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Acholi Clan, Ethnic, and National Identities in Post-Conflict Northern Uganda:

A Case Study in Koch Goma Sub-County, Nwoya District

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Abstract

In the following essay, the researcher will explore the clan, ethnic, and national identities of the Acholi people in the context of post-conflict northern Uganda. The researcher will first describe and interpret the meaning of these identities to Acholi people he interviewed during his research, and then he will analyze them in the post-conflict, socio-cultural context of northern Uganda.

During a research period of four weeks, the researcher spent a total of twelve days in Koch Goma Sub-Country, Nwoya District conducting one-on-one interviews. During this time, the researcher was able to interview eighteen people. Data was collected and analyzed qualitatively as well as against the background of theoretical arguments from scholars of anthropology, sociology, and psychology. Unfortunately, the small population size of participants makes the extrapolation of patterns found within the data collected difficult, especially due to the under-representation of educated women in the population size. Furthermore, many of the people of Koch fled to Gulu or Banyoro land during the conflict, an uncontrollable variable that makes it more difficult to generalize these findings to all Acholi. Hence, these findings are presented as a case study of Koch Goma Sub-County.

Aside from understanding the meaning of clan, ethnic, and national identities to the Acholi interviewed, several themes became apparent: the Acholi of Koch Goma feel a sense of collective shame as a result of the conflict; the conflict has also affected how some Acholi view themselves as members of their clan and Uganda. Furthermore, protection and social utility is a major factor in determining which identity an individual expresses more over others. Lastly, travelling and interacting with the "other"—someone from another clan, tribe, or nation—affects the way in which an individual defines his identities.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Following the rise of Museveni to power in 1986, a rebel movement known as the Lord's

Resistance Amry (LRA) began in Acholiland and marked the beginning of a conflict that would

continue till 2006. With thousands of Acholi displaced into camps, the forceful abduction of

children and adolescents into the LRA, and human rights violations committed by both the LRA

and the government, this conflict became what Jan Egeland called the "most ignored

humanitarian crisis of our time."

Now that the LRA has shifted base into the Congo and relative peace has come to

Acholiland, the effects of the war are systemic, manifesting themselves in clan relations, the

Acholi culture, and the relationship between the Acholi people and the Ugandan government. In

the following essay, the clan, ethnic and national identities of the Acholi people will be explored

in this post-conflict environment.

Over the course of four weeks, I conducted a case study in Koch Goma Sub-County,

Nwoya District asking residents about their identities as members of their clan, the Acholi, and

Uganda. In the remainder of this paper, these findings are presented and analyzed.

1.1 Justification

Researching Acholi post-conflict identities is important because the conflict has greatly

affected Acholi culture and society. The conflict has been a catastrophe socially, culturally,

economically, and personally for the Acholi. Not only did the conflict cause the displacement of

thousands, it caused the breakdown of family life, the breakdown of social roles, and the

breakdown of Acholi culture. For example, within the famiy, "children blame[d] their parents for

failing to provide for and protect them (their rights as children), and parents complain[ed] that

children no longer resepect[ed] them and are disobedient, respect and obedience being two significant markers of an ideal African childhood identity" (Cheney 2007, 199).[1] Having spent months in Acholiland, I can see vestiges of the conflict in the poor quality of the roads, in those who remain in former camps, in land resettlement issues, and in the lack of a connection between some Acholi and their traditional culture. Today, reconstruction programs target almost every area of society: gender-based violence, land resettlement, amnesty, cultural reconstruction, etc. However, in the words of a *Rwot* (traditioanl chief), rebuilding and repairing the Acholi society and culture "is not easy. It may take longer than the war." In my opinion, fully understanding the Acholi people's identities and the way they think of themselves as members of various groups is critical in evaluating the effectiveness of post-conflict transformation and peacebuilding programs and initiatives.

1.2 Objectives

The purpose of this study is to explore the identities of living Acholi in the contexts of modern-day Acholiland and Uganda. In particular, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

(1) What does it mean to be a clan member, an Acholi, and a Ugandan in today's Acholiland?

(2) How are these identities performed?

(3) How have these identities and their performances changed as a result of the conflict?

(4) What are the implications of these changes for the Acholi and Ugandan society?

In addition, this study hopes to benefit the Acholi community by (1) providing information that may help post-conflict transformation and peacebuilding organizations evaluate

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[1] Cf. Ocitti 1973 and Apoko 1967.

the effectiveness of their programs and initiatives and by (2) helping foreigners to understand the modern-day, post-conflict Acholi as individuals and as participants within a greater socio-cultural framework.

1.3 Background

(a) *An Introduction to the Acholi People of Northern Uganda*

Composed of over 45 distinct ethnic groups, modern-day Uganda is composed of numerous, diverse ethno-linguistic identities and cultures. Regionally, the country is divided into Nilotic ethno-linguistic groups living in the Northern-half and Bantu groups living in the South. Also living in the Northwest are Central Sudanic tribes. Among the Nilotes is a sub-group, the Luo, composed of the Acholi, the Alur, and the Langi[2]. This study will focus on the ethnic and national identities of the Acholi, who have endured a history of conflict that recently ended in 2006.[3]

Today, ethnicities in Uganda are politicized, and the politicization of these ethnicities—particularly of the Acholi—has its roots in British colonialism. The Bristish used the Acholi in the colonial police and army because of their supposed superior fighting ability. As a result, the Acholi, far from being 'born warriors', were transformed into a 'military ethnocracy'" [4] (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, 8).

After Uganda's independence in 1962, Milton Obote, the first head of Uganda's independent government, continued to use the Acholi in his army. Later in 1971, Idi Amin overthrew Obote, and he saw the Acholi in the army as a threat to his power (Atkinson 2011).

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[2] See Appendix I: "Ethno-Linguistic Diversity in Uganda"

[3] While the conflict has moved into the Congo and has not truly ended, the physical conflict has left Acholiland. As a result, the Acholi are beginning to rebuild their lives, their culture, and their society.

[4] Summarized from: A. A. Mazrui, *Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda: the making of a military ethnocracy*. (Sage Publications, London, 1975.)

Consequently, Amin sent forces to Gulu that committed atrocities against the Acholi in search of the Acholi soldiers (Atkinson 2011).

Later, Amin himself was overthrown by Acholi soldiers in exile and other opposition forces that had formed the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA). Obote then returned for his second regime during which the UNLA became Uganda's army. However, Obote and the UNLA was not making "progress" in garnering political support in the Luwero Triangle[5], and most of the inhabitants supported the NRM and Museveni. As a result, Obote "launched" a "military expedition" after which "the Acholi [comprising most of the UNLA forces] were widely held responsible" for killing more than 300,000 Baganda and Banyarwanda (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, 9).

Obote was then overthrown by two Acholi officers in the UNLA with the help of the NRM (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, 9). Shortly thereafter in 1986, Yoweri Museveni took power. The Acholi in the UNLA fled to Sudan and reorganized themselves as the Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA). Meanwhile, the NRA occupied Gulu (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, 13-4).

Around this time, the Holy Spirit Movement formed and was led by the spirit medium Alice Lakwena, who gathered support from common, non-military Acholi. Various factors contributed to the formation of this movement. Doom and Vlassenroot attribute the HSM to the Acholi history of marginalization (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, 18)[6]. Furthermore, an "unprecedented" series of cattle raids led by the Karimojong in 1987 "removed" the "productive base of the Acholi rural economy;" as a result, the Acholi developed a resentment towards the national government for failing to protect the Acholi or condemn the actions of the Karimojong

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[5] An area of land in between Lakes Victoria, Albert and Kyoga (see Appendix I)
[6] Cf. *Pirouet, M. Louise 1991, 201.*

(Leggett 2001, 29). According to Brett, this was the straw that broke the camel's back (1995, 146). Finally, there was a spiritual dimension to origins of the movement. After returning from the war in Luwero, Acholi soldiers failed to integrate. They could not abandon their "easy living [made] out of looting" and resume a "peasant" lifestyle, following their return from Luwero. As a result, they committed crimes, and they were "viewed as killers. . . because they had not been cleansed of blood spilt [in Luwero]; and the elders "feared punishment" from the ancestors because of their "immoral behavior" (Behrend 1991, 165). In brief, as Leggett summarizes, "the HSM was a complex movement combining political and military opposition to the Museveni government with a mission to cleanse the Acholi themselves of the sins they had committed in earlier wars" (2001, 28).

Following the defeat of the HSM by the NRA, Kony established the LRA in late 1987 with former UPDA and HSM members, and emphasized the "moral rejuvenation" of the Acholi people (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, 22). However, Kony's movement lacked the popular support of the previous movements. In 1994, peace talks began between the LRA and Museveni; however, for various reasons they collapsed, and Kony chastised the Acholi elders, "accusing them with high treason." Kony then "blamed the Acholi people for not supporting his war" (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, 24). Following the failure of the peace talks, Kony began to use abduction as a means of recruiting LRA members. In 1996, Museveni ordered the Acholi people into camps to isolate the LRA from civilian. The conflict reached its height in 1998, and it was not until peace talks in 2006 that the war ended.[7]

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[7] NB These Peace Talks did not conclude successfully; however, during the peace talks, many agreements were made that have facilitated the return of peace to Acholiland.

(b) *Introduction to Koch Goma*

Koch Goma is a sub-county in Nwoya district located approximately twenty kilometers southwest of Gulu town. The area is within Acholiland, but bordering the Banyoro. During the conflict, Koch Goma was turned into a camp for Internally Displaced Persons. Now that the war is over, some people have returned to their homes; however, the former camp is still filled with residents.

The town in Koch Goma consists of a small enter around which is a former IDP camp and numerous villages. In the town center are two primary schools in addition to a secondary school. As a result, many schoolchildren and teacher come to the area during the school year ,especially for the secondary school.

(c) *Terminology*

In the following sections these terms will be used frequently:

Identity   Simply put, an individual's attachment to a particular group.

Clan   A small unit of social organization consisting of families that share a
                common heritage and culture

Ethnic group   A group of people with common heritage, culture, and language

Nation   A community that shares a common government and territory

Chapter 2: Methodology

In the following chapter, the researcher will discuss his methods for data collection and analysis. The researcher will also evaluate the effectiveness of these methods and suggest improvements.

2.1 _Methods Used_

The researcher used only one-on-on interview to collect data. Due to the abstract nature of identity, using a qualitative research method was critical in gaining a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of Acholi identities in post-conflict northern Uganda. Normally, the researcher conducted a semi-structured interview in which the researcher asked questions from a list (see Appendix II). However, as the interview progressed the researcher would occasionally veer from this protocol in the process of probing a new aspect of the topic. The interview protocol was also adjusted throughout the research periods as questions were added or taken away. This flexibility in the structure of the interview maximized the productivity of each interview and the data collection process.

The researcher would have also liked to conduct a focus group or group interviews; however, due to the ethical concerns of the researcher's ethical review board, the researcher did not conduct any focus groups.

To help control unwanted variables, the researcher opted for a case study interviewing the residents of Koch Goma Sub-Country, Nwoya District. Focusing on one community rather than multiple communities enabled the researcher to explore more in depth Acholi identities without having to control differences unique to each community. The researcher chose this location to carry out his research because he had already established rapport with several key informants through the assistance of a former SIT student. Furthermore, the researcher was concerned that a

case study of Gulu town would not be as representative of the Acholi throughout Acholiland due to the large presence of non-Acholi and foreign cultures.

2.2 *Interaction with Subject Population*

During a research period of three weeks, the researcher spent a total of twelve days in the field interviewing eighteen participants. About five weeks prior to commencing his research, the researcher made a preliminary field visit to begin establishing rapport with key informants, locate potential translates, and make himself known to the community. For the first few days during the researcher's fieldwork, the researcher refrained from conducting interviews and focused on establishing rapport with the local community by walking around, talking to locals, and introducing himself to the LC3, John Bosco Okullu, of Koch Goma Sub-County. Before beginning his fieldwork, the researcher obtained verbal permission from the LC3 and from an elder of the community. The researcher also consulted his key informants and translators about his research protocol, interview questions, and research itinerary.

My two translators and key informants were critical in helping me navigate among the locals and interview them. Normally, they would set up interviews with locals before I officially introduced myself, or they would accompany me on a "walk" through the former camp or village during which I would interview between three and five people.

For a list of questions asked during the interviews, see Appendix II or the sample transcripts attached in Appendix IV. In addition to depositing a copy of this report with the SIT Gulu office, a copy has been sent electronically to the LC3 of Koch Goma Sub-Country to share.

2.3 _Ethical Considerations_

The researcher submitted a proposal to the review boards of his home university, University of Richmond, and to a local review board organized by SIT Gulu. Approvals were received from the SIT Gulu Local Review Board on November 14, 2011 and the University of Richmond Institutional Review Board on November 17, 2011. The researcher began conducting interviews on November 17, 2011. The researcher has obtained written informed consent from all study participants.

The primary ethical considerations made in this research involve protecting participant's privacy and confidentiality. Before beginning the interview, the researcher introduced himself, his purpose, and the nature of the interview. Most importantly, the researcher informed the participant of his right to withdraw from the study at any time and to not answer any question that he does not wish to answer. Throughout this paper, the researcher has also replaced the real names of participants with pseudonyms and altered identifiers, if necessary, to protect the confidentiality of informants.

2.4 _Effectiveness of Methodology_

As described above, the semi-structured one-on-one interview was an effective qualitative method, for it enabled the researcher to adapt his protocol to the participant's responses consequently maximizing the productivity of the interview. Furthermore, opting to do a case study was effective considering the scope of the project and the time constraints. It also made it easier to contextualize participant's responses because researching in one area enabled the researcher to focus his efforts on understanding the history and context of one community.

Nevertheless, there are weaknesses in the methodology. First, twelve days in the field greatly limited the number of interviews the researcher was able to conduct. This short time

period also made adjusting the interview protocol and following up with interviewees after new questions arose difficult. Consequently, some participants were not asked questions that significantly informed the researcher's later findings. The researcher did return to the Koch Goma again for two days after taking a brief respite from the field; however, time was limited, and the researcher could not locate most previous informants. This time period was also too short to conduct participant observations of clan meetings or ceremonies in Koch Goma, which proved key in shaping people's identities, and also made it difficult to fulfill the researcher's objective of understanding the performance of Acholi identities.

The small participant size also makes it difficult to produce findings generalizable to most Acholi or even the entire Koch Goma community. Furthermore, being close to the Banyoro and Gulu town, many residents either spent their time during the conflict in Banyoro land or Gulu town, which may influence their responses. The proximity of Banyoro culture has also influenced the clan culture, making these results even less generalizable to all Acholi. Lastly, within this small participant population, educated women are grossly under represented. Women who are more educated are more likely to travel outside within or outside of Uganda, which the researcher discovered affected people's identities.

While some participants spoke English, most did not—or not at a level of fluency capable expressing themselves fully—and so using a translator was necessary. However, the researcher's understanding and interpretation of participant's responses only goes so far as the translation. Furthermore, the style in which questions were asked also had an effect on participant's responses. Direct, concise questions—even direct open-ended questions—elicited brief responses; however, circuitous questions that had an introduction of sorts were more effective at

elicited more detailed responses. Unfortunately, this was not realized until my second field visit to Koch Goma after the majority of my research had been completed.

Another challenge for the researcher was simply living in the village. While the researcher quickly adapted to using a charcoal stove, going to the market daily, etc, all of these things took much more time out of the day than anticipated. As a result, it was not possible to spend as much time in the field. The lack of electricity also made writing transcripts impossible until the researcher returned to Gulu. Even with easily accessible generators in Gulu, the researcher has not been able to transcribe and analyze all of his interviews.

2.5 *The Effect on the Researcher on His Data*

As the description of how the style in which a question is asked affects a participant's response reveals, the researcher *does* impact his research. When the researcher poses his questions, he is using his own analytical categories. For example, when the researcher asked people about the Acholi, some—not seeing a distinction—responded about the Luo of East Africa. At one point, the researcher was also asking participants about their identity as "human beings;" however, most participants responded by discussing biology or Creation. It does not appear that the Acholi worldview conceptualizes "human being" in the same way as the West. Additionally, because the researcher is foreign and *munu*, participants may have confused him with an aid worker, or thought that my research will influence policy. Even though the researcher informed participants that his research will not inform policy and that he is just a student, sometimes participants gave the researcher responses that seemed directed towards an aid worker.

2.6 _Recommendations for Improvement of Methodology_

This is the researcher's first significant fieldwork experience, and he has learned many things that will improve his future fieldwork. First, to truly understand one's topic, one must explore and analyze it at a deep level that requires a lot of time in the field, a lot of consulting, and a lot perseverance. Second, it is best to start working with translators as soon as possible. Before going out into the field, it is important to discuss with them each question in one's protocol so that they know what one is getting at and how to adequately translate it. Third, consult translators about the way your questions are asked. It was not until the researcher's last day of research in the field that the translator told him he would get more detailed answers if he asked them in a roundabout way, prefacing them with a little introduction. Finally, do not rely solely on one's voice recorder. Taking notes during the interview makes analyzing it afterwards easier, especially if there is not time to transcribe the interview or you do not have access to electricity.

Chapter 3: Findings

In the following section, I will discuss the results of my research in Koch Goma. Before going on to my analyses, I would like to preface this section with the fact that the concept of identity is not indigenous to the Acholi worldview—or at least, it has not yet been revealed to me. Therefore, "identity" is not something that the Acholi people think about regularly.

3.1 *Acholi Clan Identities: What is means to be a member of one's clan*

According to each participant, one's clan identity is a status one is born into. These clan identities are passed down from the father. For most clans, it is taboo to marry within the clan; therefore, an individual's mother and father are normally from different clans originally. However, following the marriage ceremony, the woman is considered a member of the husband's clan and their children are considered members of the father's clan (Girling 1960, 21). Thus, clan identities are patrilineal.

In addition to asking someone which is his/her clan, all participants claimed that they know the other members of their clans because they see them at clan meetings and important clan functions, such as marriage, birth, and death ceremonies. Some participants also mentioned that one's unique clan slogan or riddle can be used to identify other clan members.

These clan gatherings and ceremonies are not only critical in acquainting clan members with other clan members, but for developing a sense of clanship. Mary described this process during a funeral ceremony quite well:

> During the time for burial, or any other ceremonial function, every member of the family and from the clan brings a contribution. They buy goats. They cook and bring food. And everyone has to eat. . . .When visitors come, there are girls to welcome them. People from different clans attend because a girl and boy cannot marry from the same clan. When the two parties are coming, you see the other clan. It is a joined venture. You know people are from the other clan because they identify the clan of the girl, and when her clansmen come, they introduce the clan. After the introduction, they all get to know each other. . .

.After drinking, everyone is high [i.e., drunk] and you get to know each other. They even speak their riddles. . . . (Mary 2011).

Each clan also has their own slogan. Girling calls these praise names (1960, 79), and many of my informants referred to them as riddles. Sometimes these riddles are words or phrases, and normally there is a folk legend attached to the origins of the slogan. For example, one informant of the Boro clan explained how his clan received their slogan, which means "fire," because in the "times of war, [the Boro] used to use fire to start the fighting. They put fire to the bush, and they burn all of them [i.e, enemy]." The informant concluded that "fire has become [the Boro's] slogan because it assisted us in the fighting" (John 2011). Girling elaborated in his ethnography that this slogan "forms a part of [a clan's] own specific cultural experience, and [it] serves to emphasize their internal homogeneity and their uniqueness with regards to others" (1960, 79-80).

Finally, some clans have particular rituals that distinguish them from other clans. For example, Cynthia of the Lagoro clan described how her clan does not eat the meat from a particular cow:

> "The cow has some funny colors. It is whitish and has black and brown. We do not eat *that* cattle. If we eat it, we assume that there are something in it that will harm our bodies and make us feel bad. . . .If you eat the meat, you must then undergo some purification or cleansing" (2011).

Similar to the slogan, unique rituals like this distinguish clans from each other and assist in the formation of a clan identity.

3.2 *Acholi Ethnic Identity: What it means to be Acholi*

Like the clan identity, Acholi ethnic identity is inherited from father. All of the participants interviewed had parents who were both Acholi except for one. Interestingly, this participant,

Cynthia, has a non-Acholi father. However, she still considers herself and Acholi. Unfortunately, the researcher did not explore this more with the participant.

Most participants defined an Acholi as a person who was born in Acholiland, who has Acholi parents, who speaks Luo (the Acholi language), or practices the Acholi culture. Some participants, such as Mose Issaac and Bosco, said that they are Acholi because they were born in Acholiland and they will die here (2011). In the words of Cynthia,

> "We have the cultural dances that are very richer, richer than those of other cultures. We have many, like the *larakaraka*, *ding ding, bola*. . . Also after the harvest, there is a dance to appreciate the harvest that has been upraised. We also have a dance to dance before the *rwot*, our king, which is different from other cultures. Apart from that one, we also have a lot of traditional dishes that other cultures don't. For example, we have *malakwang*, we have *boo*. . .—that other cultures do not have because they can not grown it in their own areas" (2011).

Interestingly, participants' attachment to the Acholi as an ethnic group was defined in more abstract, less well-defined terms than their clan identities. Many participants made no initial distinction between the Acholi of northern Uganda and the Luo of East Africa who reside in South Africa, Kenya, the Congo, and Uganda. Furthermore, the Acholi attached their identity to a geographical space which they have imbued with symbolic meaning. For example, many participants said they were Acholi because they were born here in Acholiland, and they will die here. Often times, when asked how the Acholi were different from others, participants described aspects of the climate that are conducive to productive, happy lifestyles. For example, what Alice likes most about Acholiland is "its fertility. You dig and you get food to eat. You can also keep animals on it." (2011). This relationship between identity and geography will be discussed more in the following section in the context of national identity.

Interestingly, few participants drew from Acholi history when describing their Acholi identity. One participant discussed the Luo origins of Acholi. He even made an argument similar

to Atkinson that the Acholi as a group did not exist until they were classified as one by outsiders, such as the Arabs and the British (Ojok 2011, cf. Atkinson 1989). Another claimed that the British were crucial in developing unity among the Acholi (Issaac 2011). However, the majority of participants drew from the present when asked what it meant to be an Acholi.

I argue that the reason for this discrepancy is two-fold: education and age. Both informants were highly educated, giving them access to literature about their own ethnic group. Furthermore, they were old enough to have been raised in pre-war Acholiland before the denigration of cultural and social institutions, such as the wang-oo where families would gather and elders would share stories about their heritage. Yuval-Davis labels these stories "identity narratives," and she explains that "such stories as these often relate, directly or indirectly, to the perceptions of self and/or Others of what being a member of such a grouping or collectivity. . . might mean" (2010, 267). For this reason, these identity narratives of the Luo and Acholi history have had significance in forming these informants' ethnic identities.

3.3 *Acholi National Identity: What is means to be Ugandan*

Similar to clan and ethnic identities, participants also described their Ugandan identity as one that was "inherited." Also similar to the Acholi ethnic identity was how participants invoked geography, notably Uganda's political borders, to describe what it meant to be a Ugandan. Because they were born "within Uganda's borders" (a phrase used by many), they are Ugandan. They are Ugandan because their parents are Ugandan. Finally, when asked if they thought Ugandans had anything in common, most participants mentioned that they all live within "Uganda." A couple mentioned that Ugandans all speak English. One participant, Ojok, listed various trivia about Uganda, mainly related to sports successes, and one, also a government official, mentioned national symbols, such as the Ugandan national anthem and flag (John 2011).

According to Anderson, nations are imagined, limited, and sovereign communities. This community is imagined because citizens invent a connection with other citizens, even though they do not know them and have never seen them. This community is limited because of the borders delimiting the nation-state. This community is sovereign because it acts freely (not to says that its individuals are free); and finally, this community is a community because "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived in a deep, horizontal comradeship" (2006, 6-7).

In Anderson's terms, it does seem that the Acholi imagine themselves as a part of a national community. However, their national identity is not as robust as their clan and Acholi identities. Many participants acknowledged that Uganda has no common culture, and I argue that that is why many participants emphasize Uganda's geography in defining their national identities: First of all, quite a few participants had never left northern Uganda and have not experienced "other" Ugandans outside of Acholiland. Therefore, Uganda's borders are the easiest concept to use in identifying similarities between oneself and all other Ugandan's. According to Stets and Burke, this process of self-categorization—or grouping oneself with others to create a "oneness"—is critical in the formation of identity (2000, 224).

Furthermore, just as important in identity formation as self-categorization is comparison (Stets and Burke 2000, 225), which implies a boundary of difference between the two social groups being compared. According to Cohen, physical borders exists just as much in on the map as they do in our minds because of how we use them to compare ourselves to others (1998, 26-30). Even though most participants have not left Uganda, the borders of Uganda simultaneously symbolize their "oneness" with those living within Uganda and an "otherness," or difference,

from those who live outside of Uganda. Afterall, "others" are not Ugandan because they do *not* live within Uganda's borders.

In brief, Acholi national identities are defined more abstractly than their clan and ethnic identities. The researcher surmises that this abstractness helps the Acholi to overcome the boundless cultural differences among Ugandan ethnic groups which would manifest themselves in an identity defined in more concrete ways.

3.4 *Acholi Identities and the Conflict in Northern Uganda*

Every single participant in this study stated that their identities did not change because of the conflict in the sense the they are still members of their clans, the Acholi, and Uganda. However, many participants revealed that the conflict put stresses on *living* their identities. For example, Mary describes the deterioration of her clan's traditional way of life:

> There is a deterioration of the culture. They way life was before the conflict is no longer there. People no longer share or do things in groups. They are only concerned with themselves. . . . You can't even get help from your clan anymore. . . .We have lost so many of our family and our clan that the young ones, the future clan leaders, will not be able to solve their problems. There is no one to advise them. . . . (2011).

Multiple participants mentioned that at times the way they suffered during the conflict compelled them to *want* to be someone else, to be someone other than an Acholi or a Ugandan. In their minds, the conflict was incorporated into their ethnic and national identities as an experience of those identities. On the other hand, many of the same participants also claimed that they have "ever been proud" of their clan, tribe, and country. Nevertheless, pride of an identity and the desire to reject an identity are not mutually exclusive feelings. It was a contradiction these participants negotiated on a daily basis during the conflict.

Some of the participants also expressed guilt and shame over the conflict when it came to discussing the Acholi post-conflict identity. At the same time, others denied feeling any guilt or

shame. Those expressing guilt and shame stated that that these feelings would go away within

twenty to thirty years. An overwhelming majority of participants also stated that they would tell

their children about the conflict and their personal experience (once they are old enough) so that

they can learn *their* history firsthand.

Those expressing guilt and shame also were divided along several lines. Some expressed

a sense of collective responsibility for the actions of Kony and the LRA:

> The conflict " has taken us backward. It has destroyed our resources. . . .We just killed
> one another. We are no longer dignified. That is how I feel. The conflict started in
> Acholiland, was led by Acholi, and affected the Acholi. . . our cows were destroyed.
> Many people died. . ." (Bosco 2011).

> "In general, it is a total shame because before the conflict life was good. Now we are
> footing when we used to have vehicles; we live in grass-thatch houses when we had nice
> houses. Many drink. The education is bad. . . ." (Mary 2011).

> "I feel guilty because many people were killed and a lot of things were destroyed. It is a
> shame to all the people of Acholi because the war was something that not all of the
> Acholi agreed on. However, there was a group of Acholi who led it, and that is why we
> feel shame." (Bob 2011).

Others emphasized the stigma now associated with the Acholi because of the conflict:

> "I feel guilty because when you go to Kampala, the people call you 'Kony'" (Lucy 2011).

> "When you move in the Central, if someone knows you are Acholi, they call you "Kony,"
> and it is an insult." (Bosco 2011).

Finnstöm discusses this sense of shame and guilt in his ethnography written during the

conflict, which he argues began in the Luwero Triangle. He writes:

> During my fieldworkd, I encountered some young men, frustrated by the collective blame
> put upon the Acholi, who painstakingly collected data and statistics to challenge the
> image of the Acholi as violent and militaristic (2008, 82-82)

The participants I interviewed feel guilt over the actions of their fellow Acholi as well as shame over the stigma it has brought to the Acholi people. According to Lammers, "war challenges the definitions and given boundaries of community. For instance, returning child soldiers, even if forcibly recruited, are often branded outsiders by their communities" (2005, 612). In a similar vein, following the conflict in northern Uganda, the Acholi will have to re-negotiate their clan, ethnic, and national identities as they cope with their since of collective guilt and shame.

3.5 *Social Utility and Identity Significance*

Many participants were asked which was more important to them: their clan, the Acholi, or Uganda. The answers were very diverse; however, the reasons were all very much the same. The identity most important to a participant was the one that was most useful to the individual. For the government politician interviewed, his national identity was the most important because to run for office, "you must be a citizen of Uganda. I love that I am a Ugandan because it allow[ed] me to stand as a leader" (John 2000). In other words, it was more useful for the participant to emphasize his national identity in order to be elected. The participant did not elaborate *why* this was the case; however, the researcher surmises that emphasizing a national identity legitimizes his claim to governmental leadership because he is working on behalf of the national government's interests, rather than an Acholi ethnic agenda.

At the other end of the spectrum, many stressed the importance of their clan identities because the clan is heavily involved in supporting its clansmen as well as resolving problems or disputes that arise in the lives of their clansmen. For example, according to Helen, her clan is most important to her "because the land it good; when [she] got married [she] was respected; and [her clan] helped fund the education of [her] children" (2000). In many cases, land is owned

collectively by a clan[8], so if the participant's clan owns good land and she makes her living off of that land, then she owes her well-being to her clan.

3.6 *Mobility, Otherness, and Identity Formation*

A clear pattern seen by the researcher in the responses of his informants was the extent to which he/she had travelled and the way in which the individual described his various identities. Individuals who travelled compared their own identities with those of others. For example, they compared a cultural practice they though critical in their own identity with that of another clan or tribe. At the same time, they emphasized the "way" of their clan or the Acholi. On the other hand, those who had travelled minimally emphasized solely the way of the Acholi, and they drew fewer comparisons in the process of describing their identities.

As mentioned earlier, developing a sense of "oneness" and "otherness" are two key elements in the process of identity formation (see Stets and Burke 2000; Hastings and Manning 2005). For those who travel, witnessing this "other" first hand is very easy, and therefore, individuals compare their own identities with those of others. However, not enough research was carried out to elaborate how mobility affects the formation of Acholi identities; nevertheless, this is a finding worthy of additional research.

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[8] Cf. Alici, Nora. "Land Related Conflicts in Northern Uganda." SIT Lecture. September 23, 2011.

Chapter 4: Personal Opinions

Having spent four weeks studying this topic, my personal perception of the topic is that while it does not offer much new information for the Acholi population, this research will provide non-Acholi with insight into the Acholi people in post-conflict northern Uganda. This topic also integrates well with the overall semester scheme of post-conflict transformation because it looks beyond the Acholi as a group and focuses on the Acholi as an individuals.

Chapter 5: Recommendations

For future research, the researcher recommends exploring the effect of mobility on Acholi identity formation. An interesting side-line to that analysis would be how the Acholi diaspora during the conflict has affected the identities of Acholi. Furthermore, participant observations could be utilized to augment the data and analyses provided in this case study.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In conclusion, Acholi identities in post-conflict northern Uganda are complex, and Acholi identities are more abstractly defined going from clan to ethnic to national identities. Clan identities are formed through clan gatherings and ceremonies but also made unique through the slogans and other rituals; Acholi identities are related to the Acholi language and culture, which is different from other cultures in Uganda; and Ugandan identities are imagined in terms of national boundaries. Finally, following the conflict, Acholi identities are being re-negotiated to compensate for socio-cultural changes in addition to compensate for the feelings of collective guilt and shame resulting from the conflict.

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Appendix I: Map of Ethno-linguistic Diversity in Uganda
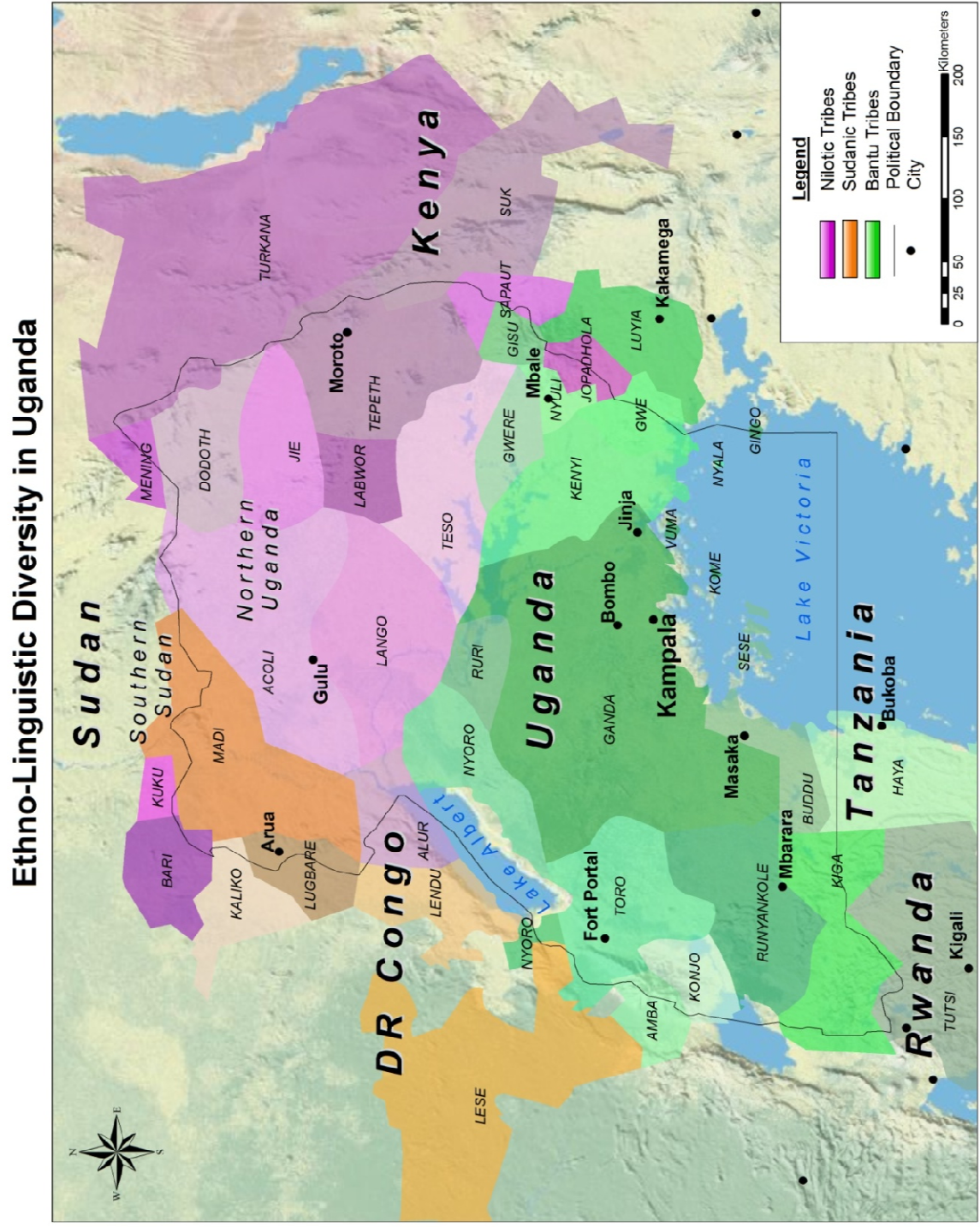
Appendix II: Interview Protocol

What is your age?
What is your level of education?
What is your ethnicity? What is the ethnicity of your parents?
How long have you stayed in Koch Goma? Where else have you lived? For how long?

What is your clan?
How do people know you are a member of your clan?
How do you know others are a member of your clan?
When do you feel like a member of your clan?
When do you not feel like a member of your clan?
How is your clan different from others?
What do you like most about your clan?

What does it mean to be an Acholi?
Who is an Acholi?
What makes you an Acholi?
How are the Acholi different from others?
How do people know you are an acholi?
How do you know others are an Acholi?
When do you feel like an Acholi?
When do you not feel like an Acholi?
How do you feel about being an Acholi?
What do you like most about the Acholi?

What does it mean to be a Ugandan?
What makes you a Ugandan?
How are Ugandans different from others?
When do you feel like a Ugandan?
When do you not feel like a Ugandan?
What do you like most about being a Ugandan?

What is most important to you? Your clan, the Acholi or Uganda? Why?
How has the conflict changed the way you think of yourself as a member of your clan?
The way you think of yourself as an Acholi?
The way you think of yourself as a Ugandan?

What is most important to you? What do you value?
What makes you happy?

Appendix III: Description of Interviewees

Interview No. 1
Pseudonym: Mose Andrew
Age: 72
Sex: Male
Ethnicity: Acholi
Education level: Post-secondary technical training
Extent of travel: --

Interview No. 2
Pseudonym: Ojok
Age: 49
Sex: Male
Ethnicity: Acholi
Education level: post-graduate
Extent of travel: within Uganda, to other countries in Africa and to Europe; dual German and Ugandan citizen

Interview No. 3
Pseudonym: Robert
Age: 52
Sex: Male
Ethnicity: Lango
Education level: B.A.
Extent of travel: throughout Uganda; has never left Uganda

Interview No. 4
Pseudonym: John
Age: 40
Sex: Male
Ethnicity: Acholi
Education level: technical training
Extent of travel: throughout Uganda and to Sudan and Congo

Interview No. 5
Pseudonym: Mose Issaac
Age: 69
Sex: Male
Ethnicity: Acholi
Education level: university
Extent of travel: throughout Uganda and once to Kenya

Interview No. 6
Pseudonym: Cynthia
Age: 26
Sex: Female
Ethnicity: Acholi mother, Banyoro father; considers herself Acholi
Education level: university

Extent of travel: throughout Uganda; never left Uganda

Interview No. 7
Pseudonym: Lucy
Age: 45
Sex: Female
Ethnicity: Acholi
Education level: Primary 7
Extent of travel: Kitgum, Gulu, Lira, Kampala. Never left Uganda

Interview No. 8A
Pseudonym: Janet
Age: 21
Sex: Female
Ethnicity: Acholi
Education level: Senior 2
Extent of travel: --

Interview No. 8B
Pseudonym: Alice
Age: 67
Sex: Female
Ethnicity: Acholi
Education level: none
Extent of travel: --

Interview No. 9A
Pseudonym: Agnes
Age: 89
Sex: Female
Ethnicity: Acholi
Education level: none
Extent of travel: never left Acholiland

Interview No. 9B
Pseudonym: Evelyn
Age: 40
Sex: Female
Ethnicity: Acholi
Education level: none
Extent of travel: never left Acholiland

Interview No. 10
Pseudonym: Bob
Age: 46
Sex: Male
Ethnicity: Acholi
Education level: Senior 2
Extent of travel: travelled throughout Uganda

Interview No. 11
Pseudonym: Innocent
Age: 42
Sex: Male
Ethnicity: Acholi
Education level: Senior 4
Extent of travel: travelled within Acholiland; never left Uganda

Interview No. 12
Pseudonym: Aaron
Age: 25
Sex: Male
Ethnicity: Acholi
Education level: Senior 4
Extent of travel: never left Acholiland

Interview No. 13
Pseudonym: Grace
Age: 18
Sex: Female
Ethnicity: Acholi
Education level: Primary 7
Extent of travel: never left Acholiland

Interview No. 14
Pseudonym: Patrick
Age: 21
Sex: Male
Ethnicity: Acholi
Education level: Senior 5
Extent of travel: never left Acholiland

Interview No. 15
Pseudonym: Charles
Age: 19
Sex: Male
Ethnicity: Acholi
Education level: Senior 4
Extent of travel: never left northern Uganda

Interview No. 16
Pseudonym: Mary
Age: 39
Sex: Female
Ethnicity: Acholi
Education level: Primary 7
Extent of travel: travelled throughout Uganda, but never left country

Interview No. 17
Pseudonym: Helen
Age: 29
Sex: Female
Ethnicity: Acholi
Education level: Senior 1
Extent of travel: travelled to Kampala, but did not stay for long. That is all.

Interview No. 18
Pseudonym: Bosco
Age: 30
Sex: Male
Ethnicity: Acholi
Education level: technical institute
Extent of travel: travelled throughout Uganda

Interview No. 4
Pseudonym: John
Age: 40
Sex: Male
Ethnicity: Acholi
Education level: technical training
Extent of travel: throughout Uganda and to Sudan and Congo

DD: What is your clan?

JH: Boro

DD: How doe people know you are member of your clan?

JH: All the clans have their slogans. And we belong to our grandfather, and people know our grandfather and how he used to stay. We also have our cultural leader.

DD: What is the slogan?

JH: It is difficult for you now. When you are going for hunting, when you shoot the animals, you find very many clans. But when you spear an animal, you name that slogan, and all the clan will know that this is your man. Like in Uganda here, we have "for God and my country." In the smaller clan there, they have their slogan too. But the slogan is difficult to say in English. For us we used to say the fire. If we were in group, and someone mention fire, you know that someone is in this group.

DD: Is this fire the wang-oo?

JH: These slogans come in at very serious times. In times of war, our clan used fire to start the fighting. They put fire to the bush, and they burned all of them. So fire has become our slogan because it assisted us in the fighting.

DD: When do you feel like a member of your clan? Is there anything you do that makes you proud of your clan?

JH. Yes, normally we have a clan meeting. Whenever I have a problem, we meet. Say I lose a child, all our clan comes together and we sit for two or three days before we leave and we do very many activies. A program or a graduation, say when my son or brother educates up to university, we gather and celebrate as a clan.

DD: Are there times when you have not felt like member of your clan?

[I explain "not"]

JH: Yes, that one is sometimes there because you may become unhappy for other reasons, such as when other clan members are trying to grab your land. Automatically, you become unhappy. You become annoyed because this land belonged to my father. I know you are also my father, but your is on the other side.

DD: What do you like most about your clan?

JH: I love them most. I love them so much. . . . When you have a problem, or when you want to marry, it is your clan members to assist you in problems, when you have marriage. Very many things. Like if I have a bride price, but I don't have money. My clan will contribute. They will pay for school fees for my child. That is why I love my clan because if there are serious problems, then they are the one to rescue me.

DD: What does it mean to be Acholi?

JH: Acholi is one of the biggest tribe. It is one of the biggest in Africa. When you go to Sudan you will get an Acholi. Others are in Kenya and Ethiopia.

DD: Do you mean the Luo?

JH: Yes. The origin of the Luo is the Acholi. The language we speak is the Luo. Even your president nowadays is Luo. We are almost the same, so the biggest tribe in Luo is Acholi.

DD: What makes you an Acholi?

JH: I was born and found that I was already Acholi.

DD: Do you think there is anything else, like something you do or have in common?

JH: We have a connection because we have other acholi, which their mother can be a different tribe, but the father is Acholi. According to the traditional way, that person is Acholi because we go by the father. Both my mother and father are Acholi, so I am Acholi. But others whose mothers are not Acholi, they are still Acholi because of the blood of the father.

DD: How are the Acholi different from other tribes in Uganda?

JH: Our culture is different from other tribes because for us here we have the traditional dance, which is different. Even our food is different. There are very many things that can differentiate we the Acholi from the other tribes. Even our traditional dressing. The style is different. Even our language is different.

DD: Do you think your perspective on things is different compared to others?

JH: Yes, the way we pronounce other things, like from the Buganda, which is different. . . .

DD: When do you feel most like an Acholi? When are you proud?

JH: When I am in Acholiland. For example, I visited Sudan, South Africa, Congo, and Kenya. Our place is very different from there. For us, we have fertile land. We have everything. But when you go to Sudan, you will see it is different. So the situation, the weather, is somehow better than all the other tribes in Uganda. And you can not die of hunger because everything is there. Even though you can not dig, you will survive. We have plenty of water. You can dig for water. In many places you get rock, but here you do not get rock.

DD: Are there time when you have not felt Acholi?

JH: Yes, I can say there are sometimes disadvantages. The level of education. We are backward. And we are very arrogant, that is why we have been suffering in the conflict with the LRA for so long because we do not love our fellow brothers as Acholi. We do not love our people.

DD: How do you feel about being an Acholi?

JH: I don't feel bad. I'm very happy to be an Acholi. But I should know that it is somehow, my character should be good. I should relate to other tribes and make friends. My character should be in a better position, not be like that of our grandfathers. But I like to be an Acholi.

DD: And what do you like most about the Acholi?

JH: Our culture. It is too nice.

DD: What does it mean to be a Ugandan?

JH: Anyone born in the geographical area of Uganda is a Ugandan. Or you can become a citizen when you stay here for long and you register for citizen. Or by birth or by registration.

DD: How are Ugandans different from others?

JH: You know, we have the geographical area, and we have very many Ugandans who have already changed their citizenship to other countries, like those in England and America. There are many there. They are staying there yet they are from Uganda. It depends only on the geographical area.

DD: How do other people know you are Ugandan?

JH: other people they know because when I fill in a form and they find that I am an Acholi, they will automatically know that I am Ugandan, because most of them you can get in Ugandan here. Also, my color. Even when I reach America, you will know that this one is from Africa, and you will ask my tribe. I will say Acholi, and you will know I am from Uganda.

DD: When are you proud do be Ugandan? When do you feel Ugandan? What do you do?

JH: Hmm. We have many things which can differentiate us from other countries, like Kenya, Congo. . . Once we have a different national anthem. A different one. And there is none like the one in Uganda. And when you come to my office, you see my flag and you know it is Ugandan. Even when you see my passport with the symbol that shows this is a Ugandan.

DD: Have you ever not felt like a Ugandan?

JH: I am very proud to be Ugandan and I like it so much. If possible I should remain a citizen forever. You can not stop me visiting other places, but for me, I will continue to be a Ugandan.

DD: What do you like most about being Ugandan?

JH: I have visited other places. Some very cool. Some very hot. But when I am in Uganda I feel good. . . .for me, I am used to the weather, and I like it so much. When I reach other places, I do not feel well.

DD: What is most important to you? Your clan, the Acholi, or Uganda?

JH: The most one is to be a Ugandan. The second, to be Acholi. And then the clan, number three.

DD: Why is it that order?

JH: . . .When you see the geographical area, being Ugandan it means you are well known. When you say you are this clan, no one will know you. But when you say Ugandan, they will know. Everybody will know you. Automatically. And to be an Acholi also. It will not be as possible. So I like to be a Ugandan so much. Because my clan is so small. At least the Acholi is bigger, but Uganda, everyone will know. No one will know you as an Acholi in America. . .

DD: Do you feel more Ugandan after being elected to office? Why do you think this feeling changed?

JH: Yes. . . When you are going for nomination there is a guideline. 1) You must be a citizen of Uganda. When you are going for nomination. . . .the guideline is clear that for you to sand, you must be Ugandan, so that one also contributed to my loving/learning [?] of Uganda because it would allow me to stand as a leader. 2) To qualify to be voters, you must be a citizen. That is the key to be able to vote if you want to elect your leader. And we have many things. . . like when you want to go somewhere, at least you need to get the permission fro the Ugandan's authority. They give you a passport with all recommendations. But your clan will not get you abroad. They will not give you a letter. But when you are Ugandan, you will get a letter, so that is why I like to be Ugandan.

DD: What does it mean to you to be a human being?

JH: . . . during the Creation. God created us to be the human being. And also he created animals. But for me, I belong to human beings. So that is a God gift. It is not my decisions to be a human being, but it is God's plan. So there is no where you can deny.

DD: Are there times when you have not felt like a human being?

JH: You know. When you read the Bible. You can find that all that God has created is for human being. Human being is on top. But the human being they are the overlord. They want to look after all those things. When you are an animal, anything can disturb you anytime. But not me, because I am a human being. . .

DD: During the conflict, did you ever feel like you weren't a human being, like you were being mistreated?

JH: yeah. You know everything has the advantage and disadvantage. So even though I am human being, there are disadvantages. But the advantages of being a human being is somehow bigger than the disadvantages.

DD: During the conflict, did you ever feel *not* a member of you clan, not Acholi or not Ugandan?

JH: As I told you being Ugandan is the most important one. Being Acholi is better. Being a clan member is good. But Uganda is the most. So the conflict. . . being in the conflict is not goo. Last time I told you that we had been in a very tough condition during the conflict in northern Uganda because we lost many lives and properties. So conflict, it began from during the time of the Creation. From the time God created human being. Even in heaven. That is why God sent Jesus to come to us because there was already conflict. So there is not way we can rule it out because it is there. And when negotiation fails, conflict is already there.

DD: Has the conflict changed the way you think of you clan?

JH: Yes. Even in the household there is already conflict. . . The only thing you can do is to get intervention because there is no way you can stop conflict in this world completely. The conflict must be there, but the way you solve it is there.

DD: Do you feel more attached to your clan to the conflict?

JH: Yes, I have a role in solving those conflict. To be a man, you are supposed to be a mediator. You are supposed to help solve the conflict between two or three. You must mediate and solve the conflict.

DD: Do you feel more attached to the Acholi after the conflict?

JH: Yes, that is why I told you I participated in the Peace Talks in South Sudan because I didn't want the conflict to continue between the government of Uganda and the rebel leaders, Joseph Kony. So I went personally to mediate. To talk peace. That is the sample I can give you to show you I am a peacemaker.

DD: Do you feel more attached to Uganda after the conflict?

JH: Yes, I have been elected as the chairperson of the whole county. This is a public office to assist the

citizens of Uganda, and as I am talking now I am leading almost 27,000 people. And everyone, I am supposed to direct them. What I am doing here, I am doing for the benefit of the people of Uganda.

DD: And what is most important to you?

JH: For me, I'm a peacemaker. I want peace. If the people of Uganda can be in peace—Ahh! That is the most important. With peace, there will be quarrel or corruption. . . whatever I do, I do for peace. I want everyone to love their neighbor, to love their friend.

DD: What makes you happy?

JH: I am different. I am happy when I am working. I am happy when I meet a woman who is pregnant—I am very very happy because even the God during the creation of the world said, you go and multiply. Fill the world. So I pray that they all go to the hospital and deliver well because I want people. I love people.

DD: What do you see for the future of your clan, the Acholi, and Uganda?

JH: For me, my future plan for the people of Koch Goma. . . First, good health. Two, education. They should educate so that they can move to America, Asia, everywhere in the world. Because when you have knowledge, you are educated well, you can move around the world. You can go and stay in American and become a citizen of America, because when you reach there you will be able to everything. You will even be able to discuss with the president o ameircan because you have knowledge. With education you will become a good citizen of Koch Goma, of Uganda, and of this world.

DD: is there anything else?

JH: yhes. You know, the bad thing is segregation. You sometimes you see that this is African country. You find few other citizens coming from toher countries. You find that when the census comes in Koch Goma you will find less than 10 Americans and God created us to live anywhere. I am thinking tha tin the future we can be mixed. Have many Americans, Asians, Japanese in Koch Goma and I want many Ahcoli in America. It would make me happy. So when you finish your studies, you come back. I will give you a piece of land. . . . we have very many activities here which the Americans, the Acholi, the Japanese can utilize. So when you go back, remember to come back. . .

DD: Thank you.

Interview No. 6
Pseudonym: Cynthia
Age: 26
Sex: Female
Ethnicity: Acholi mother, Banyoro father; considers herself Acholi
Education level: university
Extent of travel: throughout Uganda; never left Uganda

DD: What is your clan?

CA: My clan is Payira.

DD: How do people know you are a member?

CA: I know it through the cultural norms we emphasize. For example, we have some few things we do that other clans do not do. For example, we have some foods we do not eat that others eat, such as this cow meat. The cow has some funny colors. It is whitish and has black and brown. We do not eat that cattle. If we eat it, we assume that there are something in it that will harm our bodies and make us feel bad. So we just don't eat it because it is our culture.

DD: How do others in your clan know that you are a member?

CA: By the name also, we have a hereditary name, held by our forefathers. For example, our grand-grand father was called Lagoro—such like that so that every family carry that name. When you go elsewhere and say you are from Lagoro's family, they will know you are from that clan because it carries a big meaning.

DD: What about others outside of your clan? Is it the same?

CA: Not really because there is not much difference between other clans except from you expressing things in your own ways that your are not supposed to do. For example, someone slaughters a cow, and you eat it, and it is that bad cow, then you must undergo some purification or cleansing. But if you do not now that about the cow, then you do not worry.

DD: When do you feel like a member of your clan?

CA: Especially when I am with my clan members back home because I feel we are together. When we go, we get some that are elders, and for us we are children so when we go we have to move with something so they know we are working, like sugar

and salt. Apart from that one, we get a lot of advice from them, like you always have to consult on whatever you want to do. That makes you feel attached to the clan, because whatever you do, they must know what you are doing in case you encounter a problem in the future because they will be the ones to help you. If you want to get married, you have to tell them the many you've got, his clan, and you must present him before the clan member. Otherwise, you may get married to someone fro the same clan and that is not good.

DD: Are there time when you do not feel like a member of your clan?

CA: Not really. With this modern life—back in the village, culturally, there is a way of dressing, respecting elders by kneeling, you have to dress up to downward, the dress-code. That is how an Acholi is supposed to dress up. But when I am out, I put on trousers. It is a modern world. I even greet an older person without kneeling, but waving.

DD: When you greet the elders like that, do you feel less like a member of your clan?

CA: Yes, because I would have deviated from what they want us to do. Those things we do in the village when we are home. But here I know I am not doing good because elders are supposed to be given a lot of respect, but now with this modern world when we are out from our village, you can not kneel to each and every one or wear those clothes. . .

DD: What do you like most about your clan?

CA: I like the education. I like the advice I always get from the elders to us who are coming up to be elders like them. They are always following up on whatever we are doing. They are always there to direct us on what to do. I like this. They are always there to advise us. Good things.

DD: Anything else?

CA: Not really. Regarding the eating meat, we just found it existing, so we follow it. Because you can not deviate from what has already started.

DD: what does it mean to be an Acholi?

CA: It is good being Acholi. I'm proud of it.

DD: Who is an Acholi?

CA: According to me, I identify an Acholi as a person who has fathered or mothered, or was born, in Acholiland. Speaks the Acholi language. And practices the Acholi culture.

DD: And what makes you an Acholi?

CA: Myself? It is because I'm in Acholiland. I have a parent who's Acholi. I speak the Acholi language. I practice their culture.

DD: Do you think there is anything that the Acholi have in common that make them Acholi aside form the blood and the language, like any values or anything they do that makes them all the same? How is the culture different from others?

CA: We have the cultural dances that are very richer, richer than those of other cultures. We have many, like the larakaraka, diny diny, bola. . . Also after the harvest there is a dance to appreciate the harvest that has been upraised. We also have a dance to dance before the rwot, our king, which is different from other cultures. Apart from that one, we also have a lot of traditional dishes that other cultures don't. For example, we have malakwang, we have boo, we have labiri, lapenya—that other cultures do not have because they can not grown I ntheir own areas. I also myself exercise that.

DD: How do other people know you are an Acholi?

CA: The way I speak because even when you are outside the district you can easily detect this one is speaking Acholi. Even the other tribes when they co me, you would know this one comes from another tribe. You would even say that this one recognizes me from the way I'm speaking.

DD: When do you feel Acholi?

CA: When I am in Acholiland I feel like I am an Acholi. I'm speaking the same language. Doing what the culture wants me to do. Cooking the traditional dishes. That makes me feel at home. When the cultural dances are being performed, I also join them. That makes me feel like I'm Acholi. But maybe when I go outside the district, I find the dishes or dances are not there, so I have to dance according to the tune of those people.

DD: Are there times when you have not felt like an Acholi?

CA: Yes, especially when I am not in Acholiland, like when I go to Kampala. Because I speak in

Luganda or English. I also do what other people do there. I get involved in tehr culture. I eat matooke. Speak in Luganda. Which it would be very hard to distinguish me from other Acholis.

DD: How do you feel about being an Acholi?

CA: I feel good.

DD: What do you like most about being an Acholi?

CA: The traditional dishes.

DD: Anything else?

CA: no.

DD: What does it mean to be a Ugandan?

CA: Just like I defined being an Acholi, I think a Ugandan is a person who is born in Uganda and has a culture from Uganda and exercises that culture in Uganda.

DD: What makes you a Ugandan? Is it the same thing?

CA: Yes.

DD: How are Ugandans different from others?

CA: I think they are different from others because of the languages they speak. We have very many languages in Uganda. . . .but they speak at least Ugandan languages. Apart from that thery also exercise the culture of Uganda. Even when they go outside, they will still be identified by their language and their culture. They will still move with their culture, even though they will change a bit.

DD: How do people know you are Ugandan?

CA: So people know I'm Ugandan because of the way I identify myself, the way I speak, my language, my tribe. It is hard to tell this person comes from Uganda. But it me who tells people. If I go to America, I tell them I am Acholi and they will know I am Ugandan. Even the way I practice my culture. You can try to practice someone else's culture, but you will never lose yours.

DD: Do you think Ugandans have a common culture?

CA: As Africans, we all respect elders. Elders play a very big role in bringin up the children. Apart from the one, all the cultures of Uganda have the

traditional dances, though not similar, but we all have our own dances and dishes. Though different, they are there.

DD: When do you feel like a Ugandan?

CA: When I am in Uganda, or when I join Ugandan colleagues is when I feel Ugandan. I feel this way because we talk about things that are in common, our Ugandan level. We share things that are common to all of us. For example, the languages, like if I find someone who speaks the same language, and we may share the same meal. I would fee at home with them.

DD: Have ever not felt Ugandan or not wished to be Ugandan?

CA: No.

DD: How do you feel about being Ugandan?

CA: I feel sweet because Uganda is a very nice palce. The climate is very good and somehow peaceful. At our level, we have a lot of freedoms. I can exercise whatever I need. But for politicians, their rights have somehow been denied, and with the demonstration, but to me, I feel like I have my freedom.

DD: What do you like most about Uganda?

CA: The clture itself. Becaue the clture has enabled me to grow up into the person I am. If I grew up outside of Uganda, I amy not know who I am supposed to be as a Ugandan or an Africa. I may not fit into this society. When children grow outside and they brought in the village, the way they behave and handle themselves is a bit different. So the culture has enabled me to be the person I am.

DD: Anything else?

CA: Ugandans are hospitable. There are each and every tribe, they are welcoming. Whenever we visitors, we are always free. It is a free country, and we like each other, whether you are Ugandan or not.

DD: What does it mean to be a human being?

CA: A human being is someone who is living and he enjoys his/her freedoms. Freedoms like moement, like shelter, medical care/services. . . .

DD: What makes you a human being?

CA: Because I have the characteristics of a human being. I move. I am able to talk. I have a culture. And I have a family.

DD: When do you feel like a human being?

CA; When I am doing the right thing before others, such as. .. . the way I dress. The way I behave. The way I handle myself. The way I practice my humanity in me.

DD: How do you practice your humanity?

CA: In privacy. There are certain things you do in private, rather than in public..

DD; have you ever not felt like a human being?

CA; No.

DD: During the conflict, did you feel like a human being?

CA: Yes, I did. A human being must have feeling. During the conflict, I got hurt, I was traumatized. The situation wa not good. I was alaramed. I didn't feel safe. You feel useless, and bad, the trauma always disturbs people. . . .

DD: After the conflict, do you feel the same way?

CA: The situation now has changed because past years when there was a conflict, there were hard times. But with this peace prevailing, our past memories are now getting away and we are now trying to f ace future. These past experiences are now getting washed away from my brain.

DD: has the conflict changed the way you think of yourself as a member of your clan?

CA: The culture was there, but it was not functioning then because people ran away during the insurgency. But now order has been restored with the cultural members, the community, they are all there. People are no longer mixed up. In the war, people scattered and the culture was left hanging.

DD: Where did you stay during the conflict?

CA: Kampal and Gulu.

DD: Did the conflict change the way you think of yourself as an Acholi?

CA: No. I remained Acholi.

DD: Did you not feel like an Acholi during the conflict?

CA: No.

DD: What about Ugandan?

CA: No.

DD: Anything else?

CA: There is nothing because it would not be relevant.

DD: What do you see for the future.

CA: The future is bright given that the conflict may not come back, but we can't conclude that it will not come back, because Kony is still in the bush. That other problem may get him. . . but all in all the future is bright. Before the war, the Acholi culture was very rich in terms of food, wealth, moral up-bringing, but during the war all these things were destroyed. People got food from WFP. People were killed. Animals were taken away. . . everything ended up in a mess. The children lost their morals. And that is why you see currently the prevalence of HIV in Acholiland because during the conflict people stayed together, and soldiers exploited women and children in the camp. Women would offer themselves for money. Some have died. Even children are not well. But all this is changing. . . .People have gone back to their homes, and they want to bring back those days, the nostalgia, of when people had their own home and were independent, and could care for themselves and their neighbors. Even NGOs are helping them on how to improve their agricultural output, sanitation. . .

DD: Will you tell you children about the conflict?

CA: I will tell them what happened, what I saw, so they know the problems we went through. It is important to tell them and to tell them what caused it. . . .so they know what happened in the past, the present that they are seeing, so they can relate it to the present and predict their future. It helps to know how their culture is, or how we have been leading up to where they are, and the experience they passed to up to that level. It is good because I believe what we experienced will not stop there. Books will be published, and I will add to them what I saw. Since there are many sources of history, I will tell them oral history, and it will add more knowledge to what they know and read.

DD: Do you think these stories will become important to these generations, like the myths?

CA: Yes. If those things are not important, we would not now our origin. It is important for them to know each and every step that has happened to their culture. How they existed. Where they belonged. What happened? What were the reasons. . .

DD: Do you think the conflict has unified the Acholi or divided them?

CA: The conflict has divided people because they are no longer good hearted. They used to love each other,. But during the conflict elders and parents passed away and children grew up without elders to say this is our relative, our land. . . so when they go back, children don't like each othe rbeacuse they are on their own. There are disputes over land. . . So the conflict has really divided people.

DD: What do you value?

CA: My life.

DD: What makes you happy?

CA: When I'm healthy. That way I can make ends meet.

DD: Which is more important to you: clan, Acholi, or Uganda?

CA: In my life as an Acholi and as a Ugandan, the most important thing is my culture.

DD: So it is not your clan or the Acholi or the Uganda that is most important, but just your culture?

CA: Of course the culture belongs to the clan, each clan has a culture, so I think they move together hand in hand. But they are all important to me.