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

Braak, B.J.

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Propositions relating to the dissertation

OVERCOMING RUPTURES

Zande identity, governance, and tradition during cycles of war and displacement in South Sudan and Uganda (2014-19)

by Bruno Braak

1. Identities tend to become more essentialist when people are threatened by war.
2. Any choice of 'research population' prejudices researchers to see, describe, and recreate particular identities over others.
3. Change contains an openness and indeterminacy which academic research, with its desire to categorise and systematise, is ill-equipped to capture.
4. South Sudanese chiefs' wartime suffering and weakness contributed to their post-war prestige and resurgence.
5. Contrary to land tenure dogma, people may invest in land precisely because they are insecure of their tenure.
6. The term 'forced migration' reflects researchers' empathy with people who leave war, but hinders their understanding of people's varied reasons for leaving.
7. Not everyone who stays during war, is unable to leave. In addition to 'involuntary immobiles' there are 'voluntary immobiles'.
8. When a government lacks enforcement capacity, its aspirations for change-by-law ought to be commensurately less ambitious.
9. Yet international donors tend to plan most ambitiously in contexts where the state capacity to affect or sustain such change is most limited.
10. The 1951 Refugee Convention limits refugee status to 'persecuted' people. The 1969 OAU Convention broadens it to people compelled to leave home due to 'external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order'. Conceptually, this wider definition is more accurate, but European politicians are likely to accept this shift only with some refugee groups (e.g., Ukraine) and not with others (e.g., South Sudan).
11. When people suffer hardship, they are drawn to nostalgia and utopia. In this sense the reinstatement of a Zande Kingdom on 9 February 2022 fits the global tendency of people who are disappointed with modern political configurations, to turn to a modified reincarnation of a historical local political configuration.
12. King Gbudwe deserves a Netflix-series.