Chapter 4

Generations

Esther Acio, Lioba Lenhart
and Susan Reynolds Whyte

The Insecure Nephew

Daniel's grass-thatched hut was clean and tidy. It was evidently the house of someone with resources. The floor was cemented, and curtains separated the sleeping area from the space for receiving visitors. A crucifix and a rosary hung from the centre pole along with a wire basket containing a blister pack of pills, tubes and other small things. The first time we visited Daniel at home, it looked as if he had prepared for our coming. As we took the seats he offered, we saw on a table in front of us items that showed different aspects of his life and work. It seemed he had been a bit more exposed to the outside world than other youth in his community. A copy of the Book of Mormon contrasted with the rosary. There were boxes of male and female condoms, which he distributed as a youth leader tasked with, among other things, instructing his peers on how to use them to prevent HIV/AIDS and STDs. Some papers next to the boxes indicated past engagements. There was material from Green Watch, an environmental advocacy organization, which had employed him in 2012–13. He showed us documents about a National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS)-supported piggery project run by disabled people, who had invited him to become a member of their group and facilitate the work, although he was not disabled himself. There was a certificate from an oil company for which he had worked, and a photo of him and four other young men together with a Dutch engineer. Other material revealed hopes for the future: brochures promoting seeds and agrochemicals, which he spoke of passionately as the sort of thing he would buy when he was

able to engage in serious farming someday. Daniel was already doing some small-scale agriculture but, as we learned, accessing land for farming was a challenge.

We had met Daniel the day before in Purongo, at the sub-county offices, where the Chairman of LC3 had called him in response to our request to talk to some youth. The Chairman introduced him as a youth leader, since Daniel had served as a youth representative on the local council. He was 24 years old, at that time, in early 2014. Later, Esther and Lioba met him frequently during their field stays in Purongo, where both had rented a place. Esther developed a close relationship with Daniel, who became not only one of her most important respondents but also her research assistant. He shared many insights about his life and experiences as a youth in the community, identified and connected her to interlocutors, and helped her with translations. She regularly visited him at home and was introduced to his family members, with whom she interacted whenever she went to Purongo. During our first visit and meetings later on, Daniel shared his life story with us. We also talked to his brothers, his mother and his maternal uncle.

Daniel was the third child in a family of five sons. He lived with his mother Aber and three of his brothers on the same compound. An elder married brother lived in Gulu town with a wife and children. Of the five huts in the compound in Purongo, one was for his mother with whom his youngest brother stayed when he was home from school. Another was for an older married brother and his wife and children. They used one of the two kitchen huts, while his mother cooked in the other. Daniel shared his own well-built hut with a younger brother, until that brother married in 2016 and constructed one of his own.

Daniel's parents had separated during the insurgency. His father went with other women, and there was some insinuation about witchcraft in the home that we never fully understood. When people in the area were forced into IDP camps, Aber did not go with her husband but instead took refuge in a camp near her natal home in Purongo. Her elder brother Okot had received her and the children well and taken care of them ever since. Okot had used the bridewealth from Aber's marriage to bring his own first wife to the home, so he had a special obligation to her. But because Okot had also to look after his seven biological children, he could not afford to pay school fees for Daniel and his brothers, as they had hoped, so they had to struggle on their own. His elder brothers proved to be rather successful. One became a primary school teacher in Purongo, whereas the other got a job as a petrol station manager in Gulu. Daniel, however, eventually dropped out of O-level secondary school. He joined a technical school, where he took a course in carpentry and joinery, which he did not complete due to lack of school fees. However, he and his elder brothers made sure that the younger brothers could complete their O-level education. The two oldest brothers contributed from their salaries, and Daniel helped whenever he managed to earn some cash.

Daniel's uncle Okot was born into a family of six children, three boys and three girls. Two of his brothers died, so that he, as the only male child alive, had become head of the family and natal home of Daniel's mother. Two other sisters lived in their marital homes. Okot had married four wives. He was separated from one, and two of them had passed on, but he was still living with his first wife. The first wife had delivered two girls, who were already married, as well as two boys, who were still in school. Okot had three children with his second wife, one boy and two girls, who were married and lived in Purongo. The boy had two wives but had not yet paid bridewealth for either of them, something that Okot wanted to help him achieve. The third wife had delivered two children who died, and he separated with the fourth wife before they had a child. In addition to his own biological children and his sister Aber's children, Daniel's uncle was also looking after other relatives' children; five of them were still in school.

Over time, we learned more about Daniel's endeavours to access land. He told us that his uncle Okot had inherited over thirty acres of land from his father. In 2007, when they left the camps, Okot had given Daniel's mother two acres of land. It was not much for both residence and farming, but as she stated, 'In Acholi, when a girl returns home, she has no power to say anything regarding land matters; therefore, whatever she is given is what she takes, whether it's enough or not.' Okot explained: 'It is our father's land, and Aber has the right to be allocated land to use with her children. But there is no ownership given to the children; they just use it. I am now the owner of the land; they have to ask me for land when they want to use it.' Daniel and his brothers could have claimed their father's land. However, Aber explained that after she had returned to her natal home in Purongo with her sons, her husband had not supported them at all but married another wife, with whom he had four children, two boys and two girls. She stressed that Daniel and his brothers should indeed claim land from their

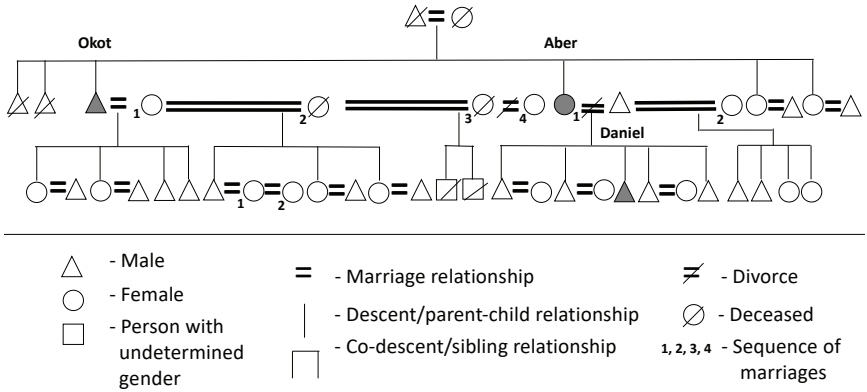

Figure 4.1. Daniel's family ties showing the marriages and children of his mother Aber and her brother Okot. Numbers indicate the seniority of wives © Lioba Lenhart.

father, but they would not do so, because they now identified more with their mother's side. Moreover, their father's land was contested, and neither her sons nor she as good Christians would want to be involved in any land conflict. She said she hoped to get money one day to buy land for her sons so that they can have a say on that land.

Of the two acres Okot had allocated to them, Daniel, his mother and his brothers used one and a half acres for residence. The remaining half acre was for planting food crops such as beans, cassava and sweet potatoes, which were mainly for home consumption. Daniel also showed us another five acres of land in a valley close to their homestead, which his uncle had given him for cultivation. The uncle had also entrusted him to manage the land in case other relatives wanted to use parts of it. Okot felt that he was no longer strong enough to use this land, which was quite wet. There, Daniel had planted sugarcane, which he regarded as a good source of income. He proudly told us that he had earned about one million Uganda shillings from his sugarcane harvest in 2013. He had also planted green vegetables and prepared a nursery bed with small cabbage plants. The valley was crossed by a small stream. Daniel had made drainage channels to irrigate the crops. He was also thinking of growing watermelons and other fruits, which he hoped to sell to one of the companies he once had worked for. 'This land has helped me a lot,' Daniel said.

However, when Daniel was given the land, his uncle Okot had told him: 'Know for sure that this is not your land, and when I ask for it, you have to give it back.' The uncle had stressed that a man in Acholi society can only own land when he has achieved a certain social status as a married man with children. But he also had another point to make. In Acholi society, land is usually transmitted from fathers to sons. However, Daniel and his brothers did not live on their father's land but with their mother on her brother's land. In Purongo, they were nephews and therefore – unlike Okot's own male children – had no customary rights to the land.

Daniel stressed: 'Youth have no voice in land matters. It is the elders. When you are grown up and you are married with children, you may have a say. When you are a youth, you may dig anywhere but the land is not yours.' This was particularly true for nephews. Daniel was given part of his maternal uncle's land to provide for his mother and siblings, but not to own or sell it. The uncle had taken good care of them since they were young; they appreciated and respected their uncle for what he had done for them, and they listened to what he said. He had treated them like his own sons and given them access to land, which some other young people were not lucky enough to have because they could not be trusted, since they were not humble and respectful towards the older generation like Daniel and his brothers.

Nevertheless, Daniel and his brothers could not be sure for how long they could stay on the uncle's land and engage in cultivation. Possibly, the uncle's sons

would claim this land in future, using patrilineal inheritance as an argument to exclude them. Okot had other pieces of customary land that he inherited from his own father and grandfather, but they were located in other areas. As the only surviving son, Okot had authority over all this customary land. Recently, he had started to sell parts of the family land to outsiders – the local church, an LC3 councillor, and others whom Daniel and his mother and brothers did not know. They had only heard about it by chance. The fact that Okot had sold land without even informing his own sister made them worry.

When the uncle returned from a drinking place where he had consumed a lot of local brew, he sometimes spoke roughly about them; one time he had even told them that they would have to go back to 'where they belong', namely to their father's place. All this was triggering worries that the uncle might also sell the land on which they lived. Daniel's brother Robert lamented this state of uncertainty: 'We live here like visitors, and one day we will be required to leave.'

Daniel and his brothers took the selling of parts of the family land by their uncle as an eye-opener 'to do something before it is too late'. For them, it was not an option to return to their father's place and fight over land with their father's other children. They were also not willing to quarrel with their uncle's children over the land where they were staying. While they continued cultivating the uncle's land, they were thinking about saving money to buy land elsewhere. They had started to hire land from other people to plant crops such as rice, sesame and groundnuts, which they sometimes sold.

Daniel was the first among them to buy his own land. In March 2016, he acquired two acres near Hoima, a town far away from home. He had earlier worked for an oil company there that had just paid him his salary arrears, which had accumulated to a total of five million Uganda shillings. A former colleague and friend from that area told him about the two acres of land that were for sale by an old man who wanted to move to Kampala to live with his daughter. Daniel bought the land at 4.8 million Uganda shillings. He still had 200,000 Uganda shillings left, which he spent for his transport fares and other requirements. Interestingly, Daniel has only told one of his younger brothers, whom he says he trusts, about the land he purchased.

Daniel had no land he could unambiguously call 'ours'. The closest was the two acres allocated to his mother and the valley land over which his uncle had given him authority. The 'ours' in this case refers to his mother and brothers. In his account, the land and the livelihood it provides are part of his belonging and obligations to this family. The purchased land he can now call 'mine' is also somewhat ambiguous in that he says it will be for his future children. In other words, it will become 'ours' for the next generation. The fact that he has only told one brother about this land suggests that he is uneasy that his brothers will treat it as 'ours' or that he will be forced to sell it to meet family obligations. This had already happened in relation to other property he had acquired.

In 2012, Daniel had started a livestock project with eight goats and two pigs. However, in late 2013 he had to sell his animals because he had to contribute money for a relative's funeral, pay school fees for his youngest brother, and cover the medical bills for his sick mother. Not long afterwards, he ventured into a poultry project for some time, but it also did not last long as he did not have enough money for treatment when the birds fell sick, and so they died. In 2015, Daniel started another piggery project together with his younger brother Robert. The number of piglets had multiplied when Robert came up with plans to marry. So, they sold all the pigs in order to finance the marriage that took place in mid-2016. 'We were all so happy for Robert and his achievement,' Daniel said, expressing firm solidarity with his brother and the 'achievement' of a church wedding.

Daniel, however, was not yet ready to marry his girlfriend from West Nile, although she and his mother had pressured him 'to settle down'. Instead, he separated from her. 'I do not have money to marry now,' he said. 'I first have to secure land for my future children's future.' He explained that he had plans to acquire land nearby and start a business in livestock production and agriculture: to raise pigs, goats and poultry – do 'some serious farming'. Daniel did not just sit back and wait for things to happen or land to appear. He had always struggled in one way or another to secure his birth family's livelihoods, and he aspired to become an equally responsible husband and father, which in his view implied having secured land as a foundation for family life.

Of What Is This a Case?

Daniel was in many ways an exemplary young man: a good son and brother, a respectful nephew, a hard-working farmer, and a socially conscious 'exposed' youth representative on the Local Council. He could be taken primarily as representative of 'the nephew problem' (*nero ki okeya*) in that he was living on his mother's brother's land to which he had no claim according to Acholi patrilineal conventions. But we will take this as a specific case of an even more general phenomenon: the interplay between generations around access to land. It is also a concrete case of more abstract principles of genealogy, historical disruption and the generation of alternatives.

In this chapter, we consider three meanings of generation – genealogical, historical and productive – which structure our consideration of the wider implications of Daniel's story. Together with gender, generation is the axis of kinship, so anthropological studies of kin-based African societies have long focused on the links between genealogical generations. Careful attention has been accorded to the relations between parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren, parents-in-law and children-in-law, aunts and uncles and their nieces and nephews, and, of course, descent groups. In the last decade or so, scholars and policymakers have approached generation in another way. They are concerned with youth as a

historical generation – a cohort born around the same time with similar experiences of war, HIV and lack of economic possibilities, but also education, communication technologies and exposure to new discourses and aspirations for a life different from that of their parents. Although the emphasis is on young people in these studies, the contrast to their seniors is always implicit. As a verb, to generate means to produce or create. The efforts of parents and children, of older and younger people, to deal with land issues in contemporary northern Uganda have generated new ideas and practices with important consequences for their interrelations.

Gerontocracy and Genealogical Generations: The Patrilineal Ideal

Acholi society is patrilineal in principle. Descent and therefore generational relations are fundamental for identity and access to resources. Children are considered to belong to the clan (*kaka*) of their fathers. Customary land is held by smaller descent groups traced through the male line; these patrilineages are also called *kaka*. Sons have a claim to their fathers' land so that a neighbourhood consists of the homes (*dogola*) of men related agnatically and descended from a common ancestor. The term for the land that they share, *ngom kwaro*, usually translates to 'ancestral land', implying a relation to previous generations.

The androcentric perspective in patriliny is tempered by the key position of women and gender relations (Shipton 2009: 105–8). Since descent groups are exogamous, wives from outside are necessary for the creation of further generations of lineage members. Traditionally, sisters married out, bringing in bridewealth to ensure that their brothers had the wherewithal to bring wives to cultivate their ancestral land. Daughters are expected to move to the home of their husbands' families, residing virilocally and cultivating gardens there, which their sons will inherit someday. They have residual rights to use the land of their fathers and brothers should they fail to marry durably. Their children often stay with them, thus living on the land of their maternal uncles, as did Daniel and his brothers. If neither bridewealth nor the payment to recognize children (*luk latini*) is given to the family of a mother, her children should be considered members of her clan and allowed to claim land from their mother's brothers, according to one source (Ker Kwaro Acholi 2008). Yet this is often problematic, and in practice the status of such children is often ambiguous.

Patriliny and virilocality are normal and normative, in the sense of being common and considered right. Still, they are neither inevitable nor absolute. Girling (1960: 37–38) reported families living on the land of mother's brothers and wives' fathers during the late colonial era. Gauvin did a full village genealogy in 2012 and found people who had been living on land from the maternal side for generations (Baines and Gauvin 2014: 299–300). Likewise, Hopwood and Atkinson (2013: 6) state that many of the 'guest' families in core clan villages 'were the households of women returning to the clans into which they were born,

usually with their husbands, but sometimes as women-headed households after leaving their husbands' clan, and clan land, because of divorce or other serious difference or difficulty'.

In his classic work on kinship among the patrilineal Tallensi in West Africa, Meyer Fortes (1949) distinguished between the significance of paternal and maternal kinship links. Filiation is the recognized status of being the child of a parent, a mother or a father. Descent refers to the link by a parent to ancestors. In patrilineal societies like the Tallensi and Acholi, it is paternal filiation that links sons, and to some extent daughters, to the descent groups through which they access land. Links to mothers, and through them to her consanguineal relatives, were dubbed 'complementary filiation' by Fortes (1969: 254). (In a matrilineal society, the 'complementary filiation' is on the paternal side.) He suggested that maternal links had a different quality; Girling (1960: 39) made a similar observation in his Acholi study. Fortes asserted that these matrilateral ties deserved equal attention despite the ideological weight given to paternal descent. For our purposes here, what is important is the acknowledgement of the most fundamental relationship of generation – that between a mother and child. Daniel lived on his uncle's land because of his mother.

Sons have a claim to land through their fathers. Through links to an agnatic descent group, they are entitled to use ancestral land: son to father and on to father's brothers, and father's father, all sharing the land of their paternal forefather. Conventionally, fathers show their sons the portion of land they may use at the time they marry. Again, however, women's position is key. The portion sons are most likely to be given is where their mothers had gardens (Obika et al. 2018: 208). Thus, a mother's labour helps to secure land for her sons. Land disputes are often based on the entitlements mothers establish through use; evidence of such use – ditches or lines where weeds were thrown – may figure in dispute negotiation. If a man has several wives, there may well be tension between them and their children over portions and boundaries.

Children have land entitlements through their parents, especially their fathers, but also in some ways through the efforts of their mothers. Women who leave their husbands often go to some length to secure their sons' claims in patrilineal land. As we will see in Chapter 5, Awor explained that she farms on the land of her ex-husband in order to secure the land for her sons. It is not always realized that the reverse also holds: parents have claims through their children. Having children, especially sons, supports the entitlement of a wife to use her husband's land. In the case of Sylvia (Chapter 3), the clan elders decided that she should be allowed to return to her late husband's land because of her sons. Obika and colleagues (2018: 216) write that: 'Being the mother of recognised clan children cements a woman's claim to garden land.' Especially if she has sons, a woman may be entitled to use land even if she is estranged from their father; her sons will one day bring wives to cultivate where their mother had gardens. Likewise, if her husband dies, her security on his family land is firmer if she has

children. Having children is also important for men's claims to land. The clansman without children is in a weaker position regarding land. One of Langole's informants, Watmon, struggled to get a share of family land. He was told to leave their father's land for siblings who had children.

As Shipton (2009: 111) points out, land use entitlements are passed from one generation to another through inheritance at death, and through devolution during a senior man's life, typically when a young man marries and a father allocates a portion of land to him. But as we have seen in the case of Daniel, devolution may take different forms. His mother's brother assigned land for his use but underlined that the land was on loan. The difference between devolution and lending may not always be clear.

Nearly all land in the Acholi sub-region is held under customary tenure; it is not registered with state authorities. Through inheritance or devolution, it passes from one generation to another. Authority over the disposition of land rests with the senior generation. As an older man summed it up: 'customary tenure means that the elders are in control' (Whyte and Acio 2017: 24). Governance of land by gerontocracy, in Acholi as elsewhere in Africa, is often attended by tensions and open conflicts between sons and fathers. In Bugisu, eastern Uganda, where land is in short supply, such conflicts have, in the past, been linked to high rates of patricide and filicide (LaFontaine 1967; Heald 1989). In Acholiland, open clashes are rare; instead, there is a marked pattern of filial humility and respect. As we have suggested elsewhere, patient, respectful waiting is a strategy for youth hoping to acquire a share of ancestral land; as one young man put it: '. . . the elders are the ones who are involved in giving or allocating land to us young people, which means that as you grow up, you have to wait until the elders give you land because they are the ones who know which land to give you' (Whyte and Acio 2017: 26). Those who are impatient and demand a share may be condemned as 'big-headed'. Deference towards 'the one who cares for the land' is also wise on the part of those staying with maternal relatives, as Daniel's example shows.

An essential element of gerontocracy is the assumption that older men have a monopoly on legitimate knowledge. The elders are 'the ones who know'. And legitimate knowledge is knowledge about the past. Which grandmother had gardens where? Who planted those mango trees? Who lived where the faint ruins of a house foundation can be traced? Who lies buried under the stones on that mound of earth? Material marks in the landscape are evidence only if they are interpreted by a person in authority. No matter what forum is used for dispute management, the voice of the senior generation is given greater weight.

Historical Generations: Challenges to Patriliny

Deference to authority is precisely what is lacking among the youth of today, according to many older people in Acholiland. They claim that the youth who

came of age during the war and in the IDP camps were morally spoiled – they respected neither their elders nor the virtues of Acholi life. They had not learned how to farm. They were lazy and avoided the hoe. They wanted the amusements of town life: videos, gambling and drinking. They did not form responsible partnerships; girls fell pregnant at a tender age and young men did not support the children they begot. A repeated assertion was that male youth just wanted to sell land to buy motorcycles to use as taxis in town.

Young people in turn criticized their male elders for secretiveness, greediness and selfishness. They did not share knowledge about the land. They sold land for their own individual benefit without consulting their children and grandchildren, they drank too much, they favoured the children of one wife over others and they did not care for orphans left by deceased lineage members. They used witchcraft and connived unfairly to exclude some young paternal relatives. Often these criticisms were aimed at specific older men; sometimes they were generalized to senior males across the board.

Karl Mannheim (1952 [1927]) drew attention to the way that young people who came of age under momentous historical conditions had to reconcile the cultural heritage they had from older generations with the new experiences they had undergone. He suggested that such a cohort might develop a distinctive generational consciousness. Several scholars have found the concept of historical generations useful in the study of youth and generations in Africa (Cole and Durham 2006; Alber, Van der Geest and Whyte 2008). Vorhölter's (2014) study of Acholi youth discourses in Gulu town analyses the generational consciousness of the 'war generation' so often criticized by their seniors. She argues that they see themselves at a crossroads, between tradition and modernity, the past and the future, Acholi and Western culture. This in-between, both/and, neither/nor situation is ambiguous as Verma (2013) shows. That is why, she explains, they are seen as *lakite* – 'somehow' tricky, changeable and unreliable. Young musicians in Gulu are explicit about the ambiguity of their generational position (Meinert and Schneidermann 2014).

It seems that the war contributed to generational consciousness: 'we are youth at the crossroads' and 'the testimony of older people is more reliable'. In the negotiations over land at Ogul described in Chapter 6, it was explicitly stated that the 'children of the camps', those who came of age as Internally Displaced, should not be part of the meetings. Partly it was assumed that such young men can turn violent and partly that they did not know how land had been used in the past. As is often the case, the consciousness of generational belonging was oppositional: 'the older people do not share knowledge with us' and 'youth today do not respect us'. In this historical conjuncture, mistrust between generations is common, both in general terms and in specific instances. Daniel and his brothers did not trust their mother's brother in matters relating to land. He sold land without telling his nephews; they heard about it from someone

else. Lack of communication fuelled their uncertainty – maybe he would even sell the land where they were staying.

Intergenerational tensions around land often revolve around the morally reprehensible sale of ancestral land. Joireman, doing research in Acholiland in 2015, examines children as victims and agents in land matters following the disruptions of AIDS, war and displacement. She found as we did that elders accused youth of selling clan land. Although she describes this as a statement made by her older informants, she accepts that it is indeed the case and argues that children in this way are vectors of institutional change. 'Resource conflict there – and specifically access to land – has taken on an intergenerational quality as young adults take advantage of the growing market in land and eroded social institutions to sell clan land' (Joireman 2018: 94). There are surely some such cases, but they cannot be very common given that authority over land is seldom in the hands of young adults. (In another sense, it is always children who sell ancestral land; if it is understood as passing down generations, then it is sold by children of previous generations – although those 'children' might be middle-aged men.) Like Daniel, most young men are more in the market for buying than for selling land. We agree with Joireman's point that members of the 'war generation' were both disenfranchised and motivated to find new alternative ways forward, thus acting as vectors of change. However, we emphasize other tactics.

There can be no doubt that the war and displacement to camps disrupted the patrilineal ideal in fundamental ways. The authority of senior men and the reproduction of agnatic descent groups rested on marriage. Older men controlled not only the disposition of land but also the circulation of bridewealth. When the Acholi people lost their livestock to the depredations of the Karamojong, the LRA and the UPDF, and then were confined to camps, the giving of bridewealth was impossible. The formalization of partnerships through open courtship (*cuna*), including visits and exchanges between families of the couple, declined drastically (Baines and Gauvin 2014). Together with the fact that links were lost through death or disregard, this meant that women had children without recognized fathers. The most common recourse for them was to stay in the homes of their parents and brothers. While such arrangements had long existed, they became far more common after the war and internment. When sisters' sons grew up in their mothers' homes, where should they get land? This was the quandary facing Daniel and his brothers, even though their situation was different in that their mother had been properly married with bridewealth and their father was still alive.

Children without a relationship to their fathers and who are not absorbed in their mothers' lineages are precariously positioned in patrilineal societies. Perhaps the most extreme examples are the 'children born of war', whose mothers were abducted and whose fathers were LRA fighters. When those women return, they are not always welcomed by their families and neighbours because of their asso-

ciation with violence. Their children are derided as 'children of the bush' whose unidentified fathers were brutal rebels. The children themselves want to know their fathers' families, where they should properly belong. The Justice and Reconciliation Project sees the establishment of paternal descent as a source of healing for these children and has been undertaking an effort to help mothers and 'children born of war' to trace paternal families. 'Many children continue to ask their mothers the whereabouts of their paternal homes and find that not knowing their home can be a painful void in their sense of identity. Additionally, knowing one's "home" (paternal village) is an integral component of *social belonging* in Acholi culture' (Justice and Reconciliation Project 2018).

More numerous even than the fatherless children of the LRA are the children who have no relationship with their (non-combatant) fathers. In some cases, this is because their mothers were mistreated and broke ties with them, as did Daniel's mother. In other cases, the mother never told them who their father was; in still others the father died and his agnates did not recognize them. Perhaps most commonly, the father never acknowledged his child, either by paying *luk* or by giving support. Poverty was often invoked as the reason why men did not undertake responsibility.

Baines and Gauvin address this widespread problem of 'illegitimate children' and note that there is a resurgence of lineal authority reflected in efforts to recognize paternal filiation and descent. Such efforts include attempts by maternal families to make paternal ones take responsibility, and the willingness of some fathers or paternal relatives to acknowledge and support children whose mothers were never wives. The backside of this resurgence of lineal authority is what can be called 'patrilineal fundamentalism', the contention that only agnatic descent gives entitlement to land (Whyte et al. 2013: 294), thus excluding sisters' sons and descendants of friends who were given land in earlier times.

Langole's (2014) study of male and female youth in Gulu town traces generational relations in detail. 'Slippery paternity' was a problem for several of the young mothers, who had no further interaction with the fathers of their children (Langole 2014: 73). Like other researchers, he found that children, especially sons, had an existential need to know their paternity, a need that could have serious mental health implications (Whyte and Oboke 2022). This did not necessarily mean having a personal relation with their genitor. Paternal grandparents, aunts or uncles might also give them recognition and support (Langole 2014: 77). Sons might even hope to be given access to land. Yet their entitlements were far from secure.

Fortes' old notion of complementary filiation seems oddly out of place in such situations. When generational links are mainly maternal in a patrilineal society, it is more a matter of 'noncomplementary filiation'. Without social recognition of agnatic descent, maternal filiation is primary not complementary. While single motherhood and the 'nephew problem' are associated with the war

in northern Uganda, the decline of formal marriage and the failure of fathers to support their children is not limited to that part of the country.

Generating Alternatives: Our Land and My Land

'This land is from our grandfathers; we are caring for it so that our children will use it in future.' These words capture the notion of entrustment that is so pronounced when Acholi people speak of ancestral land held under customary tenure. Despite the consequences of war, most of the male youth in northern Uganda access land through their parents and guardians. Some are even entrusted with large shares. For instance, at an early age, a young man we interviewed acquired about 300 acres of land from the Panakorach clan to which he belongs. After the death of his father, the clan decided to give him his father's share. In other words, he inherited the authority over the communally owned family land. His new responsibility denotes a change in his social position within the family and community. He has become a part of a new generational category and is no longer merely a son but one who has replaced his late father. His social position as a first-born male entitles him to the family authority, including the authority over the communal family land.

However, authority over land should not be confused with ownership, as this concept does not exist within customary tenure. Adoko and Levine (2005) propose the concept of stewardship to describe how land is held in trust for the next generation. Thus, the family land does not belong to the young man who has now gained the authority but belongs to his family and his clan. Land is in this way deeply embedded in social relations and hierarchical organization. Vice versa, access to and authority over land also shapes social identities, evident in how the young man's stewardship of the land provides him with a new social position in his family and local community.

Land is about livelihood, social belonging, trust and obligation. Parker Shipton (2007: xi), writing of the Luo of Kenya, whose social and cultural fabric resembles that of the Acholi, uses the term 'fiduciary culture', which he characterizes as 'shared, learned ways of thinking and acting that involve some sense of obligation'. In this regard, he highlights reciprocal forms of entrustment as well as serial transfers passed between the generations that are part of reproductive, ritual and symbolic life and are consciously expressed and emotionally felt by the people. Thus, it is 'hard to distinguish activities that are economic from the ones that are not' (Shipton 2007: xi). The attachment of the Acholi to their land, which they regard as a source of belonging and livelihood security, demonstrates this pattern. Entrustment goes together with obligation both laterally to the living and lineally to preceding and succeeding generations. The interdiction on selling ancestral land reflects the positive value of stewardship across generations. The principle that land belongs to a descent group, not to an individual, obligates

sharing while bounding the sharing unit to those filiated to fathers and through them to ancestors.

Generational attachment to land is manifested in graves. The burial of a parent or grandparent is often considered evidence of a person's attachment and entitlement to land. This is illustrated in the case which opened Part II of our book, about Oyo, who destroyed the cement graves of Stephen's ancestors, claiming they were on his land. Graves are not only deployed as evidence in disputes but they also have a spiritual purpose in that the spirits of the dead are thought to demand recognition and respect. The efforts families made to exhume the bodies of those buried in the IDP camps and rebury them properly in their rural homes testify to this (Meinert and Whyte 2013).

However cosmopolitan, however removed from the agricultural life of ancestral land, burial should be on 'our land' near the graves of agnates. In his study of intergenerational relations of youth in Gulu town, Langole distinguishes between kinds of homes, arguing that the true home is where the grave, the 'long home', will be located. He gives two examples of men with prestigious positions and luxurious houses in Gulu Town. When their fathers died, the burials had to take place on their ancestral land. Neither man had invested in houses and roads there, so their 'working-class' friends and colleagues found only dilapidated huts when they arrived for the funeral. 'After the burial, it became the talk of the town. "Ezekial does not have a home – death can really expose the real person"' (Langole 2014: 89). The burial of a parent is a 'reality check', Langole suggests; generational relationships are enacted on ancestral land, which is the socially significant home.

As young people grow older and have children of their own, it becomes more important for them to have an attachment to ancestral land if possible. Two of Langole's interlocutors were boda-boda riders, the very epitome of 'the youth of today', who want town life rather than the life of the hoe, according to the stereotype. Still, both have houses near their parents on their lineage land, which they visit regularly. They have agricultural projects there and plan to shift there as they get too old for boda work, an occupation primarily for younger men. Their trajectory was similar to that of Tito, a 30-year-old from Purongo, who explained to Esther Acio:

> If you want to have money, you should have land. As well . . . if you want to marry, you should have land where to stay with your family. I left town because life was so difficult for me with no job, so I came to the village, where I was given land by my father's brother.

The attachment to ancestral land remains, as does the patrilineal ideal associated with it. Yet the history of war, displacement, AIDS and poverty has made the inclusion in ancestral land problematic for many who are not so fortunate

as Tito. For some, like Daniel and his brothers, there were complications in the parental generation that pre-dated the war.

> You see, access to the customary land is a challenge. My mother and siblings live in the village, but the elder sons of the other two co-wives grab land from children of the deceased relatives and claim that it is for them and their own children. That is why I left the village and stay here in the centre. I don't want to go to the ancestral land, and I will only go back home when the two co-wives are no more, including their elder sons, who grab land from other vulnerable relatives. At least I will struggle to buy my own land, rather than go back there. (Dominic, youth from Purongo)

The events and conditions of the past decades have been generative in that they have problematized the entrustment of ancestral land. It can no longer be taken for granted that all male members of succeeding generations will accept to wait patiently for their share, nor is it certain that shares will be provided. Many young men, like Dominic, wanted to buy their own land, not necessarily instead of but in addition to their share in customary land.

> We live on customary land and my father has never allocated land to us, so I have no authority to say this land is mine or even to sell it. I want to shift from my father's land, but first I have to struggle and buy even one plot of land for me to move to first. If my father decides to distribute the land one day, he has to give me my share too even if I will have my own land. (George, youth from Purongo)

George would like to have a share of 'our land' as a member of his father's descent group, and he would also like to own 'my land' as an individual.

In the uncertainty about traditional, collective and customary tenure, some youth expressed that they wanted to own land with titles bearing their own names, which would be under their authority. 'If you want land in your own name, you must buy it because the customary land is not yours . . . I own a plot of land (30m x 15m), which I want to keep and register in my names since it is mine . . .' (Peter, Purongo). Yet even these dreams of individual land title were not divorced from considerations about generation. Like ancestral land, individual land often held assumptions about entrustment. In the case of 'A Disputed Land Sale', Mama Elisabeth had inherited a plot of freehold land, which she hoped would benefit her grandsons one day. Men were often concerned about their children: 'I want to buy my own land in the future, when I get money, and build a permanent house. I feel that I should farm more to raise money to pay school fees for my children . . . that is why I need to buy land' (Albert, Purongo

youth). Daniel said he was delaying marriage because 'I first have to secure land for my future children's future'. Another young man declared: 'I hope that I will be able to buy my own land one day and my children can say, "this is my father's land". I would also love to say, "this is my land and not our land"' (Whyte and Acio 2017: 33). The irony is that for his children the land he bought will be 'ours' after he dies.

The alternative to ancestral land that young men aspired to was individual land – and not only young men had such aspirations, as the case of Stephen Langole (Chapter 1) showed. But this was out of reach for the majority and certainly for most women. A more feasible alternative that diminished dependence on older males was to borrow or hire land. This tactic had the advantage of flexibility from season to season for both parties and obviated the sale of ancestral land. Lending and renting land were extremely common, both for growing subsistence crops and for cultivating cash crops such as rice, sunflower and sugarcane. It is striking that borrowing and hiring land are seldom noticed in the discussions of customary and freehold tenure. Yet they provide ready alternatives for people affected by tensions and generational conflicts.

Betty, whom we met in Purongo, had left her marriage and returned to her paternal home with her three children from two different fathers. (Later the father of her sons came and took them with him to his village.) Her father was dead, and her paternal uncles and brothers were in charge of the customary land. One elder brother, Akena, who stayed on the land and assumed the authority of their father, gave her a house and a piece of land for digging. Her crops did not do well, and she went away to Kamdini, where she worked in a hotel for six months. When she returned home to Purongo, she found that another brother was using the acre of land that she had been given to use previously, so she did not bother her brother Akena for land again. Luckily, in 2014 she got a job with the water office on an eight-month contract. The following year, she joined the sub-county as a cleaner for seven months. Thereafter, she did not have a job for some time but kept looking for petty work such as digging for people in their gardens, sorting rice at the milling grounds and washing clothes for the traffic policemen (whose uniforms must look smart). By this time, Betty had moved from their home and was renting in the trading centre. She said that she did not have much interest in the land at home because her brother Akena was hiring it out to other people and had told her frankly that there was no land for her to dig. Instead, she combined efforts and money with a friend of hers and they hired an acre of land on which they agreed to plant ginger and popcorn. This was in addition to the petty jobs that she continued to look for.

Betty's story reveals the variety of livelihood strategies that many women employ. Even though she was able to earn a salary for periods of time, she did not give up farming. In her account, we also see the tenuousness of claims by daughters and sisters to use the land of their fathers and brothers. Although the

Acholi cultural organization Ker Kwaro Acholi (2008) specifically confirms the rights of daughters and sisters in ancestral land, their claims are less firm than those of sons and in practice may be ignored. Notably, it was Betty's brother, not her paternal uncles, who first welcomed and then excluded her in order to hire out their ancestral land to others. We have seen other examples in which brothers are reluctant to provide land for unmarried sisters while fathers are more accommodating. Juliet and her sisters provide a case in point: their brothers complained that they should stay with their husbands and use land there, while their fathers declared that all children, male and female, could use family land (Whyte and Acio 2017). Brothers with their own wives, often with growing families, are more concerned about keeping land use within the patrilineal line.

Just as Betty navigated among a variety of livelihood possibilities because she could not rely on access to land through her generational links, so did many men. We have considered these alternatives particularly in relation to the 'war generation' – those who came of age in the IDP camps (Whyte and Acio 2017). But as we saw in Chapter 1 on Multiplicity, even older men try to secure land through means other than generational claims. They may sell it again, or they may lose it in a land wrangle. But much of the land that is acquired through connections other than kinship will pass to the next genealogical generation, confirming the fundamental significance of consanguineal kinship for access to land.

Conclusion

In Acholi society, intimate governance of land is obviously a matter of relations between generations. Access to land passes from parents to children. This genealogical understanding of generation is prominent in everyday considerations and practices of allocating land for use. Filiation, being recognized as a child, is a precondition for most land access. In a patrilineal society, sons, and to some extent daughters, expect to get land through their fathers and his agnatic group. Yet this is by no means a hard and fast rule, as we have seen. Some children, like Daniel, gain land access through their mothers, even if their fathers are living. In the case that opened Part II of our book, Oyo was treated as a son and given land to use by a man from another clan. Such variation in genealogical patterns has long existed but has become far more pronounced in the wake of war, displacement and the decline of marriage.

The concept of historical generation reminds us that broader changes in political economy transform conditions for generational consciousness and interactions, thus affecting access to land. In the Acholi sub-region, such far-reaching shifts are attributed to the LRA war and camp internment. However, other factors may be in play as well – factors widespread throughout the country, including commercialization of land and impoverishment. Mistrust between generations is expressed generally in stereotypes about violent and disaffected youth and images

of self-regarding, secretive elders. In specific cases, it often colours relations between sons and their fathers or fathers' brothers, between nephews and mothers' brothers, and between women and their partners' parents.

People have responded to these difficulties through another kind of generation: the creation of alternative modes of accessing land and livelihood. Mistrust arises in situations of dependence where reliability should prevail. By seeking to obtain 'my land' instead of depending on the elders for 'our land', and by borrowing or renting land, young people attempt to secure themselves in difficult situations. Yet most parents and children hope and reckon that their links will be confirmed through land.

Esther Acio is Lecturer at the Institute of Peace and Strategic Studies, Gulu University.

Lioba Lenhart was Associate Professor at the Institute of Peace and Strategy Studies, Gulu University (2009–2021), and is now Programme Advisor for Participatory Transformation of Land Conflicts in Northern Uganda, Civil Peace Service Programme, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and GIZ.

Susan Reynolds Whyte is Professor at the Institute of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen.

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