THE GACACA COURTS,
POST-GENOCIDE JUSTICE AND
RECONCILIATION IN RWANDA

Since 2001, the gacaca community courts have been the centrepiece of Rwanda's justice and reconciliation programme. Nearly every adult Rwandan has participated in the trials, principally by providing eyewitness testimony concerning genocide crimes. Lawyers are banned from any official involvement, an issue that has generated sustained criticism from human-rights organisations and international scepticism regarding gacaca's efficacy.

Drawing on more than seven years of fieldwork in Rwanda and nearly 500 interviews with participants in trials, this in-depth ethnographic investigation of a complex transitional justice institution explores the ways in which Rwandans interpret gacaca. Its conclusions provide indispensable insight into post-genocide justice and reconciliation, as well as the population's views on the future of Rwanda itself.

PHIL CLARK is a research fellow in courts and public policy at the Centre for Socio-Legal Studies, University of Oxford, and a convenor for Oxford Transitional Justice Research. He has used his experience and knowledge of conflict issues in Africa and elsewhere to provide policy advice to a wide range of government and non-government actors.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is the result of nine years of research, beginning as a doctoral thesis at the University of Oxford between 2001 and 2005 and continuing as a postdoctoral project until 2010. It therefore draws on the support and advice of more people than can be reasonably thanked here.

I am deeply indebted to my DPhil supervisors, Professor Henry Shue and Professor David M. Anderson, for their engagement with this project over many years and their constant encouragement and insight.

Since 2001, I have received generous financial and other assistance from a range of institutions, including the Rhodes Trust, Balliol College, Brasenose College, the Department of Politics and International Relations, the Foundation for Law, Justice and Society, the Centre for Socio-Legal Studies and the Faculty of Law at the University of Oxford, the Open Society Justice Initiative in New York, and the Transitional Justice Institute at the University of Ulster. These institutions enabled the fieldwork and the space to think and write that made this book possible.

My family has provided constant love and humour throughout this project, especially the Clark clan (Mum, Dad, Dan, Dave and Steve) in Adelaide and Darwin, Lis and Norm in Adelaide and Belfast, and John and Sandi in Melbourne.

I have benefited enormously from discussions about Rwanda with Zachary Kaufman, SolomonNsabiyera, Maria Warren, Levi Ochieng, Mark Drumb, Lars Waldorf, Mauro De Lorenzo, Bruno Versailles and Harry Verhoeven, whose comments and suggestions have constantly sharpened my thinking. Also vital in this regard has been the feedback from lectures and seminars that I delivered at the Kigali Institute of Science and Technology, the Kigali Institute of Health, the National Service of Gacaca Jurisdictions, and the Rotary Club of Kigali-Virunga.

In Oxford and Belfast, an incredible group of friends and colleagues has always taken a keen interest in my research. I am particularly grateful to Clinton Free, Len Epp, Niall Maclean, John and Jo Pickhaver, Ian Macauslan, Anamitra Deb, Jan Strugnell, Chloe Lamb, Nick Gallus,
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS


Some very special characters outside of Oxford have supported me throughout the writing of this book, particularly Kym, Dianne, Liz and Amanda Boxall, Bill and Sue Bonney, Robyn George, Phil Gregory, Mark Bahlin, Matt Skopal, Brett Stanford, Josh Couts, Paul Eagleton, Jenny Loken and Nate Keidel.

Finally, for her ceaseless love, care, humour, inspiration and passionate insight into Rwanda, I can't give enough thanks to Nikki. I am sure we have many more gloriously winding Great Lakes roads ahead of us.
ABBREVIATIONS

AI  Amnesty International
ASF  Avocats Sans Frontières
BBC  British Broadcasting Corporation
CNDH  National Human Rights Commission
CTV  Canada Television
DCHR  Danish Centre for Human Rights
DDR  Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DRC  Democratic Republic of Congo
EU  European Union
FAR  Forces Armées Rwandaises
FDLR  Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda
FRELIMO  Frente de Libertação de Moçambique
GSF  Genocide Survivors’ Fund
HRW  Human Rights Watch
ICC  International Criminal Court
ICG  International Crisis Group
ICTR  International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
ICTY  International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
IRDP  Institut de Recherche et de Dialogue pour la Paix
IRIN  Integrated Regional Information Networks
LC  Local council
LIPRODHOR  Ligue Rwandaise pour la Promotion et la Défense des Droits de l’Homme
LRA  Lord’s Resistance Army
MDR  Mouvement Démocratique Républicain
MINIJUST  Ministry of Justice
MINISANTE  Ministry of Health
MINITER  Ministry of the Interior
MRND  Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NSGJ  National Service of Gacaca Jurisdictions
NGO  Non-Governmental Organisation
NHCHR  Norwegian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights
NPI  Newark Park Initiative
NRM  National Resistance Movement
NURC  National Unity and Reconciliation Commission
OAU  Organisation of African Unity
PARMEHUTU  Parti du Mouvement de l'Emancipation des Bahutu
PFR  Prison Fellowship Rwanda
PRI  Penal Reform International
RC  Resistance council
RCD  Rally for Congolese Democracy
RPF  Rwandan Patriotic Front
RTLM  Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines
TIG  Travaux d'Intérêts Généraux
TRC  Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UPC  Union de Patriotes Congolais
UN  United Nations
UNAMIR  United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda
UNESCO  United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR  United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOMUR  United Nations Observer Mission Uganda-Rwanda
UK  United Kingdom
US  United States
USAID  United States Agency for International Development
Rwanda.