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Land conflicts and social differentiation in eastern Uganda*

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ABSTRACT

Rising competition and conflict over land in rural sub-Saharan Africa continues to attract the attention of researchers. Recent work has especially focused on land governance, post-conflict restructuring of tenure relations, and large-scale land acquisitions. A less researched topic as of late, though one deserving of greater consideration, pertains to how social differentiation on the local-level shapes relations to land, and how these processes are rooted in specific historical developments. Drawing on fieldwork conducted in Teso sub-region of eastern Uganda, this paper analyses three specific land conflicts and situates them within a broad historical trajectory. I show how each dispute illuminates changes in class relations in Teso since the early 1990s. I argue that this current period of socioeconomic transformation, which includes the formation of a more clearly defined sub-regional middle class and elite, constitutes the most prominent period of social differentiation in Teso since the early 20th century.

INTRODUCTION

Rising competition and conflict over land in rural sub-Saharan Africa continues to attract the attention of researchers. Recent work has especially focused on issues of land governance (Deininger *et al.* 2012; van Leeuwen 2015; Leonardi & Santschi 2016; Kjaer 2017), post-conflict restructuring of tenure relations (Wily 2009; Sjögren 2014; Joireman

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& Yoder 2016), and large-scale land acquisitions (Borras & Franco 2010; Borras *et al.* 2011; Peluso & Lund 2011; Cotula 2012; Lavers 2016). Much of this research emphasises the fluid and 'hybrid' nature of the rules, institutions and actors competing over the management of rights and access to land. Emphasis on the fluidity of land tenure also corrects some of the earlier biases in the literature on large-scale land acquisitions in Africa, which, along with assuming the constant presence of local-level resistance (cf. Hall *et al.* 2015) and uncritically accepting the figures associated with the amounts of land acquired (cf. Edelman *et al.* 2013; Cotula *et al.* 2014; Schoneveld 2014), tended to over-emphasise the involvement of foreign entities. Increasing attention is being paid to indigenous actor participation in the acquisitions of and disputes over land (Baglioni & Gibbon 2013; Kandel 2015; Justin & van Leeuwen 2016).

Yet, the recent emphasis on governance has tended to reduce theoretical engagement with how agrarian and/or pastoral relations of production (or a combination thereof), as well as transformations to these relations across time, might impact contemporary dynamics around land in Africa. Of course, there is a long tradition of research on the interrelationship of agrarian/pastoral political economies and land tenure in Africa (cf. Berry 1988, 1993; Downs & Reyna 1988; Goheen 1993; Shipton 1994; Besteman 1994). A large body of work focuses on how the introduction of capitalist agriculture in the colonial period altered patterns of landholding and elite formation (Hill 1963; Colson 1971; Okoth-Ogendo 1976; Vincent 1982; Berry 1988). Over a decade ago, Peters urged more researchers to identify how rising tensions over land 'reveal processes of exclusion, deepening social divisions and class formation' within historically specific contexts (Peters 2004: 270). While her call has not gone completely unheeded (cf. Bernstein 2007; Cousins 2007; Chaveau & Richards 2008; Amanor & Moyo 2008; Chaveau & Colin 2010; Oya 2013; Pritchard 2013), more attention is needed.

Drawing on fieldwork conducted in Teso sub-region of eastern Uganda since 2012, this paper aims to build on this tradition through the analyses of three specific land conflicts. I situate the land disputes within a broad historical trajectory and show how they illuminate changes in class relations in Teso since the early 1990s. The time period since the early 1990s has been a critical one for Teso, as three violent conflicts, which at times overlapped, ended at different points during these years. However, the intensity of the conflicts (specifically, a civil war, large-scale cattle raiding, and the occupation of an insurgent group), significantly varied within the sub-region. These variations map onto certain historical legacies as well, something that I draw out in my

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analysis of the land disputes. As researchers have noted, post-conflict contexts not only induce a restructuring of land tenure relations but also provide new opportunities for accumulation (Cramer & Richards 2011), and this has certainly been the case across Teso. I argue that this current period of political, economic and cultural transformation constitutes the most prominent period of social differentiation in the sub-region since the early 20th century.

I conducted fieldwork in all eight districts[1] of Teso, and this provides the basis for the sub-regional perspective in this paper. I also draw on research that I carried out in southern Karamoja in 2012 (see Figure 1). The data under analysis in this work were mainly generated through semi-structured, unstructured and casual interviews with residents and local government officials (both elected and civil servants), although some participant observation methods also inform the paper.[2] The social backgrounds of residents (which includes members of local government) substantially vary, and include peasants, pastoral migrants, small business owners in towns and trading centres, NGO employees, teachers, clan leaders, and wage-earning youth. I also spoke to members of the middle class and elites, many of whom increasingly engage in petty commodity agricultural and livestock production, as well as speculative land accumulation. As I highlight in this paper, the backgrounds of residents are very fluid, so there is a high degree of differentiation within and overlap between livelihoods. Semi-structured and unstructured interviews were normally carried out in offices, residences, and places of social gathering. Casual interviews took place in the latter two environments, as well as stemming from normal day-to-day interactions. I interviewed participants in the first two land conflicts on site. In the case of the third land dispute, I never visited the section of land in question. This was largely due to obstruction by specific officials in the Amuria district local government in 2012. Interviews that generated data for this dispute took place in villages and local government offices in Kapelebyong sub-county (Amuria district), as well as in Soroti Town.

In the first section of the paper, I briefly describe the physical environment of Teso and precolonial settlement patterns. I then provide a more in-depth analysis of major historical developments in Teso, such as the initial colonisation of the sub-region, the three violent conflicts, the impact of climate change on agriculture, and changing dynamics within contemporary land markets. I also delineate the main drivers of land conflicts in Teso since the 1990s. The second section consists of the analysis of three land conflicts. The first and second cases reveal how cleavages along class, ethnicity, kin and gender shape the

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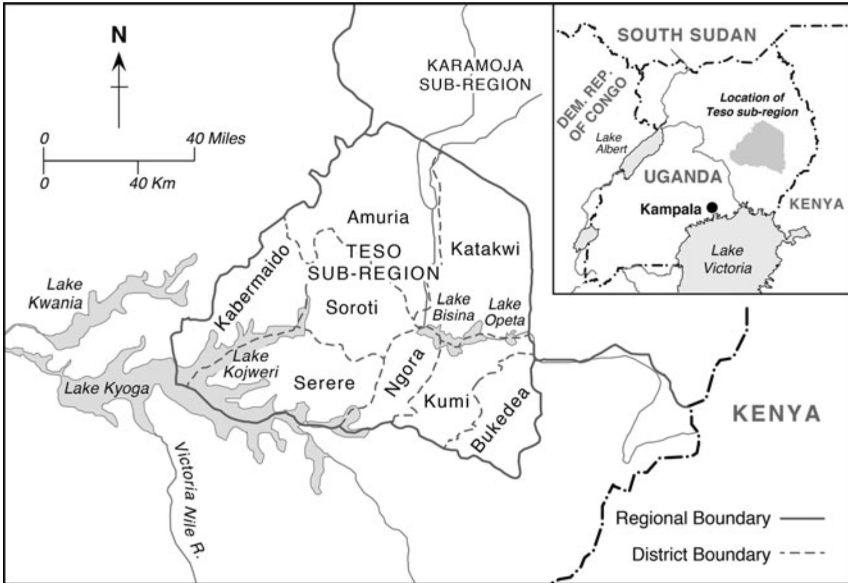

Figure 1 Teso sub-region in eastern Uganda, with districts.

underlying dynamics to disputes over land. They also offer a perspective on how members of the middle class and an expanding wage labouring group vary in terms of their capacity to mitigate the negative impacts of a dispute. While the first dispute occurred in a village, the second took place in a peri-urban environment. As is the case across Africa, peri-urban contexts are increasingly becoming the site for some of the most intense competition over land (cf. Myers 2008; Ubink 2008; Berry 2013). The third conflict reveals the salience of precolonial migration patterns, ethnoregional tensions, challenges surrounding post-conflict resettlement of land, and the power of regional elites. To conclude the paper, I consider how social differentiation in the early 20th and 21st centuries intersect and contrast, and how the two periods crystallise around different dynamics.

TESO TRANSFORMING ONCE AGAIN: SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE FROM THE PRECOLONIAL ERA TO THE PRESENT

Teso lies in eastern Uganda and consists of over 1.8 million people[3] (see Figure 1). The fertility of the soils in the grassland savannah sub-region generally range from moderate to low productivity, with the lowest levels

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concentrated in northern Teso (Nakileza 2010). The largest centre for trade is located in central Teso in Soroti Town in Soroti district, which is not only the major town in the sub-region but is also one of the key trading hubs within the eastern corridor of Uganda. While Teso is situated more along a central-eastern point of the country it is often grouped with the greater Ugandan north because it is mainly populated by Eastern Nilotes. However, particularly along the south-western side of the region, where Lake Kyoga stretches for 100 miles, there is a history of Bantu settlement due to precolonial trade and migration patterns. Kyoga forms the heart of the expansive lacustrine network in Teso, which includes three other major lakes. Other bodies of water include several rivers, as well as an abundance of permanent and seasonal wetlands. Teso receives moderate to low amounts of rainfall on a bimodal basis (~750–1500 mm per annum), an especially important statistic given that people largely practise rainfed agriculture (Matete & BakamaNume 2010). However, farmers cite the growing unpredictability of rainfall in recent years, along with the drought that began in the second season of 2015 and continued to negatively affect both harvests in 2016, as their greatest challenges. Iteso refer to the drought of 2016 as *edokolet*, or 'monkey'. *Edokolet* symbolises how the lack of rain has induced poor harvests, for, just like a monkey can cleverly steal food from one's garden, poor rainfall may lead to food insecurity in Teso.

The Iteso, along with a much smaller population of Kumam (found mainly in Kabermaido and Soroti districts), comprise the majority of sub-regional inhabitants. Iteso and Kumam are both sub-sets of the larger Ateker peoples, which consist of a number of related ethnic groups spanning south-eastern South Sudan, northern and eastern Uganda, and western Kenya (Webster 1973). This includes the Karamojong 'cluster' (Gulliver 1952) from semi-arid Karamoja sub-region (bordering Teso to the north) from whom it is believed that Iteso and Kumam separated (Webster 1973). Their ancestors began migrating southwards sometime during the 16th or 17th centuries, first travelling across the Angisa wetlands into Usuku in north-eastern Teso (Lawrance 1957; Webster 1973). The Kumam are believed to have inter-settled and intermarried with Lwo (a group that populated Teso prior to the Ateker migrations) to a greater extent than the Iteso (Webster 1973). Migration into Teso probably accelerated in the mid-18th century, although it occurred unevenly in the region. For example, while Kumi in southern Teso experienced a significant influx of migrants in the mid-19th century, northern Amuria remained

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sparsely populated until the late 1940s and 50s (Emudong 1973; Karp 1978).

Iteso and Kumam livelihoods mainly revolved around pastoralism and small-scale cereal food crop production until the early 20th century when the British and Baganda (the most powerful Bantu ethnic group from the Ugandan South, which allied with the British) conquered the region (Uchendu & Anthony 1975). While many clans organised violent resistance in different parts of Teso, the technological superiority of Baganda firearms, along with their more effective tactical and logistical structures, proved overwhelming (Vincent 1974; Karp 1978). Moreover, certain indigenous military leaders in Teso allied with the Baganda without mounting a fight (Vincent 1977). 'Teso', as the sub-region became named, was officially incorporated into the Ugandan Protectorate (established in 1894) as a district in 1912. As Joan Vincent chronicles in her seminal work *Teso in Transformation* (1982), the British and Baganda transformed the sub-region through the introduction of compulsory cotton cultivation in the early colonial period. While Teso developed into one of the largest cotton growing sub-regions in Uganda by the mid-20th century (it also ranked as one of the wealthiest districts by household and income measures; Cleave & Jones 1970), sub-regional production precipitously declined during the 1970s under the government of Idi Amin and never fully recovered (Vincent 1982).

Unlike certain ethnic groups in the Bantu-dominated Ugandan South, where precolonial political structures reflected high levels of centralisation, Iteso and Kumam shared more in common with other Eastern Nilotes. In general, these acephalous, or 'stateless', egalitarian societies were structured around loosely interlinked networks of clans and descent groups. Similar to the Karamojong, age-set and lineage served as the central organising principles for Iteso and Kumam clan structures (Emwamu 1967). This created the basis for gerontocratic political dominance, as well as the enduring tension between elders and younger people. This high degree of precolonial political decentralisation meant that attempts by the British and Baganda to politically consolidate Teso (including the attempt to institutionalise an elite through the appointment of chiefs) resulted in varying degrees of success. The colonial state imposed the Buganda political model on Teso, drawing mainly on indigenous military leaders for political offices (although Baganda filled these positions at first and retained intermittent supervisory roles as late as the 1930s) (Lawrance 1957).

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Iteso, rather than Kumam or those of Bantu descent, cemented their political dominance in the sub-region during this period, as they were selected to serve in almost all of the political offices and Ateso became the official district language (Lawrance 1957). Yet, levels of sub-regional state formation corresponded to precolonial levels of economic development and settlement patterns. For instance, the southern belt of Teso experienced greater levels of political incorporation than the northern belt, large stretches of which remained politically peripheral and disconnected from the cotton-centred sub-regional economy (Vincent 1982). This was particularly true for areas of the north closest to Karamoja (which remained entirely politically and economically peripheral in Uganda throughout the colonial period), as the border between the two sub-regions remained a (contentious) de facto common grazing and hunting area (Lawrance 1957). Large areas of Teso remained dominated by open frontier, and this included the relatively well-settled southern belt as it still retained large amounts of land that was not brought under pastoral or agricultural production. Consequently, there was usually the possibility for people to relocate if disputes over land could not be resolved through clan judicial mechanisms (Vincent 1982).

Settling unclaimed lands not only served as a mechanism for resolving disputes, but also formed the basis for precolonial land tenure relations. Typically, a small group of members of a descent group (perhaps led by males who were still too young to acquire political power in their clan) would separate from their village and seek out unsettled land (Lawrance 1957). Upon initiating settlement, the sub-lineage head allocated plots to those in his family. He also retained the right to determine which new family members over time, as well as any new migrants, would be granted rights to cultivate land, and sons were expected to farm land near their father (Jones 2009). A village, therefore, would emerge out of the initial settlement of several descent groups (potentially of several different clans), followed by a second wave (and further waves) of descent groups who were then allocated land by sub-lineage heads who had settled earlier (Lawrance 1957). Customary allocation and inheritance rights have continued to follow patrilineal inheritance and patrilocal residential principles since the precolonial period. However, numerous constitutional changes to land laws throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods have impacted the evolution of land tenure regimes in Teso, as well as across Uganda, generally (cf. Okuku 2006).

One of the critical developments over the last 20 years in Teso is the general decline in the political power of clans, which includes the reduced capacity of traditional authorities to adjudicate land disputes.

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While increasing numbers of people are accessing the statutory court system in attempts to resolve the disputes, this favours the elite and middle class who possess greater disposable income and are therefore more able to afford legal fees. Moreover, while most of the middle class and elite still retain ties to their clans (not least for ensuring rights to their own burial grounds; Jones 2007), they tend to be less interested in village life and more orientated to urbanising Teso. While the central state has attempted to push adjudication duties back onto the clans in an effort to reduce the overload of land dispute cases in the statutory courts (Edeku 2012 int.; Okiror 2012 int.), the courts, just like a council of elders[4] within a clan, still rely on the testimonies of village residents when attempting to resolve a land dispute.[5]

The erosion in the power of traditional authorities in Teso is also manifested in their weakening control over customary land sales, despite the fact that clans theoretically retain the right to deny or approve this transaction. Most of the time members of clans will not sell pieces of land unless they are desperately in need of income; or they maintain rights to more land than they can cultivate and young men within their descent group are not waiting to be allocated plots. In the villages, the most common transaction involves a transferring of customary rights to another person, in which case the land remains governed under customary tenure. While clans typically desire all customary land to remain within the lineage, there are growing numbers of transactions involving customary rights transfers to non-clan members.

A less common land transaction in the villages (though slowly increasing) involves a buyer who negotiates rights to a piece of customary land, but does so with the intention of acquiring a private title to the land. This form of transaction is most common in urban areas (specifically, Soroti Town and district centres), although it is growing in the peri-urban areas as well. In urban and peri-urban environments, it is not uncommon for buyers – mainly middle class and elites – to speculatively acquire land. Speculative land accumulation is influenced by the rising market values of land in Teso. Those who speculatively acquire land normally intend to construct a house or business on the plot at a later date, or plan to lease it out to the government, NGOs, or other private/public organisations.

While the conversion of customary to privately titled land in rural areas is a transaction that most clans (as well as a segment of indigenous civil society in Teso[6]) try to prevent, clan leaders may be shifting in how they perceive this transaction due to the gradual urbanisation of Teso. For instance, in a distinctly peri-urban case in 2016, one clan whose

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customary rights to land extends to a trading centre in Kapelebyong sub-county approved the right for one of their sub-lineages to privately title their plot. This approval was premised at least in part on the assumption that the sub-county local government will seek to expand the jurisdiction of the trading centre, thus converting adjacent customary land into leasehold tenure. Clan leadership believes a private title on this land will prevent – or at least make it much more difficult – for the local state to claim jurisdiction over the land. While tenure rights will transfer from the clan to the private title holders[7] (who then become fully-fledged private property owners) the clan appears willing to accept the compromise that private rights will at least remain within members of the lineage. Overall, while variation exists regarding the political strength of clans (and the same applies to their respective legal systems, as clan bylaws are not uniform), the overall trend in Teso is unmistakably one of decline in the power of traditional authorities.

The eroding power of customary authorities is partially due to the economic decline of Teso since the collapse of the cotton economy, as men controlled rights to revenue from cotton production; but, the most proximal cause is the concurrence of several violent conflicts from 1979 to the mid-2000s. This included armed cattle raiding by Karamojong[8] pastoralists from Karamoja, who first struck the northern belt of Teso on a large-scale in 1979. While inter-ethnic fighting between Iteso and Karamojong remained concentrated in northern Teso during the precolonial period (Emudong 1973), Karamojong raiders spread out across the entire sub-region during the late 1980s and early 1990s. The intensity and success of the raids were facilitated by the security vacuum that was created through the simultaneous unfolding of a civil war. The key actors were a Teso-based insurgent group, the Ugandan People's Army (UPA), and the National Resistance Movement/Army (NRM/A), an insurgent group from south-western Uganda that captured state power in 1986 (cf. Kasfir 2005). Across the greater Ugandan north, regional-based insurgencies developed to resist the new government (cf. Brett 1995; Kisekka-Ntale 2007). Yet, the NRM, along with the individual who became president at the time, Yoweri Museveni, remain in power as of 2016.

The UPA signed a peace agreement in 1993, but the Karamojong raiders, whom residents accuse of being directly abetted by NRA soldiers (they accuse the latter of stealing cattle as well), had already depleted Teso's cattle stock (Jones 2009). While cattle raiding largely ceased across southern and western Teso by the early 1990s, it continued on a large scale across the northern belt into the mid-2000s. Across the

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northernmost rim of Teso, many residents experienced displacement and resettlement multiple times since the mid-1960s (cf. Kandel 2016). In Teso, overall, hundreds of thousands were displaced into Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps or outside of the sub-region during the peak years of the violence, and many lost their lives. The 2003–4 eight-month infiltration by an insurgent group from further north, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), also caused mass displacement in north-western and central Teso (Buckley-Zistel 2008).

The violent conflicts induced the mass separation of people from their customary land. The mass dispossession of cattle, though not something unprecedented since disease has achieved a similar outcome at different points in history,[9] caused a massive loss in wealth. Yet, the three conflicts, combined with general political stability and economic growth on the national level over the last 25 years, inadvertently triggered fundamental economic transformation in the region. One of the most significant changes is the decreased reliance on cattle as a symbol of political and cultural power. This change has facilitated a decline in gerontocratic political control, as young men seeking dowry are not as dependent on older men who in earlier periods maintained a monopoly on large cattle herds. While not completely analogous, the level of structural change induced by the violent conflicts from 1979 to the mid-2000s (with sub-regional variation) parallels that which emerged as a result of the Baganda and British intervention almost 100 years earlier. Furthermore, and specifically due to cattle dispossession, sub-regional transformation compelled people in Teso to focus more intensely on agricultural and urban economic activities.

In sum, two prominent phases of social differentiation emerged in Teso since the colonial period, and both induced fundamental politico-cultural and economic changes, as well as transformed social relations around land. The first phase can be traced to the early 20th century Baganda and British intervention, which brought about the initial shift from a predominantly pastoral to agro-pastoral and peasant-dominant sub-regional economy, and resulted in the institutionalisation (though sub-regionally differentiated and weakly defined) of a Teso elite and higher levels of political hierarchy. The second phase emerged in the post-conflict period of the early 1990s (although the onset of this came later in northern Teso), which induced a second major economic reorganisation toward an even more agriculturally dominant economy, along with urban and peri-urban economic growth. This second phase also encompasses the decline in the politico-cultural power of customary authorities, as well as patriarchal and gerontocratic economic power.

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Urbanisation has fuelled the increase in migration from the villages to trading centres and towns, and many who lived in IDP camps – which have since become trading centres – have chosen to remain in these areas and not resettle their villages.[10] There is also a growing agricultural wage-labouring group in the rural areas, although many in this segment still retain some (if declining) access to customary land that they can farm. In the urban and peri-urban areas, wage labourers (including those who cycle back and forth between villages as farm workers) and small-scale proprietors (such as motor bike taxi drivers and mobile money service managers) are dominated by youth (ages 16–35). Many of these youth only maintain tenuous ties to their family's customary land in the villages and are disinclined to engage in agricultural work.

Another critical development in the post-1990s period is the emergence of a more clearly defined middle class and sub-regional elite. These groups increasingly engage in petty commodity agricultural and livestock production, although they are still vastly outnumbered by peasant farmers. They are also driving urbanisation by investing in the construction of schools, guesthouses, restaurants and entertainment venues. Many in the middle class are either currently or formerly employed salaried workers (such as local government officials, NGO employees and school teachers) who use their income as a source of start-up or continuing capital to drive their enterprises. Most significantly, along with the elite, they are the group most actively accumulating land across Teso. Along with driving purchases of land in urban areas, they also buy customary land in the villages, especially if someone else's plot lies adjacent or near to their own. The upper echelon of the sub-regional elite – and those who consolidate the largest landholdings – tend to possess direct ties to the local and/or central state, which is dominated by the NRM regime. Overall, the emergence of a more clearly defined sub-regional middle class and elite; the development of petty commodity agriculture; and the growth in segments of the population that are experiencing reduced access to land and/or pursuing rural/urban wage labour opportunities (the best example being youth) have formed the basis for social differentiation in Teso since the early 1990s.

Arguably the greatest expression of rising sub-regional social differentiation is the heightened competition over land, for it serves as the primary site for sociocultural reproduction and the basis of the sub-regional economy. In Teso, rising market values of land, of which the increase in private titling is a manifestation, has served as one of the key interrelated drivers to the growth in land conflicts within the last

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several decades (1). Additional drivers include the following: (2) Social differentiation, which, among other things, is gradually driving the concentration of landholdings in a middle class and elite, and creating a growing surplus labour population that is heavily skewed towards youth. The minimal returns that are generated through agriculture particularly serves as a disincentive for youth (who are the most highly educated generation in Teso) to engage in farming; (3) Minimal increases in agricultural productivity since the colonial period; (4) Ecological dynamics, such as the 2015–16 drought; (5) Population growth,[11] which, along with being vastly skewed to the youth segment,[12] has exerted tremendous pressure on descent groups and lineages with respect to the division of customary plots. While population growth cannot fundamentally explain the rise of land conflicts (in fact, high population densities and land scarcity was even noted as a problem in southern Teso in 1913[13]) it is cited by residents as a key reason for challenges surrounding land. Therefore, the significance of this driver lies at least as much in the perception that it is a problem as the actual physical supply of land, for it heightens feelings of tenure insecurity and raises the competitive stakes over land; (6) Overall displacement and resettlement challenges since the 1990s, the magnitude of which has been greatest across the northern belt. Due to the reliance on non-documented land demarcation mechanisms in customary land tenure systems, previous boundary markers such as acacia trees or grass lines might not have been visible after several decades of displacement. These types of conditions make land encroachment more easy for opportunistic actors; (7) Declining power of traditional authorities, which has resulted in a reduced capacity for clans to adjudicate disputes over customary land. These seven dynamics (though not exclusively constituted) interact to shape the three disputes I discuss below.

A WINDOW INTO SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION IN TESO: AN ANALYSIS OF THREE LAND CONFLICTS

Ethnicity, kin, and class: a land dispute in historic south-western Teso

The following land dispute took place in a village in Bululu sub-county of Kabermaido district in south-western Teso. It principally involves Andrew, who is a middle-aged history teacher at secondary level and part of the expanding Teso middle class, and his matrilineal uncle, an older man who resides in the village. Along with being intra-sub-lineage, the dispute retains an inter-ethnic component, as Andrew's

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patriline is of Bantu descent, while his matriline is Kumam. Additionally, the dispute reveals common contemporary cleavages along class in the sub-region, as well as profound historical shifts from precolonial to contemporary south-western Teso.

Andrew possesses private titles to several small plots of land on the outskirts of Kabermaido Town, although he still seeks to maintain customary rights to 15 acres of land (his estimation) in a village in Bululu, located ~20 kilometres south-west from the town. The northern part of the village is situated close to the shores of Lake Kojweri. Wetlands surround the village from the southern end, effectively rendering it an 'island' – as Andrew puts it – if excessive rains cause the low-raised marram road that traverses the wetland to flood. Andrew mainly resides at his small house near Kabermaido Town, but he usually visits his customary land in the village once a week to 'check up on it' (Andrew 2012 int.).

He has reached agreements with several unrelated families that allow them to live and cultivate his customary land without any kind of formal rental payment. Any payments by the families tend to be impromptu and non-monetised. This was illustrated when one of the families gave Andrew a goat upon our arrival in early October 2012.[14] Andrew probably believes it is more practical to leave his customary land under informal stewardship than to let it lie fallow because it deters neighbours from attempting to cultivate and build permanent structures on the property. Such practices are a common tactic used by those seeking to extend (in the case of adjacent property boundaries) or create claims to customary land. As land values rise in Teso, Andrew is certainly aware of the advantage of holding onto this plot. Nonetheless, it is possible that the families whom Andrew is renting to will at some point claim customary rights of their own to the land, especially as they continue to cultivate it. Rights to customary land in Teso were historically rooted at least in part on productive utilisation, which is why other people in a similar situation as Andrew prefer to not risk informally leasing their land, including to fellow kin.

These challenges notwithstanding, Andrew's maternal uncle, a Kumam, accuses Andrew of illegitimately possessing customary rights to land in the village (Andrew 2012 int.; Uncle 2012 int.). Despite the fact that many people of Bantu descent such as Andrew (including Basoga, Bagwere and Bakenyi) share patrilineal ancestry in south-western Teso that dates back several generations, his uncle argues that he cannot possess a customary claim to land in the village. His uncle has emerged as one of the most vociferous voices for dispossessing all people of paternal Bantu descent from the village, and has threatened

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to kill Andrew if he remains. Exacerbating Andrew's fears is the presence of a cache of weapons in one of the homes in the village, in addition to what he considers to be the easily accessible informal markets in town for purchasing firearms. The uncle's reasoning for why Andrew should not possess customary rights is informed by a selective interpretation of the history underpinning Bululu: Kumam settled first, then Bantu. Lentz (2013: 4) has referred to this distinctively autochthonous reading of history as a 'first-comer narrative', the basis of which is to 'legitimate the origins of property rights' in a given area.

For Andrew, the civil war and Karamojong cattle raids are to blame for Kumam who seek to expropriate land from those who are of Bantu descent. He opines that prior to the violent conflicts, 'Bantu and Kumam coexisted peacefully and intermarried' (Andrew 2012 int.). In his view, anti-Bantu sentiments in the village are simply a displacement of broader discontent with post-conflict social conditions, marked most poignantly by rising competition over land and a rapidly growing population. Like Andrew, other people in Teso commonly blame the violent conflicts for inducing change, including the increase in land conflicts and the decline in respect for elders amongst youth. The impact of cattle dispossession, perceived by residents in both economic and politico-cultural terms, is specifically highlighted.

Irrespective of the violent conflicts, the logic behind the first-comer narrative of Andrew's uncle belies the more symbiotic Nilotic-Bantu relationships that developed during the precolonial period in Teso. For instance, precolonial Teso-Bantu lacustrine trade served as a major source of agricultural and military advancements in the sub-region. Banyoro and Basoga drove the trade in iron hoes in Teso, bartering for Teso ivory, skins, goats and cattle in return (Wright 1942). As Iteso and Kumam possessed no tradition of iron smelting, the trade in iron (also owing to the Labwor in south-western Karamoja) allowed for the shift from wooden to metal spears (Webster 1973). Banyoro and Basoga introduced groundnuts and sweet potato as well, both of which diversified the historical reliance on cereal crops and serve as staple crops in contemporary Teso (Wright 1942). Bakenyi, another Bantu group (though from Kenya and Tanzania), drove the fishing industry, and the lacustrine fishing skills that Iteso and Kumam developed were largely learned from them (Lawrance 1957; Vincent 1982). These various economic and political dynamics explain why south-western Teso contained significant ethnic heterogeneity going into the colonial period, which included Bantu settlement (cf. Vincent 1974). Bantu–Kumam tensions driving the dispute over Andrew's customary land do

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not reflect the major inter-ethnic cleavages in Teso at the dawn of the colonial era either, for they previously cut more across Nilotic lines (specifically Langi and Karamojong) rather than Bantu (Webster 1973; Vincent 1982). The military leaders from south-western Teso who allied with the Baganda specifically requested their military support in order to counter the Langi who bordered them to the north-west (Ingham 1958).

The proximity of Bululu to the lacustrine network also explains why south-western Teso drove the sub-regional economy during the precolonial and early colonial period, something that is radically different in the post-1990s period. Kakungulu, the Baganda military leader who spearheaded the conquest of Teso, set up his first fort nearby on Kaweri island on Lake Kwania in 1896, and opened the sub-region's first colonial administrative office in Bululu in 1907 (Vincent 1971). Gondo Town in Bugondo (which sits on the opposite side of the lake from Bululu) became the sub-regional trading centre and the site of the first cotton ginneries (Vincent 1971). Ultimately, two major infrastructural developments initiated the shift in the economic and political gravity of the sub-region from south-western to central Teso: (1) The construction of permanent road networks linking south-western ports and production centres to Soroti and Kumi; (2) The extension of the Mombasa rail network to Soroti in 1929, which replaced the lacustrine transport system as the key node for sub-regional trade, and connected Soroti to the major economic centres of the Ugandan south (Vincent 1982).

The minimisation of the lacustrine trade network, in conjunction with the outsized significance of Teso cotton production to the colonial government, ensured the decline in relevance of Bantu trade to the sub-regional economy[15] (Vincent 1982). The political marginalisation of Bantu in Teso can also be traced to processes of state formation during the colonial era. As Boone (2014: 96) notes, the institutionalisation of chiefly jurisdictions, or 'ethnic homelands', formed the foundation for colonial customary land tenure systems. As mentioned above, Teso mainly became the homeland of Iteso (Kumam-dominant Kabermaido actually remained part of Lango district until 1930; Lawrance 1957), despite the fact that the precolonial history of the sub-region was typified by highly fluid, ethnically heterogeneous migratory patterns. These early colonial era developments contribute to explaining the marginalisation of Bantu in Bululu and the challenges they face maintaining customary tenure rights.

Another challenge for Andrew is class-based. Many within the growing middle class in Teso since the early 1990s have experienced difficulty

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maintaining customary land rights due to descent group pressure. Since many in the middle class are employed in salaried positions or own businesses, they often rent or own property within the expanding urban areas. This places them at a disadvantage to members of their sublineage who not only permanently reside in the village, but also consider them wealthy and no longer in need of customary land. Middle class people who attempt to maintain rights to their customary plot will often find that a brother has encroached onto their property by extending his cassava garden or by constructing a house for a son and his new wife. As historically egalitarian peoples, Iteso and Kumam have long found difficulty accommodating inequality within their cultural frameworks. It is common for both the rich and the very poor to experience resentment and derision, although the former stoke greater jealousy and suspicion. Oral histories indicate that there have been cases of wealthy people in the precolonial period who separated from their lineage and settled new land in order to alleviate social tensions (Webster 1973). The middle class, therefore, can be just as vulnerable to customary land encroachment as poorer residents in Teso, despite the fact that it is the latter who tend to receive the most attention from researchers in these contexts. Yet, unlike the middle class, the poor normally lack viable livelihood alternatives.

Retroactive Justice? (Re)claiming customary land in Kumi and the deepening pool of wage labourers

The following dispute unfolded in a peri-urban environment in Atutur sub-county in Kumi district, a south-central area of Teso. It principally posed two poor sisters against the sub-county government, and illuminates how class and gender dynamics may converge around land tenure relations. This narrative also speaks to an important component of social differentiation in Teso since the early 1990s, specifically the growth in an agricultural wage labouring group.

Sarah and Betty are poor sisters who live in a village that lies adjacent to a small trading centre in Atutur sub-county in Kumi district. They accuse the sub-county government of expropriating a part of their customary land (less than one acre) in order to facilitate the expansion of the trading centre. The motive behind the expansion is to lease out new plots to small-business owners. According to Sarah and Betty, they have repeatedly confronted the sub-county chairman on this matter. They also accuse him of accepting bribes. In an attempt to pressure

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the local government, the sisters even sought the assistance of a NGO in Soroti Town, which sent personnel to visit and document the case. This move infuriated the sub-county chairperson, who, when I interviewed him, emphasised that the sisters are circumventing the normal legal channels for addressing a land dispute (Okello 2012 int.). Yet, Sarah and Betty contend that they have already lost rights to other parts of their customary land, so they cannot afford to lose access to any more.

The sisters' case is compounded by the fact that elders in the clan are not supporting their claim against the sub-county government. A clan leader who I interviewed contends that Sarah and Betty's grandfather 'donated' the land to the sub-county government over 50 years ago (Ojok 2012 int.). Therefore, the clan has decided that the sisters are making an illegitimate, retroactive claim in their attempt to recoup land once held by their grandfather. According to a resident clan leader, it was common during the colonial and early postcolonial periods for men with a large amount of land to donate pieces of it to the local government (this is something other residents and local government officials in Teso corroborate; Odongo 2012 int.; Opolot 2012 int.). The donation was based on the mutual understanding that the government would construct public facilities such as a market, school or medical clinic. The further removed one was from the subregional urban areas – as is also the case in 2016 – the more sparse public services became. As the population was smaller and land was more abundant (it is estimated that there were 470,000 people and 5·8 acres of available land per head in Teso at the time of independence in 1962; Cleave & Jones 1970) those donating land did not necessarily foresee scarcity as a conflict driver in the future.

Even 50 years ago, however, Kumi was one of, if not the most, densely populated areas of Teso. During the colonial period, it formed the epicentre of Teso cotton production (especially as the south-west went into decline). It lay at the intersection of a major precolonial trade route (mainly in ivory) involving Swahili, Arab and Indian merchants, which began in Karamoja and cut south to Mbale, a town in south-eastern Uganda (Vincent 1982). Kumi actually experienced its first major demographic upswing during 1821–73, which appears to be linked to a shorter migration route that was discovered connecting Karamoja to southern Teso (Webster 1973). At the dawn of the colonial era, the average size of landholding was the smallest in southern Teso at 14 acres, a marked difference from the 40 acres that the average family possessed in the north (Vincent 1982). Furthermore, since the precolonial period, Kumi has remained an important destination for people from

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northern Teso seeking to escape Karamojong cattle raiders, most especially during the 1980s to mid-2000s. These historical developments contribute to explaining why land conflicts in southern Teso tend to be driven more by scarcity issues than those in the north, where disputes (though also driven by population pressure) are more likely to be embedded in complex challenges surrounding resettlement in the post-conflict period (cf. Kandel 2016).[16]

High population densities and land fragmentation are at their greatest in Kumi in the 2010s, something to which Sarah and Betty can both attest. However, unlike Andrew in Kabermaido, whose income from teaching mitigates the negative effects of his land dispute, the sisters rely on peasant agriculture and wages they earn from working on neighbours' farms. Sarah and Betty are part of the deepening pool of wage labourers (both agricultural and off-farm) in Teso. While residents across all ages and ethnic groups perform agricultural wage labour, there are noticeable hiring patterns. For instance, Simon, a petty commodity farmer in Toroma in northern Teso, draws mainly on Iteso youth and female labour, although remarks that males are needed for some of the more physically demanding tasks such as pruning orange trees (Simon 2015 int.). A counterpart of his in Serere in south-western Teso, Francis, prefers hiring female Karamojong youth (Francis 2015a int.). The employment of Karamojong youth – many of whom have attempted to escape the violence in Karamoja and/or lack alternative livelihood opportunities – is common in Teso, and Francis allows them to live on his property without charge. For Francis, the young Karamojong women possess a better work ethic and 'stronger blood' than Iteso youth, whom he chastises for being 'too proud' nowadays to work hard (Francis 2015b int.).

While performing work on someone else's farm is not a new development in Teso, contemporary labour agreements are less personalised than in earlier times. In the past, farm labourers were more likely to be other clan members (although it remains the norm for farmers to first seek labourers from within their village), and a locally fermented millet-based brew – which was provided for by the owner and consumed communally after working – served as both compensation and personalised affirmation of clan ties (Vincent 1982). In contemporary Teso, petty-commodity farmers will contract workers for tasks ranging from planting, weeding, spraying of pesticides, to harvesting. While Vincent (1982) describes the development of a large wage-labouring group in Teso during the early colonial period, she also makes it clear that the work (such as clearing out swamps, building roads, or cultivating cotton) was compulsory. This fundamentally contrasts with the

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contemporary labour market, as it is premised on voluntary (non-coerced) agreements.

However, the growing number of wage labourers (both rural and urban) in Teso form a highly unstable group, for the work is periodic and the compensation minimal. The standard daily wage for agricultural labour is Ush 2000–3000 (USD 0·60–90[17]), although farmers may also compensate workers on a piece rate basis for tasks such as the weeding and clearing of gardens. If possible, many will also cultivate their own customary held plots like Sarah and Betty, and attempt to derive income from other means as well. Furthermore, it is not clear at this point whether the petty-commodity farms will outcompete peasant farms and bring about a major shift in agrarian political economic structures. Currently, the value of family labour still poses a challenge, and one petty commodity farmer, who is also a sub-regional honey trader, considers it a competitive advantage for peasants. Ultimately, the technological and productive advantages that the burgeoning petty-commodity farmers in Teso benefit from are still slight.

Along with basic livelihood challenges, Sarah and Betty are also at a disadvantage due to patriarchal elements within customary land tenure systems in Teso. While Lawrance (1957) contends that women were allowed to act as co-guardians of customary land (including both receiving and bequeathing), these practices vary across clans and are not always followed. This problem is not isolated to traditional authorities either. For instance, the 1998 Ugandan Land Act stipulates protections of secondary and tertiary rights holders of customary land, but the enforcement of this clause – as others have highlighted (Tripp 2004; Rugadya *et al.* 2010) – is lacking in practice. Ultimately, increasing competition over land is driving many to (re)claim land that might be owned or leased out by the government. It is also driving a large number of residents who are experiencing tenure insecurity to migrate to the border between Teso and Karamoja in search of cultivation rights to land.

Customary rights? A wrangle in the north and the hazy Teso–Karamoja internal border

The main actors involved in this land conflict in northern Teso were residents of Kapelebyong sub-county in Amuria district, members of Kapelebyong sub-county local government, the Amuria district government, the central state, and a Kapelebyong MP. This dispute provides a window for viewing several social phenomena that impact land

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tenure, including the legacy of precolonial migration patterns, historical ethnoregional tensions, and challenges to restructuring land tenure relations in a post-conflict context. It also demonstrates how two local state elites (specifically, a MP and a former district chairperson) possess significant political power in Teso.

In 2012, the central government proposed using a 300 acre piece of land – locally known as Adukut – in Kapelebyong sub-county in northern Amuria for the construction of a cattle breeding centre and a military barracks. The initiative was supported by key members of the Amuria local state, including the Kapelebyong MP, the Kapelebyong sub-county chairperson and chief, and Amuria district government. Amuria district classified the 300 acres as a free land, contending it had historically never been permanently settled and that it was formally part of a game reserve (*Daily Monitor* 4.2.2013). The Kapelebyong sub-county chairperson and chief gave two justifications for the project: (1) It will facilitate economic development in Amuria, which, along with Katakwi district to its east, bore the brunt of Karamojong cattle raiding; (2) The barracks will enhance security along the border and deter cattle raiders from attacking Amuria (Okula 2012 int.; Obaikol 2012 int.).

A coalition of local civil society actors (based in both Amuria and Soroti Town) and residents opposed the project at Adukut (cf. *Daily Monitor* 18.2.2013). They were led by former Amuria district chairperson, Julius Ocen, who had lost his reelection bid in 2011 to Francis Oluma.[18] The opposition accused Kapelebyong MP (2011–16), Peter Eriaku, of acquiring a private title to the land through illegal means. Adukut became identified as Eriaku's project, and they believed the MP was simply seeking to make money by leasing the land back to the central government and UPDF. The opposition also rejected the public rationale for the project. They countered that the military barracks was no longer needed along the Amuria-Karamoja border due to the vastly improved relations between Iteso and Karamojong. In a counterproposal, a group of women activists within the opposition suggested that the 300 acres be divided up into 10-acre plots and allocated to widows who lost husbands during the violent conflicts (Grace 2012 int.; Monica 2012 int.). The opposition also rejected the claim that the land was 'vacant' or historically part of a game reserve, claiming that the people who possessed customary rights to it had simply not resettled.

The conflict over Adukut differs in many ways from the land disputes involving Andrew and the Atutur sisters, particularly with regard to scale

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and actors. In contrast to Bululu and Atutur, the northernmost stretches of Amuria – such as Kapelebyong – were the last permanently settled areas in Teso (Vincent 1982). For example, Stephen, whose family also maintains customary land further south in Orungo sub-county in Amuria district, states that in the 1950s his paternal uncle pioneered settlement in Kapelebyong in order to find better grazing grounds for his large herd of cattle (2015 int.). Prior to the 1950s, northern Amuria remained a vast hunting grounds (Vincent 1982). In fact, in the 1930s a government committee proposed relocating families from the more densely populated areas of southern Teso to the unsettled areas along the border (Lawrance 1957). While the plan failed to come to fruition, people have long voluntarily migrated to Amuria in search of open land. However, many of those who settled areas closest to Karamoja were very quickly displaced in the 1950s by Karamojong cattle raiders.

At the heart of this issue is the decades-long local state territorial conflict over the actual location of the Teso-Karamoja border (Cf. Kandel Forthcoming; see Figure 1). The internal border had historically remained unsettled, although it prominently served as a staging ground for Karamojong cattle raiders from 1979 to the mid-2000s. There is evidence of inter-ethnic conflict over resources along the border tracing back to the precolonial period (Knighton 2005). Over the years, district governments in Teso and Karamoja have accused one another of jurisdictional encroachment, and colonial and postcolonial governments have complicated the territorial conflict by alienating large sections of land along the border for the Bokora Wildlife Reserve and Pian-Upe Game Reserves (Rugadya *et al.* 2010). These reserves overlap a section of land known by residents as the 'green belt' due to its fertility relative to surrounding areas, making it highly desirable pastoral and agricultural land. Given Adukut's location, it is possible that the 300 acres of land was also historically a site of competition between Iteso and Karamojong. Thus, it is unclear whether people in Teso once possessed customary rights to the land as the opposition claims.

The conflict over Adukut is also embedded in post-conflict dynamics that are specific to northern Teso, particularly with respect to displacement and resettlement issues. In northern Amuria many people were separated from their customary land for several decades. In the post-conflict period, there have been numerous accusations that regional elites such as Eriaku have dubiously acquired private titles to land in northern Teso. However, in general, residents across Teso view any local or central state land acquisitions with extreme suspicion, even if the

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justification is economic development for the sub-region. For example, a proposed rice plantation and irrigation scheme in Malera sub-county in Bukedea district triggered stiff local resistance (cf. Kandel 2015). In 2015 protests erupted over the government's acquisition of 400 acres of land for the construction of Soroti University near Soroti Town (*Daily Monitor* 8.7.2015).

As of 2016, it appears that the construction of the military barracks and cattle breeding centre will not proceed, for, in a turn of events, Ocen defeated Eriaku in the 2016 election for Kapelebyong MP. As a member of the Parliamentary Committee on Physical Infrastructure, Ocen has indicated to his constituency that the Adukut project will not be implemented. The 300 acres is now settled by a mix of Iteso and Karamojong who are cultivating the land.

CONCLUSION

The story of social change in Teso is one of contestation, opportunism, resilience, uneven development, and countervailing forces. This paper has emphasised the importance of analysing land tenure within an historically contextualised political economy framework, an approach that has been diminished in recent times with the conceptual prioritisation of land governance. Indeed, one of the broad historical patterns revealed in this paper pertains to how fundamental shifts in productive relations (from predominantly pastoral, to agro-pastoral and peasant, to agrarian and urbanising) closely mirror changes in social relations to land. Each of the three land conflicts under analysis in this paper – though varying in some respects to underlying dynamics – capture a particular moment within this longer history. All three land disputes also speak to important changes in the class structure of Teso since the early 1990s, which I have argued constitutes the most prominent period of sub-regional social differentiation since the early 20th century. This includes advantages for the expanding middle class; reproduction challenges for the deepening pool of agrarian, peri-urban and urban wage labourers, who are also struggling to maintain customary rights to land; and elite land accumulation.

Yet, it should also be evident from this paper that there are sub-regional differences with regards to levels of economic development – though the whole sub-region felt the impact of cattle dispossession – and that these patterns tend to demonstrate continuity with those of the precolonial and colonial periods. This is seen especially in how northern Teso has remained more undeveloped and unstable in comparison to the south

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and south-west, something owing to geography (specifically its proximity to Karamoja and its distance from the Kyoga lacustrine network) and ecology (its soils are less fertile). In the case of Adukut, it lies in the vicinity of or within the disputed Teso-Karamoja internal border, thus rendering it an emblem of historic communal tensions that have tended to map along ethnic lines (cf. Kandel Forthcoming).

Critically, social transformations in Teso have not unfolded linearly. Since the rise of the Amin regime in 1971 (and most especially after its collapse in 1979) there have been major reversals in economic change in Teso. In contemporary Teso, the use of an oxen plough in agriculture – something described as 'near universal' in the mid 20th century (Parsons 1970: 130) – is less common due to the fact that the cattle supply has never recovered. However, the largest farmers in the sub-region might own tractors, and there is a growing tractor-for-hire business. Some of the elite petty commodity farmers – and specifically those in possession of a tractor – are keenly eyeing the historically unsettled Teso-Karamoja border belt as a site for agricultural investment.

Joan Vincent (1982) describes the introduction of the oxen plough in Teso in the early 1900s as a driver of social differentiation, for it sharpened the gender division of labour and accelerated individualised ownership patterns of land. Similarly, the gradual growth in mechanised agriculture might reflect an expansion of petty commodity agrarian producers in the 21st century, which perhaps might even facilitate a transition into capitalist agriculture. However, the burgeoning group of petty commodity farmers in Teso also faces major limitations. This includes weak credit and market access, low rates of agricultural productivity, poor regional infrastructure, the reliance on a wage labouring group that maintains a capacity for social reproduction through other means (namely farming their own customary land), and peasant producers who can still compete with them because of the value of family labour. One of the reasons why most elites invest heavily in the urban service sector is that they lack the capacity to profitably expand their agricultural businesses. The struggle by peasant farmers to maintain rights to customary land – as Sarah and Betty demonstrate best – is also a struggle over maintaining the capacity to socially reproduce without exclusively relying on selling one's labour.

Vincent also enumerates limitations in her account of social differentiation in Teso in the early 20th century. In her view, despite the fundamental restructuring of productive relations – of which compulsory cotton cultivation was a key component – one could only speak of a

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'nascent capitalism' developing (Vincent 1982: 230). She also describes a mass return to 'subsistence farming' during the Amin era, in which agricultural production for the market drastically dropped (Vincent 1982: 11). A similar lesson in historical indeterminacy can be learned from the violent conflicts from 1979 to the mid-2000s, for a new chain of events could arrest and reverse current socioeconomic change in Teso. One can partially understand Andrew's reticence to relinquish his customary land as an acknowledgement that nothing is certain and therefore no asset should be carelessly forfeited.

However, there are fundamental differences between the two periods, one of which pertains to relations to land. In contrast to the early 20th century, social differentiation in the 21st has crystallised around competition over land. This is not to say that competition and conflict over land were absent in the earlier period, but rather that this dynamic did not capture the essence of the transformative period. Instead, social differentiation in the 20th century crystallised around compulsory labour. Due to lower population densities, the government and indigenous chiefs faced the challenge of deploying labour when land was still abundant and intra-sub-regional migration therefore easier. In contrast, the early 21st century is typified by a surplus labour supply that is skewed heavily towards youth, making one of the new political challenges for Teso a distinctly urban one.

NOTES

1. The eight districts are Kabermaido, Serere, Soroti, Ngora, Kumi, Bukedea, Amuria and Katakwi. However, Parliament approved the creation of Kapelebyong district (currently a subcounty), effective in 2018 (*Daily Monitor* 30.8.2015).

2. I have withheld identifiers such as names and have changed the locations of specific interviews in order to honour anonymity requests by certain research participants.

3. This number was deduced by adding up the populations of each district in Teso (see above) from the 2014 Ugandan Census (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2016: Table A1 of Appendices, p. 50).

4. As indicated, clans are not uniform and this is also the case with respect to leadership. Some clans now appoint a chairman, although traditionally clan leadership revolved around a small group of adult men who were considered to embody good leadership characteristics.

5. I attended a land dispute resolution in November 2015 in Serere district. I travelled with the magistrate-court appointed neutral arbiter (a lawyer from Soroti Town) and the lawyer (from a legal advocacy NGO in Soroti Town) of the plaintiff in the case, and observed the resolution proceedings. In attempt to resolve the dispute (which was successful), the neutral arbiter mainly relied on listening to testimonies of village residents at the site of the land conflict.

6. There are members of local NGOs who are opposed to private titling and want village land to remain under customary tenure. An organisation that is most vocal in their opposition is the Iteso Cultural Union (ICHU), an advocacy group for maintaining what they consider traditional Iteso politico-cultural practices.

7. In this specific case, it is likely that multiple members of the descent group will be listed as right holders on the private title, an act permitted by District Land Boards.

8. I use this term as a general referent for peoples from Karamoja; it is not meant to be ethnically specific.

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9. One of the best known is the 1894–6 rinderpest epidemic, which decimated the cattle supply in Teso and Karamoja. Cf. Vincent 1982.

10. Whyte *et al.* (2014) analyse a similar development in post-conflict Acholi region.

11. The 2014 Ugandan Census estimates that there are 34.6 million people in Uganda, an increase of 10.4 million people from 2002 (Ugandan Bureau of Statistics 2016).

12. The 2014 Ugandan Census indicates that over 75% of the population is under 30 years of age. Approximately 48% is under 15 years or age (Ugandan Bureau of Statistics 2016).

13. Lawrance (1957: 241) excerpts a court judgment that describes land in Ngora as 'very scarce'.

14. It is possible that this payment was also influenced by my own presence. As a white person – or *muzungu* – it might have been assumed that I was a friend of Andrew's who was providing him with money. Therefore, they would be more inclined to want to endear themselves to him in hope that they might also receive any money I was giving him.

15. The construction of rail line and roads in East Africa during the early colonial period (specifically routes between Mombasa and Uganda) allowed for the international import of commodities such as iron, which also undermined local commodity production (Chretien 2003).

16. It is estimated that there are 238 people per square kilometre in Kumi (the highest in the region) versus 105 in Amuria and 72 in Katakwi (the lowest) (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2016).

17. This number is based on Google's exchange rate estimation on 12 April 2016.

18. Ocen was a member of the UPC (although he successfully ran for MP as an independent in 2016), whereas Oluma was NRM. Many in Amuria believed that the NRM tampered with the elections because they wanted Ocen out of office (although I cannot corroborate this).

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