

## Preface

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Perhaps no other country in the world is as enmeshed in fear as is Burundi. The torment and latent terror in Burundian psychologies are the wellsprings of ethnic violence in that country. Eminent scholars of the region have pointed out how the genocide of 1972 has become the touchstone for all politically-inspired violence since that time. Burundi's ethnic majority, the Hutu, are constantly afraid that the ethnic Tutsi-dominated army will descend upon them as they did in 1972. The country's ruling Tutsi minority is equally fearful of Hutu revenge.

This book is about that fear, particularly its imprint on the lives of second generation Burundi refugees whose experience of genocide has been indirect: they were either infants when their parents fled the country, and do not recall the details of the tragedy, or they were born in refugee settlements in Tanzania. Either way, these youths have heard about the 1972 tragedy from their elders, over and over and in scorching detail.

This book is also about a particular subset of the second refugee generation: young men who are urban refugees living clandestinely in Dar es Salaam, the capital of their country of exile, Tanzania. In addition to examining the impact of fear in their lives, the following story details how they constructed city lives in accordance to a coping strategy they called *kujificha*, the Swahili verb for "to hide oneself."

The tension between the practicalities of *kujificha* and the subtle penetration of *kuogopa* (Swahili for "to fear") played out differently in the earlier rendition of this book, my dissertation. The first dissertation draft, which I shared with my wife, and my primary dissertation advisor, Professor Allan Hoben of Boston University, was entitled "Fear in Bongoland." Both my wife and my advisor noticed

a similar orientation: I was ascribing fear to lives that did not seem to be in particular or acute jeopardy. On the surface, this was true: though the refugees talked incessantly about fear in private, they were never harassed, threatened, beaten, or arrested. Indeed, the refugees lived and worked in tailoring shops in a way that seemed fairly straightforward, nondescript, and safe. What, then, had led me to highlight fear in the telling of their stories?

My arguments in response to this question proved a hard sell, and I ultimately decided to abandon an in-depth exploration of *kuogopa* and shift my focus to the mechanics of *kujificha*. The dissertation became “Hiding in Bongoland” (1994). I got my degree and moved along. Two years later, with the encouragement of Professor Thomas Barfield (also of Boston University), I decided to revisit my dissertation and see if it would turn into a book. I immediately realized that task would lead to a thorough revision of the manuscript. So I returned to my data. With a fresh eye on my fieldwork experience, I considered the issue of fear.

For the final months of field research in Dar es Salaam, I lived with my wife and son in a house on a spit of Dar es Salaam shoreline between the houses of Jane Goodall and Julius Nyerere. The President of the country at the time, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, was building a new house across our road. A small neighborhood of family houses lived between our two more substantial ones.

Even though Dr. Goodall and the *Mwalimu* (Teacher), ex-President Nyerere, were scarcely ever present in their particular houses (Dr. Goodall traveled constantly and Mr. Nyerere resided in his primary residence upcountry), and President Mwinyi only occasionally visited to inspect the progress on his new house, the tangle of Tanzanian officialdom in which we lived was strange—especially for me, a researcher working with refugees in hiding. But as I was a graduate student with a family on limited funds, facing a housing market for expatriates that typically required two thousand U.S. dollars a month to rent a house or apartment, paid for in advance as a two-year lump sum, we had been relying on house sitting arrangements. When I was hit with a bad case of hepatitis while facing the end of our last viable house sit, my wife looked for a feasible living arrangement for our family. She was eventually hired by Jane Goodall. It was a straightforward *quid pro quo*: in exchange for running the Jane Goodall Institute in Tanzania, my wife received a house for our family to live in.

Though the arrangement worked out for all involved, the circumstances of my own research made the situation particularly

challenging. As I proceeded in my field research, I was repeatedly told that surveillance on me was continuing. The information, I was told by people in and out of the government, was pretty innocuous—getting paid for reporting information about any number of expatriate activities to state or party bureaucrats is one of a multitude of ways that Tanzanians made ends meet—but my file was growing. Just before I left the country, in fact, one man told me he'd seen my file and it had gotten so large that it no longer fit in the filing cabinet where it once resided but now lay atop it. Knowing that I was being watched in town, I had created, and repeatedly revised, an array of diversions to deflect attention from my work. And though my efforts ultimately succeeded—my relations with government officials were always friendly (if distant) and no harm ever came to the refugees I was involved with—the work itself was exceedingly tense. The tension was also exacerbated by the nature of the data I was receiving about genocidal horrors, ever present fears, and elemental distrust between refugees.

In the time that has passed between completing my dissertation and finishing this book, I conducted field research with Rwandans and Burundians in Central Africa several times. I also took time to reexamine the field data for this book and reflect on the context of my fieldwork in Dar es Salaam. At home on the beach, I had lived in a Bermuda Triangle of officialdom, while in the field I had worked in another universe, marginal and tenuous. The dissonance was intense. I came to realize how the refugees' fear had, for a time, made an imprint on my perceptions as well. I was experiencing what a psychologist friend told me is known as vicarious traumatization.

Be that as it may, my time away from the field research, while keeping involved with Central Africans and their concerns, allowed me to analyze the field data with more precision. It has enabled me to develop the concept of cultural fear, which will be considered in detail in this book, and see the refugees' fears, and the context of those fears, more clearly.

It is in this way that this book has returned to its original title, *Fear in Bongoland*.