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Captive Wives or Conjugal Slaves? The Slavery-Marriage Nexus in Northern Uganda Since the Mid-Nineteenth Century

Eleanor Seymour, Eunice Apio and Benedetta Rossi

ABSTRACT

This article examines transformations in the marriage-slavery nexus in Northern Uganda from the late nineteenth century to the present. By historicizing the forced marriage of abducted girls in the Lord's Resistance Army, the article contributes to explaining why the interpretation of these circumstances has been so disputed in Uganda and internationally. It starts by examining different interpretations of the relationship between Dominic Ongwen and his forced wives. The Ongwen case is then contextualized in the history of female captivity and conjugal violence in Lango and Acholi societies. It is argued that enslavement in the form of wartime captivity was not irreconcilable with marriage in Northern Uganda in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and that this history influences contemporary Lango and Acholi perceptions of these phenomena.

KEYWORDS

Uganda; Sudan; Lord's Resistance Army; Dominic Ongwen; conjugal slavery; forced marriage; historicizing female captivity

Introduction

The Lord's Resistance Army's (LRA) insurgency in Northern Uganda led to massive abductions and forced marriages of abducted women to the movement's militiamen from 1987 to 2006.¹ This article places these events in historical perspective. Abducted girls and women were forced to act as servants, soldiers, wives, and to provide sexual services, usually under threat of death. These levels of coercion are incompatible with legal marriage practices. Several commentators argued that even 'forced marriage' is a misnomer and wartime forced marriages should instead be understood and prosecuted as slavery.² Some Ugandans endorse international legal interpretations of the LRA's forced marriages as forms of slavery incommensurate with marriage and un-sanctionable as marriages retrospectively.³ Others do not deny the violence and suffering that these events engendered, but accept that the LRA's forced unions established functional marriage relations.⁴ They reason that some of these unions were characterized by genuine feelings between those

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involved (forced wives, husbands and their offspring) and support their post-conflict restoration.⁵ Competing interpretations reveal the existence of different views about what counts as slavery, what counts as marriage, and how slavery and marriage interact.

Both marriage and slavery are institutions that enable the incorporation of outsiders. While the methods of incorporation and the experiences of those involved – either coerced victims or domiciled partners – tend to be different, historically certain forms of slavery performed the functions of marriage.⁶ This article shows that if – in the words of Jean Allain – sometimes marriage is slavery, it is also the case that sometimes slavery is, or can become, marriage.⁷ As Joseph Miller has argued, the historiography of slavery has been dominated by the transatlantic model of massive enslavement of (primarily) African men turned into the dehumanized protoindustrial workforce of Euro-American capitalism. The dominance of this model can make it hard to discern the different logics of other systems of slavery. Earlier and elsewhere, slaving focused on women and children. Their incorporation enabled the expansion of the households and communities of enemies, who defeated the captive women's husbands and male relatives before sharing women as war spoils among victors.⁸

In the Luo-speaking societies of Northern Uganda, which include both Lango and Acholi, women and children were captured in the course of regional and local wars and raids in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁹ This led to the captives' alienation from their lineages of origin and forced integration into their abductors' societies, eventually as spouses and kin (unless they escaped or were ransomed).¹⁰ This relatively recent past influences local perceptions of the LRA conflict: Lango elders considered the LRA's abductions a 'hijack of wombs'.¹¹ From their perspective, the LRA's crimes compromised their lineages' control over the fertility of its female members. This viewpoint is partially blind to international law's primary concern with the violent imposition of totalizing control over individual women – a control meeting the prosecutorial threshold for slavery. On the other hand, international interpretations of the LRA's forced marriages are partially blind to local historical experience. In recent history enslavement in the form of wartime captivity, and the violence experienced by captives, were not irreconcilable with marriage in Northern Uganda: they were one of the avenues that led to it.

At all times, free and captive wives alike could experience gender-based violence.¹² However, captives always faced greater hardship, magnified by their inability to obtain support from their kin. As generations of scholars of African slavery have shown, in these contexts slaves are, first and foremost, persons alienated from their natal lineages.¹³ The closest ancestor of the LRA's abductions is the abduction of female captives from neighbours, and sometimes from enemy clans in the same language-group, that occurred in pre-colonial and early colonial intergroup warfare and raiding. These captives (both male and female) were integrated through adoption and then marriage, or

directly through marriage, into the victors' clans. As noted, to defeated clans the painful loss of captured female relatives corresponded to a hijack of wombs. The forced transfer of control over women's fertility to enemy clans was a fundamental dimension of the local historical experience of slavery. By contrast, violence, beatings, constraints to a woman's ability to consent to sex, and the payment of bridewealth at marriage (which some nineteenth- and twentieth-century European commentators equated with slavery) were not, and on the whole still are not, *distinctive* characteristics of slavery from a Northern Ugandan perspective. What distinguished slavery from other forms of female subordination, coercion, and violence was primarily the fact that captured persons (and all their productive and reproductive capabilities) brutally changed hands from kin to captor.

The rest of the article explores changing interpretations of the relation between slavery and marriage in Northern Uganda. The next section discusses the case of Dominic Ongwen, a former LRA brigade commander trialled at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague. A victim of abduction himself, Ongwen was charged with sexual slavery and forced marriage perpetrated against Acholi and Lango abducted girls, who provided testimonies of their experiences of intimate relations with Ongwen at the ICC trial. The third and fourth sections reconstruct the genealogies of forms of conjugal enslavement like those that existed between Ongwen and his wives by examining sources that shed light on the slavery-marriage nexus in the same region but in earlier times. By historicizing the LRA's abductions, the article contributes to explaining why in Uganda their interpretation as slavery or marriage has been so contested.

Forced Marriage and Slavery in the Dominic Ongwen Case

Dominic Ongwen was abducted by LRA militants while on his way to school in 1988.¹⁴ He witnessed the killing of both his parents and experienced a brutal initiation into the LRA's practices as a child and teenager.¹⁵ He rose through the ranks of the movement to eventually become a high-ranking commander of the Sinia Brigade.¹⁶ His military success provided him some safety and a more comfortable life. ICC records show that he had approximately twenty wives at various times, and up to five wives simultaneously. In 2015, Ongwen was captured and transferred to ICC custody to stand trial in The Hague.¹⁷ Charges against him included forced marriage, rape, sexual slavery, enslavement, and torture. He was charged with perpetrating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) against seven of his forced wives; and with arranging forced unions for other militants to enforce the LRA policy that dictated that girls should be married to commanders as soon as they started menstruating.¹⁸ The girls were required to remain sexually exclusive with the man while he could have several forced wives. Ongwen 'made sure that the LRA policy was followed by fighters in the Sinia brigade under his command'.¹⁹

In February 2021 the ICC found Ongwen guilty on sixty-one counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including SGBV crimes and Forced Marriage, and in May 2021 it sentenced him to twenty-five years of imprisonment.²⁰ Some elements of Ongwen's story resemble earlier forms of regional inter-group conflict and captivity. Ongwen can be seen as a child captive who was brutally initiated into what turned out to be an ephemeral regime headed by Joseph Kony. This child captive grew up in a context marked by constant violence, a context where male self-realization involved military prowess and kidnapping of children and women who became integrated in the social and kinship structures of Kony's regime. He developed skills expedient to the system he was forced to join, skills that carry similarities with those of warriors who played similar roles in the past.

Of course, there are differences: this is not an unchanging past repeating itself or a primordial culture predetermining people's actions. In the cases of pre-colonial and early colonial wars, captives tended to be taken among foreign groups, and female captives were not usually trained to fight. By contrast, Ongwen and others in the LRA abducted and enslaved predominantly members of their ethnic groups, and some female abductees were trained as soldiers. They describe being trained to use guns and rocket propelled grenades and being promoted to positions where they could command male soldiers. Furthermore, past warlords did not operate in the framework of the nation state, supported internationally as the only legitimate form of government. But the focus here is on connections with earlier forms of women's captivity in the region. This requires an analysis of the relations between Ongwen and his 'wives' – and of their perceptions of these relations.

Abducted girls were redistributed among the LRA's commanding officers and, in the LRA's camps, were expected to behave according to the gendered division of tasks that is customary in Luo households.²¹ Some women took the status that had been forced upon them at face value: they thought of the coercion and violence they experienced as circumstantial, and accepted that they were now married to their captors. Thus, for example, in November 2016, before the trial of Dominic Ongwen commenced at the ICC, Caroline was asked about whether Ongwen should be held accountable for his crimes. She responded, 'Considering the age that he was taken and was forced to do it, he is not guilty. When Dominic was captured there are those who underwent the same experience and saw what he was forced to do'.²² Caroline's sympathy towards Ongwen may appear strange. However, it is representative of the conflicted feelings that many forced wives experience. While Caroline resented the brutality of her experience, her responses indicated that she seemed to think of herself as Dominic Ongwen's legitimate wife, even though the LRA could not force her into this role anymore. With regards to the forced marriage charges against Ongwen, she explained the situation in the LRA and argued that he had no choice:

How they are living there is that when girls are caught and taken from villages Kony would order forcefully what man took what girl - you don't have a say - you are being given forcefully and you don't have a say in it ... he [Kony] would distribute these women to the men. There was a time in Sudan when he [Dominic Ongwen] was given another wife and he said 'no' and they threatened and said they would kill him and so he had to take that woman.²³

The argument that Ongwen was also a victim of forced marriage has been central to discussions of his actions.²⁴ Caroline is one of the many forced wives who were not called to testify in the trial. Originally from the Acholi region, she moved to neighbouring Lango due to safety issues related to the trial. She was an 'original' (this term is used to refer to members of the LRA who joined the movement at an early stage in the late 1980s, and remained with the group for not less than ten years). Originals do not always fit the 'pure victim' narrative.²⁵ Caroline was abducted by the LRA when she was nine years-old and became Ongwen's wife after the death of her first LRA husband. When Seymour interviewed her, she was adamant that she was Ongwen's wife. In 2016, she complained that 'he is talking to all his wives but not me even though I am the first wife. There is a cousin of his who was Kony's wife and even she is talking to him but I cannot and I am his first wife'.²⁶

Caroline's testimony is different from the testimony of most of the other forced wives who testified at the ICC. Her insistence on being Ongwen's first wife implies that she reasons in terms of the hierarchy of wives that was established in the LRA camps and continues to follow this hierarchical logic after return to civilian life. Caroline emphasized the suffering of her children and the responsibility of Ongwen as their father, to provide for them. This is consistent with Luo norms according to which fathers are expected to provide for their children. As Ongwen's first wife, Caroline would have been entitled to respect from Ongwen and his other junior wives. Even though her role of wife had been forced upon her, it gave her a position she came to accept. While Caroline invoked Luo marriage norms in discussing her marriage with Ongwen, she omitted to discuss the absence of traditional marriage transactions between the spouses' lineages, which elders see as sanctioning a marriage's legitimacy.²⁷

Other forced wives took different stances. Lucy was abducted and assigned to Dominic Ongwen's household. She tried to escape, but was captured. As punishment, Ongwen and some of the other commanders instructed two soldiers to beat her at the same time. At first, Lucy was assigned the role of *ting-ting* (abducted prepubescent girls who provided domestic service), but in 2006 Ongwen sent one of his wives to call her. She went to him and he stated that she should spend the night with him. Lucy was hesitant but Ongwen insisted. She argued with him and said that she did not want to get involved with any man in the bush. He responded asking her 'Do you know the rules we apply in the bush ... once you are mature enough you should have a husband'.²⁸

Lucy knew that if she did not submit to Ongwen she would be beaten. She complied and Ongwen raped her three times that night and she cried.²⁹ A week later, he called her again. She was reluctant but went. Lucy had three children with Ongwen and did not feel as though she had a choice in becoming pregnant.³⁰ After years in the bush, the LRA moved to a location in the Congo and Lucy and some of the other wives were brought together and told that Ongwen had said they were to go back home. She was thus released and returned to her previous home with her children.³¹

Jenti was abducted at ten years old. She was given a bag of salt to carry and commanded to walk. During the journey, it began to rain and the salt began leaking onto Jenti's head so that by the time she reached Sudan it had created sores on her face and body. Kony asked Ongwen, 'why did you bring an old person here?'³² After Kony had finished distributing the captured girls, Jenti was left standing so Ongwen instructed his escorts to take Jenti to his house. Once at Ongwen's house, one of his wives was told to wash and dress Jenti. In her testimony, Jenti narrates that when people saw her cleaned-up they ran to Kony saying that the girl he had not selected was actually young and beautiful.³³ Kony sent his escorts to collect Jenti in response, but Ongwen did not allow her to leave. He instead forced her to sleep under his bed, stating that other people wanted to take her from him. Eventually, Ongwen argued that he had abducted her and so they should either divide her in two or kill her.

After this, Kony stopped sending his escorts and Jenti became a *ting-ting* in Ongwen's house. She was first raped by Dominic Ongwen when she was ten. Jenti was asked to bring him water and when she took the water to him, he held her arm and refused to take the water from her. He said that he wanted to have sex with her. Jenti became very afraid and dropped the water, and it fell on the bed and she ran out of the room. Ongwen called his escorts and Jenti was beaten. Jenti was scared as she frequently saw the other women crying after they left Ongwen's house.³⁴ Jenti refused to have sex with Ongwen and he repeatedly ordered the escorts to beat her. After a week of beatings, Jenti could no longer sit as her body was swollen. One of Ongwen's wives still expected Jenti to complete her duties and she was beaten because her injuries prevented her from doing so. Over a week later, Jenti yielded to Ongwen. Her account of their sexual relations highlights violence and threats of death, her physical inability to resist and her pain. For example, she explained that she was too small to climb on the bed and he lifted her onto it. Following her first rape, Jenti heard Ongwen tell his soldiers at a meal, 'Today I tore a polythene bag'.³⁵ Ongwen did not consider Jenti his official wife until she turned twelve, and Jenti maintained that she did not consider Ongwen to be her husband at all. When she eventually escaped, she required treatment in a hospital for eight months before being sent to GUSCO and then finally reunited with her family.³⁶

At fifteen years old, Diana was walking home when she was abducted by a group of LRA soldiers commanded by Dominic Ongwen. That night, Diana was told to go with a female member of the LRA and sleep in her tent. Hours later she was awoken by one of Ongwen's escorts who told her to get up and come quickly. She was scared but followed the escort to Ongwen's tent and was commanded to enter. She responded, 'No, I'm not coming in. I'm not going to enter into your tent' and returned to her tent.³⁷ Seconds later, the escorts returned and grabbed her. They marched her back to Ongwen's tent and ordered her to enter the tent and kneel next to the bed. She complied and was asked by Ongwen, 'Have you seen this gun? If you refuse to sleep here, then you're going to face the consequences'.³⁸ Diana pleaded with him stating, 'I'm still young. I haven't had any sexual relations with a man. You're older than me. I'm young. I do not know what you're talking about'.³⁹ Her pleas were ignored. Ongwen's escorts held her down forcefully and Ongwen raped her.⁴⁰ After this initial encounter, Diana knew that if she refused to have sex with Ongwen she would be beaten, as happened multiple times. Diana had three children with Ongwen: two while in the bush and one upon her return. She was pregnant when she escaped the LRA.⁴¹

Harriet was abducted and sent to Ongwen's house as a *ting-ting* for some time, then she was taken to Kony. Harriet's maternal uncle was a colonel in the LRA and resided in Control Altar.⁴² Her uncle was close to Kony and they would always move together. Harriet became a *ting-ting* in Kony's household and remained there for seven months. At this time, Kony had approximately forty wives, yet he also asked Harriet to become his wife. She refused: she did not want to stay in his household because she felt that he had too many other wives and she was too young to have so many co-wives. Harriet sent a message to her uncle telling him this and her uncle talked to Kony, who arranged to have her transferred to another household. She states,

Kony gave an order that any commander who wanted to have me as a wife would first have to ask me and could only take me if I agreed. Kony said I could not be forced to be anyone's wife. If somebody wanted me as a wife, they first had to ask Colonel [her uncle]. Then he would ask me and if I consented it was fine but I would not be forced. I was treated differently than other girls who were just given to soldiers as wives soon after your abduction.⁴³

Harriet's experience within the LRA was exceptional. Her uncle was a high-ranking soldier in Kony's notorious Control Altar. She was able to reject Kony's advances possibly because of her uncle's intercession. Harriet rejected a few commanders' proposals before she was approached by Ongwen. She felt obliged to accept and was transferred to his household. In her original statement, Harriet had said that she did not want to sleep in Ongwen's house but feared that if she refused, she would be killed. When this statement was read to her in court, she said that it was incorrect. Asked to clarify, Harriet said

that it was time for her to become a wife and that, had she refused, she could have been killed or accused of promoting prostitution. This suggested that she had decided to have sexual relations with Ongwen because she thought she had reached an age when this would be appropriate. Asked, again, whether she thought that Ongwen would have killed her had she attempted to escape, she refused to answer the question, but explained:

Yes, I heard the question, but you know all armies worked based on orders and instructions, even if it's your mother's child. Let me take for example what my uncle ... if he caught me escaping and was given orders to kill me, then yes, he would kill me because those were the orders.⁴⁴

Harriet does not describe the same level of violent coercion as the other former abductees. She exercised a degree of choice in circumstances she had not chosen.⁴⁵ Her forced marriage carries some similarities to peace-time marriages: she was not entirely disconnected from her lineage, and relied on a clan elder's (limited) ability to protect her.⁴⁶ All of Ongwen's forced wives experienced physical beatings. Harriet experienced beatings, too, but was more likely to justify such beatings in her testimonies, for example, on grounds that she and other wives had disobeyed orders. Admittedly, the information on the relation between Harriet and her uncle is scanty. But her statements at the trial suggest that the presence of her uncle caused her to perceive the marriage as more legitimate. This in turn accrued some legitimacy to the violence she was subjected to, because as her husband Ongwen had the authority to beat her for certain transgressions. It is important to note that, as Seymour has shown, marriage legitimizes a degree of wife beating – it legitimizes violence rather than being antithetical to it.⁴⁷ Harriet eventually escaped.

All the captive wives argued that violence was generally ordered by Ongwen but carried out by his escorts. Sexual violence was exclusively carried out by Ongwen, while the escorts sometimes restrained the women, and beat them when they resisted. The testimonies indicate that Ongwen was in control when he sexually violated his 'wives'. Many of the reasons for violence described by the forced wives in the case studies are perceived transgressions that would also lead to violence in post-conflict marriages. A wife cannot refuse to have sex with her husband, must fulfil her domestic duties, and cannot question her husband's authority without exposing herself to reprimands, sometimes physical chastisement.

But other aspects of conjugal relations under the LRA regime differed in fundamental ways from what is acceptable in peacetime unions. For example, peacetime rules relating to polygamy forbid husbands to have sex with two wives at once, yet Jenti's testimony suggests that this happened in the LRA. Also, while men are considered to be entitled to sex with their wives which can lead to cases of marital rape, rape as punishment does not appear to be frequent in peacetime. Crucially, following abduction the abductees were severed

from their natal lineages. They could not count on relatives to support them or negotiate the terms of their relation with their partners through a series of institutionalized transactions. Only Harriet, whose circumstances were closest to having lineage members present in the LRA camps, retained limited room for manoeuvre.

Relationships in the LRA were complex. Many women preferred to be wives if given the choice, as opposed to remaining *ting-ting* or single. Wives were generally not forced to fight, received better food rations, and in some respects received better treatment, even though violence was frequent in LRA forced marriages.⁴⁸ Men, too, typically did not have a choice about who would be their wife, and were under pressure to marry.⁴⁹ Unsurprisingly, these features have been central to Ongwen's defence.⁵⁰ However, the testimonies of Ongwen's forced wives attest to sharp gender disparities in terms of the nature and degree of coercion associated with their entry into sexual/conjugal relations and their exposure to domestic violence within these forced unions. Rape was a defining element of their experience.⁵¹ The issue of consent was also raised during the trial but, as Holly Porter has shown, the conceptualization of consent to sexual intercourse is ambiguous in Acholi society.⁵² Given these complexities, the ICC pre-trial brief's representation of gender-based crimes in relation to the charges of forced marriage and sexual slavery does not necessarily coincide with the abductees' perceptions.⁵³

Testimonies given at trials must be approached critically because of the witnesses' role and awareness of the function of their statements in court settings. Caroline, speaking outside the trial, described her experience as a seamless transition from captive to wife. On the other hand, testimonies at the trial highlight extremely high levels of coercion and violence, levels that supported prosecution for sexual slavery and enslavement, among other sexual and gender-based crimes that Ongwen was found guilty of.⁵⁴ Witnesses were asked questions aimed at establishing the harshness of their circumstances. Describing high levels of coercion amounted to confirming the charges in the ICC's trial. This is due to the court's reliance on a particular definition of slavery as control tantamount to possession over enslaved individuals.

This definition took shape in the long history of struggles against Atlantic slavery and its ramifications in the Americas and Caribbean.⁵⁵ It is focused on particular forms of slavery and their rejection by actors relying on specific ideas of freedom. Slavery and freedom (and, as we shall see, marriage) have been conceptualized differently in other historical contexts, including Northern Uganda.⁵⁶ But since international legal classifications adopted severity of treatment as the fundamental criterion in detecting slavery, this criterion guided the trial's proceedings in its effort to establish Ongwen's culpability. Did witnesses perceive severity of treatment as evidence of their enslavement? Did they see their role as forced conjugal partners as incompatible with the meanings they attached to being a 'wife' (a term that they used)? To begin to answer these

questions, the following sections contextualize the LRA's forced marriage arrangements in the *longue durée* of female captivity in Northern Uganda.

It is difficult to compare the experiences of Ongwen's forced wives with those of female captives from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries because the sources available for the latter are less detailed. Autobiographic accounts of abducted women discussed in the following sections convey memories of events that happened many years before a testimony was given, memories evoked after having settled into a new life and learned to live with a painful past. Like testimonies given in the course of ICC trials, these sources, too, must be approached critically. Yet the comparison reveals meaningful continuities.

Marriage, Slavery, and Gender Violence in Northern Uganda

Historians are not the only ones seeking to trace the genealogy of conjugal slavery. A member of Dominic Ongwen's defence team connected the LRA's abductions, and Ongwen's forced marriages with 'marriage by capture'. In an interview (but not in the trial), he argued that marriage by capture, or by kidnap, was traditional in Northern Uganda and therefore Ongwen should not be seen as guilty of a crime. Rather, he was a man adhering to a tradition: 'In Lango, traditionally if a man liked a woman he would go to the market that he knew she visited with a few of his male friends and would pick her so it was not that different from tradition'.⁵⁷ As we shall see, however, marriage by capture appears to have been a consensual practice in spite of an initial performance of coercion, dissimilar in essence, to the LRA's abductions.

The literature surrounding marriage by kidnap is scarce and colonial interpretations of this institution have been challenged. Steiger Hayley, who researched Lango marriage customs in the 1930s–40s, is one of the few sources that mentions marriage by kidnap but he describes it as rare and states that,

should a boy have seen a girl whom he desired as a wife, though he did not know her at all, he might go to the dance with a group of friends and they would seize her by force and would take her to his village. The boy would not have intercourse with her, but would try to persuade her to become his wife. If she would still have nothing to do with him after a week, she would be sent home.⁵⁸

In Hayley's *mako nyako* – the temporary taking away of a girl – the boy would not have intercourse with the girl. Contemporary Acholi commentators tend to emphasize that behind the appearance of coercion ('capture') the aim of marriage by capture was to facilitate the arrangement of a relation that both the boy and the girl consented to. In the LRA, as seen, commanders could and did rape the women in their control. LRA practices cannot convincingly be equated with either marriage or a 'mock capture' for the purpose of courtship. This is

evident to contemporary Lango and Acholi people in Northern Uganda. The Acholi co-founder of an NGO in Northern Uganda stated that marriage by capture.

was done when two people had already met and talked about it and the abduction was just drama played out ... this is the way we stage our marriage process to reflect something but it's not anything close to abduction and we do not mean 'let's abduct a woman'; in the LRA they did not pay dowry and had sex in the bush which is a social taboo therefore the context in itself betrays the whole idea of marriage.⁵⁹

It is interesting, however, that a Ugandan lawyer from Ongwen's defence team stated informally in an interview that kidnaps as brutal as those performed by LRA militants could be justified as a legitimate 'traditional' marriage custom. What practices and relations are permitted through traditional Lango marriage (*nyom*)? It transferred rights of control over a woman's sexuality and future offspring to her husband's lineage. Generally, the ritual of marriage defined an elaborate process of exchanges which culminated in the transfer of bride-wealth (*lim*) from the groom's lineage to that of the bride, and the bride's lineage affiliation from her patriclan to her groom's. In this way marriage established new kinship relationships and alliances between the families, lineages and clans of the couple. Through it, a bride would leave her own patriclan and join the one of her husband. Residence at marriage was typically virilocal: a husband took away (*tero*) his new wife to his home and she lived on his clan's land.⁶⁰ The removal of a wife by a husband symbolized his newly acquired right over her sexuality and reproductive ability. Any offspring she produced within this marriage then became a member of her new husband's lineage.⁶¹ The exchanges of wealth that took place between the initial stages of courtship and childbirth underscored the formation of new alliances and relationships between the two families. Marriage was not a single event, but a complex set of negotiations between individuals, lineages and clans.⁶²

Furthermore, marriage was not a level playing field. Women were required to submit to their father's authority before marriage, when authority was transferred to their husband. Regarding the choice of a marriage partner, girls who refused to comply with their father's wishes would be beaten. Writing in the 1940s, Hayley noted that

... it is said that a father was not averse to forcing his daughter into a marriage which she did not desire, or return to a husband she wished to leave. He would dig two holes in the ground and bury her arms in them up to the elbow, pounding the earth down tight. She would be left there and beaten periodically until she agreed.⁶³

Men had greater authority over their community's political life and greater control over their households' valuable assets. Kinship and marriage presupposed a degree of subordination of women in their roles as daughters, wives, sisters, and mothers. The exact nature and extent of this subordination is debated. Arthur Kitching, commenting on Acholi gender relations as he

observed them in the 1910s, highlighted that ‘the women [were] practically on an equality with the men’.⁶⁴ Yet the same author also describes marked differences in the political and economic roles of men and women and emphasizes the requirement that a wife be obedient: that she serve and please her husband.⁶⁵ Comments about sexual equality refer primarily to contexts where women participated in most spheres of public life and worked alongside men on farms. European (mainly British) observers contrasted their observations of African societies where women did most of the agricultural labour (circumstances they often qualified as ‘slavery’) with their expectations of women’s unproductive domesticity and subdued public roles in British bourgeois contexts.⁶⁶ Europeans also found bridewealth, or brideprice, akin to the buying and selling of wives which, again, they hastened to compare to slavery. As is often the case, descriptions and comparisons shed greater light on their beholders’ worldviews than on those of the subjects of their writings. But under colonial rule European ideas about African women and marriage influenced African gender relations.

African gender inequalities were further entrenched under colonial and missionary influence, as Victorian Britain was anything but a paradigm of gender equality, a point that decolonial feminist authors have rightly drawn attention to.⁶⁷ And yet, British colonialists thought themselves in a position to reform African gender and marriage during and after the Victorian period. Colonial interpretations of African bridewealth varied. Some argued that it ensured that the woman was treated well by her husband and his family, who had ‘invested’ much wealth in her. In 1940 Hayley reported that ‘... if a boy had to hand over a quantity of these goods to his wife’s family, he would treat his wife well’.⁶⁸ The return of bridewealth traditionally depended on the causes for a marriage’s failure. If it was determined that the husband was to blame, bridewealth would not be returned. But the assessment of marital disputes was always contentious and the husband’s position was strengthened during colonialism. Hayley reports that the chiefs, ‘... at their annual Lukiko passed a resolution that, “since all women were bad in these days”, the marriage-goods should always be returned in a case of divorce, even if the wife has run away from her husband’s ill-treatment’.⁶⁹

This decision, if implemented, would have affected power dynamics within marriage, as women’s families might protect a wife less readily if they expected to be required to return bridewealth.⁷⁰ Hayley went on to cite his informants’ views on what they perceived as a sudden increase of divorces, which they attributed to ‘... the general badness of the modern woman and the fact that the guardians of the girls have not the same power over their charges as they used to have, when no one objected to them using the stick freely’.⁷¹ In other words, the reason for divorce was that guardians lacked power over their daughters, power derived from their ability to physically chastise them. These ideas entrenched gender inequalities, depriving

women of legitimate avenues to effectively stand their ground and oppose a husband's will if they wished to.

Although European gender mores may have increased the husband's authority in Lango and Acholi, Western commentators often compared bride-wealth, and the rights it gave to the husband, to the purchase of slaves and campaigned against it. Some Ugandan intellectuals disagreed. Kihangire Cyprianus, a Catholic priest studying at a Pontifical University in Rome that trained seminarians for service as missionaries, was writing shortly after the 1956 supplementary convention on the abolition of slavery was signed. Debates over the classification of African marriage were rife at the time of his research. Cyprianus argued vehemently against likening Lango wives to slaves in his 1957 thesis:

... there is a clear distinction between the status of wife and that of a slave. The slave can be transferred by his owner to another man, but the wife can never be given to another man at the whim of the husband. Marriage payment and its consequence is not to be regarded as a commercial transaction, but to be adequately understood as a recognition of the wife's value, both to her husband and to her own relatives, and the importance of the marriage contract.⁷²

Cyprianus explained that youth, physical beauty, moral beauty (defined as docility, obedience, and fidelity), capability of working well, family status, and respectable parents and relatives were important attributes of Lango brides.⁷³ However, he continued, moral beauty was deemed more important than physical beauty: docility and obedience were particularly desired. His discussion of the status of married women in Lango is ambiguous: while he argues that, '... a Lango woman is a full partner in the household, and not a superior servant', he also states that⁷⁴

the Lango women are convinced of their obligation to be subject and obey their husbands and they never question this at all. They do disobey at times, it is true, but that is due to the fact that the husband sometimes demands too much, or simply from human weakness. They know that the act of disobedience is wrong in itself.⁷⁵

Cyprianus explains that women's socialization into the role of wife begins at childhood when a woman is made to believe that she is inferior to men. The girl becomes convinced that, 'She must serve. She is made to believe that she is the weaker sex physically, and that she needs protection'.⁷⁶ Failure to behave according to these roles yielded punishments. For many elderly women alive today, domestic violence was part of their marriage and the limited recourse accessible to them suggests a degree of social acceptability for it. Seymour interviewed elderly women who had been born between the 1930s and 1950s and would have been children or teenagers at the time when Cyprianus wrote. These women argued that in the past violence within marriage could be severe: 'in those days people would fight, there are some people who would even beat their woman with a

pestle ... sometimes you are cut with a panga'.⁷⁷ Severe violence was justified in terms of discipline and teaching:

They would also kill. You are beaten if you are bad ... it is said: you woman you have made your husband tired and so you get injured in the process of him beating you. With anger, he thinks he's teaching you by beating but ends up killing you.⁷⁸

Older women acknowledged that women now had to contend with men's alcoholism, which in their opinion was less frequent when they were young. But women today had the police and other resources to help them. In a group interview, the women present agreed that

... during that time there was no sensitization and there was also no law ... there was also no court, you would be beaten and killed just like that ... And also during that time even if something goes very bad it is not taken anywhere. Even calling people say like come and help me solve this issue, it wasn't there, even though you have been pierced with a spear you get healed [only] by [fomenting the wound with hot] water and you are not even taken to the hospital ... But now people are educated. At least people know the rules, the laws, at least people know a lot on how to deal with the issues of violence in their households.⁷⁹

Women perceived to disregard a husband's authority were, and still are, under threat of physical chastisement. Furthermore, their sexual and reproductive freedom is limited. If this is unquestionably true for abducted girls, who risked death and extreme violence, free wives in peacetime are sometimes also faced with brutal treatment. Domestic violence and rejection are all the more likely when a wife does not give birth to children. Women's reproductive role was, and is, perceived as essential in marriage. A woman's place in her husband's clan is considered properly cemented once she begets a child. Until today a wife's perceived barrenness constitutes a legitimate reason for separation or the acquisition of another wife.⁸⁰ According to Apio in the recent past, 'to ensure a son never married a barren wife, a man's mother hosted the new wife at least until she showed signs of a pregnancy' in Lango.⁸¹ Focusing on Acholi, Holly Porter explains that

a woman is seen as liminal until she marries, and even then, she is considered unstable, and her loyalties may be questioned until she has children. At this point her position is more firmly established as an insider to her husband's clan and the home (not to mention his virility has been proven and hence conformity to expressions of masculine norms), as she has produced children who will help perpetrate the existence of the patrilineal clan of her husband.⁸²

Sex is a marital obligation for women in Uganda and the idea that men are always entitled to have sex with their wives is widely supported. The Marriage and Divorce Bill 2009 that has not yet been passed by the Ugandan parliament included a section on marital rape that was passionately debated.⁸³ Women interviewed by Seymour often denied that a husband could 'rape' his wife as, 'how will he have raped you and yet you know that [he] is your husband? It

happens outside'.⁸⁴ If a wife refuses to have sex with her husband and is then forced and/or beaten, it is because she is failing in one of her duties. In this sense, marital rape is not perceived as a crime, but as a way to discipline a disobedient wife into fulfilling her marital obligations.

To sum up, in recent times and up until the present-day domestic violence and wife beating, including what international jurisdiction would characterize as marital rape, were perceived as legitimate practices within Lango and Acholi marriages. In Northern Uganda marriage takes a broad variety of forms. The rules and procedures governing marriage vary from group to group.⁸⁵ There have been repeated attempts to reform and systematize the legislation that governs marriage and divorce.⁸⁶ However, Manisuli Ssenyonjo and Anthony Luyirika Kafumbe, among others, have shown that unconstitutional practices – such as widow inheritance and substantial bride-price – entrench inequalities between men and women that are rooted in patriarchy.⁸⁷ These inequalities also allow for a degree of social acceptance of wife beating within marriage.⁸⁸ A certain degree of coercion and violence was and is not incompatible with marriage. Although domestic violence in the LRA's forced marriages was both more intense and more frequent than in peacetime, exposure to violence was not the main aspect of conjugal relations in the LRA that made abducted women feel like slaves (and unlike wives). It was alienation from natal kin, and the non-involvement of senior relatives in these unions, that marked out the LRA's unions as akin to captivity.

The Past of the Present: *moo* and the Destinies of Female Captives

Nineteenth-century northern Ugandan societies knew two main forms of slavery: firstly, at the sub-regional level, they were integrated in the East African axes of trade catering primarily to demand for slaves in the slave markets of Egypt, the Middle East, and the centralized Buganda Kingdom.⁸⁹ The second form of slavery was more localized and assimilative: within the Acholi and Lango regions, slaving primarily involved the capture of female captives in frequent inter-group raids in which men were killed and relatively small numbers of women were redistributed among victorious warriors.⁹⁰ The women's integration into the society of the freeborn appears to have occurred in their own lifetime, especially when they fulfilled local kinship roles as mothers and wives. As in the case of LRA abductions, wartime enslavement led to marriage with captives; it was an institutionalized way to acquire wives and adoptive children (outsiders) and turn them into kin (insiders). Once integrated into local clans, the initial captivity of particular individuals, mainly women and children, did not mark out their descendants from the rest of society. This contrasts with circumstances in other groups, where identities rooted in slavery and slave descent were transmitted across generations. For example, the association with military slavery of the Muslim Nubis of north-

western Uganda, many of whom were slaves-turned-slavers in the nineteenth century, persisted intergenerationally even though, due to the peculiar characteristics of military slavery, it was not always a source of stigma.⁹¹

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Lango and Acholi regions of Northern Uganda had low population densities. Local societies put a premium on high fertility and wealth-in-people, and a 'subsistence-plus-cash-crop' peasant economy based on family labour. Women made a vital contribution to farming and the preparation of beer for cooperative work-groups that households mobilized on a reciprocal basis during the peak periods of the grain farming cycle.⁹² Enslavement was aimed at acquiring women, who were valued for their labour and their potential fertility. Captive women must have found their forced integration into an enemy society a painful ordeal, especially during the initial stages, but those who accepted their unwanted destiny could nonetheless become respected members of their captor's group. Once captive wives gave birth to children and contributed to the reproduction of their new families, memory of their foreign origins faded. Women were kidnapped in internecine feuds between clans of the same language group.⁹³ They were also captured in regional conflicts against neighbours and redistributed as slaves, turned into gifts or compensations for debts and crimes. For example, Madi villages appear to have been particularly vulnerable to Lango raids from 1820 to 1860.⁹⁴

In his book *Ismailia*, Victorian explorer and Ottoman military officer Samuel Baker gives one of the earliest accounts of 'the Langgos' of Lira in the late 1860s in the following terms: 'an immense tribe [...] divided under many chiefs. These people were exceedingly large and powerful, and were esteemed as great warriors'.⁹⁵ In the second half of the nineteenth century, Lango warriors conducted military campaigns both against and for Bunyoro and thereby obtained cattle, slaves, captured women and children.⁹⁶ Similar dynamics took place in Acholi. Captured women were integrated in the kinship system of their captors or receivers, and seemingly acquired full membership status in their new societies. When they gave birth to sons, the latter inherited wealth and status from their fathers like the sons of free wives. Acholi scholar Reuben Anywar explains that Acan, the mother of Chief (*rwot*) Awich, 'was a slave girl given to the Paira by the people of Palaro when soliciting help against the people of Atiak. The Palaro persuaded the Paira to join them against the people of Atiak, and Acan the mother of Awich was accepted as a slave'.⁹⁷ This happened around 1860.⁹⁸ Anywar also mentions 'a Labongo woman named Adwe who had been seized by the Paira and the Labongo as a result sent spears and Madi hoes to Rwot Ogwok of Padibe soliciting his help against Rwotcamo [Rwot Ocamo]'.⁹⁹ He notes, too, that Rwot Ocamo in the 1870s started the practice of settling blood disputes by the payment of girls in compensation for crimes, a practice that was continued by his successors. Jack Driberg noted that Lango raids were driven by the insatiable need to

have many wives who could bear as many sons as possible and to raise and maintain a large warrior base, which made Madi women particularly susceptible due to their reputation of high fertility.¹⁰⁰ Acholi, Madi, Kumam and Banyara were also raided: 'if the enemy were completely routed, their villages were destroyed, and any women, children and livestock who had not been sent to safety were captured'.¹⁰¹ Women were particularly vulnerable to abductions and transactions controlled by men in positions of power, but they were not powerless. High-ranking wives could carry out delicate political roles. For example, Awich sent his 'chief wife', Liira, on diplomatic missions to settle disputes.¹⁰²

The most alienating forms of slavery were the ones that resulted in the sale of a society's members in the long-distance slave trade, which in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was intertwined with the trade in ivory and guns. Weapons were necessary to acquire humans and ivory. Soldiers who owned their own guns could choose whom to offer their military services to, and – when unrewarded – could 'live off the land', pillaging villages and acquiring women for themselves and to sell into the slave trade. Groups of soldiers known as Nubis from what today is South Sudan fought in Northern Uganda for Anglo-Egyptian first, and later British, commanders. They also found themselves autonomous for multiple periods of a few years, when representatives of government armies were unwilling or unable to control the region. Many Nubis were former slaves and slave descendants from regions where the so-called 'Arab' slave trade had flourished and where many ex-slaves joined the ranks of native soldiers in colonial armies (*askaris*).¹⁰³

Sudanese militias looted Northern Uganda's communities, taking their women and food, throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Samuel Baker described the resistance against such attacks that was put up by the Madi neighbours of the Lango who lived near the upper Nile River in north-western Uganda. He tells of a camp ('zareeba') of Nubian soldiers who had been preying on local villages for years. Madi warriors set fire to the thatched straw roofs of the zeriba's huts in a night-time revenge raid in March 1872. Then in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the Lango and Acholi were exposed to the repercussions of the Mahdist uprising in the Sudan at the following of Muhammad Ahmad who proclaimed himself Mahdi in 1881 and mobilized his followers against Anglo-Egyptian rule. Some Nubis sided with the Mahdist forces. Awich, a prominent Acholi leader, led an attack against these Nubis, who lost all their guns *and women*.¹⁰⁴

The Nubian zeribas constituted peculiar social formations of small clusters of dependents attached to individual militiamen. Despite the Nubis' occasional brutality toward local groups, their martial experience and flexible social institutions made their military services valuable to conquering powers. Frederick Lugard negotiated with Selim Bey (senior officer serving in the Egyptian Khedivate's army) for the recruitment of Nubian soldiers in the Imperial British

East Africa Company (IBEAC)'s 'Uganda Rifles' in 1891.¹⁰⁵ These Nubian soldiers had previously served under Emin Pasha (born Isaak Eduard Schnitzer), the Governor of Egypt's Equatoria Province. Lugard wrote that each soldier had with him an average of eleven unarmed followers, which consisted of wives, concubines and female slaves, as well as children and male slaves, acquired directly or inherited from soldiers who had died. These clusters of dependents also included locally recruited slaves and servants.¹⁰⁶ The northern stretches of Acholi (less so Lango to the East) had been involved in frequent tensions with these groups, losing women and children to their raids. These frequent raids and counter-raids invariably involved abductions of women and children in a context marked by a generalized insecurity.

In Lango, war captives, both male and female, were referred to as '*moo*'. According to Driberg, 'won *mo*' referred to the thrower of the spear, that is, the 'owner of the [captured] enemy'.¹⁰⁷ A warrior would exclaim: *man moo na* (this is my *moo*). Captives who were subsequently repurposed as wives became a man's *moo* wives. The only way in which people in old Lango intermarried with members of non-Lango groups was through capture, and they rarely gave their daughters in marriage to non-Lango people.¹⁰⁸ Evans Pritchard described in detail the rituals accompanying similar practices among the Nuer of Sudan, who took their female captives as wives, adopted them as daughters, or gave them away in marriage to men of other lineages.¹⁰⁹ Like in Nuer society, Lango people integrated captives into a family either as *moo* wives (often in a polygynous relationship), or as adopted children. Captured pubescent girls could be taken as wives. Those deemed too young were kept as daughters, and later given in marriage to members of other lineages. According to Driberg, there was no stigma or differential treatment of *moo* women.¹¹⁰ Tosh noted that there was no 'slave element' associated with captured women and children in Lango; they were not held as a separate group collectively designated as slaves and treated differently from freeborn members of society.¹¹¹

Moo wives and local wives enjoyed similar rights and standing in the home, clan and community. This is borne out by Apio's research, which includes testimonies of elders who traced their lineages back to *moo* ancestors.¹¹² These testimonies describe ancestors as captured children and young women who were adopted by their captor or other members of his lineage. When *moo* adoptive girls married, their adoptive fathers received bridewealth. This was because adoption converted the captive into a lineage member, rendering her unable to marry within the same clan. But women captured as adults and taken as wives without being previously adopted into a Lango clan were not integrated in their captor's lineage. They were married into the lineage without payment of bridewealth. Apio interviewed grandchildren of *moo* captives who argued that their grandmothers gradually came to think of themselves as members of their captors' descent groups. For example, in Ayer sub county of Kole district of Lango, Abun, a seventy-two-year-old man stated that his grandmother, a

moo captive from Bunyoro, referred to herself as a member of the Jo Okii Bura clan. Her captor had been his grandfather, and a member of the Jo Okii Bura, and she had proudly observed all of the norms and values of the Jo Okii Bura, and had become a respected female elder in her husband's clan.¹¹³

Although captives did not form a separate class of dishonoured slaves, *moo* marriages were different from standard Lango marriages. In *moo* marriages, the captive's lineage of origin did not play any role. Only the captor and his group had rights on the captive girl's productive and reproductive potential. These circumstances resemble what twenty-first century Lango elders used to describe as a 'hijack of wombs' in relation to the capture of their daughters by militants of the LRA. In earlier periods, the element of coercion was most pronounced at the point of capture, and then faded away gradually as a former captive was integrated into the captor's lineage either as wife or as daughter. Similarly, some of the girls abducted by the LRA progressively accepted their roles as commanders' wives and this decreased their exposure to violence.

European abolitionists targeted African slavery in the last decades of the nineteenth century. As British missionaries and explorers ventured into the territory of today's Uganda, they negotiated anti-slavery treaties with ruling elites.¹¹⁴ Slavery was initially abolished in a context characterized by marked normative pluralism.¹¹⁵ After independence, Uganda reconfirmed, expanded and ratified antislavery colonial laws and international conventions after decolonization in 1962.¹¹⁶ The abduction of women became rarer, but persisted. Systematic inter-group raiding died out, but occasional captures of Lango women and girls reminded Lango elders of *moo*. Beyond the LRA's abductions, recent cases include raids by groups from Karamoja which spanned the period 1986 to the 2000s.¹¹⁷ These raids focused on cattle, but sometimes Lango children and women were also abducted.

Apio interviewed women who had returned to Lango after having spent a minimum of 6 months and a maximum of several years in Karamoja. Their stories illustrate the process of 'becoming free' post-abduction. Some, having spent years in their abductors' communities, could live like local women, circulating freely in town and going to markets, which also gave them opportunities to escape and return home. One woman who had been captured when she was eight-years-old in 1987 and was later married off as a fourth wife stated that in 2011, when she could no longer bear her co-wives' abuses toward her and her five children, she ran away and walked several miles to the local sub-county authorities, who then contacted their counterparts in Okwang sub-county in east Lango to help her trace her family. Having verified the circumstances of her abduction, local authorities arrested her forced husband and helped her return to her hometown with her children.¹¹⁸ Apio's interviewees also stated that those captured very young became fully assimilated. They lost fluency in their first language and spoke only Ngakarimjong, the language of their abductors, which is completely different from Luo. They also forgot all information

that would help them trace their families. Some returnees bore the ceremonial marks of the Karamojong clans in whose homesteads they had been integrated. The mother of five children mentioned above, for example, had deep scarifications on her face and abdomen, and had had two of her front-teeth removed (another Karamojong practice). In their oral testimonies, Lango elders compared these cases to the *moo* marriages of precolonial raids.

Today the institution connected most closely to the pre-colonial long-distance slave trade is the traffic in women and girls that Apio illustrated in her novel *Zura Maids*, a work of fiction based on real stories.¹¹⁹ On the other hand, the LRA's abductions and the forced conjugal association of abducted girls with LRA militants are the contemporary manifestations of *moo* marriages. This is also the case of the individual abductions that occasionally accompanied cattle rustling raids by neighbouring groups.

Conclusion

The abduction of captive girls and women by separatist warlords is illegal today. The new communities established by local warlords have a short life in the contemporary political system in which national governments intervene to suppress localized warfare and re-establish national sovereignty. Captive wives are likely to be reintegrated in their society of origin, sooner or later. Aware of this, abductees are seldom resigned to their destiny. They perceive their abduction as unjust and never stop hoping that they might be saved and resume their interrupted status of 'free' women. In their everyday lives, women in Northern Uganda are confronted with domestic violence and its paternalist justifications. A degree of gendered violence is partly accepted, but increasingly denounced by Ugandan women. These considerations, and active participation in multiple international discourses and institutions, mean that the LRA's abductees think and act differently from their *moo* predecessors. This said, *mutatis mutandis*, they are the recent instantiation of *moo* captives. Following capture at the hand of LRA militants, girls were alienated from their natal lineages and forcibly integrated into new communities as slave wives, a status that in recent history could evolve into a respected wifely role. By contrast, upon return to their communities of origin, the LRA's former abductees faced stigma and marginalization, as documented broadly by activists and researchers alike.¹²⁰

Marriage in Northern Uganda continues to place women in a patriarchal system where male authority is partly demonstrated by the number of dependents a man counts in his household, that is, by the corporate 'wealth in people' of his lineage. Women are expected to accept a subordinate role, and a degree of physical chastisement of wives is considered acceptable by men and women alike. Unlike in peacetime, in the LRA camps gender violence was systematic and intense – potentially fatal – and abducted women had no

recourse to their family's support. Like precolonial *moo* wives, these women differed from 'free' wives primarily because of their forcible recruitment into the lineages of their captors' communities without the consent of elders from their own lineage of birth. It is specifically in these terms that Lango elders problematized the LRA's forced marriages: their accounts of the conflict emphasized the 'hijacking of wombs' from their lineages more than the violence meted out against their daughters and individual girls who often faced stigmatization and continued exposure to domestic violence following post-conflict reintegration.¹²¹

The ICC's procedures in the Ongwen case analogized severity of treatment (exposure to severe acts of violence and totalizing control) to (sexual) enslavement. This interpretation is rooted in a particular understanding of the slavery-marriage nexus. The genealogy of this interpretation is complex: it rests both on the lingering legacies of saviourist European colonial and missionary discourses, which denounced African marriage practices as akin to slavery, and on the preeminent influence of Atlantic abolitionism on international antislavery legislation. This interpretation is only partially shared by Northern Ugandans, whose historical experience of female captivity is rooted in different practices and concepts. It is not brutality and coercion *per se* that are incompatible with marriage and consistent with slavery in Northern Uganda; rather, it is the absence of clan members from the spouses' lineages of birth in conjugal negotiations. Most importantly for the purpose of this article, here slavery and marriage are not perceived as mutually exclusive, as attested by the contemporary efforts of some Northern Ugandan NGOs to reconcile former abductees with their LRA abductors. In these contexts, it is not only that sometimes 'marriage is slavery', but also that sometimes and from certain perspectives slavery is – or can become – marriage.

Notes

1. Khristopher Carlson and Diane Mazurana estimated that over 60,000 civilians were abducted between 1986 and 2008, and that this included at least one in three adolescent boys and one in six adolescent girls, *Forced Marriage within the Lord's Resistance Army, Uganda* (Boston, MA: Feinstein International Centre of Tufts University, 2008), 16. UNICEF reported that 25,000 abductees were children, see Uganda Complex Emerging Situations Report #3 (2006). Accessible at: https://web.archive.org/web/20111030105505/http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/disaster_assistance/countries/uganda/fy2006/uganda_ce_sr03_09-15-2006.pdf (accessed March 18, 2022). Grace Akello estimated that following abduction at the hands of LRA militants, about 10,000 girls and young women became forced wives and mothers between 1998 and 2004, see Akello, 'Experiences of Forced Mothers in Northern Uganda: The Legacy of War', *Intervention: International Journal of Mental Health, Psychosocial Work & Counselling in Areas of Armed Conflict* 11, no. 2 (2013): 149–56.

2. Jean Allain, 'When Forced Marriage is Slavery', in *The Law and Slavery: Prohibiting Human Exploitation*, ed. Jean Allain (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 474, 472–4; Catherine Turner, 'Out of the Shadows: Child Marriage and Slavery' (Anti-Slavery International, 2013), accessible at: <https://www.antislavery.org/reports-and-resources/research-reports/forced-marriage-reports/> (accessed March 18, 2022), 16. Anne Bunting, "'Forced Marriage" in Conflict Situations: Researching and Prosecuting Old Harms and New Crimes', *Canadian Journal of Human Rights* 1, no. 1 (2012): 175; Karine Bélair, 'Unearthing the Customary Law Foundations of Marriages during Sierra Leone's Civil War: The Possible Impact of International Criminal Law on Customary Marriage and Women's Rights in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone', *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law* 15, no. 3 (2006): 557.
3. Jackie Osuna, 'Where Does Uganda Stand In Responding to Victims of Sexual Violence in Conflict?', *New Vision*, accessible at: <https://www.newvision.co.ug/articledetails/106427> (accessed March 18, 2022).
4. For a critique of the interpretation of these relations as slavery, see Carlson and Mazurana, *Forced Marriage within the Lord's Resistance Army*, 14. Jackline Atingo reports comments by 'Florence', a former forced partner of Ongwen, who considers herself his legitimate wife as she watches news on the verdict of his trial, see Jackline Atingo, 'Watching the ICC Judgement of LRA commander Dominic Ongwen with Ugandan victims of enforced marriage', *FP2P*, 24 February 2021, accessible at: <https://oxfamapps.org/fp2p/watching-the-icc-judgement-of-lra-commander-dominic-ongwen-with-ugandan-victims-of-enforced-marriage/> (accessed March 18, 2022). For another example of a (consensual) marriage under the LRA that was 'regularised' following post-war reintegration, see Eunice Apio, 'Children Born of War in Northern Uganda: Kinship, Marriage, and the Politics of Post-conflict Reintegration in Lango society' (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2016), 1–4. Apio's doctoral research received ethics approval from the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (ref. LHIREC No. 005/02/15) and by the University of Birmingham (ref. no. ERN-12-0030). However, 'Approximately fifty-nine percent of young mothers have knowledge that their 'bush husbands' are still alive and at large. Ninety-seven percent stated that they are uninterested in reuniting with former LRA "husbands"', *The Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP) Field Notes*, 'Young Mothers, Marriage, and Reintegration in Northern Uganda: Considerations for the Juba Peace Talks', no. 2 (September 2006), accessible at http://justiceandreconciliation.com/wp-content/uploads/2006/09/JRP_FN2_YoungMothers.pdf (accessed March 18, 2022), 2, 6.
5. For a discussion of these views, see JRP Field Notes, 'Young Mothers, Marriage, and Reintegration'; see also Introduction and Chapter Four of the forthcoming PhD thesis of Ketty Anyeko, University of British Columbia.
6. Benedetta Rossi, 'Parenté', in *Les Mondes de l'Esclavage*, ed. Paulin Ismard, Benedetta Rossi and Cécile Vidal (Paris: Seuil, 2021), 631–4.
7. Jean Allain, 'When Forced Marriage is Slavery'.
8. Joseph Miller, 'Domiciled and Dominated: Slaving as a History of Women', in *Women and Slavery, Volume 2: The Modern Atlantic*, ed. Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers and Joseph Miller (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2008), 284–312.
9. The article focuses on Lango and Acholi societies which were both involved directly in the LRA conflict and whose forms of marriage, kinship and warfare share common traits. Commonalities extend to the kinship logics that Edward Evans Pritchard described for the segmentary lineage systems of the Nuer of South Sudan (Evans Pritchard, *The Nuer* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940]). There are also differences *between* these groups, just as there are differences *within* Acholi and Lango

- societies. As Marxist, feminist, subaltern and decolonial approaches made clear, the notions of ‘culture’, ‘society’ and ‘community’ are abstractions that conceal internal inequalities. But this article focuses on continuities between precolonial captivity and the LRA’s form of conjugal slavery. In this respect, Acholi and Lango Luo-speaking societies were exposed to similar macro-historical dynamics, including regional forms of slaving and assimilative women- and children-focused captivity. In short, they have been part of a shared culture of slavery.
10. Jack H. Driberg, *The Lango: A Nilotic Tribe of Uganda* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1923); John Tosh, *Clan Leaders and Colonial Chiefs in Lango: The Political History of an East African Stateless Society, c. 1800–1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 107–8.
 11. Apio, ‘Children Born of War in Northern Uganda’, 6, 14, 173.
 12. The UNHCR defines gender-based violence as ‘harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power and harmful norms’. It estimates that one in three women in the world today will experience sexual or physical violence in their lifetime.
 13. This argument has been one of the main contributions of Africanists to global slavery studies and is central to Orlando Patterson’s definition of slavery in his *Slavery and Social Death. A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982). For key anthropological contributions on this point, see Claude Meillassoux, ed., *L’esclavage en Afrique précoloniale* (Paris: Maspero, 1975); Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, eds., *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977); James Watson, *Asian and African Systems of Slavery* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1980); Claude Meillassoux, *Anthropologie de l’esclavage: le ventre de fer et d’argent* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986).
 14. Ongwen was kidnapped when he was approximately ten years old. His age at abduction was contested by the ICC, as when he was first in custody, Ongwen signed a document stating that he was born in 1975 and not 1978. Although this may seem a minor issue, it has implications for the trial. For example, Dominic Ongwen can only be held accountable for crimes that he committed while fifteen years old or above, therefore, his age has important consequences when determining what charges can be laid. See Adam Branch, ‘Dominic Ongwen on Trial: The ICC’s African Dilemmas’, *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 11, no. 1 (2017): 30–49.
 15. Interview with a Member of the Defence by Eleanor Seymour, November 2016. Seymour’s research received ethics approval by the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (ref. no. SS4776) and by the University of Birmingham (ref. no. ERN-16-0496). All interviews in this paper are pseudonymized.
 16. ICC, Case Information Sheet: The Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen, ICC-02/04-01/15.
 17. Ibid.
 18. Dominic Ongwen had more than seven forced wives during his time in the LRA.
 19. Prosecution for the International Criminal Court, *Sexual and Gender Based Crimes*, 6 September 2016.
 20. ICC, Trial Judgement, ICC-02/04-01/15-1762-Red, 4 February 2021, Trial Chamber IX, Decision accessible at <https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/record.aspx?docNo=ICC-02/04-01/15-1762-Red> (accessed 18 March 2022). See also Tom Maliti, ‘ICC Convicts Ongwen of 61 War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity’, *International Justice Monitor*, 4 February 2021, accessible at <https://www.ijmonitor.org/2021/02/icc-convicts-ongwen-of-61-war-crimes-and-crimes-against-humanity/> (accessed March

- 18, 2022) and ICC Press Release of 6 May 2021 ‘Dominic Ongwen Sentenced to 25 Years of Imprisonment’, accessible at: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?name=pr1590> (accessed March 18, 2022).
21. Watye Ki Gen and CAP International, ‘The Lord’s Resistance Army Forced Wife System: A Collective Portrait Created by Female Returnees’, 18, report published online and accessible at <https://wpsncanada.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/wpsn-c-watye-ki-gen-and-cap-international-lra-force-wife-system-publication.pdf> (accessed March 18, 2022).
 22. Interview with Caroline, Interviewed by Eleanor Seymour. 23 November 2016. ‘Caroline’ is Seymour’s pseudonym. Caroline was not interviewed by the ICC but other forced wives who were interviewed were pseudonymised with numbers such as P4005. The wives’ testimonies were collected in a closed-court setting where the prosecution and defence both had the opportunity to question the women. The women did not travel to The Hague and instead participated in video interviews. Testimonies are based upon the Article 56 testimonies collected by the ICC in September 2015.
 23. Ibid.
 24. See Omer Aijazi and Erin Baines, ‘Relationality, Culpability and Consent in Wartime: Men’s Experiences of Forced Marriage’, *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 11, no. 3 (2017), 463–83.
 25. The originals are considered relatively powerful and hostile by many LRA women survivors. See, Watye Ki Gen and CAP International, ‘The Lord’s Resistance Army Forced Wife System’, 28, 58, 72, 81–86.
 26. Interview with Caroline, Interviewed by Eleanor Seymour. 23 November 2016.
 27. Apio, ‘Children Born of War in Northern Uganda: Kinship, Marriage, and the Politics of Post-Conflict Reintegration in Lango Society’, 105.
 28. Article 56 Proceedings. ICC, The Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen, Pre-Trial Chamber II, September 2015, UGA-OTP-P-0235, 32.
 29. This is based on Lucy’s description of this event in her testimony – but she does not use the word ‘rape’.
 30. Witness was asked if she had a choice or option about becoming pregnant and responded ‘no, it wasn’t my choice’, Article 56 Proceedings. ICC, The Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen, Pre-Trial Chamber II, September 2015, UGA-OTP-P-0235, 38.
 31. Article 56 Proceedings. ICC, The Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen, Pre-Trial Chamber II, September 2015. The exact locations and other identifying details are redacted to safeguard the privacy of the witnesses.
 32. Article 56 Proceedings. ICC, The Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen, Pre-Trial Chamber II, September 2015, UGA-OTP-P-0226, 27.
 33. Ibid., 34.
 34. Term used by witness, ibid., 39.
 35. This is a reference to having sex with a virgin. Jenti ‘became a wife’ at an unusually early age for the LRA, whose militants normally waited until the girl had started menstruating or was 12–13 years old. Ongwen’s determination to make her his wife so young may be due to his fear that other commanders wanted her. See *Article 56 Proceedings. ICC, The Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen*, Pre-Trial Chamber II, September 2015, UGA-OTP-P-0226, 42. Concerning the use of sexual metaphors and euphemisms, Apio’s recent research in Lango and Acholi with former forced wives and men who experienced sexual violence during the LRA war reveals frequent use of euphemisms and periphrases to refer to sexual relations, for example: he sat with me, the act that happened, or sleep abuse.

36. Article 56 Proceedings. ICC, The Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen, Pre-Trial Chamber II, September 2015, UGA-OTP-P-0226. GUSCO or the 'Gulu Support the Children Organization' was a reception centre in Gulu where many formerly abducted children were sent for rehabilitation after they returned from the LRA in order to facilitate their reintegration into the community.
37. Article 56 Proceedings. ICC, The Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen, Pre-Trial Chamber II, September 2015, UGA-OTP-P-0101, 17.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Term used by witness.
41. Article 56 Proceedings. ICC, The Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen, Pre-Trial Chamber II, September 2015, UGA-OTP-P-0101.
42. Control Alter was the name of the Brigade headed by Joseph Kony. It comprised of a group of high-ranking commanders that were close to Kony and directed military strategy.
43. Article 56 Proceedings. ICC, The Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen, Pre-Trial Chamber II, September 2015, UGA-OTP-P-0099, P26.
44. Article 56 Proceedings, 2015. ICC, The Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen, Pre-Trial Chamber II, September 2015, UGA-OTP-P-0099, 46.
45. Harriet's initial testimony stated that she was forced to have sex with Ongwen. When later questioned in court, she contradicted this and stated, 'that is not correct'. Harriet's perception of this event had changed. She refused to answer questions about the apparent contradiction before eventually providing an explanation that alluded to the fact that it was a constrained choice. During questioning, she highlighted that he took care of his wives and the soldiers under his command. Harriet's testimony at points appears to defend Ongwen, Article 56 Proceedings, 2015. ICC, The Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen, Pre-Trial Chamber II, September 2015, UGA-OTP-P-0099, 46.
46. When Harriet was asked whether Ongwen would have killed her if she attempted to escape, she refused to answer the question. She explained her reasoning, 'Yes, I heard the question, but you know all army worked based on orders and instructions, even if it's your mother's child. Let me take for example what my uncle, if he caught me escaping and was given orders to kill me, then yes, he would kill me because those were the orders', Article 56 Proceedings, 2015. ICC, The Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen, Pre-Trial Chamber II, September 2015, UGA-OTP-P-0099, 46
47. Eleanor Seymour, "You Are Beaten if You Are Bad ... You, Woman, You Have Made Your Husband Tired": Investigating Gender Violence in Northern Uganda' (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2019).
48. See Erin Baines, 'Forced Marriage as a Political Project: Sexual Rules and Relations in the Lord's Resistance Army', *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 3 (2014): 405–17; Jeannie Annan, Christopher Blattman, Dyan Mazurana, and Khristopher Carlson, 'The State of Female Youth in Northern Uganda: Findings from the Survey of War-Affected Youth (Sway) Phase II', 2008 report published online, accessible at https://genderandsecurity.org/sites/default/files/Annan_et_al._-_The_State_of_F_Youth_in_Nern_Uganda.pdf (accessed March 18, 2022)
49. Aijazi and Baines, 'Relationality, Culpability and Consent in Wartime: Men's Experiences of Forced Marriage.'
50. International Criminal Court, Defence Pre-Trial Brief, 2016. 364.
51. Rape was seen as encompassed within the broader offense of forced marriage in the ICC trial. See also Brett Shadle, 'Rape in the Courts of Gusiland', *African Studies Review* 51, no 2, (2008): 31.

52. Holly Porter, *After Rape: Violence, Justice, and Social Harmony in Uganda* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 106.
53. Prosecution for the International Criminal Court, Sexual and Gender Based Crimes, 6 September 2016.
54. ICC Press Release ‘Dominic Ongwen declared guilty’, accessible at <https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?name=pr1564> (accessed March 18, 2022).
55. Joel Quirk, ‘Qu’est-ce l’esclavage contemporain ?’ in *Les Mondes de l’Esclavage*, ed. Paulin Ismard, Benedetta Rossi and Cécile Vidal (Paris: Seuil, 2021), 635–52.
56. Benedetta Rossi, ‘Beyond the Atlantic Paradigm: Slavery and Abolitionism in the Nigérien Sahel’, *Journal of Global Slavery* 5, no. 2 (2020): 238–69; for a discussion of different concepts of freedom, see contributions to the special issue on ‘Freedom from Below: Enslavement, Bondage and Emancipation in Comparative Perspective’ guest-edited by Alice Bellagamba, *Journal of Global Slavery* 2, nos. 1–2 (2017).
57. Anonymised member of Dominic Ongwen’s Defence team, interviewed by Eleanor Seymour, November 2016.
58. Thomas Theodore Steiger Hayley, ‘Changes in Lango Marriage Customs’, *Uganda Journal* 7, no. 4 (1940): 145–63.
59. Boniface Ojok, interviewed by Eleanor Seymour, April 2018.
60. Porter, *After Rape: Violence, Justice, and Social Harmony in Uganda*. 97.
61. Apio, thesis, 100.
62. See Holly Porter, *After Rape: Violence, Justice, and Social Harmony in Uganda*. 76.
63. Hayley, ‘Changes in Lango Marriage Customs’, 145.
64. Arthur Leonard Kitching, *On the Backwaters of the Nile* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1912), 147.
65. *Ibid.*, 150.
66. The expression of ‘slavery for the women’ or ‘women’s slavery’ is found frequently in European colonial descriptions of African women’s contribution to productive life. In relation to the Acholi, see for example Albert Lloyd, *Uganda to Khartoum*, 178; Albert Lloyd, ‘Extracts from Mengo Notes - V,’ *The Uganda Journal* 12, no. 1 (1948): 85.
67. Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*, (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 156; Ifi Amadiume, *Re-Inventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion and Culture* (London: Zed, 1997). See also Colette Harris, ‘Some Gender Implications of the “Civilising Mission” of the Anglican Church for the Acholi Peoples of Northern Uganda’, *Religions* 8, no. 11 (2017): 1–20.
68. Hayley, ‘Changes in Lango Marriage Customs’, 155.
69. *Ibid.*, 152.
70. In 2018 the Supreme Court in Uganda ruled that refund of marriage goods upon divorce was unlawful ... while it is not clear if cases in courts of law suffered dismissal as a result of this, the practice of refund of bride wealth in Lango’s rural communities continued unhindered.
71. Hayley, ‘Changes in Lango Marriage Customs’, 154.
72. Kihangire Cyprianus, ‘The Marriage Customs of the Lango Tribe (Uganda) in Relation to Canon Law’ (Universitas Urbaniana De Propaganda Fide, 1957), 65.
73. Cyprianus, ‘The Marriage Customs of the Lango Tribe’, 61.
74. *Ibid.*, 49.
75. *Ibid.*, 53.
76. *Ibid.*, 51. See also Apio, ‘Children Born of War in Northern Uganda’, 92.
77. Group 2, interviewed by Eleanor Seymour, 27 March 2017.
78. Group 1, interviewed by Eleanor Seymour, 28 March 2017.

79. Group 2, interviewed by Eleanor Seymour, 27 March 2017.
80. Cyprianus, 'The Marriage Customs of the Lango Tribe', 78.
81. Apio, 'Children Born of War in Northern Uganda: Kinship', 102.
82. Porter, *After Rape*, 89.
83. Godiva Akullo Monika, 'How Long Shall We Wait? An Analysis Of The Marriage And Divorce Bill, 2009,' *Centre for Policy Analysis*, online publication accessible at <http://cepa.or.ug/analysis/how-long-shall-we-wait-an-analysis-of-the-marriage-and-divorce-bill-2009/> (accessed March 18, 2022).
84. Dorothy, interviewed by Eleanor Seymour, 10 April 2017.
85. For an analysis of the complex and diverse forms of marriage in Buganda, Bugwere, Busoga, and Bushana, see Rhiannon Stephens, "'Whether They Promised Each Other Some Thing Is Difficult to Work Out": The Complicated History of Marriage in Uganda', *African Studies Review* 59, no. 1 (2016): 127–53. For a discussion of polygamy as practiced in Muslim and non-Muslim Acholi groups today, see Charles Amone, 'Polygamy as a Dominant Pattern of Sexual Pairing Among the Acholi of Uganda', *Sexuality & Culture* 24 (2020): 733–48.
86. On the gender implications of the 'civilising mission' of Anglican missionaries in Northern Uganda, see Colette Harris, 'Some Gender Implications of the 'Civilising Mission'', 245. Early post-colonial debates are discussed in H.F. Morris, 'Uganda: Report of the Commission on Marriage, Divorce and the Status of Women', *Journal of African Law* 10, no. 1 (1966): 3–7. The Customary Marriages Registration Act 1973 of Uganda under section 4 (2) legalizes traditional (Customary) marriage, which takes many forms, alongside polygamous Islamic marriage and monogamous Christian and civil marriages. The 1995 Constitution endorses a number of human rights principles including women's rights.
87. Manisuli Ssenyonjo has argued that many aspects of customary marriage and family law that discriminate against women persist due to lack of political will to eradicate them, Manisuli Ssenyonjo, 'Women's Rights to Equality and Non-discrimination: Discriminatory Family Legislation in Uganda and the Role of Uganda's Constitutional Court', *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family* 21, no. 3 (2007): 341–72. See also Anthony Luyirika Kafumbe, 'Women's Rights to Property in Marriage, Divorce, and Widowhood in Uganda: The Problematic Aspects', *Human Rights Review* 11, no. 2 (2010): 199–221.
88. Eleanor Seymour, 'You Are Beaten if You Are Bad', 6–20.
89. Holly Hanson, 'Stolen People and Autonomous Chiefs in Nineteenth-Century Buganda,' in *Slavery in the Great Lakes Region of East Africa*, ed. Henri Médard and Shane Doyle (Oxford: James Currey 2007), 161–73; Richard Reid, 'Human Booty in Buganda: Some Observations on the Seizure of People in War c. 1700–1890', in *Slavery in the Great Lakes Region of East Africa*, ed. Henri Médard and Shane Doyle (Oxford: James Currey, 2007), 145–60; Adrian Wisnicki, 'Rewriting Agency: Samuel Baker, Bunyoro-Kitara and the Egyptian Slave Trade', *Studies in Travel Writing* 14, no. 1 (2010): 1–27.
90. Michael Tuck, 'Women's Experiences of Enslavement and Slavery in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Uganda', in *Slavery in the Great Lakes Region of East Africa*, ed. Henri Médard and Shane Doyle (Oxford: James Currey, 2007), 174–88. It is probable that debt-slavery was practiced in the region, but is scantily documented. Failure to honour a debt could have led to the transfer of a debtor, or his relatives, to the creditor as slaves or pawns. Kitching cites the Lunyoro proverb 'The debt you despise will cost you your mother,' which he interprets in the following terms: 'a reminiscence of the days when personal slavery of relatives might be enforced for long overdue debts.' *On the Backwaters of the Nile*, 290.

91. Mark Leopold, 'Legacies of Slavery in North-West Uganda: The Story of the "One-Elevens"', *Africa* 76, no. 2 (2006): 180–99.
92. John Tosh, 'Lango Agriculture during the Early Colonial Period: Land and Labour in a Cash-Crop Economy', *The Journal of African History* 19, no. 3 (1978): 415–39. Tosh mentions that it was not until the 1950s that some Lango sub-counties would begin to reach the critical higher population density of 140 persons to the square mile, *ibid.*: 437.
93. A. Tarantino, 'Lango Wars', *Uganda Journal* 13, no. 2 (1949): 145–53; Driberg, *The Lango: A Nilotic Tribe of Uganda*; John Tosh, *Clan Leaders and Colonial Chiefs in Lango: The Political History of an East African Stateless Society, c. 1800--1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 90–2; John Milner Gray, 'Acholi History 1860–1901 I', *Uganda Journal* 16, no. 1 (1952): 36.
94. *Ibid.*, 90–2.
95. Baker, Samuel W. *Ismail'ia: A Narrative of the Expedition to Central Africa for the Suppression of the Slave Trade* (London: Macmillan, 1974), Vol. 2, 118.
96. Tosh, *Clan Leaders and Colonial Chiefs*, 96; Thomas Theodore Steiger Hayley, *The Anatomy of Lango Religion & Groups* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947), 40.
97. Reuben Anywar, "The Life of Rwot Iburaim Awich" (translated from Acholi by J.V. Wild), *Uganda Journal* 12, no. 1 (1948): 72. Reuben Anywar was trained at Makerere and schoolmaster at Gulu highschool at the time of writing this article. He had been the first Honorary Secretary of the Acholi Association, founded in 1944, and took a leading role in the initial issues of the Acholi Magazine of the Association.
98. *Ibid.*, 79.
99. "Rwotcamo" is the abbreviation of Rwot Ocamo, father of Awich.
100. The Madi language group sits astride Uganda and South Sudan borders. In Uganda, they occupy the districts of Adjumani and Moyo, and in South Sudan, they are natives of Pageri County.
101. Anywar, "The Life of Rwot Iburaim Awich", 107–8.
102. *Ibid.*, 78.
103. Samwiri Lwanga-Lunyiigo, 'The Colonial Roots of Internal Conflict in Uganda', paper presented to the international seminar on internal conflict at Makerere University, 21–25 September 1987, accessible at: <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/1412> ; see also Leopold, 'Legacies of Slavery'.
104. Anywar, 'The Life of Rwot Iburaim Awich', 73.
105. Ibrahim Soghayroun, 'Selim Bey Mattar: Commanding Officer Under Emin Pasha's Troops', *Sudan Studies* 39 (2009): 9–19. See also John Milner Gray, 'Acholi History, 1860–1901, I', *Uganda Journal* 15, no. 2 (1951): 125 ff.
106. Lugard refers to these as 'Lendu groups', Frederick Lugard, *The Rise of Our East African Empire: Early Efforts in Nyasaland and Uganda* (London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1893), 217. See also Seymour Vandeleur, *Campaigning on the Upper Nile and Niger* (London: Metuhen & Co, 1898), 55.
107. Driberg, *The Lango: A Nilotic Tribe*, 107.
108. *Ibid.*, 165.
109. Captured girls were absorbed into the captor's household as daughters. Rituals were uttered to sanction the newly formed father-daughter relationship. When the time came for her marriage, she was required to observe the norms and expectations reserved for daughters. Her adoptive father (captor) gave her away in exchange for brideprice, just as he would his own biological daughters. When the Nuer took their captives directly as wives, a ritual was performed to show that the captor and captive were

- entering an exogamous union. Evans Pritchard described how the captor would pass his spear-shaft between the legs of the captive and then hand her to another man, to take her outside the village before bringing her back. No brideprice was transferred. But irrespective of whether she ended up as her captor's wife or daughter, her lineage affiliation was transformed and she became a member of her captor's clan, Edward Evan Evans Pritchard, *Kinship and Marriage among the Nuer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 32.
110. Driberg, *The Lango: A Nilotic Tribe*, 165.
 111. Tosh, *Clan Leaders and Colonial Chiefs*, 86.
 112. Apio's postdoctoral research on post-war resilience of survivors of war rape and sexual violence (2018–2019) is part of an ERC-funded project located at the University of Birmingham and received ethics approval from the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (ref. no. SS-4630) and by the University of Birmingham.
 113. Abun Nicokolaci, 72 years old, Ilera village, Apii parish, Ayer Sub County, Kole district, Uganda, interviewed by Eunice Otuko Apio, 12 January 2020.
 114. J.V. Wild, *The Story of the Uganda Agreement* (Nairobi: Eagle Press, 1950), 41–5; Apolo Kagwa, *Ekitabo kya Basekabaka be Buganda* (London: Luzac, 1912), 199.
 115. Joan Vincent, 'Trading Places: Recognizing and Recreating Legal Pluralism in Colonial Uganda', *The Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law* 25 (1993): 147–59.
 116. Independent Uganda ratified both the UN's 1926 Slavery Convention and 1956 Supplementary Convention on 12 August 1964. The 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda explicitly guarantees 'protection from slavery, servitude and forced labour' in Chapter 5 on 'Protection and Promotion of Fundamental and Other Human Rights and Freedoms'.
 117. ICPALD, 'Uganda Cattle Rustling', IGAD Centre for Pastoral Areas and Livestock Development, 2019, accessible at: <https://icpald.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/UGANDA-CATTLE-RUSTLING-FINAL.pdf> ; J. Vaughan and T. Stewart, 'Cattle raiding in Karamoja: A Conflict market assessment', Mercy Corps, 2011, accessible at: https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/Uganda_STRESS_Karamoja_Report.pdf.
 118. Atim Sylvia, Okwang sub-county, Otuke district, Uganda, interviewed by Eunice Otuko Apio, November 2018.
 119. Apio, Eunice Otuko, *Zura Maids* (Kampala: FEMRITE Publications Limited, 2018).
 120. See Allen Kiconco, *Gender, Conflict and Reintegration in Uganda: Abducted Girls, Returning Women* (New York: Routledge, 2021). For a discussion of the stigma affecting the children born of wartime unions that returning women brought with them, see Beth Stewart, 'I feel Out of Place: Children Born into the Lord's Resistance Army and the Politics of Belonging' (PhD diss., The University of British Columbia, 2017); and Boniface Ojok, 'Education After Conflict: An Examination of Schooling Attitudes and Responses to Children Born of War Following their (Re-)integration into the Post-conflict Settings of Northern Uganda' (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2021), especially Chapter 3.
 121. The 'hijacking of wombs' situation is the central argument of Apio's PhD thesis, 'Children Born of War in Northern Uganda', while the analysis of wife beating and domestic violence in post-conflict Northern Uganda is the main focus of Seymour's doctoral thesis, 'You Are Beaten if You Are Bad ...'

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