it was never a criterion for joining the school community in the first place.

Stigma and renaming 'otino onywalo ilum'

Other than be considered simply as a sign of acceptance into the family (lineage),²³⁸ especially when the names are given by the mothers' relatives, the changing of name can be seen as an identity camouflage for stigma. Goffman recognises name changing as a sign of acknowledgement of a defect in a previous social world (Goffman, 1990: 76-77). Persons with a perceived defect may therefore try to invoke name change to prevent their new acquaintances in the new location from identifying them with the defect. Apio (2007: 101), in particular, stated that naming practices within the LRA affected their CBOW's identity, sense of self and ability to integrate. Out of the sixty nine babies she sampled in her study of children born of the LRA, forty nine had names that evoked the plight of their mothers. Children were for example named Anenocan (I have suffered), Odokorac (things have gone bad), Komakech (I am unfortunate) and Lubanga Kene (only God knows). At the reception centres – in particular World Vision and GUSCO in Gulu, staff attempted to re-name the children in reverse, such that the names would now transform to, for example, *Odokober* (things have turned good) and *Komagum* (I am fortunate). Similarly, families changed these boys' names to conceal connections with the LRA. Yet, not all CBOW in Lango had their names changed. They instead continued to be called their old names, which they came with from the LRA. But some of the children in this thesis retained their old names because the heads of their mothers' natal families saw them, 'as befitting of the children's situations'. Tino's father who was violently aggrieved that his daughter Tino had a child in the LRA said of his grandchild's name, 'she came with that name from those ends of Rachele

²³⁸ Among the Luo speaking groups of East Africa, naming was lineage-bounded. Children were given names to reflect identity within the clan.

rehabilitation, and I did not change it because the name Aciro (which means I have suffered) depicts her mother's suffering from the bush and I will not change it'.²³⁹

The response of Tino's father demonstrates the continuous hardship some children face in attempting to integrate. For this grandchild, her name is seen as symbolic of all the misfortunes of her mother in the hands of the LRA. In this particular case, it can be suggested that as long as the child retains that name, her integration journey will not be complete.

But her grandfather's response also underlines the tensions that evolved from the motherhood of their daughters in the LRA. His refusal to change the child's name, on the one hand, demonstrates the control that male elders still wielded in patriarchal Lango - including the right to give and ungive names. On the other, it is suggestive of the perceptions of male elders that they were never a part of the transformation of their daughters from girlhood into motherhood. The LRA had usurped that and so they could have nothing to do with any reproductive outcome.

Illegitimate child ('atin luk')

The study found that some maternal families were passing their CBOW as *otin luk* in a bid to conceal their sexual experiences in the LRA from potential suitors in peacetime Lango. For example, Ajok's daughter, who later benefited from *cul pit* (compensation for raising a child of another patriclan), an arrangement which enabled her to join her mother in her marital home, was passed as a *luk* child by her mother's family (see chapter six).²⁴⁰ Her status as a CBOW was withheld from everyone except her immediate family members. This was possible because when Ajok returned from the LRA with her child, she found that her natal family had been displaced from their home in Ogur. They had instead moved into Bala Stock Farm, a then defunct state farm

²³⁹ Interview: Oyar Francis, fifty three years old, Acimi village, Myene Sub county, Oyam district, Uganda. 30 July 2013.

²⁴⁰ Interview: Owani Peter, fifty two years old, Ajok's father-in-law, Amia abil village, Agweng sub County, Lira district, Uganda. 12 July 2013; Ajok, twenty five years old, ex-combatant mother of a daughter, Amia abil village, Agweng sub County, Lira Uganda. 10 July 2013.

located seven kilometres west of Lira town, which hosted a camp for the Internally Displaced Persons. The IDP camp had a population of 14,548 inhabitants that had come from different villages in eastern Lango.²⁴¹ Like other IDP camps, it hosted inhabitants from various areas, so that Ajok's family found themselves living with people they had never known before. It was therefore possible for a family to conceal both the abduction status of their daughter as well as the CBOW status of her child. This was what Ajok and her family did. Her muted status and the claim that her CBOW was an *atin luk* convinced a suitor to start a love affair with her, which resulted into a *luk* pregnancy and later on a marriage.

Ajok's daughter continued passing as an *atin luk* even after the IDP camp was dismantled and inhabitants returned to their original homes. People in Ajok's village had not been aware that her abduction had led to a pregnancy because they all had been scattered in other IDP camps in Lango. In the village therefore, Ajok's daughter was simply seen as a child of *luk* that she had when she was in the IDP camp. This concealment was also reflected at the clan level, where the *Rwot* (chief) of the clan section noted and registered the child in the book of the Omolatar clan as the child of Ajok's brother.

6.6. Conclusion

All of those who participated in this study had, as the first and often only instance, the option of joining their mothers' natal families and neighbourhoods. Here, the perceptions of members of these families and neighbourhoods shaped the choices and behaviours of these children. Because ideas of gender and generation continued to define the nature of interactions within post-war families and lineages, these children had to contend with decisions made by adults and/or elderly males in their host families.

²⁴¹ See OPM/DM/54 [population of IDPs in the country – 11 November 2003]. This number kept on increasing during the next couple of years [2004-2005] as the war escalated in Lango. Available from: www.internal-displacement.org/.../IDP+Numbers+November+2003+... [Accessed 10 October 2013].

With their presence, needs and perspectives, they confronted the male elders, senior women, siblings of their mothers, maternal grandparents and individuals in their neighbourhoods. Some *otino onywalo ilum* found the homes they lived in more welcoming than others. But many people, in particular male elders in the families, perceived these children as reproductive outcomes that they had had no stakes in, and therefore strove to distance themselves from any possible claims that these children could make on their support and resources. The children were seen as a continuation of the violence orchestrated by the LRA militants against the male elders and brothers in their mothers' peacetime families and communities. This made the children vulnerable to stigma and marginalization. Although their young ages curtailed a more indepth understanding of their circumstances, it may be possible to suggest that some boys' acceptance of their new roles as heir in lineages that had no male children, or their symbolic acceptance of the new names that they were given, could be seen as examples of CBOW's attempts to negotiate acceptable living conditions. Girls and boys respected the adults' decisions by desisting from relocating to the homes of their mothers' new lovers. When there were no alternatives, the two lineages negotiated a *cul pit* so that the children could live with their mothers in their new marital homes. Other children took advantage of being in new locations, away from those who knew they were conceived in the LRA, to pass as just ordinary children. In the process, such children also collaborated to reducing the circulation of stigmatising information – ensuring that this information was not revealed to unsuspecting strangers. These examples demonstrate the hardships they faced as *otino onywalo ilum*. But they also show how the children unfolded their own strategies in their struggles to make post-war reintegration and their new life in post-conflict Lango villages more liveable.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

As scholars like Driberg (1923) demonstrated, sexual violence and rape in war is not a new phenomenon in pre-northern Uganda. In pre-colonial and early colonial Uganda, bands of Lango warriors engaged in war abroad sometimes for the purpose of carrying back home girls and women who then served as wives. As seen in the case of the women from Madi of Uganda, the Langi believed these women were very fertile and could produce sons who, as adults, would become fighters and would thereby strengthen Lango military power. This practice was gradually curtailed following the pacification of the region by colonial Britain. Pacification rendered irrelevant the need to raise an army by integrating the offspring of captive women into its warrior ranks.

But in recent conflicts in post-colonial Africa, showed that thousands of girls and women are once more forced into sexual relationships, many of which resulted in the birth of children. In particular, the LRA abducted thousands of girls and women and turned them into forced wives of LRA officers and militants. The forced wives became mothers to the children of these men. As the children grew older, Kony and his commanders turned some of these children into soldiers, replicating pre-colonial customs. Childbirth became an important recruitment strategy once the LRA failed to mobilise new recruits through calls for mass purification.

By turning forced marriage and motherhood into a recruitment strategy, the LRA deploys ideas of gender and motherhood as a weapon of war. These strategies became particularly important when the LRA lost the support of the Khartoum government toward the end of the 1990s and could no longer continue making regular incursions into northern Uganda to acquire new recruits and supplies.²⁴² LRA commanders then turned to a new way of achieving their 'political project of imagining a new Acholi nation' (Baines, 2014: 2). As Baines (2014) further stated, they used forced marriage and childbirth to raise a new breed of Acholi (*Acholi manyen*) - a position explored in

²⁴² But from 2002 when the UPDF launched Operation Iron Fist - a military action to wipe out the LRA in Sudan, the LRA followers fled back into northern Uganda carrying out some of the greatest atrocities in the history of the conflict – including massacres and thousands of fresh abduction of children, women and men. According to Human Rights Watch, at least 8,400 children were abducted between June 2003 and May 2003.

my findings in chapter four. Kony abandoned his original idea of ‘purifying’ the Acholi in northern Uganda – his original justification for founding the LRA – and instead referred to them as Acholi ‘B’. The Acholi ‘B’ were to be replaced by Acholi ‘A’ or Acholi *manyen*, who were the children born to forced wives.

Kony and his military commanders established quasi-military settlements in the southern jungles of Sudan to accommodate this new strategy. Here they created compounds, each headed by a commander or a junior officer. These men were the ‘husbands’ of the forced wife or wives who lived with them in their respective compounds. As Kony rallied his recruits to produce children, LRA settlements gradually changed form, taking a more civilian outlook as they moved into new areas and created large crop farms where they could grow their own food. They made successive changes in the pattern of their settlements, so that it may be said LRA’s recruitment strategies influenced the nature of their settlement at any one given time. At the start of the new millennium, the LRA settlements had taken the appearance of peacetime Northern Ugandan villages – with brigades moving into village-like settlements, which had just been settled when they were driven away from Sudan during the Operation Iron Fist military campaign in 2002.

Moreover the LRA’s deliberate strategies of controlling the sexuality and reproductive abilities of its recruits was based on a reward system where male recruits deemed good fighters were given a girl as a ‘wife’ to motivate him to fight on. But they also included a myriad of policies and practices that Joseph Kony and his commanders put in place to continue regulating the sexual lives of these forced couples as long as they remained in the LRA. The allocation of girls as forced wives; purification rituals that those whose ‘forced husbands’ had died underwent in the hands of Kony before they could be ‘courted’ by men, and banning of abortion were strictly enforced. Performing customary rituals without Kony’s permission was also forbidden. He also subjected women to fertility rituals that supposedly increased their fertility

Gender ideologies in the LRA gave different roles to men and women, and gave them unequal power to negotiate sexuality and reproduction. For many a girl, being pregnant

meant that she was exempt from fighting. For Kony and his commanders, childbirth guaranteed new additions to their recruits. For the women, it helped them re-negotiate their status from soldiers to civilians, increasing the likelihood of their survival. But as discussed in chapter five and six, forced motherhood in the LRA resulted in tension and exclusion when these mothers and their children left the LRA and returned to their natal families and communities in Lango.²⁴³

This study took place during peacetime in Lango when the LRA was no longer active in Uganda. Since 2006 normality had been progressively resumed and lineage leaders, too, had resumed their position and roles in ensuring societal balance that had been claimed by the spirit mediums and their purification projects discussed in chapter two. The lineage institution, dominated by male elders, gradually began to take centre stage again in shaping and re-shaping the outlines of lineages, so that their old institutions of control over women's sexuality and reproduction – such as *luk*, marriage, *culo kwor* and *cul pit* – once again became relevant.

As recent studies on the use of sexual violence against girls and women suggest, there are links between these practices and the notions of gender and kinship norms that regulate sexuality, marriage and reproduction in local peacetime victim communities (Annan et al., 2009; Baines, 2014; Baines and Rosenoff, 2013; Coulter, 2009; Olujic, 1998). As I have argued, forced marriage and the resultant birth of children in the LRA contradicted ideas and practices of gender and kinship in peacetime Lango, and greatly influenced perceptions about former forced wives and their children. This form of 'marriage' distorted the power balance in local gender and generation hierarchies – it deprived fathers, brothers, senior women and lineage elders of the position and authority they held over the sexuality and reproduction of their daughters and sisters. These distortions mostly played out at the sites of reintegration and integration, namely within family and lineage.

²⁴³ Although multiple factors complicated the post-conflict experiences of ex-combatants and their children (including their being seen as also responsible for the atrocities the LRA meted on civilian populations), this study particularly sought to understand the tension associated with control over sexuality and reproduction outcomes.

Literature addressed in the introduction chapter (e.g. Manjoo, 2008) demonstrates that the practice and other forms of sexual violence function as an attack against a woman's family or community and not solely against the individual woman and her body. This is mediated by cultural ideas and institutions that give men control over women. As elaborated by Annan et al., (2009), former forced wives and their children faced rejection, often leaving their communities to try and lead separate lives on their own. Some offered sexual services to men in exchange for financial and social support. The idea that rape targets a woman's family and community (e.g. Manjoo, 2008) and the exit of the survivor and the resultant child from her family and community (e.g. Annan et al., 2009) supports the suggestion that forced marriages also violated the social institutions of the women's original society.

Forced marriage distorted the notion and practices of gender and kinship in Lango. For example, male elders in the mostly patriarchal Lango understood the abduction and forced marriage of their daughters and sisters as a form of 'hjack of wombs' by the LRA, leading to tensions – which often manifested as stigma and discrimination - in the reintegration and integration of the survivors and their children. As demonstrated in the thesis the perceptions of these fathers, brothers and lineage elders are greatly influenced by patriarchal ideas of identity, which only transform mothers into wives and newborns into lineage members upon fulfillment of rules and conditions - which were not met by captor husbands in the LRA. The study argues that the lack of fulfillment of these rules and conditions have shaped the post war reintegration and intergration of these women and their children.

I have used a cultural approach to analyse the experiences of these women and their children. I have anchored it on the argument that gender ideas and practices in Lango provide for specifically coercive environment supportive of a hegemonic masculinity to which former forced wives and their CBOW have to comply inorder to gain some form of support and protection (cf. Baines, 2011). I have acknowledged how the narrow options that these women and their children face tantamount to lack of choice and transgresses human rights values and principles.

The return of girls and women back into Lango as mothers brought new tensions associated with their forced motherhood under the LRA regime to their families and lineages. These tensions were experienced as *rucurucu*, a state of imbalance associated with the appropriation of control over their sexuality and reproductive potential by the LRA.

Findings revealed that reintegration and integration experiences in Lango were greatly influenced by local ideas of gender and kinship – which are reproduced in the social institutions of *luk*, marriage, *culo kwor* and *cul pit*. The study underlines the importance of local social institutions that regulate ideas and practices of gender, sex, marriage and motherhood in the reintegration and integration of former forced wives and their children in Lango. For many women, reintegration with their children was easier if they re-negotiated their status according to the ideas of gender and motherhood inherent in Lango social institutions. These women reasserted the principles and rules of kinship that governed peacetime relations, in order to access familial and societal protection and support. The ‘children born in the bush’ (*otino onywalo ilum*), too, obtained some support conditional upon their integration in their mothers’ natal families and communities following Lango principles of child-affiliation.

The fathers and brothers of former forced wives in Lango saw CBOW as the product of illegitimate sexuality because their birth had not followed traditional Lango negotiations and transactions regulating sexuality and parturition, which shape the identity of newborn children in Lango lineages. These men also continued controlling other institutions of exclusion and inclusion – in customary normative terms they, for example, continued to regulate access to land and livestock.

Lango men had temporarily been deprived of their authority to control the transformation of their daughters and sisters into mothers. This in turn had curtailed the ability of *otino onywalo ilum* to make claims on lineage resources and support. Their marginalized position as illegitimate children provided ground for the manifestation of stigma and discrimination as discussed in chapter six. But as seen of the children who participated in this study, *otino onywalo ilum* had different experiences that reflected the

perceptions of adult members of the families they lived with. These perceptions, in turn, influenced the behaviour of these children.

Like their mothers, they too unfolded individual strategies that many times reaffirmed local ideas of gender, motherhood and kinship in today's Lango. Some boys entered into sonless families and were seen as heirs by their maternal grandmothers. This showed how women in Lango could use patrilineal ideas to retain rights over land and property that would otherwise be controlled by men. But they also demonstrated the varied ways by which children could integrate into families and lineages and live normal lives – belonging in the kin group just like other members born through normal marriages.

Their situation did not differ from that of children of separated mothers who moved in the household of new partners leaving the children they had with their previous husband in the custody of their parents (i.e. the children's maternal grandparents). Children from previous marriages could not live in their mothers' new marital homes because through payment of bridewealth, their step-fathers had acquired rights to affiliate and benefit from the industry of only their mothers, but not of the children they had with previous partners. The mothers and any future offspring born in these new marital relationships could expect the husbands/fathers to meet their livelihood needs, including inheritance rights if they were sons, and rights to support in finding resources necessary to pay bridewealth when they would get married.

But as seen in chapter six, the lived realities of some children showed how difficult it was for them to negotiate residence and other rights even in the households of their maternal grandparents. Some of them were given away as domestic workers in the homes of distant relatives, decreasing their ability to make claims on lineage property and support. The experiences of *otino onywalo ilum* – how they were perceived, how they perceived themselves, the strategies they unfolded as they attempted to integrate, and the collapse of some of these strategies – underscore the importance of considering local ideas of kinship, age and gender, and the social mechanisms through which these ideas shape people's everyday lives.

Limitations and recommendations

This thesis acknowledges that the everyday life of *atin onywalo ilum* is often complex, with each child having different experiences. I have attempted to analyse this complexity by exploring ideas of kinship, gender and, to some extent, generation; and by looking at how these ideas shape Lango social institutions such as the family, lineage, clan, marriage and motherhood. My findings suggest that, just as these institutions are shaped by ideas of kinship and gender, individuals in these institutions appropriate these very ideas to establish meaningful relations. Hence, these ideas and institutions function both to constrain and to expand the agency of people, be they formerly abducted women, their children born in the LRA camps, or these women's relatives and acquaintances in Lango villages where they were reintegrated. I have suggested that kinship institutions that regulate social inclusion and exclusion influence the process of post-war (re-)integration, and that the stigma and discrimination observed by other scholars should be explained in relation to local systems of gender and kinship.

In this study, I have attempted to make the case for scholars and practitioners to recognise and explore the complexities associated with reintegration and integration that I have pointed out – in particular those that hinge on power imbalances inherent in ideas and practices of gender, marriage and kinship. Understanding these local dynamics and perceptions will enable practitioners to shape their reintegration agenda in ways that may ensure sustainable reintegration and integration of former forced wives and their children (cf. Lundquist 2004).

It is worth noting, however, that children conceived by forced wives in the LRA are just one sub-group of those born of war – bearing in mind Carpenter's (2007) definition. Carpenter defined children born of war as a person of any age conceived as a result of violent, coercive or exploitative sexual relations in war zones. In northern Uganda's case of the LRA war, these would include those conceived as a result of rape by government soldiers – the UPDF, civilians and from exploitation of girls and women by humanitarian aid workers during the war (e.g. Akello et al., 2010: 215; Porter, 2013;

Okello & Hovil, 2010:440; HRW, 2003). Available literature suggests that very little is known about these other categories of children born of war, and how local victim communities perceive and relate with them in the aftermath of war. New studies would therefore help in illuminating themes and issues related to these sub-groups with a view to framing their agenda in war and peacetime.

A similar note concerns the age-factor – which was an important limitation while interviewing children of former forced wives in Lango. At the onset of the study, the oldest child was thirteen years old and the youngest five years old. The sensitive nature of the study – which was rightly buttressed with stringent ethical considerations - and the time scope within which I had planned to complete fieldwork (two years) meant that I could not exhaustively interview the children. I observe that a longitudinal study of these children would have illuminated their experiences better.

Additionally, the study scope – especially in terms of sample size - was limited by the mass phase-out of institutions that had worked with ex-combatants by the onset of the fieldwork in 2013. As explained in the introduction chapter, I found that the most efficient and reliable way of identifying these primary respondents was by tracking their records at institutions that had directly worked with them. At the start of the fieldwork in 2013, all eight transit centres in northern Uganda had either closed down or phased out their transit-centre related activities. In Lira, I could only access the records of Rachele Centre because Caritas Lira in whose hands the Rachele establishment had handed over the centre after phase-out had chosen not to discard off the records. I therefore had only statistics from Rachele to work with – a limitation which made it difficult for me to provide a full picture of the magnitude of former forced marriages that targeted Lango girls in comparison to the rest of northern Uganda. In addition, I found the Rachele records limited in terms of documenting the identities of children of former forced wives. The records did not provide information on the biological fathers of these children, making it difficult to trace the fathers and involve them and/or their relatives in the study. I therefore restricted the sampling primarily to former forced wives and the children they came back with. This lack of involvement of the children's

biological fathers also limited the thematic considerations that might have enriched discussions about the everyday life of these children.

It has not been my intention to suggest that ideas of gender, marriage, and kinship are the only factors shaping the lives of *otino onywalo ilum* in Lango or elsewhere - though my analysis of it is significant. To be sure, there are multiple other factors that could also be seen as responsible for these children's experiences. In particular, there is need to examine the economic disruption caused by years of conflict on the integration of these children. Additionally, further fieldwork still needs to be done on inter-ethnic hostility resulting from the ethnicisation of the LRA as an 'Acholi' war with consequences for economic, social and political relations in northern Uganda.

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Field notes: Acimi, Myene sub county, Oyam district, Uganda. July 2013.

2. Interviews

Focus Group Discussion: 6 respondents in Amia Abil Village, Agweng sub County, Lira District, Uganda. 13 February 2015.

Focus Group Discussion: Abako village, Alemi parish, Ayer Sub County, Kole District, Uganda. 15 January 2014.

Focus Group Discussion: 19 elderly men and women, Abako village in Alemi parish of Ayer sub county, Kole district, Uganda. 15 January 2014.

Focus Group Discussion: Acen's father (80 years old) and 5 other members of his household that had been present during the marriage, Amia Abil village, Agweng sub County, Lira, Uganda. 13 February 2015.

Focus Group Discussion: Okabo's father Eron, mother, father, paternal uncle, grandfather, Awing Ipany village, Amo Yai parish in Okwang Sub County, Lira, Uganda. 18 April 2013.

Interview: Abang, 34 years old, ex-combatant mother, Imato-Ikwoto village, Ogur sub County, Lira district, Uganda. 23 July 2013.

Interview: Acen, 32 years old, and her sons in their new home in Orubo village, Layibi Division, Gulu town. 19 January 2015.

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Interview: Agonga, Okabo's mother, Barlonyo, Ogur, Lira district, Uganda. 16 April 2013.

Interview: Ajok, 25 years old, Amia Abil, Agweng sub County (formerly part of Ogur), Lira district. 10 July 2013.

Interview: Akello, 28 years old, Bar Obia village, Acaba sub County, Oyam district, Uganda. 15 July 2013.

Interview: Aloyo, 35 years old, Lapaico, Gulu, Uganda. 19 January 2015.

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Interview: Atat Cucuria Auma, 89 years old, Aputi village, Abeli parish, Akalo Sub County, Kole district, Uganda. 2 January 2015.

Interview: Atine Moses, 26 years old, *Jo* Alwa wibye acel clan, Acimi village, Myene sub County in Oyam, Uganda. 30 July 2013.

Interview: Ayo Gaby, 13 years old, son of Abang, Lira Integrated Boarding and Primary School, Kakoge A, Ojwina Division, Lira Municipality, Uganda. 26 July 2013.

Interview: Bua Nelson, 20 years old, caretaker of the child Bua, Obutu village, Iceme Sub County, Oyam district, Uganda. 25 July 2013.

Interview: Bua, 4 years old, Obutu village, Iceme Sub County, Oyam district, Uganda. 25 July 2013.

Interview: Constantino Okori, 78 years, Acen's father, Oromo clan, Amia Abil village, Agweng sub County, Lira, Uganda. 12 July 2013.

Interview: Geoffrey, 46 years old, LCI Chairman, Bar Obia village, Acaba, Oyam, Uganda. 30 July 2013.

Interview: Imat Santa, 62 years old, Rainbow, Lira, Uganda. 26 March 2015.

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Interview: Muzee Igwat, 91 years old, Aputi village, Abeli sub County, Akalo, Kole District, Uganda. 9 January 2015.

Interview: Muzee Quinto Ochille, 73 years old, a Lango elder, Abako village, Alemi parish, Ayer Sub County, Kole, Uganda. 14 January 2014.

Interview: Obua Elisa, 78 years old, clan leader of the Alira Clan in Ilera village (Apii) of Ayer sub county, Kole District, Uganda. 14th July 2013.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. A list of items proposed by the Pagwo Clan – Obongi for the marriage of their daughter to a youth of Atek Okwero Amor clan, dated 14th March 2014.²⁴⁴

Proposals:

Writing the introductory letter = 500,000 shillings

Luk in respect of mother and child²⁴⁵ = 3 cows, 2 he-goats, 2 cockerels

Andralicoma [dew] = 300,000 shillings

Opening of discussions [beginning the negotiation meetings] = 500,000 shillings

Father's consent = 300,000 shillings

Mother's consent = 300,000 shillings

Gifts for the Pagwo Clan = 1 cow, 2 goats, 4 chicken and 1 bag of flour

Allowances:

Chairman and secretary of the marriage = 400,000 shillings

Elders of the clan = 300,000 shillings

Helpers and kitchen staff = 300,000 shillings

Dowry²⁴⁶

10 cows, 2 bulls, 15 goats, 1 carton of hoes and 100 arrows

Gift to girl = 500,000 shillings

Engagement ring = 200,000 shillings

1 cock, 15 suits, 15 *kanzu* for brothers-in-law (girl's brothers).

Dressings:

Father-in-law = 1 suit, 1 *kanzu*, 1 pair of shoes

Mother-in-law = 1 *gomesi*, 1 *kikoyi*, 1 belt and a pair of shoes

Aunties (father's sisters) = 15 *gomesi*

Girl's sister = 1 *gomesi*

²⁴⁴ Pagwo clan belongs to the Alur language group of the Luo speaking people of northern Uganda. A look at their descent policies shows that they are similar in marriage practices with the Langi. Like the Langi (which the boy is a member of), the Alur also use brideprice (cattle) to negotiate for control over a woman's sexuality and reproduction ability, whose children are then seen as members of a husband's patriclan. These similarities in patriarchal doctrines of language groups in today's northern Ugandan communities make it possible to generalise some of the important findings in any one of these groups.

²⁴⁵ Here, *luk* payment is combined to cater for both the illegitimate sexual acts, including that which led to the child's birth, and the *luk* for the child. This latter payment switches the patriclan of the child from her maternal patriclan (in this case, the Pagwo) to that of Atek Okwer Amor clan of the father.

²⁴⁶ Both language groups (and actually all Ugandan language groups) have a brideprice system as opposed to dowry. A boy and his family are charged with taking cattle and/or money to a girl's family and clan (i.e. brideprice) and not the other way round (dowry). In Uganda however, the term 'dowry' is used interchangeably with bridewealth to simply refer to the goods that a boy takes to his lover's family for the right to control her sexuality and reproduction potential.

Appendix 2. Ex-combatant mother Apili's depiction of the LRA camps at Lubanga Tek in 1998.

