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## **Overcoming ruptures: Zande identity, governance, and tradition during cycles of war and displacement in South Sudan and Uganda (2014-2019)**

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## Annexes





## Annex 1

### Full portraits

The key respondents to this book were introduced earlier. Here, I feature the full portraits about them. In writing this book, I have often felt ill at ease. People's lives in war and displacement are endlessly diverse, and yet the academic pursuit for patterns and coherence inevitably entails generalization and abstraction. Much of the rich complexity that characterizes real life is lost in this way. Some authors overcome this problem by devoting an entire book to the life story of one person (Kassai 2020; Eggers 2008; Steinberg 2016). In this book, I have foregrounded individual experiences incidentally. I include the following portraits here to do some justice to individuality, and to better contextualize the 'data' used in this book. These portraits also illustrate a lot about the central themes of this book: Wars, threats and survival; complicated pathways to exile and refugee life; being an 'authority' and resolving disputes; working for the children's future; and more generally the 'lifescapes' of people amidst war and displacement. These portraits may also serve as a reference for other scholars. On a methodological note: Whereas in the rest of the book I 'triangulated' various sources, these portraits rely almost completely on my key respondents' own accounts.

JAMES

#### *Pathway to the present*

- 1965 Born in Nzara, Sudan.
- 1967 Fled to Central African Republic.
- 1973 Return to Nzara. Completed primary school.
- 1979 Rimenze, completed intermediate school.
- 1985 Wau, attended seminary.
- 1989 Moved to Juba.
- 1991 Fled from Juba to Khartoum.
- 1996 Decided to go on an adventure: Khartoum (Sudan), El Obeid, Nyala, Bangui (CAR).
- 1997 In CAR met and married his wife.
- 2000 Returned over Source Yubu, arrested and imprisoned at the border.
- 2000 Returned to Nzara, joined SPLA as security guard.
- 2006 Joined Yambio State ministry of agriculture.

- 2009-10 Joined campaigns for Bakosoro in Yambio.
- 2010 Became senior inspector for culture.
- 2015 War started in Yambio.
- 2016 January 21. Angelo Parakondo shot; clash between rebels, SPLA and prison authorities.
- 2016 January 22. 'The whole town of Yambio was shooting at daytime'. Decided to move to Nzara. Following days: Moved to Doruma (DR Congo), then over Dungu to Arua (Uganda).
- 2016 February. Arrived in Kampala.
- 2016 December. Move to Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement.

### Portrait<sup>1</sup>

James was born in 1965 in Nzara, Sudan. His father (b. 1940s, Tambura) was educated at the seminary and held a job with the Sudanese government in Nzara, 'to work as *effendi*,<sup>2</sup> that is somebody very big. Like an executive director. Somebody responsible for recording everything.' But when James was two years old, the family had to flee from war for the first time. They first walked to Source Yubu, and there boarded a UN-cargo plane that was taking families to Mboki, in the Central African Republic. James fondly recalled to me a childhood memory. When he was about 5 years old, he and his elder brother had to guard maize against monkeys:

When my brother saw the monkeys coming to him, he ran home. So I decided to take a stick and hold it ready. When I threw it against a teak tree near the monkey, it made it fear. It then turned back to go ... While my elder brother had already gone home. And then he told my mother and father 'the monkeys have already eaten my brother so, let us go and see what is there.' [Laughs] So when they came they saw me already chasing the monkeys across the river. So my mother said, 'From now onward I will ask nobody to accompany me!' Because there in Central Africa it is very thickly forested. Even a grown up person can fear. So when my mother wants to go to my uncles, she just said 'You come, we go.' And I would just go in front, without fearing. I just go! Then she named me, '*Gimiko*' (This one is mine)!

The family returned to Nzara in 1973, a year after the Addis Ababa Agreement was signed. This time they travelled by a lorry that the UN arranged to repatriate refugees. 'Then we started living with the Arabs until again the SPLA came in 1983,' he recalled. James completed his primary school with the

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1 Based on oral history interviews on 5 August 2017, 7 February 2018 and 28 May 2019.

2 *Effendi* (Lord, Master) was a honorary title used especially in the Ottoman Empire for somebody of high education or social standing. In British colonial times it was associated with education and the city, and also used in military contexts. It was not a position as such.

Komboni missionaries in Nzara, and then went on for intermediate school in Rimenze. In 1985 he joined the seminary in Wau where he became head prefect of his class. He did well on his Sudan School Certificate: passing on his first attempt, with 58 percent, 'others would fail even 6 times!'. His sister, who was a superior of a sisterhood in Juba, brought him to Juba in 1989 to continue his education. She hoped that after some more studies, James would sit for his Sudan School Certificate again, and perhaps score over 60 which would have enabled him to go to university. But his studies were interrupted when they ran out of money.

The Sudanese Civil War had been going on since 1983, and intensified in Juba around 1990. 'There was a lot of shelling in Juba,' James recalled. The road to Yambio was unsafe and there was fighting there, too, so in 1991 James decided to flee to Khartoum. He travelled with a Sudanese government cargo plane. 'You paid a little – 180 Sudanese pounds – but there were no seats, you just try to hold on!' In Khartoum, James resumed studying for his philosophy diploma at the seminary in Koba. But he was kicked out from the seminary when an old enemy he had made in the seminary in Wau reached out to the head of the seminary in Khartoum. James was frustrated when he experienced racism in Khartoum. He found that 'they [the Sudanese] could not let you go to university unless you go for fighting, for war. You had to fight for two years with your own colleagues, the South Sudanese.'<sup>3</sup> As James did not want to go to war – let alone against other South Sudanese – he decided to drop his ambition of studying.

Frustrated by life in Khartoum, James decided to go on 'an adventure' that would eventually lead all the way to Central Africa. James was in his early 20s at the time. 'That one I just made an adventure. I knew that I could die, but I was just going out of frustration.' Later he described that journey in similar terms: 'That adventure was like a fire: Either you die, or you go across!' With a smile he recalled in Uganda how he had started from Khartoum by bus to El Obeid. Then from Rahad train station, James took a train going to Nyala. Because there were 'security' on the train and James lacked papers permitting him all this movement, he rode secretly on top of the train. Crossing the Sudanese-Central African border without papers would have been difficult and so in Nyala, James 'forged [him]self into a Cameroonian national.' To do so, he wrote a long letter to the local magistrate, saying that he was Jamal Abdullah, a Cameroonian who had lost his papers. After long questioning, his letter was stamped and signed and he was given documents. The judge proclaimed: 'Now you are a Cameroonian by birth.'

From Nyala, James travelled by lorry to Am Dafok on the border between Sudan and Central Africa. But again, he had to tread carefully. People were

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3 The English word 'colleagues' is often used by South Sudanese people to refer not only to people with whom you share a work place, but also colloquially for people with whom you share another type of group membership.

suspicious of South Sudanese people – especially men of fighting age – approaching the front line between the government and SPLA. At the border, James wore a jellaba and told the same story that he had used in Nyala: he was Jamal Abdullah, a Cameroonian Muslim, on his way to visit his father. But his path was blocked by a Sudanese immigration official, ‘He said there was no way out’. The official, however, invited James to come along to the mosque the following morning to pray together, and told him that he would ask the congregation for contributions for his travel. James practiced at night how to pray like a Muslim. By morning time, he felt he could do it perfectly. When he arrived at the mosque together with the border official, the latter introduced him to the elders of the mosque and told them in Arabic – a language James pretended not to speak – to pay close attention to James to see if he was real. But the prayer went well, and afterwards James received donations amounting to some 25.000 Sudanese Dinar. Still, the border official was not convinced and used countless excuses to keep James in Am Dafok. James suspected that the official was waiting for messages about him from Nyala. ‘So I thought, let me disappear,’ he recalled laughing. At 4 pm he set off with two friends, walking from Am Dafok to Birao in Central Africa, some 54 miles away. They walked all through the night through thick forest, and arrived at 10 am the next morning. From Birao, James traveled by lorry to Bangui.

Central Africa was more welcoming to James than Khartoum had been. He met his wife, also Zande, there and married in church in 1997. After three years the family decided to return to Sudan through Source Yubu. But when James crossed the border, he was arrested by the SPLA: ‘I was even imprisoned because I was coming from Khartoum. They could not hear that you were coming from the Arabs ... I was put in the jail for almost one month.’ Reflecting on his prison time, he expressed understanding for the SPLA, ‘Of course this torture was only to make you get used to the life they were moving with at that time.’ Upon his release, James returned to Nzara but he was forced to enter into ‘military activities’ – ‘If you don’t do it you will not live’. From around 2000 he joined the SPLA and followed an officer training. But he did not end up fighting, working not as a soldier but instead as a security guard for the office of the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Authority.

In 2006 James got his first office job, joining the state ministry of agriculture as an establishment officer, working to manage staff appointments in the public service. In 2008-9 he went to Arua in Uganda to study further at the Nile Institute for Management Studies for his Diploma in Public and Local Government Administration. In 2009-10 James helped with the campaign for Governor Bakosoro. Once victory was secured, the new governor appointed James as ‘senior inspector for culture,’ which tied in closely with James’ love of the arts and Zande culture.

James was in Yambio in 2015 when the conflict started there. In his words: ‘There was this movement of the other young people who went to the bush to start fighting. And the government of Salva could repel back. It came to

a very serious point when they killed one of the big men just in the city square, minister<sup>4</sup> Angelo Parakondo [on 21 January 2016]. Then [the Arrow Boys] wanted to capture the prison to collect the guns inside. The prison wardens were very strong. They started to fire back. So the whole town of Yambio was shooting at the daytime.' This was the moment when James and his family decided flee. Initially, they went to Nzara, some 19 kilometres west, to stay with James' mother in law. But on the way there they saw that the government was bringing a lot of troops, 'So we thought there is going to be a very big war. So we decided to go to Congo.'

James has a son with a disability, whom he pushed on a bicycle to Congo. 'We decided to go through Doruma. We reached there at 01.00 AM. But when we were there, there was no network. We could not communicate back to our people. So we spent almost 10 days there.' Then the family – then two adults and two children – paid a boda-boda driver 45 Congolese Francs to travel to Dungu on a motorbike. 'In Dungu still we were finding some challenges to communicate with our people. You could not buy any airtime' Now the family wanted to travel from Dungu to Arua, but a driver asked 85,000 UGX, which James did not have. So he gave the driver his passport as a safety, and paid him when he arrived at his daughter in Kampala.

The family arrived in Kampala in February 2016, about a month after the fighting that had forced them to leave Yambio. James' eldest daughter was already living in Kampala for her studies, so the family 'came and settled after her.' The family registered as refugees in Kampala, but life was not 'easy' there. In December 2016 they decided to move to Kiryandongo RS instead. 'Because for me I have a big family. I have 8 children. With my madam we are all 10. It is only me who is caring for them. So I decided to come this way because this is where I can cultivate the land and get some potato, cassava, and other food free of charge. But there [in Kampala]? No. Charcoal, firewood, water, it is all for money. Even movement is for money! This one cannot help me.' Like so many other refugees, James had tried refugee life both in the city and in the settlement, and ultimately decided that the latter was more sustainable.

The family travelled to Kiryandongo RS, and registered at the Reception Centre. They were given some cultivation equipment, and James found a plot of land directly adjacent to a marram road, quite deep inside the camp. Later that plot was extended a bit. The family lived far from Bweyale town, the entrance gate, and the camp's central hill with its market, churches, and health centre. Although the settlement was generally safe, James asked me not to visit him late in the afternoon because he reckoned it might not be safe after

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4 Angelo Parakondo was a commissioner in the office of the governor of Gbudwe State at the time of his death.

dark. Near his house, a child was abducted and allegedly decapitated in early 2018.<sup>5</sup>

James erected two buildings on his land, both with half-baked bricks, UNHCR-tarpaulin, and a corrugated iron roof. During a later rainy season the half-baked bricks had started to shift, and James fortified the walls exterior with cement. James' plot further sported two rarities: a 'payot' (a structure common in Zande areas where visitors are received), and a water tap. The payot was some four meters from his house, allowing visitors to speak with James with some privacy. James built the payot in February 2018, 'You know it is one of the habits of the Zande to want a place to receive visitors so that they can rest and have some cold water.' The construction was covered by tree branches and shrubs planted in such a way as to form a small room, which was then covered by tarpaulin. Inside, there were two wooden benches and a wooden table, and depending on the number of visitors James called for some of his children to bring more chairs. In May 2019, James was modifying the payot, enlarging it and making it with cement.

The water tap was connected to the watering system of the town. It was paid for by TPO, an NGO, which offered help because of James' disabled son. It offered major advantages to the household. Especially during the dry season water often became scarce, and the lines for the boreholes in the camp could be prohibitively long. Women, girls and children (men seldom carried water) got up before dawn to get in line, only returning with two jerry cans of water several hours later. James' family's water tap allowed them to avoid this ordeal. Their neighbours also used the water tap, paying some 200 UGX per jerrycan. These three features – the plot's vicinity to the road, the visitors' area, and the water tap – made that people continuously stopped by for short or long chats.

James' social position in the camp could be expressed in a variety of ways. His buildings and plain clothes indicated that he was not wealthy. But he was well-educated, spoke good English, knew many people in the camp, and three of his daughters studied in Kampala. Further, James became the leader of the 'Western Equatorial community' and in February 2018 also chairperson of the RWC 1 and vice-chair of the RWC 2. As chairperson he regularly met camp inhabitants of all backgrounds: the various South Sudanese, Congolese, and Ugandans. The position cost him a lot of time and was unpaid apart from the

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5 This was not reported in any media, but it was 'the talk of the town' during my stay in Kiryandongo RS in March 2018. In response to these stories, some of my South Sudanese friends pierced their children's ears because they believed that those who abduct children will only take spotless children, not ones with piercings or scars.

occasional sitting allowance.<sup>6</sup> It did, however, better position him to secure odd jobs whenever there was a food distribution.<sup>7</sup>

On the face of it, James adapted well to life in the refugee camp. But still, over the years that I knew him he also got older, and although he was quick to joke and laugh he also showed a more worrisome side. When I asked him in 2019 how Western Equatorian refugees in the camp felt now compared to when they first came to Uganda, he listed the reasons that people missed South Sudan:

Our country is more fertile than here. And we had a lot of freedom there to move around. In Yambio, a Ugandan could take a beer and fall asleep on the ground. Nobody would touch him – it is his problem. But here, you would be caught and treated badly. There, even there is a lot of food. In the whole belt from Maridi to Central Africa and Congo, you don't care about food. There is no starvation. You can just pluck and eat. There is access to food. Here we cannot invest. When you grow a tree here and you have to move back abruptly, you cannot even cut it. But there, you plant trees for the future. For your children. I have six plots in my country. Here we sit like this, idle.

Like so many people, James has conflicting emotions and ideas about displacement. There were better days and worse ones. But often, despite occupying three leadership positions, he still felt that he was 'sitting idle' in the camp, and that he was missing a more future-oriented life back in South Sudan.

## CHARLES

### *Pathway to the present*

1963 August 4. Born in Bazungua, moved to Yambio, Sudan.  
 1983 Secondary School in Tambura.  
 1983 School closed due to riots, back to Yambio.  
 1987 Moved to Juba, completed studies in 1988.  
 1988-1990 Spent in Yambio, hoping for scholarship to the UK.  
 1990 November. SPLA captured Yambio, Charles fled to Mboki, CAR.  
 1993 Travelled to Entebbe and Nairobi, refused visa to study in the UK.  
 1993-1996 Studied at Bishop Tucker College in Uganda

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6 According to James, in February 2018 members of RWCs would get a sitting allowance for attending workshops or trainings, at 20.000 UGX for a RWC 3 member and 10.000 UGX for a RWC 1 member.

7 One day I met James at the 'Youth Center' – a big grass field on the central hill in the camp – where the distribution took place. James was working as an 'usher' calling out peoples' names through a megaphone before they could collect their ration. He received 40.000 UGX for working 4 days as an usher.



- 1996-1999 Mboki, Central African Republic
- 2000 Moved from Mboki over Obo and Source Yubu to Yambio
- 2002 Traveled over land to Uganda
- 2003-2007 Obtained law degree at Bishop Tucker College in Uganda
- 2007 Returned to Yambio.
- 2008 Became Headmaster of Timbiro Secondary School
- 2008 August. Joined South Sudan Employers Justice Chamber.
- 2015 Additional position: Chairperson, Land Dispute Resolution Committee (CLA)
- 2016 May 17. Ruled in favour of civilian in contentious land dispute.
- 2016 May 19, 10.15 pm. Shot by unknown gunman. Admitted to hospital.
- 2016 May 23. Flew to Juba.
- 2016 May 27. By bus to Kampala, Uganda, for treatment at Gwatiro Hospital.
- 2016 August. Decided to seek asylum.
- 2016 October. Moved to Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement.
- 2017 June. Built a plastered building to start a shop.
- 2019 May. Co-founded Azande Traditional Association.

### *Portrait*<sup>8</sup>

Charles Isaac Bangbe was born on 4 August 1963 in Bazungua, a small village some 7 miles from Yambio. Both Charles' parents were born in Yambio.<sup>9</sup> His mother was the second wife to a polygamous husband. She died the same day Charles was born, and so a sister of his father who had no children herself adopted the baby. They stayed at an area called Dar Es Salam near Yambio airport.

Education was to play an important role in Charles' life. His own family members never went to school and his father did not spend anything on his education, 'But this aunt who raised me encouraged us to go to school.' And so Charles completed his primary and junior secondary school. In 1983 Charles got the chance to go to a secondary boarding school in Tambura. But after 3 months there, a student riot broke out between students along ethnic lines.<sup>10</sup> When students set fire to one of the dormitories, the school was closed and students were forced to go home. This would be the first of many instances where Charles' aspirations were blocked by violence.

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8 Based on oral history interviews, 13 May 2017; 19 June 2017; 9 February 2018; and 28 and 29 May 2019; Feedback by Charles on 5 December 2019.

9 His paternal grandfather lived in Asanza, then a forestry area in Yambio, but when the colonial administration demarcated the town somewhere in the 1940s, 'people were asked to move from inside the circle of the town to outside.' So the family moved first to Makpandu, and later Li-Rongu. When Charles' father died, however, they still buried him in Yambio town.

10 Charles requested me to leave out the specific ethnic groups.

Back in Yambio, Charles heard about a course in theology at Bishop Gwynne College, then in Mundri. Normally more senior people would apply, and Charles felt he was too young. But something pushed him to try his luck.<sup>11</sup> He completed the exam more out of curiosity than anything else and ended up being the third best performing candidate and so he was accepted at Bishop Gwynne College. Not much later, however, SPLM rebels came and arrested two expatriate lecturers and tutors, 'So the thing was closed again.' Because of the insecurity, the College moved from Mundri first to Yei and then to Juba. Charles also came to Juba to continue his studies until he finished his certificate in theology 1988.

Charles returned to Yambio again in 1988 and spent 2 years there. During this time he was in hopeful anticipation of a scholarship to continue his theology studies in Oak Hill College, London. Bishop Daniel<sup>12</sup> was making arrangements, 'but before it happened, the war broke out.' In November 1990 the SPLA captured Yambio. Like many others he sought refuge in Mboki, a refugee settlement in the Central African Republic. From there he followed up his scholarship and managed to get permission to go. A British friend helped Charles with some money, so he could travel by Central African cargo plane over Entebbe to Wilson airport, Nairobi.

In Nairobi, Charles applied for a British visa. But that visa was rejected three times because a consular official suspected that Charles would demand asylum status upon arrival in the UK. He tried to move his scholarship to another institution in East Africa. After Kenyan officials did not want to give him a student visa, a European missionary helped him to apply at Bishop Tucker College in Uganda. He studied there for three years, and graduated with a diploma in theology in 1996. Upon graduating, Charles and his family returned to Mboki where they spent three years.

In 2000, after some 10 years in different countries, the family decided to repatriate to Yambio. 'I was asking myself: if I have to continue [in Mboki], all my life will finish and I will do nothing.' Bishop Eduardo helped the family by offering them a vehicle and buying their properties for 200 USD. 'So we have been very close friends with that Bishop.' The family drove from Mboki to Obo. There they hired another car to get to Bambuti close to the border with South Sudan. From there they walked the three miles to Source Yubu, paying men with bicycles to carry their belongings. From Source Yubu they drove to Yambio.

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11 'I just went and entered into the Timbiri Cathedral Hall. This man who brought the interview thought I was one of the people who were selected but that I had come late. So he did not take time to check my name on the list. He just gave me the question papers. Something made me not to argue.'

12 Bishop Daniel Manase Zindo was the second bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Tombura-Yambio (which then still included Maridi). The first bishop was Jeremia Kofuta Datiro.

Some two years after returning to Yambio, Charles developed an interest in law. His old Ugandan institution, Bishop Tucker College, was now offering law courses. Through a missionary friend, Charles wrote to the vice-chancellor and got offered a place. 'In 2002 when the SPLA was mutinying from Torit ... I was travelling over land to Uganda. We met a lot of challenges on the way because the mutineers were actually confronting. We were led by convoys. Then I succeeded to come to Uganda [but] my family was left behind.' From 2003 to 2007 Charles completed his law degree (LLB). After, he returned to Yambio. Now Charles was well-educated both as a priest and a lawyer. But upon his return, the church didn't give him 'the work of law, but [they] put me in charge of Timbiri Secondary School, where I was the headmaster in 2008 for 6 months.'

In August 2008 the office of the South Sudan Employees Justice Chamber planned to extend their offices to Yambio as part of a pilot project. Charles applied and was hired and tasked to investigate government civil servants grievances. When Governor Bakosoro was elected, Charles' boss was moved to the Ministry of Finance, and so he became the acting director. In that position he handled government employee's problems. 'If they are victimized by their employer they bring the issue to my table ... Because there was a set procedure of discipline, which employers have to follow. But of course they take advantage of people who are not learnt. What they say is the law.'

In 2015 Charles got an additional position as chairperson for the Land Dispute Resolution Committee of the County Land Authority. He went to the office on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 'Not as a job, I was only paid a sitting allowance.' His committee was trying to resolve land disputes by reference to the law, but it had very limited sanctioning powers. The funding for the building and sitting allowances was provided by Tetratex and USAID, but they paid no salaries. Substantively Charles struggled because 'Land tenure is not properly defined in South Sudan ... Also people are ignorant of the law.' His committee sought to resolve land disputes, but in doing so often became the target of criticism and even violence.

Charles' was leading a stable life in Yambio from 2008 until 2015. Quite a lot of fighting took place in Yambio from the summer of 2015 until spring 2016, but Charles decided to stay put. 'We were discussing the issue of moving out at church: in case the worst comes to worst, how do we move?' But they had decided that they could still hold on in South Sudan. That changed dramatically in May 2016. 'On 19 May 2016 at 10.15 pm four unknown gunmen came to my house with the intention to kill.' Three stayed outside the gate, while one went in, 'his face was veiled like a ninja. I jumped into my bedroom and he shot five bullets at me. One finger was shot off. By 1.30 am I was at the hospital in Yambio.' When Charles told me the story for the first time, he showed me pictures: of his house, of the bloodied floor, of him in the hospital, where his finger was amputated.

When I asked him if he knew why he was attacked, he narrated how he had heard a land dispute involving an army commander and a civilian: 'The civilian had the land title, certificate, and he was born there, it was his father's plot.' The army commander, in Charles' recollection, said he wanted the land 'Because he fought for it.' After making an investigation with witnesses, on 17 May 2015 Charles ruled in favour of the civilian, offering that the county could compensate the commander with another piece of land. 'But the army commander didn't want that. He left complaining and the next day he reported to the [county] commissioner, saying that the County Land Authority gave [away] his land.' Charles, though, insisted that the civilian had the right documentation and – as a lawyer – he balked at the suggestion to bend the rules in favour of a man who could use violence. When speaking about the ramifications of the shooting for the county land authority Charles explained, 'After they shot me, my colleagues feared for their lives. They needed security to resume working – otherwise they would halt.'

The day after the attack, Charles decided that he would leave for Juba. But the banks were closed on the weekend, and he was only able to get money on Monday and book a ticket with South Sudan Supreme to fly out on Tuesday. Come Tuesday, the plane did not come. Instead a Kenyan plane which had been chartered to fly to Yambio was looking for passengers to fly back with them. Charles, his wife and two children got seats to Juba for 200 USD total.<sup>13</sup> In Juba, Charles found that 'the security situation was equally not favourable. People take a container in their room, because they don't want to go out at night.' He also needed better medical care, so he left for Uganda on 27th May 2016. The family travelled by bus with an armed convoy.

In Uganda, Charles first spent three months in Kampala before applying for asylum at the Office of the Prime Minister in Old Kampala. There he was told that OPM could not make him an 'urban refugee'. InterAid, an NGO, encouraged him to relocate to Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement. Charles moved to Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement in October 2016. His house was close to one of the main roads between the settlement and Bweyale town. Because of his damaged hand, Charles received support to build a house from the Kampala Human Rights Foundation, an NGO that supported activists and journalists.

With its plastered walls, firm iron sheeting, and sheltered veranda Charles' house was nicer than average in Kiryandongo RS. In June 2017 he built a plastered building by the roadside, where he and his family operated a small supermarket selling mixed goods: drinks, soap, candy, toiletries, airtime and 'royco' (a food additive). The shop was called 'Password', 'because that is how you access things.' The other half of the building was still empty, and waiting for somebody to rent it. Across the road was a football field. When the parent-

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13 That is comparatively cheap, normally a one-way flight Juba-Yambio costs between 100 and 150 USD.

run school on that pitch held breaks, dozens of students would come to Charles' shop to buy candy and drinks.

Charles often sat on the porch of the shop on a green plastic chair, and was sometimes joined by his children, acquaintances or just passers-by. His shop's porch was where we talked most of the time. Every time I came to Bweyale, I tried to visit Charles. He was very analytical, and he always offered me an update of the situation in the refugee settlement. Topics usually included recent disputes, OPM policies, aid delivery, and the politics of South Sudan. Charles was a man of the world and follower of news, and frequently made reference to the situation in other countries: Brexit; the ousting of Mugabe and Bashir; the tenure of Trump.

Charles had countless ideas on how the situation in South Sudan should be addressed – there should be general disarmament, reform of the armed forces, and the international community should invest heavily in the education of refugee children as a way to build peace in the future. He was critical of what he saw as the lack of meaningful support from the outside world, 'Humanitarian aid just salvages the crisis. You can keep us alive, but for what? If we have no education we just sit around waiting to die.' Reflecting on displacement, Charles was sombre, even gloomy:

When you leave your place and go, you have lost almost everything ... You become a beggar, depending on relief. Being an IDP is better, you are within your country. When you cut with your country completely, you cannot plan your future. Children are not going to school. It's not easy. To sit like this when you have dependents. It means that the future is dead. The children have nothing to return with.

During one of my visits in June 2017, we discussed the assassination of Ismail, a reputable doctor in Yambio. The event caused Charles great pain, and pause for reflection:

When we see people moving over the tarmac roads [in Uganda], wherever they want to go for their business. And ours is we kill doctors, we destroy everything every time. Life loses its meaning. It is like it was a mistake to be born as a South Sudanese.

When the topic of an eventual return to South Sudan came up, Charles was again somber: 'Some of us, we are expiring and getting old. And now there is no hope for us to do anything back home.' Despondent thoughts like these, were further aggravated by the boredom that seemed rife in the camp. For a man as active as Charles, it was hard to 'sit idle'. Boredom came up often in our conversations:

People are desperately suffering from what to do. Idleness is the devil's workshop. So it is good that Refugee Law Project is coming with a program for adult education

... because people will be engaged. The time for worries is reduced to when they come home and eat their beans, or when they lie in bed at night.

Charles, too, found ways to reduce the time for worries. Not long after his arrival in January 2017, he got involved as a paralegal for the Danish Refugee Council, an NGO. His task was to support the Refugee Welfare Councils (RWCs) in resolving disputes: about land allocation, lines for the water points, domestic violence, alcohol abuse. Despite his legal qualifications, years of experience, and the time he put in, however, the position was unpaid. He asked, 'For how long will you continue to do it at the expense of your own life? Motivation needs not just be money, it could be soap, salt or just 15 or 20 k [4-5,50 USD].' When I met him again in February 2019 he had quit the position. The contract had expired and the NGO had asked the paralegals to continue on a voluntary basis, promising that they would give a token of gratitude like soap. Charles complied for three months, but when the promise did not materialize he quit to focus on other things 'that can help.'

When I met him again in May 2019, Charles was enthusiastic about a new initiative in which he was involved: the establishment of the 'Azande Traditional Association' (ATA). 'Our goal is to record in all forms the fading customs, culture and language of the Zande. Because you know the young Zande cannot speak our language without involving Arabic or English.' Later he emphasized how Zande culture and history ought to be recorded before they are lost, making an analogy to the Bible:

You know the same is true for the Bible. Some of the letters were written 30 years after Christ died. So we have lost a lot. What happened between his birth and his 12th year when he entered the temple? And then again between then and when John the Baptist came? All those things were not written and yet we want to know.

Charles took up the task of writing a constitution for the association, a job he took very seriously. He showed me a very formal document, complete with perambulatory clauses. 'Our plan is after our meeting to register it with OPM, and to launch a website.' His work for ATA gave Charles new hope and energy. The same day, I asked him about his thoughts on 'resilience' and his own secrets to keeping alive and energetic amidst the most trying of circumstances. His answer moved me:

I'm a believer. I believe that God created me for a purpose. I don't know that purpose, but I believe it will avail itself as I keep living and pursuing. Life was becoming squeezed in my own country, so I knew that God wanted us to go. Like his discipline – they had to leave Jerusalem when there was hunger to spread the faith. When something happens to me, I want to believe that God has a purpose for me. And I am looking forward to the plan that God has for me in Uganda. Like this ATA [Azande Traditional Association], perhaps that is one of the reasons that

God has kept me alive ... God has a purpose for South Sudan. God may use some of us who are outside here for that purpose. So he allowed us to come outside.

ELIZABETH

*Pathway to the present*

- 1978 January. Born in Maridi, Sudan.
- 1991 Completed primary 7. Moved to Zaire (DRC), Kuku Camp.
- 2002 Returned to Maridi.
- 2003 Returned to DR Congo, Ariwara.
- 2010 Moved to Maridi, then Mundri.
- 2015 April 21. War came to Mundri, fled to Maridi.
- 2015 April 28. War broke out in Maridi, fled to Yambio.
- 2015 December. Fled to DR Congo.
- 2016 January. Moved to Uganda.
- 2016 April. Arrived in Kiryandongo.
- 2016 December. Traveled to Maridi to pick up more children to bring back to Uganda.

*Portrait*<sup>14</sup>

Elizabeth was born in 1978, on 1 January,<sup>15</sup> the child of Foibe Gabriel and Hamza Abdallah. She grew up in Maridi until she was 13 and completed her primary school 7. In 1991, at the height of the SPLA activity in Western Equatoria, Elizabeth and her family went to Dungu, Zaire (now DR Congo). She stayed there in Kaka refugee camp for 10-11 years. 'That was good: there were no lines for food, you could move out,' she recalled, comparing it favorably to her recent experience in Uganda. In 2002 Elizabeth moved back to Maridi, but the next year she was forced again to return to Congo when the SPLA were 'marrying people by force.' Coming to Congo, she did not return to the camp, but instead to Ariwara, a small town near the border with Uganda. From 2003 to 2010, she stayed in Congo. 'All my children were born in Congo.'

Elizabeth returned to Maridi in 2010. She found work in the nearby town Mundri, running a wholesale shop and a restaurant, similar to her businesses in Uganda. Life in Mundri was good, and she had a lot of business: 'I had

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14 Based on oral history interviews, 15 May 2017; 9 February 2018; 9 March 2018; 15 May 2018; 16 November 2018; and 11 April 2019.

15 Often, birth dates were not recorded in Sudan. The need to know a precise date often only came up in confrontation with the state bureaucracy, and because people did not know the exact date (but rather the season, or what else happened around that time) bureaucrats would often list the birth date as the first of the month in which the person estimated to have been born.

a hotel, restaurant, second-hand clothes business.' But Mundri was one of the towns first rocked by violence in Western Equatoria, when farmers and migrating cattle keepers clashed. 'On 21 April 2015 war came to Mundri, so I ran to Maridi.' She recalls without sharing further details of the conflict and her experiences of it. 'After 7 days there, war broke out there too so I ran to Yambio. In December 2015 I went to Congo, then by January 2016 I came here.'

Upon her arrival to Uganda, Elizabeth had her mind set on Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement. To avoid UNHCR and OPM allocating her to a random settlement in West Nile, she told the Ugandan border officials that she had come to visit her sons who were living and studying in Kampala. After some time in Kampala, Elizabeth arrived in Kiryandongo in April 2016. When she registered at the Reception Center, 'They gave me land in Magamaga.' But when she went to see the land, she found that 'People were not there and I cannot stay alone.' Having stayed all her life in trading centres, she did not feel like living 'alone'. She decided only to keep the land for cultivation, but to look for elsewhere to live. She returned to the Reception Centre and was lucky to meet a Sudanese Acholi woman who had already lived in Kiryandongo for 22 years. That woman offered that Elizabeth could stay on a piece of her land near the Reception Center. Elizabeth asked her for a spot 'by the roadside ... for business to help my life.'

Since 2017, Elizabeth also rents a small shop in the bustling market of Bweyale. She sold mixed goods: rice, coffee, herbs, soap, orange juice, Omo washing powder, apples, honey from Congo, new clothes and Congolese fabric. On her right there were male butchers selling goat meat, loudly wooing customers and continuously chasing the flies from the meat. On Elizabeth's left was a lady selling powdered herbs. And opposite her, a handful of women selling potatoes, tomatoes, onions, garlic, pineapple, and lemon. Elizabeth spent most days at the shop, and this is where I would most frequently meet her. As we talked she would pack coffee into small bags, or pause to deal with clients. Elizabeth's main clients are South Sudanese, 'Ugandans cannot buy orange juice or meat, it is only South Sudanese! They get money from Juba!' Business in the market was better than in the camp, but still 'It only covers my rent and bodaboda, there is little benefit.'<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth paid 70,000 UGX per month to rent her shop. On an inventory of 1,000,000 UGX, she estimated to make 150,000 UGX profit.<sup>17</sup> With many children to provide for, that was not a lot. 'So there is nothing. That is just enough to push life and keep me busy.' In addition to her business, Elizabeth held various positions in Uganda. She was an adviser in church, worked from time to time as a translator for the camp management, and was the chairperson, sometimes called chief, for the Azande in Bweyale and Kiryandongo (see Section 8.4.2.1).

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16 20180209 Bweyale – Elizabeth Night

17 'When I buy a crate of soda for 10 500 UGX, I sell it again for 12 000 UGX. I sell bags of water for 100 UGX.'



Like most adults in the settlements, Elizabeth cared for many children. In December 2016, about a year after leaving Yambio, she traveled back to South Sudan over land (Arua (UG), Ariwara (DRC), Dungu, Nabiapai (SS), Yambio, Maridi) to get seven children that were left there, some of them orphans. During the good years in South Sudan when she was making money, Elizabeth had already sent some of her children to school in Uganda:

I sent them some 3000 USD for 10 children. But of course some kids they lie about graduating and paying school fees, they are just enjoying. So when I came to visit them, I wasn't sure what to expect. But then my two eldest boys were graduating with degrees from St Lawrence University. Now the third is doing Public Health in Entebbe and he has been named Mr Kumba for being the smartest. The two girls are in S3 and P7.

Elizabeth also paid for the house that her children in Kampala lived in. For 12 years, she paid 450,000 UGX per month. But when times became harder and her money 'dried up', she thought she would have to move the children elsewhere. To her surprise, the Ugandan landlady said it was better for the children to remain in Kampala and offered to reduce the rent to 200,000 UGX. When she came to Kiryandongo, Elizabeth would also collect food aid for the children and send it to them in Kampala.

In February 2018, I visited Elizabeth during the dry season. This was a notoriously hard time of the year. People's reserves had been hit by Christmas and then school fees in January, and many lived hand to mouth until the first harvests in April. In this time, there were shortages and prices went up.<sup>18</sup> When we met, Elizabeth told me she had sold the gold necklace which she had bought seven years prior, during the good times. She got 1,200,000 UGX for it, and used the money to pay for her house, school fees, and the rent of her shop in Bweyale.

Elizabeth was a strong woman, running small businesses and working for her community in the camp. Many refugees sat idle in the settlements, haunted by trauma, and disheartened by the lack of economic opportunities. Elizabeth remained hard-working, even if war and displacement had also affected her. Often when we met and I asked how she had been, she offered the idiomatic 'we are just here pushing life'. One time she elaborated: 'It is hard. Running up and down. Life here is also not easy ... It is harder than in South Sudan. Food is not enough, school fees... Not a good life.'

Elizabeth lived in Kiryandongo RS, but most of her children stayed in Kampala. This prompted me to ask her about the difference between the refugees in the camp and those staying in the town (also Section 7.4). She

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18 'Charcoal used to be at 25.000 – 30.000 has generally increased to around 35.000 – 40.000 UGX. And even the cooking material onion, tomatoes, vegetables and others have been expensive this making difficult unaffordable and difficult to cope with.'

explained: 'Town is better, because if you stay there you have money. Even if you have small money you eat well, there is water, your children will study well and be clean.' But she also saw downsides to 'town'. Most immediately, town life was expensive. But Elizabeth also worried how it would affect the children. 'Children who stay in Arua or Kampala are not OK. They get spoilt.' She frowned and explained:

They go to dance, take alcohol, bangi [weed], this thing they snort from America, what.. Some parents are paying the school fees for their children in Kampala, but they are not in school. All of them are on the road. Girls at 15-16 are all spoilt. In the camp, it is the same but not like the town. In the town there are many lodges, in the camp there are no lodges and their mothers are there.

Elizabeth also weighed the merits of camp life:

[It the camp] your children will not study well and be dirty, and there is no water. The food is not OK. You will just eat the food that they are giving you. The good thing about the camp is that you don't have to rent. You have your own house. Also medical care and schooling are free.

The camp has also offered her access to development assistance. Two of her daughters were sponsored for their education, 'The only thing left is 2,500 UGX per term for printing for primary school. For secondary the sponsors pay the uniform and the fees. If you are in the camp, your children will be schooling.'

Contrary to my male key respondents, Elizabeth seemed uninterested in national politics. She only mentioned the war insofar as it affected the economy and the lives of ordinary people. For instance, 'They failed to promote peace and this has led to a reduction in the cash flow from South Sudan'. Rather than worry about those big picture developments elsewhere, Elizabeth worked hard every day to get by, to provide for her many children, and to contribute to her various communities.

ALBERT

*Pathway to the present*

- 1974 Born in Mangbangou Boma, Ezo Payam, Sudan.
- 1980s Grew up in Ezo, primary and intermediary education.
- 1993 May. Left for Uganda, spent 4 months on the way. Stayed in Koboko, Arua, Kampala.
- 2000 Returned to Southern Sudan.
- 2005 Followed GTZ training in Yei for road construction.

- 2006 Dinka-Zande fighting. Became inspector of accounts in the local government in Yambio, and later in Ezo.
- 2008 Field officer for the census in Ezo.
- 2010 Joined SPLM state secretariat as secretary of admin and finance.
- 2010 Was elected to state legislative assembly.
- 2013 July/August. Became County Commissioner in Ezo.
- 2015 Personally targeted, left to Uganda.
- 2017 Worked as 'assistant admin' for South Sudanese NGO working in Uganda.
- 2020 Returned to South Sudan.
- 2020 July 4. Passed away in Yambio.

### *Portrait*<sup>19</sup>

I will sketch the portrait of Albert in episodes, as this is how I came to know him. I interviewed him across several years in both South Sudan and Uganda, and in different kinds of settings. Sometimes I will include bits of transcript to allow the reader to read his words more directly.

#### *2015 March 23, Ezo*

I first met Albert Moudie on 23 March 2015 in Ezo, South Sudan. Together with my colleagues Felix, Rejoice and Donato I had travelled to Ezo as part of a research project on justice in land and family disputes (see Section 1.2 and Annex 3: Methods). As always, we first reported to the local authorities before starting our work. And so, we knocked on the door of the old colonial-looking office of Mr Albert Moudie, the county commissioner at the time. Albert was dressed in a good suit and received us in his office together with his director of national security, Mr Peter Ayang. These meetings had not always gone smoothly, and some people in power distrusted me, a strange *khawadja*, coming to their area. But Albert was friendly to us from the beginning. He smiled, was interested, and had many ideas. He told us that he had been appointed county commissioner on 9 July 2013, and he introduced the county and its politics to us. We discussed the proximity to the borders with the DR Congo and Central African Republic, and how that affected justice provision in Ezo. Albert also explained where the unmarked borders were, and how lay people and chiefs interacted across the borders. We learned a lot from our short meeting, and thanked him profusely. Little did I know then, that Albert and I would meet much more often, and that I would come to regard him as a friend.

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<sup>19</sup> Based on oral history interviews in Ezo, Arua, Rhino Camp and Bweyale on 23 March 2015, 23 April 2017, 18 May 2017, 7 June 2017 and 8 March 2018.

*2017 April 27, Rhino Camp*

On 23 April 2017 I drove on a motorcycle through Rhino Camp, Uganda. The escalating civil war in Western Equatoria had chased many people out, and many now lived as refugees in Uganda. My research in South Sudan had also become impossible, so I had decided to continue my research in Uganda. In Arua a friend told me that there was a 'Zande Chairperson' in Rhino Camp, but he had no further details. So I set out one Sunday morning, asking for directions along the way. Ultimately I was led to Eden 6, and in that section to one particular grass-thatched house. I asked a small child if her father was at home, and she went in to get him.

When Albert stepped out, I first did not recognize him. We had not been in touch since that afternoon in Ezo two years prior, and I did not even know he had fled. But Albert remembered me right away, and told me that he used to be county commissioner in Ezo. Then I remembered and I was both happy and shocked: Happy to see him again, and shocked that even a former county commissioner now lived in a grass-thatched *tukul* with very little belongings. We exchanged some pleasantries, and then Albert told me about his flight from South Sudan. His account:

When I was county commissioner in Ezo, things were calm. There was no insecurity, despite what was happening at the national level since December 2013. But then Governor Bakosoro was arrested, and the insecurity started to increase in Western Equatoria. Then national security thought that I may have been grooming the Arrow Boys, and that I was coordinating with them. So when the new governor Patrick Zamoï came, he wanted to arrest me.

One time, I got a call by someone in the national security, warning me that I was going to be targeted. Then I saw a pickup with army people coming to my house and to the house of my mother after. I escaped on a motorcycle. Then I called Governor Zamoï, and agreed that it was best to go to him so that I could explain myself. Zamoï said that there was no problem. When I was on the way coming on the back of a *boda*, I received a call. It was my friend in national security. He asked me: 'Where are you?' I told him that I was on the way to Zamoï. Then he told me: 'Your bravery may be beyond what I am telling you, but you are going to meet your death if you come.' Then I decided to tell the *boda* to turn around.

Together with a chief from Ezo, I left on a motorcycle to Congo. But we hadn't realized that they were on the way waiting for us. When I saw them I told the chief: I think this is it for us. As we approached them, they pointed their weapons at us. But then there was a huge gust of wind. The dust flew up so high that I couldn't even see the road anymore. I was just praying and driving. Then when the dust settled, we were out of there. And the soldiers were nowhere. We stopped and asked each other: What was that? We didn't know but continued. We spent the night before the border. The next morning we left at 4 am. We had left just in time: the soldiers arrived at 5 am.

When we reached Congo we reported to the army there about our story. They told us there is no problem, but that they had to call Kisangani. And Kisangani

had to call Kinshasa. And then Kinshasa called Juba. And then Juba told them: 'Please, the governor of Western Equatoria needs those people so you arrest them and give them to us.' But I had a friend in the Congolese army who used to come to me in Ezo. I asked him what was going on. And he told me: 'I think your observation is good. So you make your decision soon.' Then I realized they were going to come for me, so we decided to jump over the border again back to Ezo.

When I came back my brother and a Bishop mediated with the governor.<sup>20</sup> Then I was allowed to stay, but I had to report to national security every day to prove that I wasn't in the bush. But then after Governor Zamoi went to Juba, he called his deputy to arrest me and torture me. This deputy called a meeting on a Sunday with me, my brother, and the bishop. There he told us: 'For me I'm a lawyer, and I haven't seen any evidence against you, Albert. But the best thing is for you to move as soon as possible away from Yambio.' I also asked the UNMISS human rights officer and he said: 'You may be in the right, but that cannot give you your life. You better decide soon.' So then I decided to move to Uganda. When we came to town again, the bishop filled up his car and borrowed it to me to drive straight to Kaya. Luckily enough, on the way we could join a UPDF convoy for 100 USD.

As Albert was finishing this part of his story, it was already getting late in Rhino Camp. Unfortunately, I had to leave in order to make it home to Arua by sunset. So I thanked Albert, and we made plans to meet again later. I drove home in good spirits, grateful to have again met Albert – a familiar face in this unfamiliar new land.

#### *2017 May 18, Rhino Camp*

Only at our third encounter, on 18 May 2017, Albert told me about his personal background. I had come to meet him again in Rhino Camp, and had prepared some questions for an interview. He told me that he was born in 1974 in Mangbangou Boma of Ezo Payam. His father Paul and mother Bernadette Mbutiro were married in the Catholic Church. Albert grew up in Ezo, and got his primary and intermediary schooling there until the early 1990s, when the SPLA was fighting with the SAF for control over Western Equatoria. In May 1993, Albert left with a common friend for Uganda. He narrated:

We spent 4 months on the way to Uganda from Yambio. First we went to Maridi. We spent a month there waiting for the truck of Trunk Oil Company, which brought food to Bahr el Ghazal. Once we left, we were stopped by the SPLA after a few kilometers. They detained us and put us in prison. I was young then, [our friend] was a bit mature. They said that we wanted to fight. But luckily a priest from Yambio heard about us. He told them that we were only going to Koboko for a family visit and that we would come back. So they released us.

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<sup>20</sup> I have removed the names due to the sensitive nature of the anecdote.

By that time, Yei and Kaya were under Sudanese government control. So we had to go through Abazer. We spent 2,5 months there because that was the village of our driver. We only survived there through his help. He would bring us food every now and again. But our clothes were full of bed bugs. I remember [friend] and me by the river crushing the bed bugs from our clothes with stones. From there we went to Angbokolo. [Friend] and I went to the market, but we were arrested by the Congolese police. They tried to interrogate us, but we did not understand their languages, so he brought us to the police station. Lucky enough, the key to the prison was not there. So he told us to sit and wait while he went to get the key. So [friend] and I ran and sneaked back to the car. We told the driver all that had happened and he put us inside. The next evening we left. There was a roadblock on the way, so the driver covered us with a carpet. We reached Kile in Uganda, near Koboko. At the border they were registering refugees, but we did not want to be registered because we feared they would transport us to the camp. We just wanted to get to Koboko. So we snuck out of the car, and joined it again after the checkpoint.

We reached Koboko at 11 pm. We wanted to see our elder brother, Father X. So we went to the parish and met a priest. He asked us about our travel, and if we were rebels. By that time, Juma Oris had his operation in northern Uganda. We said 'no,' but he had so many questions. After some time, he sent the watchman to go and tell Father X that there were guests to see him. So he came out, and we greeted each other. He gave us a fresh bed – we had not slept on a mattress for months – but we told him we could not sleep on it, due to the bed bugs. So he told us to remove our clothes, and wash carefully. Then he gave us fresh clothes.

Albert did not tell me much about the years he spent in the 1990s in Uganda. Just that he stayed in Arua, as his friend moved on to Kampala. Later as rebel activity increased in West Nile, he was helped by Father Trudeau of the Jesuit Refugee Council to find his way to Kampala. He wanted to study medicine but there was no money. So finally in 2000 he went back to South Sudan, to cultivate and do other work.

In 2005 he went to Yei for a GTZ-training on road maintenance. They had a project to fill the potholes on the road from Ezo to Maridi, and first started with a pilot project on the road from Yambio to Gangura. But then in 2006 there was the conflict between Zande and Dinka. Albert recalled, 'That destroyed everything and the project was cancelled.' He then became an inspector of accounts in the Yambio local government. Later he was transferred to do the same in Ezo. Then he did his diploma course in Banking and Finance.

In 2008 Albert was involved in the population census as field officer in Ezo. Then when the SPLM reorganized, they nominated him as delegate. He became the secretary for administration and finance for the SPLM state secretariat until 2010. Then there was the general election, and Albert was nominated for a seat in the state legislative assembly. He won by a large majority, and was also elected deputy chairperson for economic affairs. After the referendum in 2011, he was elected chairperson of the public accounts

committee. And then in 2013 he became county commissioner, the position in which I met him in 2015.

2017 June 7, Arua

Albert and I had met various times mostly 'off the record', and I feel that I am learning a lot from him. I wanted to drive out to Rhino Camp to meet him again, but when I called to ask if he was there I learned that he was in Arua. So then I asked if he had time to stop by Zebra 2 – a nice, quiet bar – for a soda and an interview. I was mostly interested in his work in the refugee settlement, and in his analysis of the effects of conflict and displacement on social life. I have included here some bits of my transcripts to let Albert speak for himself.

*Bruno: So the first question I have is how you became chairperson of the cluster.*

*Albert: The first chairperson of Eden 6 was Joseph. He was elected on 10 August 2016. But after that he was committed elsewhere, staying in the camp was not convenient for him. So he resigned in November 2016. Then the people were saying that I should be the one to take over. Because I had been County Commissioner and so on. But I refused. So they gave me time to think about it. The meeting was rescheduled. People then told me that if people invested their confidence in me, it would be better that I accept and then later resign again. There was one other candidate. But when I decided to accept, he stepped down. He could not compete with me.*

*Bruno: And what are the sorts of disputes you work on?*

*Albert: Issues arising with the host community over land and firewood. When a case is brought, I have to inform the landlord, a *muzee* called Peter. From there, we call the LC 1 or LC 2. We explain to the community that refugees also need firewood for survival. We also explain the language barrier. Then there are not much problems. Water points have been an issue. The principle is that people should stand in line. But if someone comes and asks politely: 'Please, I have a child back home' or something urgent, then people should consider it. We also explain to the community that NGOs are also facing constraints. They were prepared for the people that were here already, not for all those who came new!*

*Bruno: And what about individual disputes? Do people come to you if they have a problem with their neighbor for example?*

*Albert: People do come. Commonly these problems are around poverty. There are no livelihoods. A man is not in a position to provide the basic needs. So there is no proper understanding in the household, and that leads to domestic violence. The women need salt. In South Sudan it was the responsibility of the men to provide, meet the needs of women. But now a common saying among women is: 'My husband is UNHCR and WorldVision.' Men are not providing anything at all.*

*The few jobs around are given to nationals. There are only jobs for refugees to translate and do low-level development promotion work (e.g. sanitation, hygiene). Most such positions are voluntary. People who had documents in South Sudan, don't have access to jobs here. There is no refugee who sits in an office! The Refugee Welfare Council is not paid either. And yet we are engaged 24/7 for the community*

and NGOs, mobilizing people. But you're not given a single coin, not even a piece of soap. The community selected me, but I will not continue for long. I've already handed my resignation two weeks ago to OPM and the community. Last time they refused it, saying that I am supposed to serve them. Now I told them that I cannot go footing around to follow up cases, and that there is no money. I suggested that my deputy chairperson can act in my absence. But eventually there will have to be elections.

*Bruno: Do you see similarities between the Refugee Welfare Councils and the Customary Courts in South Sudan?*

*Albert:* The RWC are not supposed to handle conflicts and pass judgements. We just keep order, and we advise people. We are not mandated to do more. But now the settlement commander found that there are many issues being referred to him. So he decided that now we should do Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) of non-criminal disputes. Still we are not allowed to fine people. If someone has taken a chicken, we advise them to pay for it.

*Bruno: Do you also deal with issues to do with defilement, dowry, kasurubeti, etc?*

*Albert:* We are not supposed to do defilement, that is a police matter. We only handle civil cases. If they are old enough, we can do dowry problems. When a man fails to pay the dowry, we call them in. We ask if this is true, and what resources he has. But often there is no money. So then we advise the claimant not to press too much for the dowry now because people are surviving on UNHCR. We also encourage the defendant to do casual work.

*Albert:* When you handle a dispute you are supposed to be five: the chairperson, the secretary and other members of the RWC executive committee (which is composed of 12 members). There are supposed to be two women, too. We don't have a fixed day for hearings: we just call a meeting anytime a case comes. The secretary takes minutes. ZOA came to train people on the role of the RWC, and in recording cases, and monitoring the implementation. They used an exercise on a land dispute.

*Bruno: How many cases would you hear per week?*

*Albert:* Probably five. But we tried also to create more awareness about certain issues that are common. So that people know they shouldn't be at loggerheads with their wife.

*Bruno: Were there also land disputes?*

*Albert:* Not really during my tenure. In Rhino there were no problems.

*Bruno: In Kiryandongo, many people found that the land they were allocated was already occupied by others. Sometimes they had initially failed to develop it quickly.*

*Albert:* In Rhino if that happens and you find someone else on the plot because you were too slow to develop it, then you are given another plot. There is enough land.

*Bruno: So another big question I have is about the impacts of conflict and displacement on the people of Western Equatoria. What can you tell me?*

*Albert:* First, that the livelihoods of the people of WES have been affected. We cannot meet our basic needs. In the Zande culture – but also beyond – the man is supposed to provide. The women manage the household. So now the authority of men is undermined by women. Cultural erosion. Men are not considered the head of the household anymore, but women are. Because you are being helped, you are not providing. Also, cultural aspects tend to disappear. The Zande are supposed to be trained. But people are scattered now. Families too. So you as a man, how are



you supposed to handle this situation where you have children in three different countries? Now there are no Zande gatherings where we would dance, sing in our language. What brought people together were the big days: Christmas, 1/1 [NYE], Independence Day. There we would cook food, talk, resolve issues. But here the ration is limited and so you cannot.

*Bruno: And who goes where? So some people stay in Western Equatoria, others go to Congo, others come here. What explains these movements?*

*Albert: People choose where they think they can live well. People go to DRC because they think they are the same Zande people, they share the language and the culture. So they will have access to land, and it is fertile too. But then that area is also quite remote. People come to Uganda because they want access to education. If they have resources they go to the town. Others in the camps have free primary education. Some arrive in Rhino Camp and find that it is very dry, so they move to Bweyale if they can. Some say it is better to die in South Sudan, and they don't go anywhere. It all depends on where and how they want their family to be.*

*Bruno: And what made you decide to come to Rhino?*

*Albert: I saw that DRC is also not safe. It is vast, and there is no proper system. I've studied in Uganda, and I know that the security here is calm. For anything to happen it will first face some difficulties. We were placed in Rhino and though it is dry, I did not want to change again.*

Our conversation meandered a bit from here. It was getting later and we switched from soda to a beer. He ordered a Club, and I took Tusker. I put my notebook down and we talked more freely. But then Albert brought up another topic that had fascinated me in South Sudan: the Ezo-triangle. When I visited him in 2015, he had told me about the exact border between South Sudan and the Central African Republic. That it was not marked by the road, as most people believed, but the river Mbomu. I had gone then to find out with a research assistant. We walked across the road and then all the way to a small river and across it, leaving us more confused than before. All along the way we had met people saying we were in South Sudan, and then suddenly somebody had said that we were in Congo. All the while our Thuraya satellite phone had still indicated South Sudan. So where was Central Africa? Later, in early 2017 I was in the Sudan Archive at Durham University in the UK where I found a handwritten letter from colonial-era district commissioner JWG Wyld, requesting his superior to inquire whether the French Equatorial African authorities (colonial CAR) could be persuaded to hand over the 'Ezo Triangle' to Sudan. I never did see any reply, but shared the document with Albert who was very interested, and told me that he had always thought this area should be transferred to South Sudan. With a joyful smile Albert recalled 2015.

*Albert: I was the one sending people to go and live across the road! I encouraged people from South Sudan, DRC and CAR to settle there! There is an old road of Baribara, dating back to a survey during the colonial time. He opened a small path allowing people to go along the border. He put nails in the trees as he went. This*

story was told to me by Ricardo Mario, the son of Chief Maria Diko of Ezo. In old Sudan, the police would train in Dingi. Also, CAR would tax those that would farm beyond river Mbomu. I sat down with [local chief], who is an Avungara, and I told him that we need to create that place now. So he talked to a chief in Obo (CAR). That chief said: 'The land belongs to the Azande, there is no other tribe who can claim it. The Azande have the right to it, and whatever they agree will happen.' The chief was also optimistic and ready. He said it is better that the place is proper, so our hope was serious. When I became county commissioner, I started to send some people over there. At first they were just cultivating there, not living.

*Bruno: If the area had been Sudan, why were people not living there?*

*Albert:* Because the place was reserved for the police training, to test guns. So settling there was not realistic. But my plan now was to claim that place. Because now the road passes Ezo center, so I did not like the shape of town. Shops should be on both sides. And also, most borders are marked by some sign or features, like a river or mountains.

*Albert:* But then one day there were going to be elections in CAR. Then their mayor came because she wanted people to be registered to vote. But she did not contact me. So I told security to detain them until when I arrived. I came, and then we sat with them. I told them: 'I am the county commissioner, and you cannot enter here without my permission. And what road did you use to come here? It must have been the road from Source Yubu, which is South Sudan!' And I said, 'This is not CAR, it is Dingi.' Dingi is Pazande for empty place, place with animals. I told her, 'If you want to go to beyond river Mbomu, you can come to me first to see your forest.' This place from the road to river Mbomu is us. So she went back to talk with the big person in Obo.

*Albert:* My aim was after some time to bring the Zande from DRC, SS, CAR to the border points. So that they could sit and construct their historical boundaries. At least during the time of the colonialists. When was the joint border point stone put? We should celebrate that day! We could gather to share food and ideas! We were only planning. Our idea was that if you come to Ezo, you don't really need to go through migration. Yambio is deep, so you need to process your documents. And it was working! Even if you were Congolese with HIV/AIDS, you could access drugs in Ezo without payment. They only need your photo, so that they can recognize you.

*Albert:* I wanted to smoothen relations with the other Zande in Congo and Central Africa. If I could have been there for long, I would look for intellectuals to contribute some money to send 100-150 Zande from CAR/DRC/SS to one place to study. Then over 10 years, we have like-minded across. They could have much impact. Well-educated, so that they enter politics. Then in the area of the Zande, people could move without passports – there would be free movement. They could advocate for peaceful unity.

As Albert spoke like this, his eyes lit up. These were big ideas that really motivated him. I learned a lot from his mix of history lesson and political idealism. I did wonder at the time how realistic it all was, given the sensitive politics at the time, the ongoing civil war, the scarcity of resources.. But Albert

seemed not to be in the least discouraged to think big: He dreamt in effect of a free zone in the heart of Africa.

2018 March 8

In 2017 and 2018, I met Albert many different times: In Rhino Camp, Arua and Bweyale. Albert helped my research a lot by sharing his insights, and by connecting me to interesting others. Albert was also involved in 'Hummingbird Action for Peace and Development,' the NGO of a mutual friend, Peter. From time to time, I also attended Hummingbird-activities or simply shared meals and drinks with Albert and the others. One day I met him at the house of another mutual friend in Kiryandongo settlement, and we drove to Bweyale together where we shared a meal. Over dinner he shared some insights into the differences between refugees in town and those in the camp

*Albert:* In the camp, everyone is together. Class does not matter. If anything happens to you, everyone will come. So ethnicity is also stronger. In town people live individually. I meet them only at church on Sunday, but I don't go to their homes. Also people are more class conscious. They don't want to live in the camps.

*Bruno:* Do you mean class in terms of wealth?

*Albert:* Yes, and in terms of education.

*Bruno:* So where is it easier for people to communicate with people from other ethnic groups?

*Albert:* In the camp of course! Because you are there together. You may even pick up some of their language. And if anything happens, we all go. In town you may be in the hospital and no one would know!

During one of these informal get-togethers that Albert shared his dreams for MIKESSE, the university that he helped run in Yambio. As I worked for a university in the Netherlands, Albert was interested in cooperation: Could we send colleagues to teach in South Sudan or Uganda? Could their students come to us for an exchange programme? Hummingbird was identifying 'focal peace persons' in every ethnic community in the camp, and Albert wondered if we could develop a curriculum for them to teach peace and unity. He continued: What about for the idle youth? Whenever Albert spoke of such ideas his eyes lit up, and his enthusiasm was contagious.

2018 November 16, Arua

The last time I met Albert, was in November 2018. John Kenyi and I had come to share a report that we had written for the Rift Valley Institute. We brought copies, and invited all key respondents from Rhino Camp, Bidibidi, Kiryandongo and Impepi Refugee Settlement to come to Arua. It was a joyful day

for us, and we were happy to see so many familiar faces re-connect. We hosted a series of discussions about the future of chieftaincy in South Sudan and Uganda. Albert was one of our most active participants, freely sharing his sharp views with humour and tact. Albert was a great teacher. He could explain complicated things in clear language, and used his great humour well. I am grateful for all that he has taught me, and simply for the friendship we built. In 2020 Albert returned to South Sudan to prepare the ground for the return of his family. But tragically he fell sick, and passed away in July 2020.

#### CHIEF ZAZA

##### *Pathway to present*

- 1977 Born in Naandi, Sudan.
- 1990 Family fled to Dungen, Zaire.
- 2000 Came to Adjumani camp, Uganda.
- 2001 Moved to Kenya, Kakuma refugee camp
- 2003 Returned to Uganda, worked as watchman with church in Rubaga, Kampala.
- 2007 Returned to Yambio.
- 2012 January. Naandi payam chief election held.
- 2012 September. Zaza took office.
- 2015 Arrow Boys started rebellion against government/SPLA.
- 2016 May. Arrow Boys attacked Ezo. Chief tried to mediate between rebels and government.
- 2016 May. Chief was warned, and sought shelter in Juba.
- 2016 July. Outbreak of violence in Juba.
- 2016 July. Took UPDF-convoy to Bweyale, Uganda. Moved on to Lira.
- 2017 Autumn. Returned to Naandi, South Sudan.
- 2018 January. Naandi formally turned into county, visit of Governor.

##### *Portrait*

Moses Zaza was born in 1977 in Naandi, in the southwestern corner of Sudan close to the border with the DR Congo. His great-grandfather Madi Zungubia was a tough chief, who never went to school. When the Arabs came to Naandi, he did not want to be converted and he protested their plan to build a mosque. So they arrested him in 1938 and hanged him in Wau in a place called Nazareth.

Moses' grandfather Madi was very young at the time, but he was nonetheless installed as chief. Then when the British colonial administrators came to Naandi and saw how young he was, they brought him to school in Timbiro, behind the barracks in Yambio. Moses' grandfather sat in school together with

the former governor, Abujohn. They studied up to Primary 4, and then Madi returned to Naandi and came to full power.

When Moses' father was born, grandfather Madi was already old and tired. Madi took long before getting children, and passed away in 196-something. Moses' father was still very young then, so Madi chose his own brother to take over. Moses' father enjoyed a good education and eventually became a teacher. In 1990 during the Second Sudanese Civil War, the family ran to Dingu, Zaire. Moses finished his primary school there, and then secondary school up to senior three at the Institute Wandu.

In 2000 Moses came to Uganda where he spent a year in Adjumani refugee camp, 'But life was not ok there, so in 2001 I went up to Kenya.' After two years in Kakuma refugee camp, Moses returned to Uganda again in 2003. He settled in the Rubaga-neighborhood of Kampala where he stayed with the ECS of Sudan, 'I worked as a watchman. I cleaned the rooms and looked for money to go to school, because I had nobody to support me. My father was in Sudan, but he was old and there was war and no money.'

In 2007 when peace came, Moses decided to go home. But instead of moving to Naandi he stayed in Yambio because it was more of a town. When he came back, the people of Naandi did not know him well. His father, however, was a very popular and well-respected teacher. Moses was his only son. When he came back to Yambio, he tried to work hard and honestly with the people, 'I listened to them. That is how they came to like me.'

Earlier in this book, I explained Moses' chiefly election process, his subsequent grooming by 'stayee' traditional authorities, as well as reflection on his work 'in office' (see Chapter 5). I also described how Moses had had to flee South Sudan once again, and how he came to Uganda (see Section 5.6). When we met in Kampala in June 2017, the Chief had been very uncertain about returning to South Sudan, especially Naandi, saying that it would not have been safe for him to do so. Yet a year later I heard through a common friend that Chief Zaza had spent most of the preceding year back in South Sudan, and had only just returned to Uganda. I called him, and we arranged to meet in Kampala.

On 28 November 2018, we met at the Equatoria Hotel in Kampala. Moses was accompanied by his Ugandan wife. The three of us walked to Arua Park. Long-distance busses departed and arrived here, and there were many Sudanese and South Sudanese shops and people around. Chief Zaza knew a small cafe on the first floor of one of the shopping centres. This was a meeting place for Zande in Kampala. During the hour or so that we were inside, nobody came to take our order but at least five Zande-speaking people stopped by to greet Chief Zaza and myself.

Zaza told me that he spent most of the time since our interview in 2017 in Naandi. 'My people need me,' he explained. The situation had improved slightly, and Naandi had been upgraded from a payam to a county. So now a county commissioner was installed as well. Zaza showed me pictures on

his phone of the welcoming ceremony for the county commissioner. They visited the different payams to announce the arrival of the commissioner. Moses showed me a picture of a chicken being sacrificed. When I asked him about it, he told me it was meant to be a cow but they only had money for a chicken. They sacrificed the chicken and sprinkled its blood on the road before entering a new locality, so as to make it safe. There were more pictures: of big men in suits, children dancing, crowds gathering. There was a picture of a car with small flags on the front – in the fashion of diplomatic cars with national flags – and Zaza explained that this was Naandi's flag: white with a hoe, pen and notebook. Then there was a picture of the chief and the commissioner at the tomb of Zaza's grandfather, where they went to get the ancestors' blessing for the new county commissioner.

The decentralisation also meant that Chief Zaza was now paramount chief. Still, he was not enthusiastic about the policy: 'This decentralisation is just divide and rule. There is nothing. You by yourself have to establish your office. There is no proper care. They give people titles but no money, so that is even dangerous ... It can even make you to steal, so that you have fuel to move with the car.' His salary was still worth very little, about 4,70 USD per month at the time.<sup>21</sup> When I asked him how he survived, he told me that his family contributed and, 'In your homeland you cannot suffer.'

As a paramount chief, Zaza's court had been upgraded to 'C Court,' and he had been hearing mostly criminal cases, often referred to him by the police.

I work with a lawyer who comes from Yambio. He works in the civil affairs court [probably means county court]. He is not a judge, but a lawyer. If something involved assault or a gun, they have their Code. We sit there together and see. Sometimes we also work by phone if he cannot come.

The Arrow Boys with whom Zaza had a number of close encounters and 'misunderstandings' also came to his house when he returned to Naandi. 'They apologized and said that they wouldn't pick up arms like that again.' Some people again complained that he talked to the Arrow Boys, but Zaza insisted that was a crucial part of his role: 'I'm like the UN. I can serve everyone. They are all my children. When the SPLA were fighting the *jellaba* [Sudanese] we also supported with food and intelligence. So what is the problem if we do it now?'

Naandi, however, was still not at peace. In Zaza's opinion, the national elites had to make peace and, 'They are the ones who should come down to us at the grassroots to explain.' At that time, 'There is too much fighting in South Sudan. Here [in Uganda] and in Kenya they don't fight. Because they don't want their property to be destroyed. Like this place [gestures to the

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21 Zaza told me he receives 1440 SSP per month, and that the rate at that time was 12.000 UGX for 1.000 SSP. So the salary amounted to about 17.280 UGX = 4,67 USD.

building where we sit]. If it was destroyed it would take ten years to rebuild.' Meanwhile the community of Naandi was 'traumatized by the sound of guns.' There were shortages, and new widows and orphans. 'There is no improvement. Things are going down down down. We are just trying to calm them.'

## Annex 2

### Poem: It has started again

This poem was written by Isaac Hillary in Zande in 2018, and then translated into English with my editorial support. Isaac published the text and an accompanying video on his blog, *Worondimo*. He agreed that the full English and Zande text could be included here. This poem is cited in Chapter 6 as an emic perspective on the outbreak of war in South Sudan.

*It has started again!*

The sounds of mortars have gone quiet one after another. The ring tones of cell-phones have gone mute. The music lovers have turned down the volume on their devices! The pumping heart sounds as if someone is coming.  
What is it? It has started again!

The natural lights of the fireflies have gone off. Women are quickly putting out their fire. Lights are going off one after another. The smartphone users are reducing the brightness of their phone screens.  
What is it? It has started again!

Slowly the breastfeeding child has turned its mouth from its mother's breast. An elderly man has withdrawn his hand from his dinner. The rats have paused eating groundnuts, and flee for refuge. The red ants have suddenly stopped their damaging work and went quiet.  
What is it? It has started again!

The swamps have gone quiet because the frogs have stopped their melodious songs. Owls and jackals have gone suddenly quiet. The crickets have stopped their nonstop stories to their young ones.  
What is it? It has started again.

The joyous sounds of children is no more in the air! A peevish child has gone quiet like night. The funeral drums suddenly go mute. The widow has stopped her sorrowful cry.  
What is it? It has started again!

The mothers are confused about the future of their offspring. Men are thinking about where they will take their families to. The grandparents are all wondering what is next.  
What is it? It has started again!



Women are spreading their bed sheet on the ground. Large bags are being pulled from under the beds. Children are collecting their books. Mothers are tying up new baby carriers. Men are securing their important documents.  
What is it? It has started again!

Highways are getting empty. The vehicles and motorbikes are no more accessing the routes! Main roads have been deserted by all.  
What is it? It has started again!

A small child has woken up and started to ask, 'What is it father?' The whole village has answered him in a low voice: 'Child, it has started again! It has started again! It has started again!'

*Ti Enge Koyo Berewe!*

Woro asangu na onga kina ti mburu akuraha... woro terefonti kisi wa mbata! A gi mazingo kakama azingirihe si ki ongo wa he na mangu! Kina woro bangbunda na foka tihe kugbu-kugbu-kugbu wa woro ndu boro...  
Ginihe gu? Ti enge koyo berewe!

Anzengue mbu ki wakina ikpiro gumba... adee na biso gayo awe ni kina boro ngar... .. bangiri awe na sa tihe kpaafure wa ti a bibiso rogo akporo ringara yo, a mangi sunge na terefonti na gbisa timaha ku sende kisusi...  
Ginihe gu? Ti enge koyo berewe!

Gude ngba-mai di ngbaru ti momu nai yeee... bakumba kusi beko kurungbuyo yee...  
Akuri ru zaa zanga ti ri awande...angbari mbu gu nyanyaki sunge nga ga ri bambu ki ongo zaa!  
Ginihe gu? Ti enge koyo berewe!

Adari na Azai mbu gaami dodoromo bia ku munga yo... agbuku, andima, afurɔ na ahuɔ mbu gaami sasara afugo rogo dudu bitimo! Akperende mbu gbetegbete pangbanga fu awira...  
Ginihe gu? Ti enge koyo berewe!

Mongo agude ongo sisisi! A rukutu mbu gandara ki ongo wa yuru! Woro gaza kporo kpe ongo dangu!  
Dekurugbo sungu zanga kpe be pa imisiri kumba ri!  
Ginihe gu? Ti enge koyo berewe!

Anaagude sungu ni kina duadua riyo kusende ni bere pa awiriyo. Akumba nari ngba rindi yo na pa wŕri ini ka ndu ka mbu adia yo na awiriyo ni! Tita agude sungu ni ngere tataita be gbinza kini ako nyanyaki gbe!  
Ginihe gu? Ti enge koyo berewe!

Adee na gbaraga kpe aroko tihe ti kptosende... kikingi amangu mbar<sup>o</sup> nakura  
ti apambara yo...  
Agude sura na dungura zegino awaraga ku pati yo... adee na s— vovo akua tinda  
agunde, akumba na mbakada bara gayo kpe awaraga sunge...  
Ginihe gu? Ti enge koyo berewe!

Bamukutu agene ugu wa — zire yo... Atorombiri na amotoro he peka abagene!  
Andu ti gene na ndu na kere bir? zanga boro na gihe worondu yo!  
Ginihe gu? Ti enege koyo berewe!

Tooni gude zingi be rame ki tona kina sanahe, 'Ginihe du buba?' Ringara na baha  
karaga pai kina ku bani fu gi tooni gude re... Ti enge koyo berewe gude! Si tona  
berewe! Si enge koyo berewe! Pai na tona nga si a ki ru te ya?



## Annex 3

### Methods and multi-sited displaced ethnography

In the Introduction I explained my longitudinal and multi-sited displaced ethnography. In this Annex, I will explain further *where*, *when*, and *how* I conducted my research, and *why* so. I will also candidly detail some of the dilemmas and challenges that I faced, and how I responded to them.

#### A3.1 PLACES AND TIMES

##### A3.1.1 South Sudan

First, I spent a little over three months in Western Equatoria State, South Sudan, on two visits between August 2014 and April 2015. I first arrived in Yambio in September 2014 as part of a joint research project on ‘primary justice’ between the Van Vollenhoven Institute, aid organization Cordaid, and the Justice and Peace Commission (JPC) of the Catholic Diocese Tombura-Yambio. The research was sponsored by the Netherlands government through the Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law. We held a ‘kick off’-meeting for the project in Yambio in January 2015 to brainstorm about primary justice and to introduce our research team.

For three months I worked with an all-Western Equatorian team of eight local research assistants of the Justice and Peace Commission. We split up in teams of two, to research local justice in Western Equatoria. We did the lion’s share of the research in Yambio, Nzara, Ezo and Tambura counties. Within those counties, we mostly focused on towns. The local researchers also visited Ibba, Maridi and Mundri-West. But none of us did research in the far east (Mundri-East) or in the north (Mvolo and Nagero) of the state.

Next to the JPC office in Yambio there was a halfway constructed building: The walls were there, but it had no windows, floor or doors. Every day we met there, moving some chairs from the JPC office to sit in a circle and discuss our research findings and plans. Much of what I know about Western Equatoria, I have learned in those sessions. My colleagues also helped me to navigate the towns, roads, etiquette and conversations.

In Yambio I lived in a room at the Catholic Diocese, sharing meals mostly with the religious, the bishop, and their guests. After working hours, I would stroll the market, attend church services, or go running or mountain biking. There was a small group of other foreigners that I shared meals and drinks

with: researchers, aid workers and UN staff mostly, but on occasion also US special forces<sup>1</sup> and loggers.<sup>2</sup>

This was a moment of peace, of post-conflict return migration and reconstruction. Dispute resolution institutions were functioning: customary courts, the County Land Authority and the County and High Courts. We were able to do our research, and learn a lot about the workings of various justice systems in this remote part of one of the world's most fragile and conflict-affected states. It was hard, then, to imagine things changing for the worse. But over the course of 2015 war 'started again' in Western Equatoria (see Chapter 6 and A3.3.1).

The war forced me to recalibrate my research. One option was to write a thesis with the material I had gathered until then, another option was to start anew somewhere else. But when hundreds of thousands South Sudanese moved to Uganda over the course of 2015 and 2016, I decided to see if I could continue my research there, to study how conflict and displacement were affecting social life among the Zande of Western Equatoria.

### A3.1.2 Uganda

Between November 2015 and July 2019, I spent 15 months in Uganda. My entrance point for ethnographic inquiry in Uganda was not a *place* at first, but rather a group of *people*: Western Equatorian and particularly Zande refugees in Uganda. This focus had three advantages. First, it suited my previous experience and network in Western Equatoria. Second, I limited myself to a more manageable sub-group than 'South Sudanese refugees'. Third, based on earlier literature and my research in South Sudan, I anticipated that various groups' experiences in exile would differ. Although I set out to study 'Western Equatorians' and 'Zande', I wanted to treat the salience of these identity markers and the coherence of these groups as empirical questions.

Researching displaced people came with a predictable challenge: people who regarded themselves as belonging to a group (e.g., family, clan, ethnic group, nation) had been 'scattered' in different places (see Chapters 6 and 7). To find people in Uganda I took a two-pronged approach: First, I connected with a handful of acquaintances whom I knew had crossed the border. Peter Minaida, the former manager of the JPC in Yambio who had also welcomed me to Yambio in 2014, was now in Uganda. He had brought part of his family to safety in Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement. I also linked up with one of my former research assistants in Yambio, who was now living in Kampala with his parents. These acquaintances would refer me to other people, and so I could snow-ball further. Second, and to avoid too much of a 'selection bias',

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1 The American forces were stationed near Nzara to help the UPDF fight the LRA.

2 Especially the men from Equatoria Teak Company.

I would work through different entry points and sometimes find people on my own. I went to football matches, church services, even refugee settlements and just started to speak with people and ask if there were people from Western Equatoria around. In this way, I found two of the people that would become my key respondents, whom I had also met before in Western Equatoria, Charles and Albert. My time in South Sudan and social network helped me to get access to people more quickly, and to understand where they were coming from.

I quickly learned that many Zande refugees in Uganda lived in Kiryandongo RS and nearby Bweyale town, with sizeable but smaller groups in Rhino Camp, Arua and Kampala. So that is where I focused most of my research. I also visited refugee settlements in Imvepi, Bidibidi and Adjumani. From 2018, my wife worked with the UN in Entebbe and so we shared a house there. I would travel up north to stay at Christos Centre in Arua or New Doral Guesthouse in Bweyale, and visit the surrounding settlements. After some days or weeks, I would return to Entebbe to write. I travelled around frequently – initially by bus, later by motorcycle – and carried with me news and photos from across the country.

In Uganda, besides conducting my doctoral research, I also worked on two sub-projects with South Sudanese colleagues: 1) with John Kenyi for the 'South Sudan Customary Authorities'-project of the Rift Valley Institute, funded by the Swiss Government; and 2) with Isaac W Hillary for the 'Deconstructing Notions of Resilience: Diverse Post-Conflict Settings in Uganda'-project of the London School of Economics' Firoz Lalji Centre for Africa, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation.

### A3.2 METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

#### A3.2.1 Multi-sited ethnography

Initially my plan was to do research in Western Equatoria alone. When war 'interrupted' my research plans, I thought my research was doomed to fail. I took much of 2016 to teach various courses at Leiden University, and to reconsider. Eventually, I found inspiration and consolation from other scholars who by choice or coercion had been led to do 'multi-sited ethnographies'. Peter Loizos, a pioneer in refugee ethnographies, had not planned to write about the displacement of his Cypriot relatives. Equally, many scholars of the Sudans were forced to improvise around periods of war and displacement, doing research when and where it was possible to compose books rich with connections across time and place (Felix da Costa 2018; Akoi and Pendle 2021; James 1979; Hutchinson 1996; Kindersley 2016).

Eventually, I came to see the multi-sited nature of my research as a strength. For over a century, conflict and displacement had been crucial forces

in the history of Western Equatoria and the Zande. The present crisis was a 'rupture' but it was not new to many people: Those who were born in the 1960s had often been displaced three or four times before. Beyond war, other factors had encouraged international migration and return. Attempting to brush that away in the service of a neat ethnography of a single place and people would have been misguided and dishonest.

By adopting a similar multi-sited ethnographic approach, my work could better respond to the call of Colson and Harrell-Bond for anthropologists to 'focus on people in transition, who are uneasy about themselves in a world that ignores their desire and need for continuity' (Colson 2003, 3). But beyond rupturing and liminality, the multi-sited ethnographic method also allowed me to see continuities and attempts at reconstruction. I found inspiration in Malkki's work on Burundian refugees:

[This is] not an ethnography of any eternal place or 'its people,' nor is its aim to give a comprehensive account of the social life of a 'community.' [Instead] it is concerned to explore how displacement and deterritorialization – conditions which are 'normal' for increasingly large numbers of people today – may shape the social construction of 'nationness' and history, identity and enmity (Liisa H. Malkki 1995, 1).

This – how displacement shapes social (re)construction of various kinds – became a primary interest. I came to recall many of the people who played formative roles in Western Equatoria in 2014-5 had been 'returnees'. Although at the time I had no idea that my research focus would shift towards displacement, we had always asked people to speak about their lives and whether they had always lived in Western Equatoria. That data now suddenly became especially useful. So after my own geographical shift to Uganda, I also made an analytical shift – looking at our prior material from South Sudan with a different lens to see that it already taught us much about prior episodes of war and displacement, and about connections across time and space. It also taught us how more generally, ideas and identities had circulated 'in diffuse time-space' (Marcus 1995), e.g. the Zande Kingdom, the codification of customary law, the demarcation of land.

In Uganda, my research became multi-sited in more ways than one: I conducted research in geographically different places, but I also became more attentive to people's personal trajectories and their ideas about connections across time and place. Practically, multi-sited ethnographic research requires even more opportunistic improvisation than single-sited ethnography. I could not simply design and 'execute' a research design, for one because my research 'subjects' (i.e. refugees) were scattered and mobile. Instead, I had to become just as connected as many refugees were: using phone calls, Facebook and Whatsapp messages to check how and where people were, just as they were checking in on me. I had to be flexible to meet whenever and wherever it suited people, and I travelled around a lot. Like Schapendonk, I found re-

searching in this way 'allowed me to keep track of people's changing, and sometimes remarkably unchanging, situations' (Schapendonk 2020, 7).

### A3.2.2 Interviews, small talk, and transcripts

In South Sudan, our team carried out 338 semi-structured, unstructured interviews, focus group discussions, and court observations. Our interviews focused on disputants and authorities (e.g., chiefs, judges, prison authorities, police, headmen and county commissioners). We observed in the customary courts and County Land Authority. We also collected and digitized customary court records (see Annex 4). One time, the president and clerk of Yambio's High Court gave us permission to read the court records on three land disputes which had been resolved a year prior, so that we could research whether and how the ruling had been implemented. When respondents spoke good English, I would ask questions directly. When they were more comfortable in Zande or Juba-Arabic I relied on research assistants to interpret. As often with anthropology, the line between research and life itself has been blurry. I have learned a lot from informal encounters: roadside small-talk, church services, shared teas or dinners, Whatsapp or Facebook-chats, and football matches.

In Uganda my colleagues and I organized some 138 semi-structured interviews, oral histories and focus group discussions. For the Ugandan camp authorities perspective, we relied mostly on discussions with OPM officials in Kampala and Arua. I did not speak to UNHCR-officials, or with people working with other aid organizations. By far most of my interviews in Uganda were with Western Equatorial refugees, some of whom also occupied leadership positions in the Refugee Welfare Councils or Community Organisations. As people were more 'scattered' in Uganda my research was more mobile, and my learning was more limited to scheduled research encounters. In Uganda, too, I would attend church services, football tournaments and workshops, but it was still very different from South Sudan where from morning to night I was immersed in 'my' research site. My key respondents in Uganda taught me about their perceptions and experiences also in other forms: One wrote poetry, and another made paintings.

Throughout, my preferred research methods were semi-structured and open interviews. When I wanted to be able to compare findings with colleagues and/or across respondents, I would prepare a list with questions to work through. I would ask clarification and follow-up questions, but mostly stick to the subject. But my most interesting findings came from more open and life-history interviews. From John Ryle, I learned to open interviews with an easy and stimulating question: 'Could you tell me your names, and what they mean?' Often, people would then also speak about their family background and their childhood. From there, I encouraged respondents to speak about their lives: where and with whom they lived, what education or work they



did, what led them to leave South Sudan, how and why they got to Uganda, how they lived here, what their thoughts about the future were. Mostly I would try to get respondents to the topic and then 'get out of the way' (Russell Bernard 2006, 216).

Despite my anthropological training, I hesitate to claim having been a 'participant-observer'. I did not, like Evans-Pritchard and Reining, live a full year in the same place, or learn Zande and Juba-Arabic sufficiently. Part of this was due to the multi-sited nature of my research, and the limited time I spent in different places (Schapendonk 2020, 8). But also in those places where I spent a lot of time and developed dear friendships, I continued to feel like a visitor and was often ill at ease. I think both my interlocutors and myself always remained aware of the countless differences between us, the most glaring one being the immense privilege that I enjoyed to be able to fly in and out of places, compared with their lot of, often, being stuck in a refugee settlement.

In some situations I may have become so familiar that I was a bit of a 'fly on the wall', but even that I doubt. The Comaroffs warn that in anthropology (as in other sciences) the conduct of research often changes what is being observed. I focused on peoples' narratives about themselves, their experiences and perceptions. There are pitfalls with such 'self-reported' data: People might eschew sensitive information or deliberately lie. That I was the research instrument 'recording' their accounts influenced what I was told (A3.2.3). While I tried 'triangulating' factual information, often I was at least as interested in people's (inter)subjectivity and 'lived experience', as in an objective 'truth' (Eastmond 2007). Qualitative research with its focus on 'being in the world' is challenging, especially when the subjects are war and displacement. But with Duffield I believe that qualitative methods are better suited to do justice to the complexities and contradictions that often characterise such times and places (Duffield 2014a).

Throughout the research I kept detailed notes with paper and pen, which I would transcribe into Evernote every evening. In this book I have anonymized all interviewees except for those who insisted that I should use their real names, and then only in those places where I feel citing them is safe for them. Due to the sensitivity of recording people and the time needed to write verbatim transcripts, most of my transcripts were a summary of what people said with a few especially powerful literal quotes. In two dozen cases my colleagues or myself got permission to record interviews (especially with more elite respondents) and of those interviews we made verbatim transcripts. Throughout I also kept field notes and diary notes, especially to describe my own perceptions and experiences, and to deal with culture shock and obstacles encountered.

### A3.2.3 Positionality and access

In research generally, but in anthropology in particular, 'There is no knowledge without someone who *knows* in a particular way' (Hastrup 2004, 456). My positionality ('the stance of the researcher in relation to the social and political context of the study', SAGE) shaped the research process in various stages. Inevitably, another researcher would have written another book.

Most obviously, my positionality affected my access: Where I could go, and whom I could speak with. As a white European man, I stood out in South Sudan and Uganda. To many respondents I looked like the white missionaries, aid workers, loggers, and soldiers who had come before me. Some people explicitly referred to this history and questioned my positionality. A grandson of King Gbudwe, now in exile in Uganda, reminded me:

Gbudwe started fighting the colonial powers. Do you know what the colonialists did? [*I answer that I do*] They killed Gbudwe! Are you here to kill me also? [*He laughs*] ... History records that the relation between the Azande and the people who colonized Sudan were not good. We could not sit side by side then like we are sitting now.<sup>3</sup>

Despite, or because, this dark and racialised history, being a white foreigner often gave me easier access to people in authoritative positions. Some people, I am sure, actively used my presence as 'a tool by which to record and gain recognition for their political and historical narratives' (Leonardi 2013, 10). Researchers have their interests, but interlocutors do too (see Chapter 1). Especially older and higher-educated men sometimes refused to speak to my South Sudanese research assistants, and instead insisted that 'if Bruno wants to know something, he should come to me in person.' But my access was constrained in other ways. Women with little formal education, for example, would often be reluctant to speak with me freely. Yet from those women some of my South Sudanese colleagues were able to elicit the most elaborate and nuanced responses. Other anthropologists in South Sudan were differently positioned and/or made other choices (see Section 1.3.3).

My positionality also shaped what people told me. In South Sudan, customary court staff told my research assistants about the use of evidentiary Zande oracles, including the famous 'poison oracle', something which they had never told me. I learned most about witchcraft-related beliefs and practices from my research assistants and their transcripts. Perhaps the court staff thought it wise not to discuss this subject with the white man staying at the church.

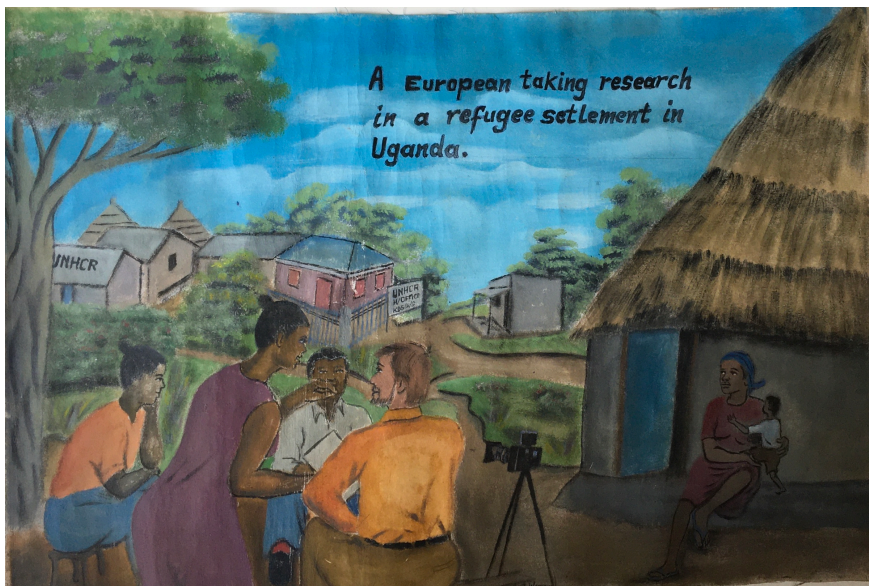
Despite my best efforts to explain my research, some people in the aid-heavy refugee settlements in Uganda thought of me as an aid worker. I asked my key respondent James to make a series of paintings: one on a customary

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3 Interview with Avungara elder, Arua, 9 August 2017.

court; one on flight; one on the future of South Sudan; and a last one on my research in Kiryandongo RS. In that last painting, a UNHCR logo is clearly visible in the background. James knew that I did not work with the UN, and he used the logo in other paintings to indicate that the scene was in a refugee setting. Still, the association of ‘white man’ and the UN, aid organisations, or the church was strong. Initially, some respondents assumed our interview was a ‘needs assessment’ and they would almost unprompted start listing the troubles they were facing. I would take time for lengthy introductions, make sure that people would know me before I would start an interview, and often worked with South Sudanese colleagues to navigate these positionality / access-quagmires.

Figure 18: Painting by James: On his perspective on my research. Commissioned by the author, 2018.



But beyond access and the research encounter, my positionality has also shaped what I looked for, what I saw, and how I wrote about it. As Lund reminds us, ‘conceptual interpretations are therefore not simply explanations of the world as it is, but the weighed and measured assessment of the most interesting facts and most plausible inferences as understood by the author’ (Lund 2021, 58). And so positionality is related to debates about representation as well (see A3.3.2).

### A3.3 LIMITATIONS, CHALLENGES, AND RESPONSES

The most glaring limitation of this book, is perhaps that I have explored many different places and fields as they relate to my broad questions about the effects of conflict and displacement on traditional authority and identity among this group of people. Banakar and Travers warn against (socio-legal) researchers spreading ‘their intellectual resources to thin[ly]’ over too many areas of knowledge and too many debates (Banakar and Travers 2005, 2; Ribeiro de Almeida 2020, 14). In my book, each chapter engages in different debates and would have merited a separate book. So I have made choices. My historical chapter 2, for example, offers no comprehensive history of Western Equatoria or the Zande. Instead I have, together with my interlocutors, selected only those elements of history most salient to this book. Similarly, the two chapters about refugee life in Uganda did not reach the same depth-in-place as scholars who focused on single refugee settlements (Kaiser 2010; 2006b). But then my aspiration was to show connections: Between times and places, but also thematically and even disciplinarily. I suspect that some readers may find the balance I strike between breadth and depth acceptable, whereas others may find that my excess curiosity had resulted in a lack of focus.

#### A3.3.1 Insecurity

Anthropological research in Western Equatoria, as in much of South Sudan, has often occurred shortly after or before war. Evans-Pritchard’s fieldwork in the 1920s took place shortly after the colonial civil administration had replaced military rule. Reining’s research was cut short in 1955 when skirmishes began around Yambio about the Zande Scheme, eventually contributing to the eruption of the First Sudanese Civil War. Siemens wrote how his research in Yambio in 1984-5 took place during the last two years of ‘the few years (1973-1985) available for research between conflicts’ (S.D.S.D. Siemens 1990, 210). Anthropological research in South Sudan has often been impossible, or cut short because of conflict.

My case would be similar. During my research period between September 2014 and April 2015 in Western Equatoria, I was able to travel relatively uninhibited over land in and between Yambio, Nzara, Tambura, Source Yubu and Ezo. The local MONUSCO-security advisor was fairly relaxed about security in this area, and told me mostly to stay away from local women to avoid problems. I would discuss our planned movements with Cordaid’s security advisor in Juba, and touched base with him daily on a satellite phone. Mostly, though, we relied on the local network of the church and local government for detailed and up-to-date security advice (Verweijen 2020). During my stay in South Sudan, I was afraid only on three occasions: Twice when I heard gunshots, and once when we had a puncture in a forest with recent LRA-

activity on the border with CAR. But nothing half as traumatic as what was to follow for my colleagues.

In the summer of 2015, violent conflict escalated in Western Equatoria (see Chapter 6). The Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs changed its travel warning from 'code orange' (only essential travel) to 'code red' (do not travel), and my contacts in Yambio also advised me against coming. So I cancelled my second research period. Our research team faced a dilemma. We were keen to learn how the insecurity was impacting disputing practices, the courts and local government. The Justice and Peace Commission and our research assistants were still in Yambio. But we did not want to risk anybody's safety for this research. During a week of meetings in Kampala in November 2015, we discussed the security situation and how our team members felt.

We decided that with increased caution, safety measures, and continuous re-evaluation, our research assistants could continue some research. To cope with the insecurity our team secured permissions from local authorities anew, and stuck to familiar people and places (Yambio and Nzara). We also instructed the research assistants to prioritize their personal security, and that they would continuously determine whether doing research would be safe enough for themselves and their respondents. We told them that they would be paid either way, thus giving them the freedom and discretion to see what could still be done, without pressuring them too much. And so between November 2015 and May 2016, they were able to do 30 interviews and 7 focus group discussions in Yambio and Nzara. In 2017 and 2018 two research assistants in Yambio and Nzara carried out a further 44 semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions during periods of relative calm, mostly with people that we had met before. That material offered us unique insights into the experiences and perceptions of 'stayees' (see Chapter 6). This was necessary, if only because reliance *only* on refugee testimonies may lead to a skewed understanding of the war and its causes (Revkin 2020, 3).

The violence directly affected many of my colleagues, interlocutors and respondents. Many were threatened, some were shot, and at least two were killed. Many decided to run away from South Sudan. Some came to Uganda, where I would meet them again. I have tried to write about this period from the perspective of my respondents (see Chapter 6). On a personal level, it has been painful to be so far away from South Sudanese friends during such periods of intense hardship. From afar, I followed news and rumours day by day as they spread over Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter. I felt powerless, and at times alienated from my home environment and my day-to-day work.

Uganda, in this respect, was much better. Even close to the South Sudanese border, Uganda was much more peaceful. There were incidental targeted attacks against South Sudanese refugees in Uganda, riots between refugees, and some criminal activities. Personally, I never felt unsafe. But for my South Sudanese interlocutors' security remained a key worry. Many were suspicious of other South Sudanese, and feared that the South Sudanese intelligence or

SPLA would be after them. On one occasion, I was tipped that a man who wanted to be part of a focus group discussion with former combatants might be a government spy. Another dilemma. I decided to tell the man the discussion was off, and re-arranged with the others to meet at another time and place than previously discussed. As an outsider I learned to trust a select few 'insiders' to guide me in these matters.

### A3.3.2 Representation

In South Sudan, but especially in Uganda, I often felt uneasy about my research. Why should *I* write this story? Why should this story be written at all? Some respondents asked me the same. My answer was threefold. First, I felt that there was intrinsic value in recording the contemporary history of Western Equatorians, however devastating. Second, I hoped that I could rectify some of the warped and outdated ideas that the outside world (including anthropology students who read Evans-Pritchard) had about South Sudan generally and 'the Zande' in particular. Third, I hoped that based on this 'case', I could contribute to a number of more theoretical debates (i.e., on land formalisation, traditional authority, community formation, war and displacement).

Yet especially in the refugee settlements, such academic purposes often felt insufficient. People struggled to feed their children, and then I would come to ask questions. For what? As Colson put it, 'Those who suffer the insults of forced migration ... may legitimately ask what right social scientists have to study them' (Colson 2003, 3-4). I did not assume a 'right' to research, and accepted when people were not interested to participate. As a token of my gratitude and as basic co-humanity, I would often try to reciprocate people's kindness and help. I brought news and helped with applications. Initially I had avoided given anyone anything, having been taught that this would somehow discolour the research. But I found that 'not giving' was not a neutral choice either. Almost all South Sudanese with something to spare, including my research assistants, would help those in need where they could. The more I felt connected to the people around me, the more I also felt this obligation to contribute – although never in direct exchange for interviews. Over the years I bought specific gifts from my own money (e.g., soap and salt, books, a chess set); paid for transport, airtime, or food; and in a few instances supported bigger projects (a roof, kiosk, video hall, medication, and education). I am sure that (anticipation of) such support may have motivated some people to speak with me. This was and still is a difficult topic. In a context of such abundant poverty, I felt that to give nothing back at all would have been inhumane, but that anything I could offer would inevitably fall short of the needs and risk provoking jealousy.

Some respondents told me they valued my presence as a foreign researcher. They felt at times forgotten, and were keen to be heard. Some saw in me a representative of the world beyond, who had come to listen to them. My respondents had sometimes had disappointing experiences with other researchers who had come once and then disappeared, never to be heard of again. So I made a point of coming back often, and of staying in touch online. In this light, I am beyond grateful to the Rift Valley Institute for funding two 'dissemination meetings' in Kampala and Arua, in which John Kenyi and I shared our report with our respondents, and had a full day to discuss our findings with them.

*Figure 19: Photo from Rift Valley Institute dissemination in Arua. Source: Photo by author, November 2018.*



This still leaves the question, why should *I* write this story? I have discussed how my positionality shaped the research itself, but should it perhaps even have prevented me from doing this research at all? Have not enough white men gone to 'remote African places, inhabited by 'vulnerable' and underdeveloped communities' (Mwambari 2019)? Is this a colonial practice in and of itself? I see the historical continuity, and have come to learn about my own 'whiteness' and the colonial heritage much more acutely through my stays in Africa. This has made me also much more critical of the Netherlands and its selective amnesia which, at least in my time, was fostered through our primary and secondary education.

Yet I think that a researcher should not be primarily judged by their race and nationality, but rather by the integrity and quality of the research they do. To enable such judgement, I have written this methodology annex. And to improve the quality and integrity of the research, I have sought to work in more collaborative ways. In South Sudan I still worked with local 'research assistants' who were not involved in the research design and whom I asked to carry out specific interviews. But in Uganda I sought and found research associates to work with more equitably. I was privileged to work with the experienced John Kenyi with whom I co-authored the Rift Valley Institute-report, and with the promising young scholar Isaac Waanzi Hillary, with whom I co-authored a paper on refugees' resilience (Hillary and Braak 2022). I found such collaborations extremely rewarding.

The present book I have written alone. But as Nyamnjoh puts it, 'science is a collective pursuit and no one has a monopoly on insights and the truth' (Nyamnjoh 2012, 65). He uses the metaphor of three blind men (anthropologists) making bold claims about an elephant (their research 'subject') based on their brief encounter with a single part. This teaches some humility. This book, too, is based on brief encounters with glimpses of a running 'elephant'. Perhaps it would be better if, like Nyamnjoh suggests, the elephant itself would speak about its experiences. Even if that, too, would raise familiar questions about the politics of representation, and about the existence of a singular 'elephant'. I certainly hope that future Zande scholars will write about the topics that I have explored and that when they do, they will find something of value in this book.

### A3.3.3 'Observer effect' in research on ethnicity?

Irrespective of my academic intentions, my research and writing are likely to impact in some way the very subjects that I describe. Part of this has been called the 'Hawthorne effect' or 'observer effect' ('that the presence of a researcher will influence the behavior of those being studied') and its effect on the ethnographic method has received more elaborate reflection elsewhere (Monahan and Fisher 2010). This dynamic deserves special scrutiny in contexts of war and displacement. Crucially, the effect of the research may extend well beyond the research encounter.

Epistemologically, this book takes a constructivist point of departure. Few things that matter *exist* unambiguously, and are instead embedded in webs of meaning that are shaped by history, linguistics and cognition, politics, power and (academic) 'knowledge production'. Anthropologists have sometimes played a problematic role in co-creating the social phenomenon that they set out to study. Consider, for instance, what Malkki termed the 'chilling traffic' of essentialist ideas between anthropologists, colonial administrators and nationalists of the 'groups' concerned (see Section 1.2.2). More recently, too,



De Waal holds that, 'Every writer on South Sudan has the uncomfortable experience that analysis itself becomes part of the conflict' (De Waal 2019a). Clearly, scholars must exercise caution when writing about social groups, with especially ethnic and national groups so often being the subject and object of exclusivist politics. But this is easier said than done.

I, too, have wondered how by researching with, and writing about, 'the Zande' and 'Western Equatorians' I was influencing those groups. This was less of a problem in South Sudan. When I arrived in Yambio I was excited to meet Zande people, as I had read about 'the Zande' in the classics of Evans-Pritchard. But then my research was about dispute resolution and the local justice system in Western Equatoria. That almost everyone there was Zande was interesting context, but not the focus of my work. Our focus on dispute resolution brought us to research 'traditional authorities', but again being 'Zande' or Avungara was no inclusion criterion. Later, I was happy that while in Yambio I had also discussed 'Evans' and changing traditions with my colleagues.

In Uganda, conversely, I looked actively for 'Western Equatorians' and 'Zande', using both as inclusion criteria and 'social search keywords', if you will. I had several reasons to do so. First and most importantly, I had researched in post-conflict 'Western Equatoria', but not elsewhere in South Sudan. I wanted to compare before and after flight, but could not do so for the enormously diverse group of *all* South Sudanese refugees. Second, the 'South Sudanese refugees' would have been too vast. Even if I had limited myself to Kiryandongo RS I would have had to somehow choose a basis to select respondents out of the over 60.000 candidates. Third, I found that it was easier for me to speak with Western Equatorians and Zande because I knew their area much better than the rest of South Sudan, and I already had some connections there. This helped me gain access and understanding.

But my focus on 'Zande' or 'Western Equatorians' in Uganda had its problems. Practically, some non-Western Equatorial South Sudanese refugees suspected that I would bring aid, and demanded that I also spoke to them. I could usually resolve any such friction by carefully explaining to them the nature of my work, and the reasons for 'inclusion'. But a second more fundamental problem related to the section introduction: Was I not actively co-creating the (salience of the) group that I sought to research?

After reading the critiques of classical anthropology (see Introduction), I had anticipated facing this problem more acutely regarding ethnicity. But the most problematic anecdote from my research concerned the supra-ethnic 'Western Equatorial' identity. John Kenyi and I had done interviews with Western Equatorians who were 'scattered' all over Uganda. Travel was expensive by many refugees' standards, so people had often been unable to visit other refugees elsewhere. In November 2018, John and I organised a 'dissemination meeting' in Arua to share our research report with our 33 Western Equatorial respondents. The meeting was a success. Our respondents were happy to be

in Arua, to stay in a hotel, and to discuss the report. But they also valued our bringing them together as a group. In the closing prayer of the day, one of the elders thanked us for organising the event and expressed the hope that the participants would work together 'to make Western Equatoria great again.' The next morning over breakfast, another of my closest interlocutors fondly and graphically recalled an episode of the 2005 Zande-Dinka violence (see Section 2.6), concluding by making another case for forming a strong Equatorian union in Uganda. In that moment I was shocked. We had brought respondents together to discuss our report, and had not anticipated that some of them might seize the opportunity to rally the group in this way. I was somewhat relieved to see that most other participants were not keen to get involved, instead smiling politely and eating their breakfast.

But it made me think. Why had my interlocutors' recollection of violence and barely-cloaked call to arms surprised and upset me so? Had I somehow come to sympathise with my respondents to the extent that I was blind to any violence they, too, could perpetrate or condone? I found inspiration here in Bahre's work on ethnographic blind spots based on his work on intimacy and violence in South African townships (BShre 2015). I have tried in writing this book to show how notions of identity and community are constructed, and how this construction may result from (and lead) to violence.

#### A3.3.4 Permissions / Access from the state

The governments of South Sudan and Uganda had very different procedures for giving research permission. In South Sudan, things were much less established. At the time there was no formalised procedure. We simply set out with endorsement letters from the three cooperating partners – Leiden University, Cordaid and the Catholic Diocese of Tombura-Yambio. In Yambio my colleague at the Justice and Peace Commission made introductions at the relevant authorities, working from the top down. First we explained our research plans to the Minister of Local Government, and then to each County Commissioner of any new county we visited. We would ask them if they would sign a letter to give us permission to work in their area. Occasionally we faced questions from local security officials, but normally they would let us do our research once we showed them the letters. In this system foreign researchers, once they have the authorities' permission, face very little scrutiny of their work and poor research practices may well go unchecked.

Uganda was different. Here there was a highly institutionalised process for evaluating research proposals, giving 'ethical clearance' and research permissions. The process cost me three months and 850 USD just in institutional fees (this excludes transport, printing, communication, not to mention the time spent on this). This obligatory process is overseen by the Uganda National Centre for Science and Technology, and explained in its 'National Guidelines

for Research involving Humans as Research Participants'. First, foreign researchers required an affiliation with a Ugandan knowledge institution. I paid 150 USD to be affiliated with the Centre for Basic Research (CBR). In my years in Uganda, CBR sometimes offered a friendly and conducive environment for discussing my research and that of others. Then, the NCST required researchers to get 'ethical clearance' from a Ugandan research ethics committee. In my case, Mildmay's REC carried out the ethical review for 400 USD. Like many other RECS, Mildmay is specialised in medical sciences. Nonetheless, they offered minor suggestions, urged me to do an online 'research ethics' course (heavily inspired by medical sciences), and then gave me 'ethical clearance'. UNCST finally approved my research for another 300 USD.

Nowhere during this process of getting ethical clearance and research permission did I receive substantive comments on my research design: i.e., topics to cover, respondents to focus on, methodologies to use, let alone on other research that had been conducted on similar topics. I had hoped that the process would put me in touch with Ugandan subject experts, and help me avoid 'duplicating' other peoples' similar research with a potentially research fatigued group of respondents. But that was not my experience.

Further, the process seemed ill-suited for anthropological field research which often involves improvisation, and blurred boundaries between work and social life. For instance, the Guidelines emphasise 'informed consent forms' and 'compensation for research participants'. I wholeheartedly subscribe to the underlying logic of respecting peoples' rights throughout the research process. But the practical stipulations of the Guidelines are not always practicable in anthropological field research. Research encounters vary from quite formalised long-form interviews, to unscripted group conversations, brief roadside catch-ups, telephone calls, and Facebook or Whatsapp messages. What is more, many South Sudanese people have not enjoyed a great deal of education, and they often have good reason to distrust state bureaucracies and its forms. So for a researcher to come in requesting them to put a signature or thumb print on a heavily formalised consent form is hardly a good ice-breaker. I chose instead to work with oral consent most of the time, and only asked my key respondents to sign informed consent forms after taking a very long time to explain the background of the consent form to them and giving them a full day to discuss it together and think about whether they wanted to sign it.

There is one permission that I never got: That of OPM Kampala. After getting my UNCST-research permit, I proceeded to OPM's Department of Refugees in Kampala. A colleague had given me the name and phone number of a helpful OPM-official. I called and made an appointment to come and introduce myself, and hoped to get their permission to work in the refugee settlements. Visiting this office was no mean feat. After finding the right office on a Kampala backstreet, I was let in the gate by an armed guard and directed through a metal detector gate, while my bag was being searched. Then I signed

a registration book, and got a visitors badge in return for my passport. Once inside the four-story building, I explained my purpose to a receptionist, and sat down to wait. After some time, I was given a room number and 'buzzed' through a metal gate to go up the stairs. When I found the right office, I was let in by a friendly man in his late forties. The man was sat behind his large desk in a spacious corner-office. Behind him was a white board filled with jottings, on his right a huge cupboard piling over with files. He was just finishing writing something on his computer. When I told him this was clearly the office of a busy man, he sighed: 'This is like a hospital, every day we get new patients, new cases. The work is never done.'<sup>4</sup> We discussed my research plans and the procedure of obtaining permission. It all sounded fairly straightforward. Once I had collected and printed all the necessary documents, I handed them in with the 'registrar,' to be brought to the attention of the Commissioner for Refugee Affairs. But after I had submitted my documents, I never heard from either. Follow-up emails and phone calls over the following months did not yield any result either. To make matters worse, my contact with OPM was arrested over land grabbing allegations, and the Department more broadly became embroiled in a corruption scandal.

I decided to seek OPM permission to work in the refugee settlements one level down, with the refugee desk officer. The one in Arua was welcoming, generous with advice, and happy to sign a letter to the camp commandants that they should allow me entry. It was from him that I learned most about the perspective of OPM bureaucrats – albeit not quite at the *street* but rather at the *district* level. In Kiryandongo RS, however, the situation was difficult. When I visited the deputy camp commandant in Kiryandongo RS, he said he needed a letter from the Commissioner of Refugee Affairs himself, the very man I had been trying to reach for months in Kampala. To get that letter, the Deputy instructed me to first talk to the Dutch ambassador to write a formal introduction letter for me to the commissioner. As my research assistant and I walked out, somewhat dispirited, my assistant told me that this deputy just wanted *kitu kidogo* (Swahili word for 'little something', a bribe). Only weeks before, she had visited the same deputy with a civil society organisation that wanted to start work in the settlement. At first the deputy had told a similar story of bureaucratic difficulty and tedious procedures. But once a brown envelope with 100 USD was given, he was happy to grant the organization permission to work. I could have tried to buy my way into the camp, but felt that would have been the wrong thing to do. It frankly made me furious that this man appeared to be using his gatekeeping position for personal gain. There could have been good reasons for not wanting outsiders to come into the settlements or wanting to scrutinise their plans, but the deputy did not give me any. Ultimately, my South Sudanese friends and acquaintances inside

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4 Meeting with official at OPM Department of Refugees, Kampala, 23 February 2017.

reasoned that if they had the freedom to move out of the settlement, I should also be free to move in. I agreed. So I opted for a grey zone route: to continue my research without the permission of the camp commandant. I decided that in situations where those in charge of 'the law' behave corruptly (see Section 7.6), I ought instead to be accountable to my respondents and my supervisors.

## Annex 4

### Customary courts caseloads: Methods and findings

To study exactly what customary courts in Western Equatoria did, my research team and I observed dozens of hearings, and interviewed hundreds of disputants and court members. To get a more quantitative impression of the work of these courts, we digitized segments of customary court record books. In these books, the court clerk (or in some cases court members themselves) wrote some basic information about the case: Date; the claimant's and defendant's gender, name, tribe, occupation, place of residence; the claim/accusation in brief<sup>1</sup>; and the ruling. In five customary courts we were given permission by the court chairperson and clerk to digitize these records in anonymized form (leaving out the names).

Subsequently I coded the accusation in brief (which was a written summary of the case) into categories.<sup>2</sup> I drew these categories from the accusations, but not all court clerks used the same standard language and so I categorised the descriptions.<sup>3</sup> Some categories were ambiguous in part because the descriptions were: a 'fight', for instance, could have meant an exchange of words or a physical fight, it could have also referred to domestic violence. Theft was also quite a wide category: some people were alleged to have stolen a bottle or shirt, others to have stolen a motorcycle or livestock.

Crucially, we learned from the court observations that it was often impossible to neatly divide disputes into categories like 'family', 'land', and 'witchcraft'. More often than not cases spanned these divides. In Western Equatoria as in the wider literature, customary courts often excelled at ap-

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1 Technically in civil cases one ought to speak of 'claims' rather than 'accusations' (a term typically associated with criminal law), but the customary court records used the term 'accusation' for both. With the civil law terms 'claimant' and 'defendant' it was the other way around (even in criminal cases people would use these terms).

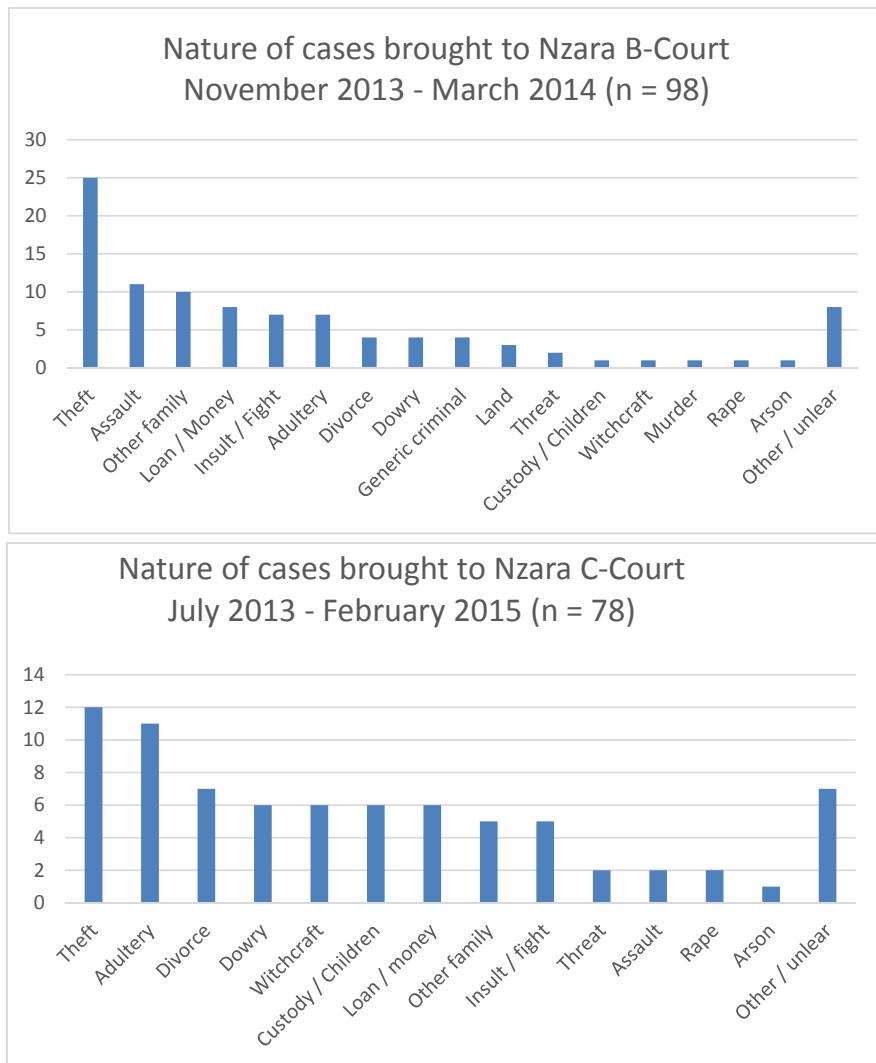
2 1. Other Family, 1.1 Dowry, 1.2 Adultery, 1.3 Divorce, 1.4 Custody, 1.5 Insult / fight, 2. Other criminal, 2.1 Theft, 2.2 Assault, 2.4 Threat, 2.5 Rape, 2.6 Murder, 2.7 Arson, 3. Land, 4. Witchcraft, 5. Loan/Money, 6. Other/unclear.

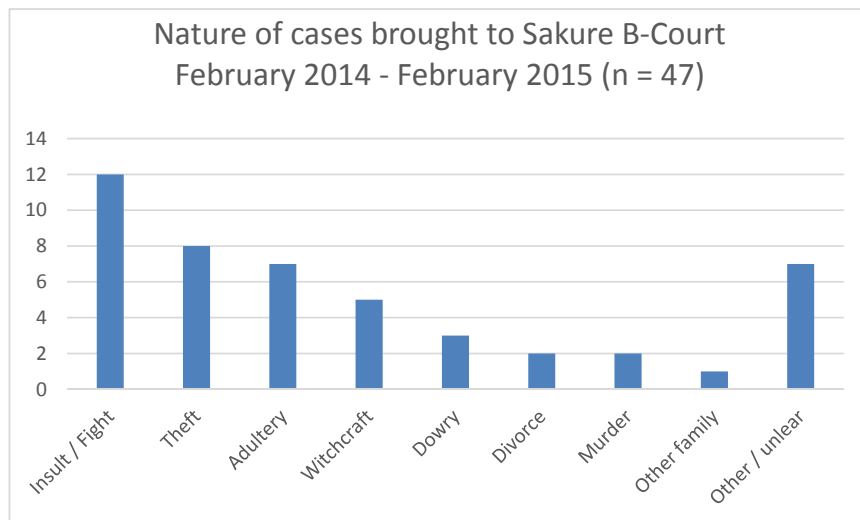
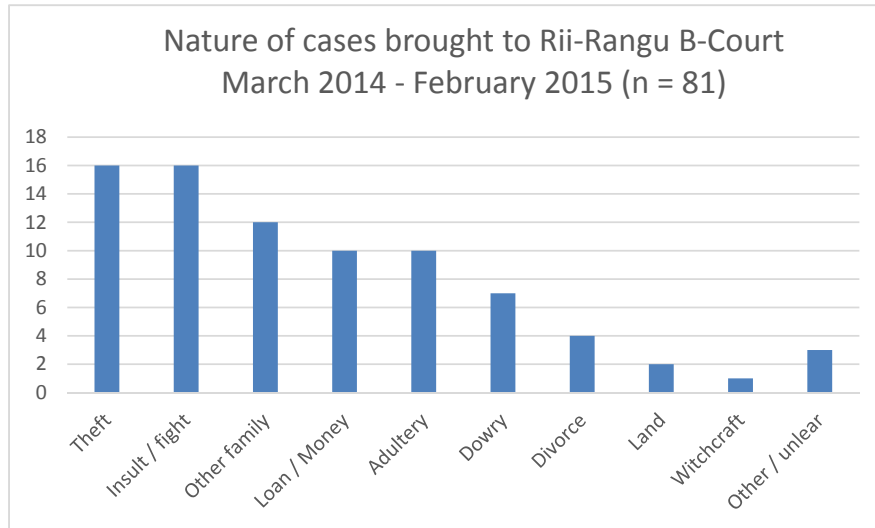
3 For instance, under 'Other family' I included cases about 'pocket money', 'leaving the wife without care', and so on. Under 'theft' I included loans without returning the object, and harvesting crops/timber without permission. Under 'threat' I included accusations about one party wanting to kill the other, even though in some instances that may have also involved assault. What I term 'witchcraft' was sometimes called that by court clerks, but in other instances they referred to it as 'native medicine.' Witchcraft accusations might have also played important roles in other cases which the courts (and I) have labeled as something else.

precipitating the complexity and specificity of each individual dispute, avoiding ‘excising [it] from the ongoing flow of communal life’ (J.L. Comaroff and Roberts 1986). In this sense, the following categorisations are a somewhat violent abstraction which does not reflect the sensitivity of the courts. Especially witchcraft and ‘insult/fight’ often came in at later stages of a dispute that was originally about something else (e.g., family, money or land matters). In the court records this was sometimes clearly visible. Many cases that start with an accusation of adultery, theft or insult, result in a ruling to approve divorce. But to maintain some consistency, I labelled such cases based on the claim or accusation, and not based on their outcome.

Having made these caveats, the following charts give an impression of the caseload of the five customary courts that we digitized the records of.

Figure 20: Cases brought to five Western Equatorial customary courts







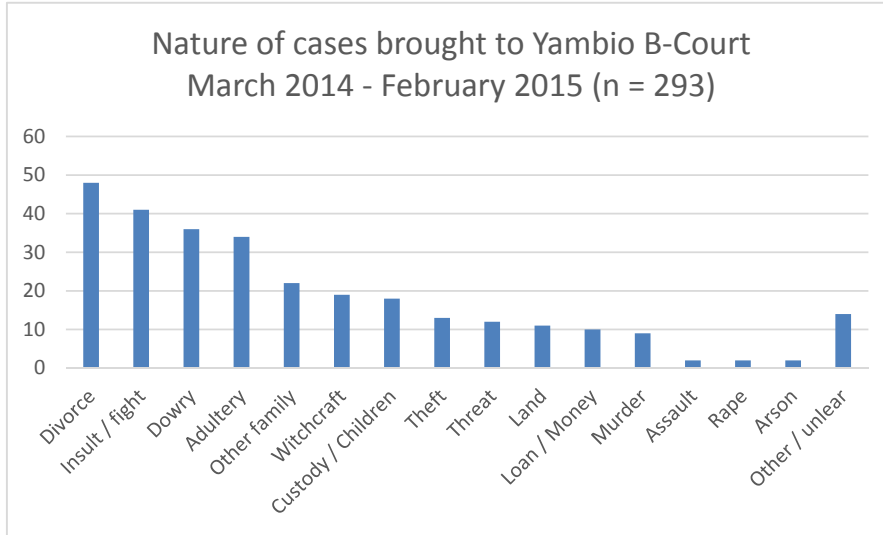
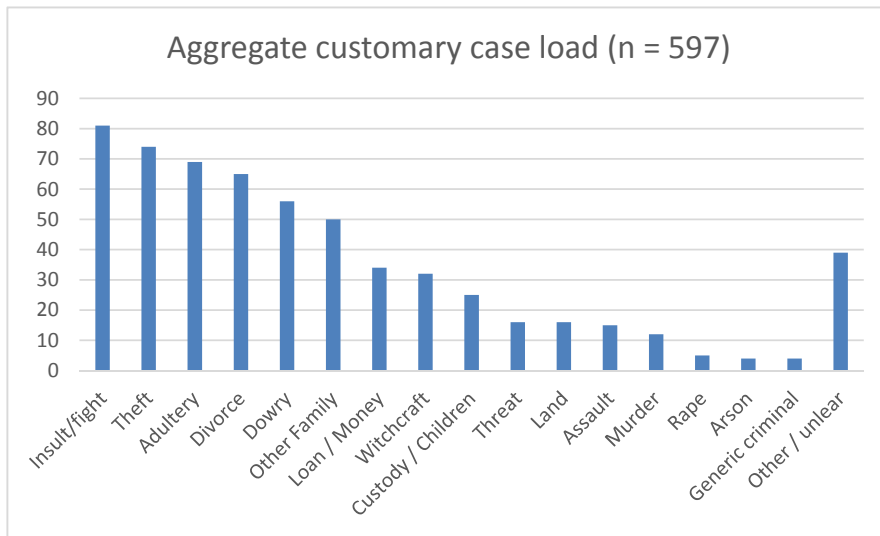


Figure 21: Aggregate customary court caseload



Comparison between these customary courts is not straightforward. The courts were very diverse in almost every respect (see Section 5.5). The sheer number of cases that courts heard varied greatly. In the village of Sakure, the B-court heard 47 cases in a year, whereas in state capital Yambio the B-court heard 293 cases in just under a year. The difference was explained in part by the small population of the village of Sakure compared to central Yambio, and the consequent small absolute number of disputes. It also tended to be more difficult in small places to find high-quality court members. In Sakure for instance, the payam administrator told us that the A-court had remained inoperable because 'we need people but [there is] nobody because of lack of education.'<sup>4</sup> Caseloads were further influenced by the presence of other dispute resolvers, like neighbours, family members, elders, police, administrative officials, other courts and their relative popularity (Rigterink, Kenyi, and Schomerus 2014). Yambio, for instance, had no C-Court at this time which may explain why many cases were brought to the B-Court. From our qualitative interviews with disputants, it was also clear that some courts just worked better than others, and that some chiefs were regarded as more reliable problem-solvers than others (see Chapter 5).

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4 He also explained that the sub-chief was acting in the B-Court on behalf of the executive chief, because the latter would stay away for long periods of time in Bakpara (a town further north). Interview with payam administrator, Sakure, July 2015.



## Curriculum vitae

Bruno Jim Braak was born in 1987 in Utrecht, the Netherlands. Between 2005 and 2010, Bruno studied for his BA Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Leiden University, for which he spent 6 months in Indonesia, and wrote a thesis on the history of natural resources, conflict, and state formation in Eastern DR Congo. In 2010 and 2011, Bruno interned with the Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, the Netherlands Embassy in Sudan, and newspaper NRC Handelsblad. He completed his MLitt Peace and Conflict Studies at St Andrews University in 2012. His thesis focused on the effectiveness and legitimacy of various peace missions in Kosovo, and was awarded the Sir Menzies Campbell Prize for International Relations.

In December 2012, Bruno joined the Van Vollenhoven Institute as student assistant to Janine Ubink, and later Jan Michiel Otto. He supported various research projects, and helped teach 'Law, Governance, and Development' and 'Peace and Justice'. In his spare time, he also set up a website, War and Peace Talk with his future wife Josefine Ulbrich. In 2014 Bruno assisted Jan Michiel Otto to write a research proposal for the Security and Rule of Law (SRoL)-fund by the Dutch Research Council (NWO), titled 'Exploring Primary Justice in Insecure Contexts, South Sudan and Afghanistan'. When the grant was awarded, Bruno started his PhD under supervision of Jan Michiel Otto, Carolien Jacobs, and Cherry Leonardi at Leiden Law School of Leiden University.

Bruno carried out and supervised qualitative research in South Sudan and Uganda between 2014 and 2019. He also conducted smaller studies for the Rift Valley Institute's 'South Sudan Customary Authorities'-project, and the London School of Economics' 'Deconstructing Notions of Resilience: Diverse Post-Conflict Settings in Uganda'-project. Bruno also supports Isaac Waanzi Hillary's blog, *Worondimo*, which features poetry and anthropological essays. Bruno wrote this book in Amsterdam, Entebbe, Utrecht, and Kinshasa. He got married to Josefine Ulbrich at the Maison Communale de Gombe, Kinshasa during the pandemic year of 2020. Bruno is currently working at Leiden University as post-doctoral researcher on the 'Access to Justice in Libya'-project, led by Suliman Ibrahim.



In the range of books published by the Meijers Research Institute and Graduate School of Leiden Law School, Leiden University, the following titles were published in 2020, 2021 and 2022

- MI-352 B. Ribeiro de Almeida, *Building land tenure systems. The political, legal, and institutional struggles of Timor-Leste*, (diss. Leiden), Amsterdam: Ipskamp Printing 2020
- MI-353 K.A.M. van der Zon, *Pleegrechten voor kinderen. Een onderzoek naar het realiseren van de rechten van kinderen die in het kader van de ondertoezichtstelling in een pleeggezin zijn geplaatst* (diss. Leiden), Den Haag: Boom juridisch 2020
- MI-354 E.G. van 't Zand e.a., *Bestuurlijke boetes en de Verklaring Omtrent het Gedrag. Een onderzoek naar de realiseerbaarheid en wenselijkheid van het betrekken van bestuurlijke boetes bij de VOG-screening aan de hand van een casestudy naar handhaving en integriteit in de financiële sector*, Den Haag: Boom juridisch 2020, ISBN 978 94 6290 843 7
- MI-355 J. Boakye, *Understanding Illegal Logging in Ghana. A Socio-Legal Study on (non)Compliance with Logging Regulations*, (diss. Leiden), Amsterdam: Ipskamp Printing 2020
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- MI-357 S.S. Arendse, *De uiterlijke verschijningsvorm in het strafrecht. Een analyse van de jurisprudentie van de Hoge Raad*, (diss. Leiden), Den Haag: Boom juridisch 2020, ISBN 978 94 6290 844 4
- MI-358 J. Reef, M. Jelts & Y.N. van den Brink, *De PIJ-maatregel doorgezicht. Juridische grondslagen, populatiekenmerken, gedragsverandering en recidive*, Nijmegen: Wolf Legal Publishers 2020, ISBN 978 94 6240 608 7
- MI-359 S. Guo, *Recognition of Foreign Bank Resolution Actions*, (diss. Leiden), Amsterdam: Ipskamp Printing 2020
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- MI-364 J.J. Asscher, Y.N. van den Brink, H.E. Creemers, E. Huls, E.K. van Logchem, N. Lynch & S.E. Rap, *De strafmaat voor jeugdige daders van ernstige gewelds- en zedenmisdrijven in internationaal perspectief*, Den Haag: Boom juridisch 2020, ISBN 978 94 6290 943 4
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- MI-371 C.M. Sandelowsky-Bosman, T. Liefwaard, S.E. Rap & F.A.N.J. Goudappel, *De rechten van ongedocumenteerde kinderen in Curaçao – een gezamenlijke verantwoordelijkheid*, Den Haag: Boom juridisch 2021, ISBN 978-94-6290-965-6
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