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# Pearl of Africa: Condemnation and Celebration in Uganda

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Pearl of Africa:  
Condemnation and Celebration in Uganda

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April 24, 2017

Submitted to the Faculty of Ursinus College in fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in the  
Department of History

Approved by:  
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## **Abstract**

This research examines how British colonialism affected the modern state of Uganda. By analyzing both intentions and consequences, it is argued that the phenomenon has attributes to be condemned and those to be celebrated. Focusing on issues of gender, education, and language, it provides an introductory survey of the multifaceted implications of the colonial era. Upon critical analysis, it becomes clear that the dominant narrative does not reflect the proper level of nuance, meaning that the average observer sees the colonial era as something wholly good or completely bad. Finally, this project seeks to question the mental framework used to judge progress and illuminate possibilities in the modern world.

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## Prologue

During the summer of 2016, I traveled to Uganda in order to perform first-hand research on the effects colonialism had on the country's education system as a part of a Summer Fellowship at Ursinus College. I spent one of my final days at Three R's Secondary School in Kasokoso, Uganda. There, I interviewed three teachers – Fredrick Mwesigye, Alphonse Tomas Olupot, and Janssen Mukhozi – about their experiences working in Ugandan schools. One of my questions concerned the differing experiences of boys and girls in the education system; I received an unexpected answer. The men began lamenting the increased emphasis placed on educating female students and blamed these policies for the increased crime rates in the capital of Kampala: without school, the boys were resorting to violent activities for survival and entertainment. Though grateful for the honesty, I had not expected anyone in Uganda to say to me, a white, Irish-American, college-educated woman, that there should not be such an emphasis on female education. Likely sensing my discomfort, my friend William Mukisa stepped in. Eventually, he teased out of the men the story that I had been expecting: a young woman in Secondary 1 (approximately 13 or 14 years old) who had become pregnant and whose family had married her off before the school officials could intervene on her behalf. Having regained my composure, we continued with the interview and nothing more was said about crime rates and female education.<sup>1</sup>

Upon returning to the guest house, I decided to clear my head by checking up on my friends via Facebook. My trip just so happened to coincide with the police shooting of Philando Castile. I was instantly bombarded with cries of "Black Lives Matter!" and "Blue Lives Matter!"

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<sup>1</sup> Participant Observation, 3R's Secondary School (Kasokoso, Uganda), July 8, 2016.

interspersed with the oddly comforting post about PokemonGo. After spending a few minutes scrolling, I spotted a small cartoon depicting two stick figures standing before a burning house (Figure 1). One of the figures was spraying water from a hose onto its own house, not the one aflame. The second character argues with the first: should we not focus on saving the people trapped inside the burning house? Why waste time and resources where the fire as not yet spread? We need to change our priorities! This is, of course, an analogy for police brutality and the Black Lives Matter Movement: although excessive force is a problem across the board, resources need to be allocated to those in the most present danger, i.e. African Americans and other minorities.

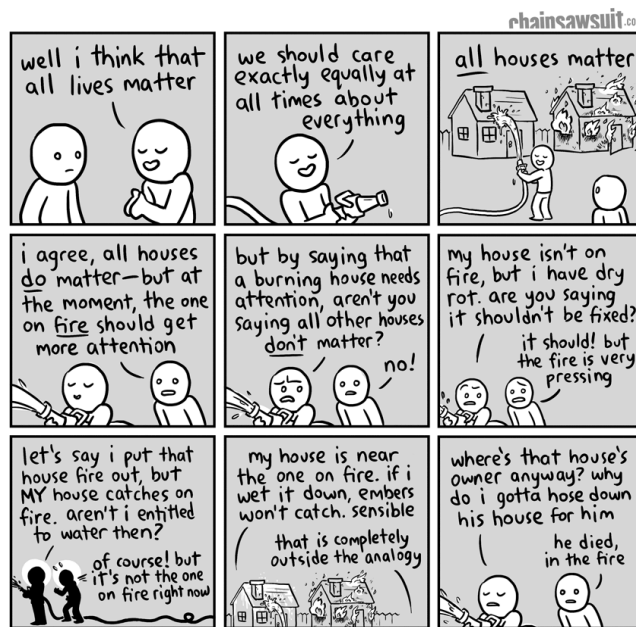


Figure 1 - <http://chainsawsuit.com/comic/archive/2016/07/07/all-houses-matter-the-extended-cut/>

Over dinner, I realized that this perfectly explained what the teachers had been telling me. I recalled how earlier in my trip, we got stuck behind a lumbering firetruck traveling on a dirt road up a large hill - this was the first and only time I have seen a firetruck in the country. It

was leaking, meaning water was being wasted and not reaching its intended recipients. Imagine that rather than one house being on fire, an entire neighborhood is. There is a limited amount of water with which to battle the encroaching flames and for various reasons, not all the water is reaching its intended destination.

Uganda is on fire. In part due to colonialism and its remnants, the country has many fires to put out and only a limited amount of resources to do so. Powerful individuals must make decisions as to where the money goes: building roads, funding schools, subsidizing agriculture, encouraging industrialization, creating a fire department. All these problems must be addressed. Even focusing on the micro-level has its challenges: where does education funding go? Primary school, secondary school, higher education? Does one fund a library at this school or a well at another? Will these teachers continue to hold class under a tree, or do they get a roof to shelter their students from the weather? Does one prioritize the education of female students when the system is unable to adequately prepare students of any gender? How does one justify these decisions?

Compared to underdeveloped countries like Uganda, the United States is able to answer many of these questions easily. There is no question that class will be held inside, unless it is a particularly sunny day. Most schools in this country provides its students access to safe drinking water and a collection of books. When society has an adequate number of doctors, engineers, and scientists, it can focus its attention on how women and minorities are disproportionately underrepresented in STEM fields. This is not to say that the United States education system is without its flaws; there are many and they are serious. But the country currently has fewer fires to put out.



This one cartoon and these three men drastically altered how I approached this project. I attempted to temper my criticism and think more optimistically about the intentions of those I was researching; we are all trying our best to survive within a given situation. Though actions and beliefs may be questionable, examining motivations is crucial; understanding how we got here does not condone where we are at. Furthermore, I tried to shed my own Western-centric biases that would have otherwise clouded my judgment. What works in America may not work in Uganda and vice versa, although there is plenty to be learned by *both* parties through each other's *successes and failures*. Determining a path to take from where history has deposited us is the final goal of the research. To do this, it is important to not only to read the scholarship and analyze the data, but also to listen intently to first-hand encounters. Sometimes it can be difficult to translate experiences across cultural barriers, but the stories of these individuals are often the most ignored. When one's voice is amplified by a privileged standing in society, it becomes a duty to advocate for the voiceless and tell their stories.

## Chapter 1 - Introduction

When the continent of Europe began to expand its relationship with Africa, the actors in this theatre did so for a number of reasons. While they certainly allowed their greed and desire for monopolies of raw materials to drive them into Africa, they also believed this to be a noble endeavor: missionaries spread Christianity and salvation across the continent, attempted to provide a higher quality of life to the indigenous people, and sought to destroy the Arab slave trade that still flourished in Eastern Africa. While reading between the lines is important, it is just as crucial to entertain the possibility that colonizers are being truthful and to take their words at face value. Across the continent, Europeans did believe that they had a duty as civilized and Christian nations to guide uncultured and pagan people into a new era of development. At stake was their own self-conception of superiority and advancement. The degree to which each country or individual held this belief and put it into practice is debatable, but it is clear that the premise at least was widely accepted.

There are, of course, economic reasons for why Europe acted as it did. Contemporaries often painted themselves as reluctant colonizers, compelled to take on this burden because their continental rivals were circling the defenseless natives; they could not allow their neighbors to corrupt the indigenous people or exploit the generous raw materials available in these lands.<sup>2</sup> Although previously confining their trade activities to the Western coast following the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, colonizers sought to extend their influence into the hinterlands, allowing themselves direct access to raw materials previously only available through trade with African intermediaries. Europeans also wanted to secure markets for their own manufactured

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<sup>2</sup> Baron Frederick John Dealtry Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, rev. ed. (1922; repr., Miami: HardPress Publishing, 2013), 10-12.

products.<sup>3</sup> Their economic incentives were therefore multi-faceted: taking advantage of the generous raw materials available on the continent would allow for increased production and growth within their own countries while fulfilling a moral duty to distribute the pleasures of civilization to barbarian people. European countries began this process of partition at the Berlin Conference where representatives outlined the rules they would follow in interactions with each other and, to a lesser extent, with natives on the continent of Africa.<sup>4</sup>

One of the many ways that colonists attempted to improve the lives of the indigenous population was through education, though their intentions varied. The French believed that by educating the African, he could become a “black Frenchman” and assimilate himself into French society.<sup>5</sup> This suggests that Africans could learn to be civilized and were not biologically inferior to the European, a notion that belays how modern observers perceive the past: subordination was temporary rather than eternal. However, the concept never fully came to fruition as it competed with other, racially-charged ideas surrounding intelligence. Sir Francis Galton, cousin to Charles Darwin and the father of modern statistics, utilized correlation and regression data to argue “that parents passed on hereditary traits like intelligence that environment could not alter.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, no amount of exposure to another culture could alter a person’s natural state.

By contrast, the British utilized education to create a hierarchy amongst Africans while rewarding the loyalties of those traditionally in power. Britain's goal was to create an educated

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<sup>3</sup> Sean Stillwell, “The Imposition of Colonial Rule,” in *Africa, Volume 3. Colonial Africa, 1885-1939*, edited by Toyin Falola (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2001), 5.

<sup>4</sup> “General Act of the Berlin Conference (1885),” in *Colonial Rule in Africa: Readings from Primary Sources*, edited by Bruce Fetter (Madison: The University of Madison Press, 1979), 35-37.

<sup>5</sup> Andrew E. Barnes, “Western Education in Colonial Africa,” in *Africa, Volume 3. Colonial Africa, 1885-1939*, edited by Toyin Falola (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2001), 153

<sup>6</sup> Ibram Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York: Nation Books, 2016), 210.

class to be utilized in colonial enterprises while also reinforcing “traditional” hierarchies. Many students dreamed of a job in the colonial administration, but only a select few would be utilized as clerks, secretaries, and occasionally managers. None would rise above a European. At first glance, this seems reasonable: Britain was not trying to irrevocably alter African societies and sought to minimize the political impacts of the economic exploitation. They could not, however, escape the racist ideologies that plagued French policies. British policies of separate development and indirect rule actually facilitated dramatic changes in their colonies.

### **Uganda’s Hidden History**

When discussing the phenomenon of colonialism, it is crucial to consider all the attributes. There is a tendency to routinely condemn this period in world history and anyone who fluctuates on the issue, or heaven forbid, celebrates it, is labeled as racist and ethnocentric. But history is not black and white and to treat it as such would be a grave error. There are aspects of colonialism that should be condemned and those that should be celebrated; often these labels overlap, creating shades of grey and requiring a good deal of analysis. This is especially true surrounding issues such as gender, education, and language, in addition to the historical context that nurtured them. The process is further complicated by the lack of critical consideration given to the dominant capitalistic mindset; development and the judgment of institutional attributes are not universally accepted. What is deemed “good” or “bad” by capitalistic standards can always be reversed by others. In recent years, scholarship surrounding the relationship between Africa and Europe has grown increasingly nuanced, reflecting an array of topics, themes, and interpretations. One such example would be Toyin Falola’s five encyclopedic volumes tracing the history of the continent from pre-colonial times to

independence.<sup>7</sup> Falola brought together some of the most renowned scholars of Africa – those with African heritage and without – to comprise a vast overview for an introductory college course.

The Republic of Uganda makes for an ideal colonial case study because of the massive alterations to African lives: it changed how they conceived of gender, how they educated the youngest members of society, how they communicated, and how they engaged in economic markets. However, many of the authors in Falola's collection find themselves succumbing to the same pitfalls of their intellectual forbearers. They focus their research on those former colonies that are most likely to capture the attention of Westerners – areas with a large number of white settlers, whose resources most benefited colonist economies, and whose history reinforces a Eurocentric world view – rather than on histories that require unearthing, such as Uganda's. That these chapters are meant to be used in a survey course magnifies this grave oversight. Although not all selections err in this way, it is important to examine how hidden histories can be incorporated into a broader narrative of Africa.

In Volume III, much is left wanting in terms of the incorporation of Uganda's history. Adebayo Oyejide's chapter on "Colonial Political Systems" only mentions how the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) controlled both Uganda and Kenya.<sup>8</sup> The inclusion of Kenya in this sentence is critical; a simplistic Kenyan narrative – featuring the stereotypical savannah landscape and violent Mau Mau Revolution – has captured the imagination of outsiders

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<sup>7</sup> The term "pre-colonial" is extremely problematic, and yet no better word exists. While the African continent existed and its people thrived without Europe's help for centuries, the onset of colonialism had such an impact that it is impossible to not consider it a watershed moment. The terminology currently available takes this too far, restricting Africa's ability to be independent: the continent cannot exist without Europe, even during an era in which Europe did not know about it.

<sup>8</sup> Adebayo Oyejide, "Colonial Political Systems," in *Africa, Volume 3. Colonial Africa, 1885-1939*, edited by Toyin Falola (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2001), 71.

for decades, thanks in part to its large settler colony and port city of Mombasa. Much less is known about how Britain had to negotiate with Kabaka Mutesa I of the Ganda people, or the years of strife and consolidation that followed. While this indicates successful cooperation between natives and Europeans, the application of the colonial system gave tremendous political favoritism to the Gandans at the expense of rival ethnicities, causing generations of ethnic tensions and a rural-urban dichotomy that persists to this day. Even prior to the formal institution of colonialism, early explorers and administrators praised the Ganda as vastly superior to surrounding people, positing that with the help of Europe, this kingdom would be the center of East African civilization.<sup>9</sup> British colonial systems would allow for the Bugandan kingdom to achieve this, but at the expense of others.

Similarly, Andrew E. Barnes' "Western Education in Colonial Africa" only references Uganda in terms of the association between the University College of Makerere (later Makerere University) and the University of London during the mid- to late-1900s.<sup>10</sup> The fact that one of Africa's first modern institutions of higher education gets only this passing glance is upsetting; that no other aspects of education are brought up is even worse. The creation of a class of educated and westernized elite in Uganda society was one of the driving forces of the civil wars that took place in the late 1900s. After the military general Idi Amin staged a bloodless coup in 1971, the army was given free reign against Ugandan citizens. Largely undereducated, these soldiers attacked those whom they saw as the heirs of colonial white power: the educated elites. Massacres took place across the country, mostly at primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ernest Linant de Bellefonds, "Kabaka Mutesa I. 1875," in *Documents from the African Past*, edited by Robert O. Collins (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2001), 271.

<sup>10</sup> Barnes, 154.

<sup>11</sup> Oliver Furley, "Education in post-independence Uganda: change amidst strife," in *Uganda Now*, edited by Holger Hansen and Michael Twaddle (London: James Currey, 1988), 182-3.

Uganda is a premiere example of how Western education played a pivotal role in the development of an independent state and how colonialism continues to impact them.

Finally, Gloria Chuku's Volume IV chapter entitled "Women and Nationalist Movements" shows the importance of these volumes as well as their struggles. As the author argues, previous scholars have always concentrated on the role of men in nationalist movements while ignoring the "African women [who] played active roles in the continent's nationalist movements."<sup>12</sup> Chuku's work is an important step in dismantling the patriarchal notion that women are not involved in "history." Instead, she seeks to integrate the two by shedding light on the crucial roles played by women in all types of resistance movements. Despite the progress she made in terms of gender, the author continues to perpetuate the focus on only a select number of former colonies. She intensifies the light cast upon Kenya by concentrating almost exclusively on the Mau Mau Rebellion when she could have used her platform to expand her reader's view to lesser known nationalist movements in places that did not garner attention through massive bloodshed and media coverage. Carol Summers' "Catholic Action and Ugandan Radicalism" examines how the Catholic hierarchy gave indigenous Africans a structure for political activism. Bugandans utilized its formality to protest and question colonial authority.<sup>13</sup> To blend Chuku's focus on uncovering gender dynamics with Summers' concentration on religious activism would add nuance to both their arguments as well as supplementing scholarship on Uganda.

There are some examples in Falola's volumes that did double duty, exploring new avenues of research while incorporating lesser-known areas like Uganda. For instance, Kirk

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<sup>12</sup> Gloria I. Chuku, "Women and Nationalist Movements," in *Africa, Volume 4. The End of Colonial Rule: Nationalism and Decolonization*, edited by Toyin Falola (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2002), 109.

<sup>13</sup> Carol Summers, "Catholic Action and Ugandan Radicalism: Political Activism in Buganda, 1930-1950," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 39 (2009).

Arden Hoppe examined the role that gender played in African history. He explained how within the centralized state of Ganda, “male political aristocracy often had institutionally-condoned sexual relationships with young male pages” who used the relationship to gain job training, eventually leading to “status, wealth, and knowledge.”<sup>14</sup> Given that early visitors described the Bugandan kingdom in largely positive terms, this could be interpreted as condoning same-sex relationships and other so-called savage behavior. He also explores how the British colonial state in Uganda sought to control STI rates, infant mortality, and “poor mothering skills” through social purity campaigns and maternity training schools.<sup>15</sup> While the intent behind these actions was arguably genuine and desirable, the consequences extend far beyond the actions themselves. The United States Agency for International Development’s (USAID) programs continue to perpetuate these paternalistic practices in the country, using billboards to disseminate maternity and sexual health advice; this implies that women do not know how best to care for their babies and that young adults are incapable of practicing safe sex.<sup>16</sup> In both these cases, Hoppe seeks to explore what it meant to be a male or female in Africa throughout its history. His work examines new topics as well as geographic areas in order to give the most complete view possible.

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<sup>14</sup> Kirk Arden Hoppe, “Gender in African History,” in *Africa, Volume 3. Colonial Africa, 1885-1939*, edited by Toyin Falola (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2001), 231-2.

<sup>15</sup> Linant, 272. Hoppe, 234.

<sup>16</sup> Photos in author’s possession





**Figure 2 - Billboard in Mukono, Uganda**

The discipline of history has largely ignored Uganda because its story has not been deemed sensational enough to capture the attention of a predominantly Western audience. By contrast, other fields such as economics and journalism have grown increasingly attracted to the former colony due to the plethora of topics available for study. This realm facilitates the interaction of diverse methodologies with undiscovered and underutilized themes. For instance, Dutch economic historian Felix Meier zu Selhausen examined Protestant parish records to determine that female education at mission schools was not enough to guarantee social autonomy; brides delayed marriages and minimized age differences between themselves and

their spouses only when their literacy led to employment, an offer extended only by the missions themselves.<sup>17</sup> Although religion, education, and gender are all prominent themes in colonial studies, Selhausen brings them together with the underrepresented Uganda to form a unique analysis that has drastic implications for the field. Similarly, many Western news sources are now supplementing articles and observations from within Uganda with their own. Forbes' 2011 public opinion poll included Yoweri Museveni on the list of "The World's 10 Worst Rulers."<sup>18</sup> Having quietly maintained his position and consolidated power within the office for over thirty years, outside observers are beginning to realize the danger posed by the regime, despite the lack of violence and bloodshed. In 2016, *Newsweek* reported on the suppression and imprisonment of opposition leader Kizza Besigye following a heavily contested political election.<sup>19</sup> Other disciplines are uncovering what history has forgotten.

Uganda has long been neglected as an area of study, even as the African continent itself is beginning to be taken seriously as its own discipline. The reasons for this are many and complex: unlike its neighbors, Uganda did not boast a large settler colony; its wildlife and landscapes are not extolled as a picturesque and exotic; there was no grand revolt against the colonial powers and what bloodshed has occurred was covert and between formerly colonized people; its land-locked geographic position meant that despite its economic output, the country was not utilized as an exporter and instead used other countries as "middle-men." The marriage of unexplored topics and hidden regions is long overdue and this research seeks to take part in the union. This work will not only explore on the forgotten history of the Ugandan state, but will

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<sup>17</sup> Felix Meier zu Selhausen, "Missionaries and Female Empowerment in Colonial Uganda: New Evidence from Protestant Marriage Registers, 1880-1945," *Economic History of Developing Regions* 29, no. 1 (2014): 74.

<sup>18</sup> Tim Ferguson, "World's Worst Rulers: Scratch One Now?" *Forbes*, August 22, 2011, accessed March 26, 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/timferguson/2011/08/22/worlds-worst-rulers-scratch-one-now/#626263636190>.

<sup>19</sup> Conor Gaffey, "Uganda: Opposition Leader Besigye Hears Treason Charges in Court," *Newsweek*, May 18, 2016, <http://www.newsweek.com/kizza-besigye-uganda-elections-treason-461104>.

seek to do so through a new lens that uncovers hidden themes in the hopes of inspiring others to incorporate forgotten stories into the narrative of history.

## **Terminology**

In order to fully and accurately analyze the impact of colonialism within Uganda and the African continent, it is critical that special attention be paid to the terminology used. One of the murkiest areas is that of “development.” Commonly interpreted as a solely economic term, development encompasses a whole range of social, political, and economic concepts. It generally includes the establishment of institutions – schools, governing bodies, legal systems, etc. – that are typical of what is deemed “modern society.” Countries all over the world lack these things, considered to be hallmarks of civilization. Echoing many colonial-era discourses, questions revolve around how “advanced” countries can best assist those that are “lacking.” Development exists almost exclusively in a capitalist, Western frame of reference. Laws and regulations are crucial to maximize economic efficiency. Political institutions that emulate European standards are supposed to facilitate the empowerment of the masses. Schools give children the tools they need to be productive members of society. All these institutions have been imposed on Africa through colonialism. The topics discussed within this paper are typically viewed through this lens: celebration occurs when situations point towards development and condemnation results when they veer people off course. Colonialism is intimately connected to development and the modern observer cannot analyze the historical events without recognizing the modern equivalency. With this in mind, it is important to distinguish between variations on “development”:

*The United States is developed.* “Developed” gives the impression that this country's growth is in the past and therefore there is no goal to be pursued. It gives a false sense of accomplishment, privileging some societies over others when in fact there is always work to be done. Development does not necessarily have a finish line nor does it have a clear and distinct winner: progress can always be made, yet this word implies nothing more to do. Even when standards have been met, conditions can always be improved. To be developed, to reach these standards, is presumed to be the ultimate goal of all nations and people.

*Uganda is undeveloped.* “Undeveloped” is a similar term in that it reflects a stagnated view of the country in question. It is a state that one is in and when used in a sentence, it does not evoke any sense of progress or hope. There is no change or progress occurring. Because language is absorptive, a plethora of other meanings have become attached to the term over time. As a scholar of colonialism, undeveloped brings to mind the language used by Europeans to justify their exploitation of indigenous people around the world: they are uncivilized, primitive, and tribal. In this context, the terminology becomes racially charged and brings with it the connotations of racial superiority.

*Uganda is developing.* By contrast, “developing” represents an action, inspires hope, and reflects a goal. It is a process that is currently underway and being performed. It serves as a reminder that while some countries may be lacking in some of the key determinants of development, the picture may look very different in a year, a decade, or a century, presumably with a net gain. There is a path forward and this entity is progressing along it with some goal in mind. By the standards of civilization, colonialism instigated this process, setting a course for the former colonies. It facilitated Africa’s entrance into the world system and provided the opportunity to “develop.” Dambisa Moyo's *Dead Aid* calls into question the current system of

foreign investment as a means for development and suggests a new way forward.<sup>20</sup> The author posits that Africa's development journey would be better managed by the individual states without foreign aid rather than through "developed" nations using money as a proxy for political control.

*Uganda is underdeveloped.* Finally, the term "underdeveloped" provides a more sinister nuance: it calls to mind the deliberate lack of development activities that were typical of the European colonists. Underdevelopment is something that is done *to* a country by powers either outside or within it. Walter Rodney's book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, argues that the colonizing powers deliberately and maliciously took advantage of the continent's economic resources and crippled it for future development.<sup>21</sup> Relying still on European standards as unquestioned truth, the perspective argues that underdeveloped countries were only partly accepted into the economic system. They were allowed to participate, but only to the extent that it benefited the colonizers themselves. Their resources were utilized on the world market but not by themselves. Underdeveloped countries do not choose to be so but were manipulated into this position by the greed of others, signaling a need for condemnation. The best solution would be one that allows for full and equal participation by all parties.

Similarly, the use of the word "tribe" is extremely problematic in discussing the African continent despite its continued and excessive usage in scholarly pursuits. The word has become commonplace across the African continent and many use the term to describe their own ethnic loyalties. This word was utilized by the European colonizers as justification for their incursions into Africa: the continent was filled with tribal people who were backwards, pagan, and in need

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<sup>20</sup> Dambisa Moyo, *Dead Aid: Why Aid is not Working and How There is a Better Way for Africa* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010).

<sup>21</sup> Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London: Bogle L'Ouverture Publications, 1972).

of reform. European civilization therefore represented a paradigm of progress: they were forward-thinking, Christian, and advanced. In anthropology, “tribe” denotes a group of people who live on “nonintensive food production” and trace their ancestry to the same mythical or real being, often a human, animal, or deity.<sup>22</sup> The level of civilization or development that a group has achieved has nothing to do with the title of “tribe.” These connotations have been artificially imposed by the standards of an outside group instead of considering the self-perception of individuals or groups of people.

However, even a strict adherence to the anthropological definition of tribe is problematic within the context of Uganda. As has been well established elsewhere, European powers partitioned the continent without regard to the inhabitants’ way of life. Tribes and ethnicities were torn asunder and many found themselves scattered across different states. For example, the Luo people are technically inhabitants of five different countries in East Africa: Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Sudan, and Ethiopia. Although united by an ancestral history, colonialism has dramatically affected each sector's recent development in terms of language, culture patterns, and the like. The Ganda people were one grouping that did not experience this type of separation within their history: because they allied themselves with the British imposition they were largely able to preserve their land and political rights. Yet, it would be improper to refer to Buganda as a tribe as it so often has been. The historical Gandans - those that the British encountered - are typically referred to as a kingdom, but modern Bugandans are commonly called a tribe. Not only does this reflect a development-focused racial hierarchy, but it also negates the incredible achievements of the Ganda prior to British interference. Buganda had begun a policy of

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<sup>22</sup> Conrad Phillip Kottak, *Cultural Anthropology: Appreciating Cultural Diversity* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2013), 183.

aggressive expansion and conquering by the time the first missionaries entered the region. The title of kingdom is an appropriate one as it reflects this level of political organization.

Finally, terminology specific to the Gandan people must be discussed. The *Lugandan* language is Bantu-based and thus follows Bantu rules of assigning prefixes to differentiate between various aspects of the same culture. *Buganda* is the name of the central and most powerful kingdom in the colony-turned-state of *Uganda*, named after the kingdom by Great Britain. *Baganda* and *Muganda* are the plural and singular descriptors of those individuals who resided within the kingdom and their descendants. *Gandan* is used more generally to describe the culture or the ways in which the people lived their lives.<sup>23</sup> In order to accurately discuss the interactions between Europe and Africa, or Britain and Uganda, these terms must be taken into account and guide the analysis.

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<sup>23</sup> Summers, 85.

## Chapter 2 - Historical Background

### Existing State and Early Interactions

Europe's relationship with Africa began long before the colonial system was conceived: for centuries the two continents interacted in trade and exchanges of knowledge. This included the slave trade. By the 1700s, debates were raging as to the morality of slavery and the slave trade. The most common defense of the trade was that conditions on the African continent were much worse than those encountered in the New World. Mercator Honestus – a pseudonym – made this argument in his letter published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1740. He argues that British colonies are “where the Negroes are governed by Laws, and suffer much less punishment in Proportion to their Crimes, than the People in other Countries more refined in the Arts of Wickedness; and where Capital Punishment is inflicted only by the Civil Magistrates.”<sup>24</sup> He believed that in indigenous communities, violence is arbitrary, vicious, and deadly. This is obviously an ethnocentric statement, but reflects the reality of the time. By European standards of justice, Africa was lacking. Judiciary representatives were seen as obvious choices to exercise the state's monopoly of violence. Presuming that reports and stories coming out of Africa were accurate in their description, then Honestus was right: the “New World” is where true justice would be meted out according to European standards of fairness. Honestus does not argue that slavery in and of itself is moral, in fact he recognizes that the practice violates individual's “absolute Right to Liberty.”<sup>25</sup> However, the author points out that all forms of power – governments and family hierarchies included – echo the master-slave relationship and that it not within the power of man to cure universal evil. Instead, it is best to “communicate as much

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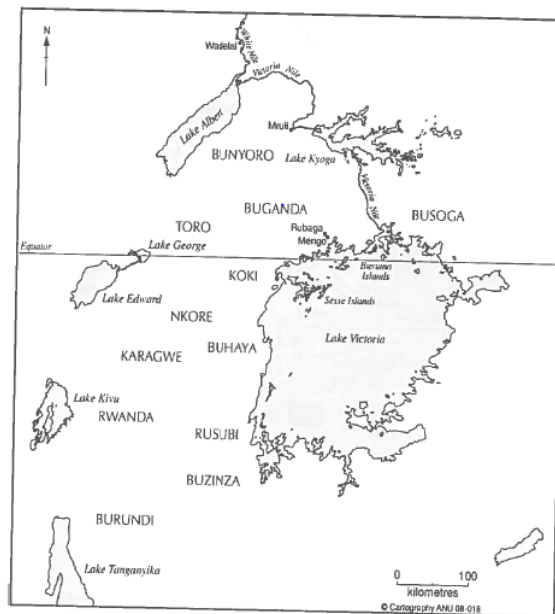
<sup>24</sup> Mercator Honestus, “A Defense of the African Slave Trade. 1740,” in *Documents from the African Past*, edited by Robert O. Collins (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2001), 136.

<sup>25</sup> Honestus, 135.



Liberty, and Happiness, as such circumstances will admit, and the People will consent to: And this is certainly by the Guinea Trade.”<sup>26</sup>

Leaving debates on slavery aside, the outlook of Mercator Honestus is indicative of how the African continent was viewed on the eve of colonialism. The indigenous people apparently had no law and order, allowing anyone to distribute capital punishment. Their societies were schooled in the “Arts of Wickedness,” conjuring images of witchcraft and the supernatural. Given Europe’s predominantly Christian background, its inhabitants would visualize a pagan and uncivilized continent, one that was as dangerous as it was receptive to evangelism. Using their own development as the stand, their intent was to facilitate the continents’ foray into modernity. It was Europe’s duty to impart liberty, happiness, and perhaps most importantly, civilization, to the indigenous people of Africa.



Map 1 Pre-colonial: location of principal interior East African lakes kingdoms, and some clusters

**Figure 3 - D.A. Low, *Fabrication of Empire: The British and Uganda Kingdoms, 1890-1902* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), xiii.**

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<sup>26</sup> Honestus, 135.

This ideology was inexplicably present when Europeans encountered the Ganda people. This kingdom was the largest collection of people in the area and had begun to expand, routinely going to war with their neighbors, particularly the Bunyoro, and incorporating smaller villages and tribes into their folds. The first European to visit the kingdom was John Hanning Speke, a British explorer who, on a previous expedition, had believed that he found the source of the Nile at Lake Nyanza, now called Lake Victoria.<sup>27</sup> On his journey through Tanzania and Uganda, he notes not only the richness of the land, but the relative state of various tribes and people. In dictating his encounter with the Wanyamuezi of Tanzania, he has nothing good to say about the people. Speke describes them as darker, not well-dressed or armed, and “wanting in pluck and gallantry.”<sup>28</sup> To make matters worse, their style of dress caused them to expose themselves and “The whole tribe are desperate smokers, and greatly given to drink.”<sup>29</sup> The values of Europe were incongruous with the reality of African life: they seemed to dress, act, and appear different. Speke would not have been surprised to encounter this setting in Africa, as the dominant ideology of the time was that these indigenous communities were backward and uncivilized.

By contrast, Speke and other early explorers were impressed by the advanced nature of the Bugandan kingdom. Speke records that the kingdom had roads comparable in size to those in England, and were far more extensive and smooth than in neighboring regions. When he met the aunt of the Kabaka at Meruka, near Lake Nyanza, he found the temperature to be enjoyable and the landscape lush: "Wherever I strolled I saw nothing but richness, and what ought to be

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<sup>27</sup> John Hanning Speke, “Unyamwezi and Buganda. 1862,” in *Documents from the African Past*, edited by Robert O. Collins (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2001), 252.

<sup>28</sup> Speke, 253.

<sup>29</sup> Speke, 254.

wealth."<sup>30</sup> The explorer also recorded a relatively advanced administrative system. On his journey to the Kabaka's court, he interacted with appointed governors and pages across provinces. He also discussed how power was passed between individuals. Kituntu, the officer's residence in the province of Uddu, had been passed from Eseau, a Beluch of Zanzibar, to his slave Uledi along with his family and property.<sup>31</sup> This level of sophistication in inheritance and transitions of power belayed the view that indigenous Africans were wholly uncivilized. The natural setting as well as man-made institutions lent themselves to the establishment of control. The political organization therein led to a positive imprint in the minds of Europeans.

Europeans were similarly impressed by the indigenous people themselves in addition to what they had achieved. Writing just a few years earlier in the 1850s, Charles Livingstone recognized the economic potential of Africans. In a conversation with Senhor H.A. Ferrão in the village of Senna, modern Zambia, the two recognized that the cultivation of cotton would be a worthy endeavor that natives would partake in. Leading men of the village had declared that "when it is for their interest, black work very hard" on their own soil.<sup>32</sup> In 1859, men like Livingstone were beginning to recognize the industrial nature of indigenous people as well as the laziness of their own. He valued economic productivity: those who exhibited such characteristics were looked upon favorably. According to Livingstone, settlers "who were much addicted to lying on their backs smoking invariably complained of the laziness of the negroes, and were poor, proud, and despicable."<sup>33</sup> This criticism indicates that the explorer viewed some Africans more favorably than some Europeans.

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<sup>30</sup> Speke, 254.

<sup>31</sup> Speke, 256.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Livingstone, "The Prazeros," in *Documents from the African Past*, edited by Robert O. Collins (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2001), 251-2.

<sup>33</sup> Livingstone, 252.

Ernest Linant de Bellefonds, an Egyptian administrator who was unsuccessful in bringing Buganda under Egyptian control in the 1870s, was especially impressed by the intelligence of Kabaka Mutesa I. Not only was the Kabaka able to understand de Bellefonds' descriptions of the stars and other heavenly bodies, he was also able to inspire others to do the same: by himself acting as a pupil, others sought to follow him on "this quest for understanding, for self-instruction and for knowledge."<sup>34</sup> He goes so far as to compare Mutesa and his people to Europe: "the people of Uganda are today as much above the other tribes I have visited, as civilized Europe is above the Bedouins Arabs, those primitive nomads of the desert."<sup>35</sup> Despite his celebration of Gandan progress, the people cannot negate his preconceptions about race: "They are an inquiring, observant, intelligent people with minds longing for the learning of white people whose superiority they recognize."<sup>36</sup>

This mentality forms the basis of European colonialism in Africa. No matter how advanced a people are, they require the assistance of Europeans in order to continue developing. Linant predicted that the Gandan people would someday be the center of East African civilization, but only if missions - complete with farmers, carpenters, and smiths - were to be established. This ideology is furthered in the belief that, despite the aspect of civilization present, indigenous people are still "backward." Linant notes that Mutesa believed himself to be a divine ruler, a concept unconjurable with Christianity and therefore labeled as regressive.<sup>37</sup> And yet, the European continues to extoll Mutesa's leadership abilities: "He learns about the customs, habits and governments of every country and all this not merely out of idle curiosity, but with the idea of becoming better informed and of bringing about some useful reforms in his

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<sup>34</sup> Linant, 271.

<sup>35</sup> Linant, 272.

<sup>36</sup> Linant, 271.

<sup>37</sup> Linant, 271.

own country."<sup>38</sup> Linant himself saw cause to celebrate existing institutions and systems even as he lamented other attributes.

The relative advancement of people like the Bugandans did not mitigate the paternalistic attitudes that heralded the onset of colonialism. The 1884-1885 Berlin Conference, often cited as the beginning of the partition of Africa, not only dictates Europe's economic goals and restrictions, but also the ways in which the indigenous people were to be viewed and treated. Signatory powers were to "watch over the preservation of the native tribes, and to care for the improvement of the conditions of their moral and material well-being, and to help in suppressing slavery, and especially the slave trade."<sup>39</sup> In particular, Westerners were to ensure that Africans enjoy the "blessing of civilization" in the form of religious and scientific advancements; protect the agents of progress such as missionaries, scientists, and explorers; and promote religious toleration and freedom of worship.<sup>40</sup> This attitude is more consistent with the perspective of Mercator Honestus than the experiences of Speke and Linant. Indigenous societies were seen as backwards, pagan, and uncivilized: they were in need of the guidance of Europe in order to ensure their development.

In some ways, these goals were achieved through the practice of colonialism. Indigenous religious practices are rarely independently followed because these traditions have typically become fused with the dominant faiths of Christianity and Islam. In Uganda, both religions are subjects taught to students in government-run schools. Similarly, former colonies have continued to reap the benefits of scientific advancements despite not acting as the innovators. Although localized in urban areas, electricity has steadily asserted itself on the continent,

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<sup>38</sup> Linant, 271.

<sup>39</sup> "General Act of the Berlin Conference (1885)," 36.

<sup>40</sup> "General Act of the Berlin Conference (1885)," 37.

becoming more reliable as it goes; so too have clear water, cars, and cell phones. In fact, Africa in many ways skipped over some development steps: cell-towers did not replace landlines and early automobile models were never seen on the continent.<sup>41</sup> These attributes of society, however problematic, find their roots in the Berlin Conference: Africa has these institutions and programs because Western nations and individuals believed it was their duty to share them.

In contrast with the wording of the Berlin Conference, many explorers recognized that Buganda was powerful and relatively advanced: their roads were smooth, there was an established hierarchy, the natural landscape was beneficial for economic prosperity, and their leader was intelligent. Writing in 1910, Sir Apollo Kagwa, a Mugandan who served as both regent and prime minister of Buganda in addition to his role in the Protestant clergy, credited Ganda's respect for king, chiefs, and country as a reason for the "respect and encouragement with which the British Government has consented to regard the native system of government."<sup>42</sup> Perhaps more so than any other people, the Bugandan elite were successful in negotiating with the British and confirming their power structure, often at the expense of other ethnic groups and their own lower-classes.

### **Missionary Involvement**

In addition to explorers and early political administrators, missionaries were among the first to permanently establish themselves on the African continent. Priests and laymen struggled to establish a lasting presence in many areas: missions suffered from the unforgiving climate, a

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<sup>41</sup> Scott Burns, "How Regulatory Environments Can Either Promote or Stifle Entrepreneurship in the Developing World: Lessons from the Mobile Money Revolution in Africa" (presentation, Ursinus College Business and Economics Candidate Talk, Collegeville, PA, January 31, 2017).

<sup>42</sup> Sir Apollo Kagwa, "Court Life in Buganda. 1910," in *Documents from the African Past*, edited by Robert O. Collins (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2001), 316.

lack of qualified clergy, and indifferent governments or monarchs.<sup>43</sup> However, an evangelical revival throughout Christendom during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, coupled with an increasingly morality-based opposition to the slave trade, improved commitment both at home and abroad.<sup>44</sup> Regardless of the period, missionaries shared many of the paternalistic and racially discriminatory attitudes with European explorers. In many regions, the dearth of clergy members that almost ended the mission experience was the result of a white superiority complex: “the most inadequate white clergy was superior to the possibility of training African ones.”<sup>45</sup> The process of evangelization as a whole was deeply rooted in European ethnocentrism and the need to distribute civilization to the culturally-poor Africans.

Henry Stanley visited the kingdom of Buganda in 1875 and it was through his influence that the Protestant Church Missionary Society, CMS, sent representatives in 1877; the Catholic White Fathers Mission followed in 1879.<sup>46</sup> This created an additional layer to the colonization and evangelization of the continent: not only were European countries competing for power, but various strains of Christianity competed with one another both within and between their secular loyalties. Catholics and Protestants were broad designations, but capture much of the animosity within African Christendom. Missionaries were battling each other as much as they were waging a war against indigenous religions.<sup>47</sup>

Kabaka Mutesa initially allowed the missionaries entrance in the hopes of military support against Egypt, but it quickly became clear that this was not on their agenda.<sup>48</sup> Despite

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<sup>43</sup> Joel E. Tishken, “Christianity in Colonial Africa,” in *Africa, Volume 3. Colonial Africa, 1885-1939*, edited by Toyin Falola (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2001), 158.

<sup>44</sup> Tishken, 158.

<sup>45</sup> Tishken, 158.

<sup>46</sup> *Uganda 1964* (Entebbe: The Government Printer, 1965), 9.

<sup>47</sup> Tishken, 159.

<sup>48</sup> *Uganda 1964*, 9.

this, the various missions operated within the kingdom with relative ease. As Ernest Linant de Bellefonds noted, Kabaka Mutesa was a powerful ruler with keen intelligence. He was able to balance the demands and expectations of the various religions that sought his attention. Although he appealed for Christian missionaries to come to his kingdom, he did not fully embrace the religion. At one point, he summoned both Linant and a Muslim Fakir of the Xodcria to discuss the Koran. According to Linant, “The poor Fakir was at a loss as to how to answer all the King’s questions. I had to give him some help.”<sup>49</sup> Linant was thus posturing himself, his religion, and his nation as superior to the Fakir, Islam, and the Xodcria. Only indirectly was he competing for the patronage of Kabaka Mutesa. By playing the two off against one another, the Kabaka was able to maintain much of his previous authority and autonomy.

By contrast, Mutesa’s son Mwanga was not as shrewd a diplomat as his father. He ordered the execution of at least thirty Catholic and Protestant converts in 1886.<sup>50</sup> The event still lingers on the outskirts of Ugandan history, though some seek to bring it into the light. Kalungi Kabuye, a contributor to *New Vision*, a Ugandan newspaper, noted in 2016 that this version of “history, of course, has been written by Christians”<sup>51</sup> meaning the vilification of Kabaka Mwanga was accepted by the general public and those executed were deemed the Ugandan Martyrs. While the taking of human life is generally considered deplorable, Mwanga’s actions were not arbitrary: Kabuye notes that the crime of these young men – the Kabaka’s pages – was not that they had become Christians, but that they had disobeyed his orders and instead followed the missions. This was previously unheard of, as the Kabaka had undisputed control within his

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<sup>49</sup> Linant, 270.

<sup>50</sup> Kalungi Kabuye, “The vilification of Kabaka Mwanga,” *New Vision*, January 5, 2016, [http://www.newvision.co.ug/new\\_vision/guest-blog-blog/1414058/vilification-kabaka-mwanga](http://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/guest-blog-blog/1414058/vilification-kabaka-mwanga).

<sup>51</sup> Kabuye.



kingdom. These royal pages “were sent to the palace by their clans to serve” but had failed to do so.<sup>52</sup> They were executed at Namugongo, a site reserved for traitors to the Bugandan kingdom.<sup>53</sup>

For the purposes of this study, it is important to note the influence that these missionaries wielded within the Kabaka’s court. Their presence and teachings were enough to challenge centuries of social customs and hierarchal relationships. The executions were indicative of a much larger problem that Mwanga was facing: missionaries undermined traditional authority and offered a new view of divine authority. While Kabakas had been seen as made of divine essence, the missions challenged this notion.<sup>54</sup> With an almighty God as the true authority, Mwanga’s position of power would be called into question. When God’s law (according to the missionaries) contradicted Mwanga’s will, strife was sure to follow. These missionaries, these early heralds of colonialism, must assume some responsibility for their charges’ deaths, not the bloodlust of a pagan king.

### **Colonial Administration**

Although a Protectorate over Buganda was officially established by Great Britain in 1894, two years before the executions, increasing tensions between the missionaries and the court may have played a role.<sup>55</sup> According to Lord Frederick Lugard, a colonial administrator whose many roles included Governor of Nigeria, it was “in defence [sic] of their [missionaries’] interests that the Government was forced to intervene” in the African tropics.<sup>56</sup> The missions had been struggling to maintain a presence, but the intervention of governments brought its own

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<sup>52</sup> Kabuye.

<sup>53</sup> Kabuye.

<sup>54</sup> Linant, 271.

<sup>55</sup> *Uganda 1964*, 10.

<sup>56</sup> Lugard, 10.

issues. While missionaries' primary objective was to spread Christianity, the British government cites foreign diplomacy and economic incentives in addition to humanitarian concerns. Lugard notes that "whatever value our existing tropical possessions might have, would be lost if other nations with exclusive tariffs appropriated their hinterlands."<sup>57</sup> Thus, the General Act of the Conference of Berlin dictated the claims of the Europeans in relation to one another: there was to be free trade, no excessive taxes or dues, proscriptions against monopolies, and protection of foreigners.<sup>58</sup> The Conference also led to the acceptance of the "hinterland theory": "a Power in occupation of coast lands was entitled to claim the exclusive right to exercise political influence for an indefinite distance inland."<sup>59</sup> Although lip service was given to the support and preservation of natives, the primary concern of these acts was to dictate European relationships on the African continent.

As such, there were a variety of methods through which European countries engaged with their colonies; Britain utilized indirect rule in East Africa. This approach was first established by Lord Lugard in Nigeria, but it quickly became the cornerstone of British policy. Through indirect rule, Great Britain utilized indigenous chiefs as the form of rule rather than exercising complete control.<sup>60</sup> This is achieved by "representative institutions in which a comparatively small educated class shall be recognized as the natural spokesmen for the many."<sup>61</sup> The European power created a new hierarchy through which they disseminated power: Englishmen reigned supreme, but maintained the illusion of disinterest by investing their political and social capital in select "traditional" leaders.

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<sup>57</sup> Lugard, 10.

<sup>58</sup> "The General Act of the Conference of Berlin (1885)," 35-6.

<sup>59</sup> Lugard, 12.

<sup>60</sup> Lugard, 194.

<sup>61</sup> Lugard, 194.

Britain also adopted a policy of separate development, based on “the premise of a cultural difference between Europeans and Africans.”<sup>62</sup> Underscoring this was the belief that Africans could not acquire the cultural sophistication of Europe.<sup>63</sup> This policy was not implemented until the later days of the British Empire in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Previously, the colonizer had attempted a policy of collaboration, an offshoot of the assimilationist policy of France. The latter’s policy dictated that Africans could become French citizens by adopting social, economic, and political institutions.<sup>64</sup> Collaboration policy, by contrast, sought to convert Africans to a European way of life in preparation for a partnership with Britain.<sup>65</sup> While they were not to be considered “British,” they could be seen as equal. This shift in practice has been accounted for by the rise of racism in Europe as well as the increasing costs of establishing British institutions in interior territories;<sup>66</sup> by the 1880s, it was no longer socially or economically practical to pursue development as a means to equality.

In theory, indirect rule and separate development meant that little changed for Africans. Power was vested in the same leader as before and the same activities were performed in daily life. In reality, Buganda was one of the few places that this held true. British conceptions of what constituted “tradition” did not always represent the realities of African life. In *An African Speaks for His People*, Parmenas Githendu Mockerie, a Kenyan educator, notes that Uganda was the only region in East Africa that still utilized hereditary rule as a means of governance at the advent of colonialism.<sup>67</sup> Kenyans had instituted what he calls “tribal democracy,” a practice

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<sup>62</sup> Oyebade, “Colonial Political Systems,” 82.

<sup>63</sup> Oyebade, “Colonial Political Systems,” 82-3.

<sup>64</sup> Oyebade, “Colonial Political Systems,” 80.

<sup>65</sup> Oyebade, “Colonial Political Systems,” 82.

<sup>66</sup> Oyebade, “Colonial Political Systems,” 83.

<sup>67</sup> Parmenas Githendu Mockerie, “An African Speaks for His People (1934),” in *Colonial Rule in Africa: Readings from Primary Sources*, edited by Bruce Fetter (Madison: The University of Madison Press, 1979), 190.

contrary to the protocols of indirect rule where the colonial government picked the chiefs without the say of the people. According to Mockerie, “the government has introduced a foreign idea which has robbed the people of their form of democracy. Chiefs who were nominated by European officials cannot win the confidence of the people over whom they are imposed.”<sup>68</sup> By imposing their incorrect assumptions of traditionalism on unsuspecting Africans, Britain dramatically altered the region’s political system and development.

This system of indirect rule did coincide well with the political system of the Bugandan people. The Kabakas of the early colonial era were able to leverage their power to maintain their hierarchal status. Elsewhere, African leaders strongly repelled European interventions while Kabaka Mutesa welcomed the early explorers and opened his borders to missionaries. In this way, he signaled his willingness to collaborate with the soon-to-be colonial power. According to Linant, Mutesa “wants history to think of him as the founder of the human race.”<sup>69</sup> Linant himself believed that the Ganda could be “the centre of civilization” in East Africa.<sup>70</sup> The goals of both the Gandan leaders and the colonial administrators complimented one another in terms of political structure; by providing the British with their full cooperation, Kabakas sought to fulfill both their and their colonizer’s goals. This has been by-and-large a successful endeavor since Uganda as a colony maintained its hereditary kings up to Mockerie’s publication in 1934 and through to independence in 1962.<sup>71</sup>

Thus, indirect rule and separate development had many nuances. Separate development did not leave room for British Africans, nor did it acknowledge that the continent could independently develop to European standards, but it did recognize that Africans would be worth-

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<sup>68</sup> Mockerie, 190.

<sup>69</sup> Linant, 271.

<sup>70</sup> Linant, 271.

<sup>71</sup> Mockerie, 190.

while trade and economic partners. The intent was to ensure that African nations could engage on the world stage; whether this would ever be on equal footing remains to be seen. Similarly, indirect rule was only a liability where the British misinterpreted the existing context: when European notions of African traditions did not reflect reality, as in Kenya, the result was a foreign system of rule. In Buganda however, indirect rule was able to reinforce traditional hierarchies and preserve indigenous political systems. Rather than imposing chiefs, Britain threw its support behind the established Kabaka. For Bugandans, this was a successful relationship: they maintained and even supplemented their regional power while also benefiting from exchanges with Europe. Other ethnic groups who did not have a similar political and social structure or who had to compete with an augmented Bugandan kingdom were not as celebratory.

## **Independence and Beyond**

Before full self-government could be achieved, there was a period of negotiation. In 1961, Great Britain ordered the creation of a Relationships Commission and it was on the basis of its subsequent reports that a conference was held in London that September.<sup>72</sup> It was here that a constitutional form was drafted and decided upon; internal self-government was attained on March 1, 1962.<sup>73</sup> On April 25<sup>th</sup>, a general election was held in which A. Milton Obote, head of the Uganda People's Congress, assumed the title of Prime Minister.<sup>74</sup> Serving with him as president was Kabaka Mutesa II, also known as Sir Edward Frederick Mutesa; he had been able

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<sup>72</sup> *Uganda 1964*, 14.

<sup>73</sup> *Uganda 1964*, 14.

<sup>74</sup> *Uganda 1964*, 14.

to successfully negotiate a semi-autonomous state for the Bugandan kingdom within the now independent Uganda.<sup>75</sup>

Obote quickly began to lose control of the newly emancipated state as regional and ethnic divisions plagued the political process.<sup>76</sup> As the Kabaka-president sought to assert Bugandan autonomy within the national structure, Obote feared a coup would ensue. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 1966, the prime minister ordered Deputy Commander Idi Amin to attack the kabaka's palace, forcing Kabaka Edward Mutesa to flee to London.<sup>77</sup> The next year, Obote instituted a new constitution, the third in the five years since independence. By the "republic constitution," all regional and ethnic monarchies were abolished and power was consolidated with the president, a role assumed by Obote.<sup>78</sup> The result of this was relative peace and stability within the system; the Gandan kingdom was no longer asserting its autonomy and conflict was mitigated by fear of repercussions from an unchecked President Obote.

In January of 1971, Idi Amin led a military coup against Milton Obote while the president was at the Singapore Commonwealth Conference.<sup>79</sup> A year earlier, Obote had survived an assassination attempt in which a bullet struck his face; this attack occurred only a few weeks after Kabaka Edward Mutesa died in exile under suspicious circumstances.<sup>80</sup> Official blame for the attempted murder was placed on a group of Gandan loyalists. With the largest and most powerful Ugandan ethnic association set against him, Obote increasingly relied on the military to

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<sup>75</sup> *Uganda 1964*, 14.

<sup>76</sup> James H. Mittelman, *Ideology and Politics in Uganda: From Obote to Amin* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), 81.

<sup>77</sup> Mittelman, 81; The Bugandan Kingdom, "Buganda commemorate 50 years since 1966 Libiri invasion," *Bugandan Kingdom*, accessed March 26, 2017, <http://buganda.or.ug/index.php/news/731-buganda-commemorate-50-years-since-1966-lubiri-invasion>.

<sup>78</sup> Mittelman, 82.

<sup>79</sup> Mittelman, 168.

<sup>80</sup> Mittelman, 169.

support him and his regime. General Amin's actions were not comforting: he had made remarks praising the exiled Kabaka; had been implicated in the murder of Brigadier Pierino Okoyo, his rival in the Ugandan army; and had shifted his religious-political membership from the National Association for the Advancement of Muslims, a government institution, to the Ugandan Muslim Community, a Gandan organization.<sup>81</sup> When the coup occurred, Radio Uganda broadcasted the army's eighteen reasons for the take-over, "ranging from unwarranted detention and lack of freedom of expression to wide-spread kondosim (armed robbery) and hypocritical talk about socialism."<sup>82</sup> By February 2, Amin had dissolved Parliament, assumed executive power, and assigned positions in Uganda's Second Republic; although those who served under Obote were excluded from the administration, the appointments reflected an equitable geographic and ethnic representation as well as an inclination towards civilians in ministerial positions.<sup>83</sup>

Amin's promise to address the eighteen points that drove the coup initially inspired optimism. Only a few months into the new regime however, its repressive nature was showcased. While leaders associated with various national institutions, including the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry and The Ugandan Teacher's Association, issued their congratulations and support, others began political agitation. Among these were university students, some trade unions, and blue-collar workers.<sup>84</sup> City council workers struck in September, were joined by plantation works, taxi drivers, and Jinja garment workers in November, and workers at the Kilembe Mines joined in December.<sup>85</sup> The response was quick and brutal. Political activity was "temporarily suspended" for a minimum of two years. In the

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<sup>81</sup> Mittelman, 170.

<sup>82</sup> Mittelman, 171.

<sup>83</sup> Mittelman, 172.

<sup>84</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *Imperialism and Fascism in Uganda* (Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books, 1983), 37.

<sup>85</sup> Mamdani, 37.

name of preventing *kondoism*, soldiers were granted power to freely search property and “take possession of vehicles, stolen property, and dangerous weapons.” Thousands of soldiers, suspected of loyalty to Obote, were tortured and murdered.<sup>86</sup>

Perhaps Amin’s most recognizable act was his regime’s expulsion of all foreigners, particularly Arabs, Asians, and Indians, from the country in 1972. During the colonial era, these groups, collectively referred to as Asians, were used primarily as a buffer class; though they were certainly not the equal of whites, they occupied a privileged position over Africans while living on African soil. This amounted to Asians operating as the middle-class of the economic system. They owned land, ran businesses, and worked official jobs, things Ugandans could not do. Amin ordered the Asian population to vacate the country, or face certain death. This “economic war” served not only as capital collection and distribution – land and businesses once owned by Asians were used to reward Amin supporters – but also as a means of deferring blame.<sup>87</sup> With the public eye fixated on a future free of the influences of the colonizers and the ills begot by colonialism, no one questioned the methods used by the regime, or if they would yield any tangible outcomes for the average Ugandan. Couched in the language of the masses, Amin’s dictatorship survived for eight long years, wreaking havoc by military rule and civil war. The regime finally fell in 1978 after provoking war with Tanzania in a misguided attempt to secure American support.<sup>88</sup>

From here, the country had a quick succession of presidents: Yusufu Lule lasted 68 days, Godfrey Binaisa was removed in June 1980, and Milton Obote returned from exile in supposedly rigged elections for three months before Yoweri Museveni launched a guerilla war against him

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<sup>86</sup> Mamdani, 38.

<sup>87</sup> Mamdani, 39.

<sup>88</sup> Mamdani, 106-7.



and successfully executed the coup in July of 1985.<sup>89</sup> Museveni has maintained his position as president for three decades now, earning himself a spot on “The World’s 10 Worst Rulers” list in 2011.<sup>90</sup> Modern observers recognized that authoritarian measures were necessary at the start of his reign: anywhere from 100,000 to 500,000 million people went missing or were killed during Amin’s decade of terror and the country’s political and social institutions were in no state to efficiently ore effectively make decisions.<sup>91</sup> Yet many repressive policies, some from the Idi Amin era, continued as law for decades; the ban on political-party activities, instituted in 1986 by Museveni on the grounds of “national-healing” was only relinquished in 2005 after considerable political pressure.<sup>92</sup> The most recent election held in February of 2016 remains hotly contested. Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) candidate Kizza Besigye was placed on house arrest after evading surveillance to take part in an alternative presidential inauguration. He was charged with treason, a capital offense, and transferred to a maximum security prison,<sup>93</sup> though he has since been released and continued to agitate for political reform.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Furley, 189.

<sup>90</sup> Ferguson, “10 Worst.”

<sup>91</sup> Andrew M. Mwenda, “Personalizing Power in Uganda,” *Journal of Democracy* 18, no. 3 (2007): 27.

<sup>92</sup> Mwenda, 27-8.

<sup>93</sup> Gaffey.

<sup>94</sup> Kifefe Kizza-Besigye, Twitter Post, 10 April 2017 (12:43 PM), <https://twitter.com/kizzabesigye1/status/851475704466341888?s=01>

## Chapter 3 - Gender Construction and Reconstruction<sup>95</sup>

While there is a tendency to routinely condemn the colonial period, the single redeeming quality that has always been insisted upon is that the phenomenon was beneficial to women. If nothing else, colonialism had set Africa on its current path towards equality. This narrative is not reflective of reality. Rather, colonialism has managed to assert itself squarely within the gender history of Africa; it has cast itself as a heroic character that liberated women as it civilized the continent. To be effective, colonizers relied on a myth of traditional societies that endorsed and actively practiced the suppression of women. In reality, explorers, missionaries, and officials imposed Western gender ideologies upon the African people, resulting in a monumental shift in the perception of gender roles and decreased female autonomy. Although the implications are many and diverse, the education system of Uganda showcases many of the continuing consequences of colonial imposition in relation to the power dynamics of gender. Furthermore, it emphasizes how Western involvement continues to be both beneficial and detrimental, attempting to alter perceptions concerning gender, believing that their actions benefit women.

### Early Ugandan Gender Roles

Within the modern state of Uganda, the largest ethnic and political association was the Bugandan Kingdom. Early explorers, recording their contact with the Kabaka and his court catalogued some of the gender dynamics within the elite class. Ernest Linant de Bellefonds spent much time with Kabaka Mutesa, attempting to convince the ruler to recognize Egyptian

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<sup>95</sup> Portions of this chapter come from "Pearl of Africa: British Colonialism's Role in Ugandan Education and Modern Repercussions for Nonprofits" (2016). *History Summer Fellows*. 4. [http://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/history\\_sum/4](http://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/history_sum/4)

sovereignty in the 1870s and discussing the affairs and countries of Europe; Linant mentions that “The King’s sister was present at all of these sessions.”<sup>96</sup> Mutesa placed some value on his female kin, since he allowed her to engage with a distinguished guest. Linant also recalls how eager the Kabaka was to learn about the wider world and converse about its most powerful forces: Mutesa did not value this knowledge merely for himself, but also for his kin. Allowing his sister’s presence signaled her importance within the social hierarchy as well as the place of his visitor.

The administrator also noted that “The daughters and sisters of the King never go on foot; they are always carried by their slaves.”<sup>97</sup> Although no mention is made of the Kabaka’s wives, this too signals the esteem in which female blood-relatives were held. Alternatively, this signaled that these women were perceived as delicate or weak. Since it would appear no men were treated as such, royal blood alone did not merit such treatment. It was their sex that distinguished them for this indulgence and reflects a gender ideology in which women were meant to be doted upon and men had to survive on their own. This could also be a method of subjugation; being unable to walk would negate any autonomy that these women would have otherwise exercised. Whether for their own protection or as a means of cementing masculine authority, individual choice would have been extremely restricted. Regardless, these women were present in important diplomatic exchanges and visible to guests, who witnessed the extravagancy of their lifestyle.

A Mugandan member of the Protestant clergy, Sir Apolo Kagwa, witnessed the enthronement of Kimera as the new Kabaka in 1910. During the ceremony, “Kagwa escorted the

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<sup>96</sup> Linant, 270.

<sup>97</sup> Linant, 270.

king and his sister, Djuma Kateba.”<sup>98</sup> Kimera was the one being crowned, but Djuma held a place of importance beside him. Although not technically a ruler, she clearly had an important role to play in the governance of the kingdom. After receiving symbolic gifts from the various clans, the Kabaka retired to his home where his relatives bestowed more gifts upon him. According to Kagwa, “They came in order, his grandfather, then his aunts, his sisters, brothers and the other princes” and “His mother’s relatives also offered gifts.”<sup>99</sup> Although not an exhaustive list of relations, this helps determine the place of these elite women within the familial and political systems. The arrangement may indicate a privileged role for these women.

In some societies, a sister’s son was held in high esteem and often competed with a son for succession. This was because these nephews guaranteed the succession to a blood relative; the children of a brother or the king himself could not be conclusively proven to be his own, but a sister’s son could. If a similar ideology pervaded the Bugandan kingdom, then the prominence of these women could be a result of, rather than in spite of, patrilineal and patriarchal societies. An emphasis on preserving succession would lead to a privileged status for the kabaka’s sisters. This is also supported by the delineation between relatives of the mother and father. Since power was based on the father’s family, this lineage would be prioritized and its members – including both brothers and unmarried sisters – would be privileged. Alternatively, Kabaka Kimera’s brothers represented a threat to his power, thus their relegation beneath their sisters. The Ganda people did not utilize females as chiefs, though other peoples in Africa did. Because his sisters were less likely to violate their cultural customs and usurp his power, it would be relatively safe for him to favor them or allow them certain privileges. By contrast, allowing his

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<sup>98</sup> Kagwa, 312.

<sup>99</sup> Kagwa, 313-314.

brothers a measure of authority or access to privileged information could lead to their appropriation of his role as Kabaka.

Additionally, same-sex relationships and exchanges existed prior to colonial imposition. In the Bugandan Kingdom, members of the aristocracy would engage in sexual relations with young male pages, understood as a part of the mentorship arrangement which these young men could utilize for social gain.<sup>100</sup> Elsewhere in Africa, same-sex relations between young men were seen as a temporary adolescent phase: during periods of social segregation by gender especially, it was expected for boys to engage in this type of behavior. Upon reaching a "mature" age or reintegrating with their female counterparts, these boys were expected to transfer their sexual behaviors to the opposite sex.<sup>101</sup> In terms of male sexual portrayal, there was a great deal of fluidity throughout life, though certain actions were typically restricted based on circumstances.

Sexual fluidity and experimentation was also allowed amongst girls and women throughout the continent of Africa. Some ethnic groups condoned woman-woman marriages, such as the Luo people of Eastern Africa. At its most simplistic definition, a marriage is a contract that defines the party's rights to each other's productive and reproductive labor; this does not require a sexual dynamic. In these arrangements, the partner who paid the bride wealth – gifts given to the bride's family to compensate for the loss of a laboring member – assumed the masculine role in the relationship and took on the "legal and social position of men in the context of the family."<sup>102</sup> All children thus belonged to the female husband's lineage, as the female wife was encouraged to engage in sex with males in order to become pregnant; sometimes this partner

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<sup>100</sup> Hoppe, 232.

<sup>101</sup> Hoppe, 232.

<sup>102</sup> Hoppe, 226.

was of her own choice, but could also be selected by her female husband. Reasons for the institution of this practice varied across the continent. If a people allowed for a female chief or religious leader, the patriarchal structure of society and patrilineal means of ancestry combined with a marriage to a male could undermine her leadership rule; woman-woman marriages were a means of appropriating masculine authority. In other cases, the eldest daughter assumed the masculine role in a partnership as a means of continuing her father's lineage if he had no sons.<sup>103</sup> Regardless of sex, people in pre-colonial Africa had opportunities to negotiate their gender identities and roles in relation to others with whom they interacted.

### **Colonial Intersection**

The experiences of the elite, however, were not necessarily indicative of the broader society. Class and social standing could influence African gender roles. For example, because military conflict was generally the province of men, it “prioritized masculine values and gave paramount social and economic authority to men.”<sup>104</sup> Protecting the community carried implications of prestige and physical power to which women did not have access. If expansion on masculinity was a goal and war became commonplace, as it did in the Bugandan kingdom, then the emphasis could permeate throughout society. Once men began to travel and migrate for military duties, they were also able to access more economic opportunities, both of which they could leverage against women.

European societies were similarly structured and thus provided a common point of view from which to negotiate. When British explorer John Hanning Speke was searching for the

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<sup>103</sup> Hoppe, 226.

<sup>104</sup> Hoppe, 222.

source of the Nile in East Africa, he attempted to leverage his familiarity with masculine bellicosity to his advantage. While traveling through modern Tanzania, he attempted to mediate between Sheikh Shay and Manua Sera, the former being an Arab merchant trading in slaves and the latter a raider who had seized the Sheikh's ammunition supplies.<sup>105</sup> Speke had already encountered Manua Sera when the Sheikh called upon him; as they discussed the conflict he "begged them strongly to listen to reason, and accept my advice as an old soldier, not to carry on their guerilla warfare in such a headlong hurry."<sup>106</sup> Speke was taking advantage of the commonality of war in order to impose himself into the situation. The European's attempts at mediation and soldierly advice went unheeded however, and the pair continued their violent exchanges.

This contact, is representative of the expansion of European influence as a whole: it was solely a conversation between men. While there were a few notable exceptions, explorers and missionaries at the onset were males. Both British and Gandan societies were typically patriarchal, but the European entrance onto the African stage changed the scene. To some, patriarchal Europe's technological advances offered an enticing opportunity of which male Africans took advantage. They utilized colonial culture to lend "political, legal and economic support to patriarchal components of African societies," thus undermining the role of women.<sup>107</sup> This began the slow but persistent process by which African customs were supplanted by European norms.

Altering gender roles and their implications often occurred through migration and urbanization. In extractive states, the main purpose of the colony was to transfer raw materials

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<sup>105</sup> Speke, 254.

<sup>106</sup> Speke, 254.

<sup>107</sup> Hoppe, 224.

and resources from the colonized to the colonizer.<sup>108</sup> This often resulted in men relocating – by force, coercion, or incentives - in order to best optimize the extractive process. Similarly, “Neo-Europes,” or states that proved optimal for European settlers, exploited African labor for optimal operation.<sup>109</sup> Mines in extractive states and plantations in Neo-Europes were particularly exploitative. Colonial labor laws allowed for officials to simply force men to “build roads and railways, clear rivers for ship and boat transportation, construct government houses, military and police barracks, and so on.” British administrators held elders as ransom and required colonial-appointed chiefs to meet labor quotas as a means of coercing African men to perform this labor.<sup>110</sup> Administrators also utilized taxation as a means of social control. Although traditional institutions required payment as a portion of agricultural gains, Europeans required payment in cash; the only way to acquire this was by working for settlers, European companies, and colonial officials.<sup>111</sup>

As African men left their families to fulfill their new economic obligations, gender roles and family structures were fundamentally altered. Initially, mines only offered short-term contracts, meaning that families remained in their original locale and wages were considered supplemental to the subsistence farming.<sup>112</sup> The rest of the family – wives, children, and senior men – shouldered the burden of the loss of productivity. Without younger men around, women experienced greater domestic and agricultural duties.<sup>113</sup> Rather than relieving women of their

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<sup>108</sup> Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson, “The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation,” *The American Economic Review* 91, no. 5 (Dec. 2001): 1370.

<sup>109</sup> Acemoglu, 1370.

<sup>110</sup> Felix K. Ekechi, “Colonial Consolidation,” in *Africa, Volume 3. Colonial Africa, 1885-1939*, edited by Toyin Falola (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2001), 36.

<sup>111</sup> Ekechi, 36.

<sup>112</sup> Erik Gilbert, “The Economic Impact of Colonialism,” in *Africa: Volume 3. Colonial Africa, 1885-1939*, edited by Toyin Falola (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2001), 120.

<sup>113</sup> Hoppe, 227.



traditional work, colonialism actually supplemented it! While the colonizers' narrative has always maintained that women were able to better exercise autonomy because of European influence, this was simply not true for all women: those who were already married and raising families now had to do so on their own. Their partners had been taken by the colonial machine to service its heads.

In the urbanized mining communities where there were fewer women, men performed domestic duties and other acts typically seen as feminine. They had to redefine their masculinity and their relation to other men. This disturbance to feminine and masculine roles can be seen in mine marriages. In these relationships, one partner – normally the younger – essentially became a social female, performing the domestic and sexual roles of a wife. The other partner acted as the masculine half of the relationship, providing the other with gifts, protection, and professional guidance as would have occurred in any other male-female marriage.<sup>114</sup> These relationships typically ended when the social female had acquired enough social and physical capital to negotiate another marriage as the husband.

The economic changes that accompanied colonialism also had consequences for the structure of marriage within indigenous societies. In patrilocal societies, a daughter's marriage and relocation was a loss of a valuable, contributing member; in exchange for her productive and reproductive labor, the groom's family typically gave gifts to the bride's family, called bride wealth. Because young men traditionally did not have the financial means to conduct marriage negotiations on their own, they relied on senior members of the families to support them. This is one of the reasons why marriage was considered to be a communal engagement: since families would not finance a marriage if they did not approve of the partner, individual desires and

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<sup>114</sup> Hoppe, 232.

compatibility were considered in addition to desires of previous generations.<sup>115</sup> With the induction of the colonial era, unmarried men were able to collect wealth and status on their own terms through wage labor. Thus, these young men attempted to circumvent and undermine traditional practices. Elders responded in kind, inflating bride wealth in order to maintain a modicum of control over the marriage practices of their offspring.<sup>116</sup>

The introduction of wage labor and taxation had a profound effect not only on gender dynamics, but also on relationships between generations. Young and old men were now in competition for dominance over women's productive and reproductive labor. Senior members of the old hierarchy were no longer able to dictate marriage patterns since young men had been given alternate means of accumulating wealth. Women were caught in this game of tug-a-war between old and new; in either case they would still be dependent on a masculine authority.<sup>117</sup> While the narrative has always asserted that colonialism empowered young people to purpose their own marriages, this was only partly true: the ability for men to independently accumulate wealth still enforced the practice of bridewealth that commodified women. Britain was never able to eliminate this system from their colonies and so the altering of gender roles disproportionately benefited men over women.

This is still the case in many areas, including Uganda. Last summer, my friend William Mukisa announced that he was beginning the engagement process to his girlfriend, Sharon. As a Christian in a Muslim family, William was able to take advantage of this relatively recent fluidity and his empowerment in the marriage market. With wage-based jobs at a church and a non-profit, he was liberated from what would have been a traditional, family-oriented marriage.

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<sup>115</sup> Tabitha Kanogo, *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya, 1900-1950* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 22.

<sup>116</sup> Hoppe, 224-225.

<sup>117</sup> Kanogo, 23-24

Despite his paternal family's relative wealth and prestige in his home country of Kenya, they could not influence his marriage choice and he selected a college-educated, Christian woman with whom he could build a life. Colonialism appropriated the power traditionally given to fathers and used it as a means to bolster younger men and grant them autonomy and independence from generational hierarchies.<sup>118</sup>

Despite Sharon's independence – she lived and was employed in Kampala while her father and natal family resided in a rural town – her marriage to William required homage to these traditional systems. At the “pre-engagement” event during which William would officially ask for her father's permission to marry her, he had to first curry favor with the family by presenting certain members with gifts. If her father gave his blessing, then Sharon's family could request additional items at the official “engagement” ceremony; her father gave his blessing to the couple and then asked for a cow. While William and Sharon could have certainly ignored traditions and simply eloped, this would have led to various social and economic repercussions; Sharon was still unable to leverage her relative power to ensure her own autonomy.

Colonialism also created difficulties for women within marriages in addition to those caused by their partner's absence. Because marriage was considered a contract regarding labor. There were no exclusive ties to religion prior to the imposition of outside faiths. The combination of Christianity and colonialism was extremely important, as missionaries and officials wielded both moral and legal authority based on their own perceived superiority. The Islamic faith also helped weld religion to marriage, although to a lesser extent since Muslims did not exercise economic and social power to the extent that Christian Europeans did. Once this

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<sup>118</sup> Participant Observation, Mukono (Uganda), July 2, 2016.

link was formed, it proved very difficult for women to act with any form of agency within the arrangement. Christian conceptions of marriage emphasized domesticity and loyalty to a single partner. Previously, marriage had more fluidity and contracts could be unmade with relative ease.<sup>119</sup> Requirements for the granting of a legal divorce left women as the primary victims as they found themselves unable to negotiate for freedom or authority.

Furthermore, Christianity was the main instrument by which polygamous practices were destroyed. Many believed that polygamy was indicative of immorality and a lack of female empowerment when in fact it was a useful tool in the assignment of responsibilities. Multiple wives meant that domestic responsibilities could be shared and more time could be devoted to other endeavors, such as trade and crafts.<sup>120</sup> Families could provide the necessities of life while also engaging with the world at large and expanding technical skill work. The benefit of adding a family member – less average labor for each woman – outweighed the maintenance work they required as each was essentially doing the same chores as before. Without the ability to share labor, agricultural and household chores became the dominant and almost exclusive work of women as priorities shifted to maintaining a subsistence level of living and leisure was severely cut down. Women actually found themselves more restricted in their economic and social capabilities even as colonialism privileged masculine characteristics and claimed to seek the empowerment of women.

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<sup>119</sup> Hoppe, 223; and Kanogo, 22.

<sup>120</sup> Hoppe, 225.

## Gender in Traditional Education

Traditional and modern systems of education in Uganda showcase how colonialism has both reinforced and disrupted ideologies surrounding gender. Like some of their counterparts in medieval Europe, young women of the Gandan aristocracy were routinely sent to the Kabaka's court to be "trained for their future roles in the nation as wives and mothers of the elite."<sup>121</sup> Their male counterparts had similar experiences. This education was intended to be practical, allowing young boys and girls to occupy certain spaces and successfully perform their assigned gender roles within society. Often, initiations encompassed formal education as opposed to informal, through which knowledge was disseminated freely. At these points of demarcation, children received specific instruction based on their gender: young women received "physiological, social, and moral education to become capable mothers and wives" while young men were "trained to become defenders of their villages and good providers for their families."<sup>122</sup> Formal education also existed through apprenticeships which allowed for both boys and girls to attain the skills necessary to pursue a particular role in society, like that of a blacksmith or religious leader.<sup>123</sup>

However, much of a child's education occurred through informal methods, though the subjects and topics very closely resemble those of modern, Westernized education. History was covered in the discussion of war, movement amongst clans, and ancestry; lessons about birth and death, plants and animals could all be considered biology; children were taught very early how to

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<sup>121</sup> Nakanyike B. Musisi, "Colonial and Missionary Education: Women and Domesticity in Uganda, 1900-1945," in *African Encounters with Domesticity*, edited by Karen Tranberg Hansen (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 173.

<sup>122</sup> Michael B. Adeyemi and Augustus A. Adeyinka, "The Principles and Content of African Traditional Education," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 25, no. 4 (2003): 435.

<sup>123</sup> Ado K. Tiberondwa, *Missionary Teachers as Agents of Colonialism in Uganda* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1998), 4.

honor and perform their culture's religious practices; traditional dances constituted physical education; geography would have been encompassed in practical experiences with the land.<sup>124</sup> Sometimes these informal instructions were gendered. Dances and religious activities often had – and still do have – a distinct dichotomy between male and female; their roles, costumes, and movements reflected the masculine and feminine nuances in their everyday lives. In visiting a Maasai village in Kenya during April of 2003, my eight-year-old self was upset when I was not allowed to learn how to start a fire using string and friction; while my brother and father learned this, my mother and I were taught to construct a house by driving stakes into the ground, weaving grasses between them, and solidifying the walls with mud. These distinctions have likely endured for generations and reflect the gender roles within this culture. As the traditional hunters and protectors of the family, the men's control over fire reflected this role. Since women typically focused their energy on raising the family, the construction of the home fell to them.

At the imposition of colonial rule, missionaries utilized these cultural commonalities in order to usurp education, beginning by educating the children of elites. Over time, opportunities at religious institutions spread beyond this class, but in the early years schools were only accessible by elite families. Gayaza Girls' Boarding School was the first all-girls school to be established in modern Uganda in 1905 by the Church Missionary Society; here, African values came into conflict with both European values and changing perceptions. Elite parents were assured that their daughters would not be removed from the domestic sphere and so the missionary teachers utilized “practical domestic work combined with religious education to build character” while largely ignoring academic studies.<sup>125</sup> As wives and mothers, an extensive

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<sup>124</sup> Tiberondwa, 6.

<sup>125</sup> Musisi, 173.

literary curriculum would not be useful and would also provide the women with excessive power and a means to disrupt social hierarchies. However, the emphasis on domesticity also caused problems. Daughters of the aristocracy were typically exempt from the manual labor that these educators believed would instill discipline into their pupils; the *bakembuga* – the class of elite women – began to protest on behalf of their daughters, objecting to the excessive orientation towards domesticity.<sup>126</sup> Although female domesticity was already important in Gandan culture, elites and missionaries may not have agreed on what this meant. Ernest Linant de Bellefonds' observations that some female members of the royal family were carried around by slaves provide some context. Walking was seen as beneath the daughters and sisters of the king, just as work in the gardens was beneath the aristocratic daughters at Gayaza.<sup>127</sup>

As access to European education trickled down through society, many proponents of colonialism used female education as justification and evidence of female empowerment. Recent scholarship, however, suggests that this may not be the case. Basing his analysis of Protestant marriage registries, Felix zu Selhausen concludes that although literacy levels improved amongst educated women, their participation in labor markets did not.<sup>128</sup> Education did not guarantee that a woman would be able to utilize her newly gained knowledge; gender roles restricted her economic opportunities and ability to negotiate relationships with men. Perhaps colonialism reinforced this condition rather than alleviated it. The distinguishing factor for empowerment was employment at missions following their education in these institutions. When women were employed by the missions, they married approximately three years later to men about three years closer to their own age, which may be a signal of shifting power between

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<sup>126</sup> Musisi, 175.

<sup>127</sup> Linant, 270.

<sup>128</sup> Selhausen, 74.

parents and daughters as well as husband and wife. The author also found that the women who were employed by missions tended to have fathers engaged in mission work, suggesting that they needed this masculine presence in order to gain the opportunity.<sup>129</sup> Education was not enough to qualify a woman for employment in the colonial economy or empower her to control her marriage prospects; she needed to leverage her masculine connections against a religious institution in order to make this a reality.

One must wonder how much freedom these women really had given such constraints. Education did not provide women with the ability to exercise agency in terms of selecting and pursuing a marriage partner. Only when she was able to obtain employment was she able to delay marriage and reduce the spousal age gap; however, opportunities were only available through missions, and this was even more restricted to religious, educational, and nursing roles.<sup>130</sup> Furthermore, the necessity of a mission-employed father may signal a negation of the analysis that the missions themselves provided the means of empowerment through education. A father who is employed at the missions could be more inclined to let his daughter seek educational and employment opportunities; he, rather than mission education, may have been the determining factor that allowed his daughter agency in the pursuit of marriage. If this were true, then the missions were not empowering women. Instead, they were merely encouraging fathers to relinquish aspects of their authority. Women would have only exercised autonomy by virtue of a masculine figure allowing her to control aspects of her own productive and reproductive labor and then only within the constraint of the missions. In this sense, the restriction on their agency had been very much “double-downed:” not only were they restricted by colonial

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<sup>129</sup> Selhausen, 74.

<sup>130</sup> Selhausen, 74.



imposition, which carried distinct racial undertones, but they were also restricted by their sex and gender performance.

### **Gender in Modern Education**

In the modern Ugandan education system, the fluctuation between reinforcing and disrupting gender ideologies has taken its toll. Many problems within the system can find parallels in the performance of gender roles. For all children, schooling does not reflect the practicalities of their daily lives, increasing the opportunity costs of their education. By attending school, families not only lose out on their labor – something crucial to survival in a subsistence-level household – but children forgo vital knowledge dissemination in the form of “home apprenticeships.”<sup>131</sup> Regardless of gender, knowledge gleaned from one’s parents is likely to be more practical than what a student learns in school, particularly in rural areas.

If a young man were to complete primary school after approximately seven years in school – an achievement only one-third of enrolled students achieved in 2005<sup>132</sup> – but does not obtain the exam scores to enter secondary school, he may find himself right back where he started, working on a family farm. The years he spent learning mathematics, a foreign language (usually that of a former colonizer), and science could have been utilized learning the best crops to sow, how to go about irrigating them, and the proper means to store or sell the harvest. A young woman in the same situation would be unprepared for the tasks of a mother and wife, not to mention the physical implications of an early marriage and motherhood. Typically girls are

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<sup>131</sup> Mary Jean Bowman and C. Arnold Anderson, “The Participation of Women in Education in the Third World,” in *Women’s Education in the Third World: Comparative Perspectives*, edited by Gail P. Kelly and Carolyn M. Elliott (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 22.

<sup>132</sup> Fred M. Ssewamala, Julia Shu-Huah Wang, Leyla Karimli, and Proscovia Nabunya, “Strengthening Universal Education in Uganda: The potential role of an asset-based development policy,” *International Journal of Educational Development* 31 (2001): 474.

thirteen years old when they complete primary school. Marriage would be their most likely path. Death from pregnancy and childbirth is five times more likely to occur to girls under fifteen than it is to women over twenty.<sup>133</sup>

In both of these accounts, it is clear that economics is just as important, if not more so, than formal education for ensuring the long-term success both of individuals and the nation-state as a whole. Is it more prudent to reform the education or economic system? Like women educated at the missions, social changes can only be brought to bear when economic opportunities are readily available. Education and economy walk alongside and inform one another; these opportunities must allow for fluidity to both conform to and contradict common gender roles.

It should be considered that despite the lack of economic opportunities that match with the knowledge disseminated through schools, the education of both men and women can lead to positive outcomes. The education of girls has been described as a “vaccine” against HIV/AIDs owing to the reduced risk of sexually transmitted infections attributed to schooling. An educated mother also results in a more balanced diet and better nutrition for her children.<sup>134</sup> While schooled women can have a positive impact in the family, so too can educated men: fathers with higher education levels are more likely to value education for their children, particularly their daughters.<sup>135</sup> This is something to be celebrated. While this generation of Ugandan adults was not able to utilize their education, there is still hope for their children and grandchildren.

Education received today has a snowball effect through the years, resulting in healthier, more

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<sup>133</sup> Angela Wanak, “Educating Girls in Africa: a case study of a nonprofit organization working to ensure the international human right to education,” in *Willamette Journal of International Law and Dispute Resolution* 16 (January 2008): 110.

<sup>134</sup> Wanak, 110-111.

<sup>135</sup> A.B.Z. Kasozi, “Access and Equity Problems in Uganda,” in *Financing Access and Equity in Higher Education*, edited by Jane Knight (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2009), 70; Wanak, 111.

educated future citizens. Western education has done this. Though there still is work to be done to ensure that the economic and education systems unite in their goals, the progress and positive externalities that result from education are worthy of praise.

The practicality of formal education has greatly improved since the disturbance of the missionaries, though there is still a long way to go. German Catholic missionaries – indeed, Europeans of all denominations and origin countries – working in East Africa focused their educational efforts on disseminating knowledge based on European experiences. Questions from a Togo school examination in 1909 reflect this orientation: students were asked to write an essay answering the question, “What good things have the Europeans done for us?”<sup>136</sup> and perform arithmetic to solve for percentage increase of copra exports between 1906 and 1907.<sup>137</sup> These tasks are extraneous in today’s society and absolutely absurd in the colonial era. Following independence, Uganda began an intense process of Africanizing its curriculum in order to incorporate its history, culture, and people into the school system. Still, some modern examination questions face some of the same difficulties of practicality, though other areas have been improved. Sample questions published in newspapers to prepare for Primary Leaving Exams are a mixed bag in terms of practical applications: the science section ranges from “What type of change takes place when a bean seed is germinating?” to “Give any one example of a hinge joint.”<sup>138</sup> Social studies questions range from “Which arm of the rift valley passes through Uganda?” to “Why is it important for families to prepare a budget?”<sup>139</sup> Many of these questions do not address the gendered realities of children’s future. The subjects taught and lessons

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<sup>136</sup> “A Togo School Examination, 1909,” in *Colonial Rule in Africa: Readings from Primary Sources*, edited by Bruce Fetter (Madison: The University of Madison Press, 1979), 128.

<sup>137</sup> “A Togo School Examination, 1909,” 129.

<sup>138</sup> “Modern PLE Revision Tests,” *Observer* (Kampala, Uganda) 22, no. 83 (July 11-12, 2016), 18.

<sup>139</sup> “Modern PLE Revisions Tests,” 15.

learned are simply not applicable to how these young men and women are going to operate in the world.

Within schools, girls are often subjected to new gendered hierarchies begotten by colonialism, making their educational pathway difficult to maneuver. Often times in Uganda, the school day runs from 8:00am to 5:30 or 6:00pm, which is why most students prefer to board at the school rather than commute, though this also increases costs. For those who cannot afford this option, it is a serious disadvantage in multiple aspects. Although officials may see more time in school as an advantage, it burns students out regardless of gender. It just so happens to also have a side effect that disproportionately hinders girls. With these extreme hours in addition to assignments that are taken home, young girls are often unable to complete domestic duties. School-age boys have similar problems with their chores, but girls are more likely to suffer repercussions to their education because of it. In some situations, families have no choice but to prioritize the present value of their daughter's labor over the potential value after years of schooling. Further, since many societies are still patrilocal, investing in a daughter's education – at the expense of unfulfilled domestic obligations – would be unlikely to pay off in the future. Daughters will marry and move away from home and her husband and his family will reap the benefits; sons are more likely to stay in the same area and look after their aging parents.<sup>140</sup>

Girls encounter the largest obstacles when they begin adolescence. The start of puberty signals a turning point in any child's life and in many cultures marks the transition from childhood to adulthood; for girls around the world, puberty can also disrupt their educational and social progress. When menstration is considered a cultural taboo, females are often restricted in

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<sup>140</sup> Wanak, 112.

their activities. If hygiene products are not readily available, the issue is compounded. Unable to attend school during their monthly cycle, adolescent females fall further and further behind until they are unable to catch up and they leave school altogether. Furthermore, menstruation means that a girl now has tangible reproductive potential; this increases a daughter's present value on the marriage market and further diminishes incentives to invest in a future that is often seen as mutually exclusive to motherhood.

Some educators realize this, and are taking small but important steps to help girls overcome these obstacles. During my summer 2016 research trip in Uganda, I had an opportunity to spend a day with Jimmy Katende, the director and founder of a small rural school in Mukono District. He very proudly showed me the lady's latrines, pointing out the special room that held a stock of sanitary napkins, a pail for disposal, and a bucket for washing. He was even able to introduce me to the matron, a young woman whose specific task it was to keep the girls supplied and assure them that any changes in their bodies were normal. With his third and youngest daughter completing secondary school and beginning university in the fall, he understood the issues facing young women in Uganda and has incorporated it into his passion for education. Empowering individuals like Jimmy is crucial to not only to women's education, but to reforming the system as a whole. He has hope for his country and he uses it to snuff out the flames that are threatening to encroach. Regardless of the resources available to him, he has made it his mission to do what he can to make a difference.<sup>141</sup>

Historically colonizers have often justified their actions in Africa by claiming that they liberated African women. However, women in traditional African societies were not as

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<sup>141</sup> Participant Observation, Mukono (Uganda), July 8, 2016.

oppressed as colonialism has made them out to be; if they were, it would provide one of the necessary conditions to justify the imposition of European rule. In particular, elite women in the Bugandan Kingdom were granted special privileges and often prioritized over male relatives. When Europeans began expanding their trade networks and imposing formalized rule, they engaged in a masculine conversation which benefited African males at the expense of their female counterparts. Economic changes wrought by colonialism fundamentally altered how gender roles were performed and how people of all genders interacted with one another. Rather than alleviating oppression and facilitating freedom, women faced new complications and new forms of oppression both in colonial society and the transition to post-colonial. The post-colonial education system has built on this complicated legacy, altering generations of informal knowledge dissemination and further restricting both men and women to these greatly misconstrued understandings of traditional gender roles. Without recognizing the underhandedness present in the myth of colonialism, it is impossible to fully understand its implications.

## Chapter 4 - Education<sup>142</sup>

### Early Education

Prior to the onset of colonialism, there were informal and formal means of education on the continent of Africa, most of which took place in the course of people's daily lives. This education, compared to schooling, was about more than literacy or the passage of knowledge; it was an initiation into the dominant culture, which encompassed much more than what could be taught in a school and was tailored to the context of the society.<sup>143</sup> Scholars have suggested five basic principles of African indigenous education, elaborated upon by Michael B. Adeyemi and Augustus A. Adeyinka. The first, "preparationism," ensured that learners were prepared with skills appropriate to their gender roles.<sup>144</sup> As discussed previously, this generally produced capable wives and mothers compared to farmers and warriors.<sup>145</sup> The principle of "functionalism" ensured that the education received was utilitarian in nature, ensuring that regardless of future situations, knowledge would be applicable.<sup>146</sup> Related to this is the concept of "wholisticism." With the exception of some peoples, including the Acholi of Uganda, there was little if any specialization of jobs; this meant that as learners grew, they had a choice of occupations depending on what was needed by the community.<sup>147</sup> The fourth principle, "communalism," enforced the belief that all things were owned in common, strengthening the social bonds between individuals. Finally, the concept of "perennialism" ensured that education

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<sup>142</sup> Portions of this chapter come from "Pearl of Africa: British Colonialism's Role in Ugandan Education and Modern Repercussions for Nonprofits" (2016). *History Summer Fellows*. 4. [http://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/history\\_sum/4](http://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/history_sum/4)

<sup>143</sup> Adeyemi, 429.

<sup>144</sup> Adeyemi, 432.

<sup>145</sup> Adeyemi, 432.

<sup>146</sup> Adeyemi, 432.

<sup>147</sup> Adeyemi, 433.

was used as a “vehicle for maintaining or preserving the cultural heritage or status quo.”<sup>148</sup>

Although each generation would leave its mark, modifying the inherited culture before passing it along, its principles remained largely unchanged.

Traditional education is thus distinct from the Western schooling that Christian missions introduced. They did not consider that their system “had been tailored to suit people of a different cultural background and to solve different kinds of problems.”<sup>149</sup> Mission schooling was simply not practical to the indigenous way of life. For example, German Catholic missionaries working throughout Africa focused their educational efforts on disseminating knowledge based on European experiences. Questions from a Togo School Examination in 1909 reflect this orientation: students were asked to name the men who supported the government of Emperor William I during his campaigns and had to prove their reading skills by reading aloud from “Drei Kaiserbuchein.”<sup>150</sup> None of this would have been readily applicable to the realities of African life. Functionalism was not being employed as pupils were not equipped with the tools necessary for employment. In traditional societies there would be no unemployment because skills were utilitarian and could be used in any position, while unemployment may have remained low in the colonial era, this was a byproduct of necessity rather than choice. Pupils would graduate from these mission schools with skills applicable to jobs in the colonial administration, but the available supply meant that few could actually obtain such employment. Thus, knowledge disseminated through these institutions were not useful in the average African’s life.

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<sup>148</sup> Adeyemi, 433.

<sup>149</sup> Tiberondwa, 14.

<sup>150</sup> “A Togo School Examination, 1909,” 129.



Since schooling was first introduced by the missions, religion was intimately tied to the dissemination of knowledge: one could not understand Scriptures without being literate and to be literate without faith was practically unheard of. Thus, Christian missionaries were imposing a distinctly Western culture within the schools, complete with their own emphasis on literacy and academic subjects.<sup>151</sup> Education also became denominational with “Catholic” students attending the Catholic mission school while “Protestant” students went to the Protestant mission school even within the same village.<sup>152</sup> East Africans often ‘abandoned’ their traditional beliefs in order to gain the advantage of schooling for their children, setting aside the traditional education they had received in exchange for Western schooling; scholars cannot estimate how many Africans converted due to genuine belief as opposed to material benefits.<sup>153</sup>

Once in school, missionaries forcibly separated young Africans from their native cultures. Music, dance, drama, dress, and anything else connected to their ways of life were actively discouraged and often banned outright. Students could be punished for using their indigenous languages on school grounds.<sup>154</sup> The culture of the colonists was an intrinsic feature of the education system from the beginning. They taught European literature with “good” and “bad” Africans portrayed as those who accepted or rejected colonialism; students learned that their continent had no real history until the arrival of the Europeans; geography courses focused on the European landscape and African landmarks mattered only in reference to the first European to see it.<sup>155</sup> Although schooling did not match with to learners’ daily lives, many local

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<sup>151</sup> Adeyemi, 425.

<sup>152</sup> Tiberondwa, 44.

<sup>153</sup> Adeyemi, 425; Tiberondwa, 38.

<sup>154</sup> P.G. Okuth, “The Creation of a dependent culture: the imperial school curriculum in Uganda,” in *The Imperial Curriculum: Racial images and education in the British colonial experience*, edited by J.A. Mangan (London: Routledge, 1993), 141.

<sup>155</sup> Okuth, 141.

chiefs would punish those who did not attend the missionary schools.<sup>156</sup> According to British-stated policies, “the educational program should be designed for the majority and should follow a course which would give due consideration to the cultural peculiarities of the various regions.”<sup>157</sup> In practice however, this was not occurring. The subjects being taught in schools were not functional to the average student and those that would be most pertinent to their futures were ignored.

Notwithstanding these issues, there are some congratulatory attributes of this education system. The uniformity of subject matter between Britain and its colonies is one such instance, especially given the current state of the globe. The earth has been dominated, at least indirectly, by Western society. Though pupils of the colonial era had little use for Shakespeare of the English language, modern students do. Technology has minimized the impact of the miles between people; the best way to take advantage of these opportunities is to find common ground. Globalization only becomes an asset when individuals can leverage it to their advantage. The domination of Western culture and ideologies – a byproduct of their previous colonial endeavors – has facilitated unprecedented levels of economic, political, and social interactions between people historically isolated from one another. The current structure of post-colonial and western education systems reinforces this, echoing the traditional concept of “perennialism.” Schooling around the world has dual-roles as creators of commonality through knowledge dissemination and reinforcements of the western-oriented status quo.

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<sup>156</sup> Tiberondwa, 56.

<sup>157</sup> H.A. Wieschhoff, *Colonial Policies in Africa* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944): 87.

## Missionary and Government Involvement

Missionaries, who arrived second only to explorers, established an enduring presence on the continent, but it was only a matter of time before governments began imposing themselves. Britain intervened in East Africa because of their existing presence in Egypt: as the Italians expanded their influence to the east, there was a very real fear that they would reach the source of the Nile – located in modern Uganda – and build dams, crippling the British Empire.<sup>158</sup> However, colonists did not actively take control of the school system until after the First World War when governments began to see the potential of their colonial subjects as well as the dangers they posed. Missionaries demanded that Africans discover the joys of hard work, an acceptance of European hygiene standards, and the blessings of Christianity. However, the aftermath of the war created a need to fill the lowest ranks of colonial administration.<sup>159</sup> Christian missionaries and colonial administrators thus found themselves in direct competition for the minds of indigenous Africans.

Great Britain began to seize control of the formal education system in the 1920s by creating an Advisory Committee and charging the Phelps Stokes Commission with evaluating its holdings.<sup>160</sup> It became their goal to preserve and improve upon what they considered as “good” in indigenous education, including a sense of “responsibility to the tribal community” and the pursuit of “moral and intellectual truth.”<sup>161</sup> The British colonial administrators believed that the civilizing effects of colonialism and education would remove what was considered to be “bad” in

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<sup>158</sup> Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, “New Frontiers of Insecurity,” in *The Partition of Africa: Illusion or Necessity*, edited by Robert O. Collins (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1969), 141.

<sup>159</sup> Apollos O. Nwauma, “Educational Policies and Reforms,” in *Africa, Volume 4. The End of Colonial Rule: Nationalism and Decolonization*, edited by Toyin Falola (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2002), 168; Okuth 139; Barnes, 146.

<sup>160</sup> “Educational Policy in British Tropical Africa (1925),” in *Colonial Rule in Africa: Readings from Primary Sources*, edited by Bruce Fetter (Madison: The University of Madison Press, 1979), 130.

<sup>161</sup> “Educational Policy in British Tropical Africa (1925),” 131.

everyday indigenous life: “Since contact with civilization – and even education itself – must necessarily tend to weaken tribal authority and the sanctions of existing beliefs, and in view of the all-prevailing belief in the supernatural which affects the whole life of the Africa it is essential that what is good in the old beliefs and sanctions should be strengthened and what is defective should be replaced.”<sup>162</sup> This statement reflects the enduring colonial beliefs that indigenous culture was backward and in need of European guidance and reform. It also signals the intent of Europeans to provide assistance and aid. They recognized that, by their own standards, there were positive and negative attributes to traditional systems. They did not resolve that there was nothing to be celebrated even as they prepared to fix what they condemned.

The recommendations that came out of the inquiry brought the colonial school system in line with Britain’s own system. Although administrators recognized that “devotion to some spiritual ideal is the deepest source of inspiration in the discharge of public duty,” they were prepared to wrest control from the missions in order to achieve their other goals. Observers recommended that residential or boarding schools be utilized as the primary institutes of instruction due to the presence of teachers and older pupils.<sup>163</sup> Through this structure, teachers and older pupils could serve as role models for younger pupils, passing the values of the colonial system through the years. In this way, the model was similar to the principle of perennialism, through which one preserves the status quo. However, it was not a traditional culture that was being maintained, but rather a foreign value system that carried its own social expectations and limitations.

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<sup>162</sup> “Educational Policy in British Tropical Africa (1925),” 131.

<sup>163</sup> “Educational Policy in British Tropical Africa (1925),” 131.

The study also dictated the requirements of a native teaching staff. This had lasting implications in terms of a rural-urban dichotomy. Observers called for training in conditions specific to a rural setting so that “those who are being trained are in direct contact with the environment in which their work has to be done.” Furthermore, authorities were encouraged to pay attention to the varying linguistic traditions and customs of rural areas and would preferably assign graduated teachers to schools that served their own tribe or district.<sup>164</sup> There were distinct challenges in rural areas which are reflected in the recommendations in “Educational Policy in British Tropical Africa” of 1925. Schools outside metropolitan areas often had to contend with various language and ethnic discrepancies. Kampala, the capital of Uganda, resides in the historical kingdom of Buganda, meaning that there was a fair amount of conformity. Having conquered various tribes and ethnic associations, the kabakas had begun the process of uniting the people in the East African region. Outside of these boundaries, however, there was more fractionalization and cultural practices distinct to certain peoples. This left much to be desired in terms of education; the closer one lived to an urban setting, the better the opportunities were for education.<sup>165</sup>

## **Colonial Ideologies**

There were a variety of colonial educational methods that found their way into practice during the era; in particular, the British and French differed significantly to their approaches to education. While the dominant French model emphasized assimilation and adaptation, the British tended to endorse a “separate development” policy.<sup>166</sup> Both have severe racial

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<sup>164</sup> “Educational Policy in British Tropical Africa (1925),” 132.

<sup>165</sup> Nwauwa, 171.

<sup>166</sup> Oyebade, “Colonial Political Systems,” 81-83

undertones. Though the French model contained the notion that European culture should be imposed upon “uncivilized” peoples, the British took its implications in a different direction, believing that European culture was far too advanced for indigenous people to comprehend. Thus, Britain sponsored the use of regional languages in their colonies as a part of their educational endeavors.<sup>167</sup> In rural areas, this meant that exposure to English was limited and schooling more often occurred in student’s home language. Implications of these two approaches to language in the modern educational context require further examination, but for now it is sufficient to say that when the medium of instruction (MOI) is an un-mastered language, pupils are less able to comprehend the material and schooling fails them.<sup>168</sup> With the costs associated with catering to a variety of rural distinctions, many colonists followed the French model and prepared their colonial subjects for assimilation into a European system.

Despite the limited access to English, the colonial education system resulted in Africans becoming “British in all but color.” Although they acted British and thought of themselves as such, they did not meet all the physical criteria.<sup>169</sup> Like the indigenous people, indigenous culture was finding itself Westernized, incorporating aspects of both experiences. It also imparted the belief that the goal of education was to acquire rather than emerge with “more.” In other words, schooling and certificates alone should provide people with a good life rather than equip them with the tools and opportunity to make their dreams a reality.<sup>170</sup> The education system as it stood emphasized academic subjects over practical and technical ones. A general consequence of this was the elevation of the elite over their fellow Africans.<sup>171</sup> In Uganda, this

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<sup>167</sup> Barnes, 149.

<sup>168</sup> Mathias Bwanika Mulumba and Fred Masagazi Masaazi, “Challenges to African development: the medium of instruction in Uganda’s education system,” *Pedagogy, Culture and Society* 20, no. 3 (October 2012): 442.

<sup>169</sup> Okuth, 143.

<sup>170</sup> Okuth, 143.

<sup>171</sup> Tiberondwa, 61.

resulted in a shortage of desperately needed tradesmen and women. When young adults have a “white collar attitude,” believing that technical subjects were only for fools, there were not enough people entering the necessary fields.<sup>172</sup> Curricula emphasized theory at the expense of hands-on practice in a largely agricultural society.<sup>173</sup> Since most students would find themselves working in the fields whenever they left school, they were not prepared for their lives. Furthermore, they attained literacy and the knowledge that there were jobs available that required such skills yet few found such employment. Students who were unwilling to settle for agricultural and traditional work found themselves without any job opportunities; those who were willing discovered their schooling had been in vain. The latter group might have been better served had they received traditional education. Missionary education meant that Africans had lost “time-tested skills which the elders had developed as a result of careful study of the indigenous environment.”<sup>174</sup> With the steady collapse of traditional education and the loss of generations of knowledge, colonial systems would leave a problematic legacy for the African people.

## **Modern Education**

When Uganda first received its independence in 1962, education was one of the first subjects to be addressed. During Milton Obote’s first presidency, the focus was on secondary and tertiary education, largely ignoring primary schools. Students in these two levels leaned so heavily towards the arts and social sciences that the economy could not absorb them when they left school. That same decade, the government’s five-year plan, *Work for Progress*, aimed to fix

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<sup>172</sup> Okuth, 143-4.

<sup>173</sup> Okuth, 144.

<sup>174</sup> Okuth, 144.

these lopsided numbers and enact Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 1981.<sup>175</sup> They recognized that they needed to adjust the curriculum of primary school in order to achieve this. Simultaneously, it was oriented to students continuing to secondary school, only one in seven pupils.<sup>176</sup> Thus, they sought to “Africanize” the former colonial system to better suit the country’s needs. Their default solution to their problems was more: more teachers, more schools, more students. They did not, for instance, acknowledge that approximately 90% of Ugandan school teachers were British expatriates rather than Ugandans or that pupils were not being directed towards the subjects where labor was needed to grow the nation.<sup>177</sup> Instead, everything would be fixed if only there was more.

In the *Development Plan for Education, 1964/65 up to 1970*, the Ugandan government aimed to have a small increase in primary school enrollment but to triple the number in secondary education; to accommodate this massive increase, they planned to convert twenty-three teacher training colleges into secondary schools. The government also set and controlled a fixed ratio of science to art students at 60:40.<sup>178</sup> However, the Obote government again failed to address the heart of these educational issues, rooted in quality rather than quantity. The country began experiencing severe shortages of teachers, materials, and accommodations; in some cases, strikes and riots on the part of students resulted in damage to buildings, and unpopular teachers and headmasters having stones thrown at them or discovering their homes and cars set ablaze. These conditions may be the consequence of overcrowding, poor accommodations, harsh or unnecessary discipline, poor exam results, and dwindling job prospects which were all offshoots

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<sup>175</sup> Furley, 175.

<sup>176</sup> Furley, 176.

<sup>177</sup> Furley, 177.

<sup>178</sup> Furley, 177-178



of the “disappointment and impatience” with “the fruits of independence.”<sup>179</sup> Eventually, Uganda began to take serious its push for UPE for fear of too many early school leavers being unable to match with the needed jobs that required a higher education level. Jobs that were available were beyond the skills of those who left primary school. The hope was that UPE would not only temper the supply of young, unskilled laborers, but also provide them with the opportunity to remain in school to fill employment gaps in the economy. In 1966, the country released its second five-year plan, *Work for Progress*, in which they aimed to increase primary school enrollment by 40% to 70%, by collaborating with parents in underserved districts.<sup>180</sup>

In 1971, Idi Amin came to power and wrecked the nation during the eight years of military rule and civil war that followed. As a military commander in Obote’s army, he and the rest of the military – who were mostly uneducated – were suspicious of educated people.<sup>181</sup> They could not trust the elites who according to Amin’s propaganda were prominent because they rode the coat-tails of the colonial regime and crushed the masses of Africans underfoot. Many powerful members of society, fearing attempts on their lives and attacks on their families, fled to neighboring countries and never returned.<sup>182</sup> In November of 1972, Amin ordered all foreigners, specifically Asians, Arabs, and Indians, to leave the country by the end of the year or be killed. The British used these groups as a sort of buffer-class between themselves and the indigenous people; enticed by economic prospects and the ease of travel and immigration between British colonies, many people from India and Hong Kong took advantage of these opportunities. Although not actively pursuing favoritism by the British, they nonetheless were privileged in society. During the colonial and early independence eras, they had comprised

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<sup>179</sup> Furley, 178.

<sup>180</sup> Furley, 180.

<sup>181</sup> Furley, 182.

<sup>182</sup> Furley, 182.

much of the merchant and skilled work needed to run the country. Without them, all the materials to maintain a school were becoming near impossible to obtain – books, paper, food water, building materials, and repair work.<sup>183</sup> Despite these horrendous conditions, the education system survived. The Primary Leaving Exams (PLEs), a standardized test given to all students on completion of Primary Seven, were administered without difficulty, an incredible achievement. They

must be delivered at exactly 7.30 am on a given day in December at 4,000 different school locations around the country. Accompanying them must be exactly the same number of answer sheets and thick lead pencils, invigilators from neighbouring schools, and (a rival) school's managing committee. In 1978 the exam required a special airfreight flight from London to Kampala; 40 lorries; a military escort - of battalion strength and approximately 3 per cent of the Ministry of Education's current outlays. After three days of testing, the envelopes containing only each individual student's identification number are collected, sealed, and transported back to either Nairobi or London for grading by computer. Results are sent to district education offices and then to each of the 4,000 primary schools within two months despite extraordinary limitations on foreign exchange, despite (since independence) five changes of government, and despite unprecedented levels of internal strife, each year the PLE has been administered on schedule and without scandal.<sup>184</sup>

Given the political and social upheaval that was occurring, this was a remarkable feat.

Even at this stage, there was a concerted effort to continue reforming and Africanizing the curriculum. Courses began to include indigenous and “English languages, mathematics, health education, general science, geography, history/civics, religious knowledge, PE, music, crafts and handiwork”; in other words, school became about best serving “those who would receive no further education.”<sup>185</sup> There was also a greater push towards incorporating Africa’s history, culture, and people into the curriculum. Rather than teaching British Literature, schools taught literature in English that included African authors; math and science problems were re-

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<sup>183</sup> Furley, 182.

<sup>184</sup> Furley, 183.

<sup>185</sup> Furley, 184.

written to the African context; vernacular language courses incorporated literature written in that language; East African history replaced that of the British Empire.<sup>186</sup>

Despite the progress, the final years of Amin's dictatorship were some of the most violent. This helped ease the teacher shortage as many powerful people opted for a quieter, rural life and career beyond Amin's immediate sight.<sup>187</sup> After a six-month war between the Ugandan army and exiled Ugandans partnered with Tanzanian forces, Amin was deposed in 1979. The quick succession of presidents and continued warfare between the years of Amin and current-president Yoweri Museveni resulted in tremendous political uncertainty. Despite this, there was a general consensus concerning education: from 1981-83, the main goals were reconstruction and rehabilitation. It was recognized that some form of education would be needed if the country was ever to rise from the ashes; they needed to restore the national conscious and sense of pride as well as impart the values, responsibilities, and skills necessary to rebuild to the younger generation.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Furley, 187.

<sup>187</sup> Furley, 187.

<sup>188</sup> Furley, 189.

## Chapter 5 - Language<sup>189</sup>

### Early Language Usage

By the time Europe and Africa had entered into sustained contact, there was already infiltration of non-indigenous language into the region. Writing on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1875, Ernest Linant de Bellefonds recorded how Kabaka Mutesa summoned him and the Fakir of the Xodcria – a Muslim holy man – to discuss the Koran.<sup>190</sup> Given proscriptions against translating the holy book into any other language, Arabic must have made its presence known already. One could not have understood Holy Scriptures without learning the language. Given the intimate ties between literacy and religion, it is not surprising that language plays a role as well.

This relationship, however, was complicated by the complexities of colonialism. Although a belief in white superiority dictated that European civilization was superior, not all aspects were meant to be shared with the supposedly backwards natives. Language was a carrot dangled out front, a temptation that urged Africans forward without ever being attainable, except by a select few. This psychological disempowerment meant that Africans were encouraged to hate their indigenous languages as symbols of inadequacy while worshiping the language of their oppressors.<sup>191</sup> Linant himself described the Ganda people as “an inquiring, observant, intelligent people with minds longing for the learning of white people whose superiority they recognize.”<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Portions of this chapter come from “Pearl of Africa: British Colonialism's Role in Ugandan Education and Modern Repercussions for Nonprofits” (2016). *History Summer Fellows*. 4. [http://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/history\\_sum/4](http://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/history_sum/4). Other portions are the result of research conducted in Dr. Sheryl Goodman’s MSC350: Intercultural Communication course during the Fall of 2016.

<sup>190</sup> Linant, 270.

<sup>191</sup> Iweriebor, Ehiedu E.G., “The Psychology of Colonialism,” in *Africa, Volume 4. The End of Colonial Rule: Nationalism and Decolonization*, edited by Toyin Falola (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2002), 472.

<sup>192</sup> Linant, 271.

No doubt, Mugandans were actively pursuing a comprehension of European languages, not only as a means of communication but also to acquire social capital.

It should, however, be noted that the issue of colonial domination through language is a heavily contested topic. In particular, Kenyan and Nigerian writers Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe stand on opposite ends of the debate. In his book *Moving the Centre*, Ngũgĩ argues that the context of colonialism meant that European and African languages encountered one another on unequal footing and subsequently elevated English, French, Portuguese, and other foreign languages at the expense of indigenous languages.<sup>193</sup> Since the conquering nations held racist and negative viewpoints about the African continent and its people, this inevitably carried over into their languages.<sup>194</sup> Ngũgĩ argues that European languages became a means of achieving power, since they were used as the languages of instruction, administration, justice, and foreign communication; they were spoken by the minority in order to exclude the majority<sup>195</sup> as “the measure of one’s readiness for election into the band of the elect.”<sup>196</sup> The imposition of European language was thus a tool of the colonial system to divide and conquer.

By contrast, Achebe argues that Africans were not passively accepting colonialism: in linguistics, they often courted, even demanded it. Achebe emphasizes the need to play the devil’s advocate and consider all alternatives. The current interpretation of the problems of Africa’s languages is that “European languages [were] sponsored and foisted on the people by imperialism and African languages [were] defended by patriotic and progressive forces of peasants and workers.”<sup>197</sup> Thus, the issue has an element of class struggle, elites versus

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<sup>193</sup> Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* (London: James Currey, 1993), 32.

<sup>194</sup> Ngũgĩ, *Moving the Centre*, 35.

<sup>195</sup> Ngũgĩ, *Moving the Centre*, 37.

<sup>196</sup> Ngũgĩ, *Moving the Centre*, 32.

<sup>197</sup> Chinua Achebe, “The Politics of Language,” in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, edited by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (Reprint, London: Routledge, 1995. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition), 269.

commoners. The author notes that the Phelps-Stokes Commission, formed by Britain in 1922 to evaluate the empire's holdings in West Africa, emphasized the use of native tongue in the official business of the country; the legislation that followed, including that of the British Advisory Commission on Native Education on Tropical Africa, followed suit.<sup>198</sup> In fact, when Scottish missionaries refused to teach English during the 1920s and 30s, Kikuyus – the dominant ethnic group of Kenya, with which Ngũgĩ identifies – began establishing independent schools in retaliation.<sup>199</sup> Achebe works deliberately to complicate the issue of linguistic colonialism, exploring the possibility that native Africans were not so much the helpless victims as they may have also been willing collaborators.

### **Linguistic Colonialism**

When examining language and colonialism in the context of education, the intersections become even more complex. European languages were never intended for mass dissemination, instead granted to only those select few pupils who showed significant promise.<sup>200</sup> These students typically became cogs in the colonial machine or re-entered the educational system as teachers.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the British colonial administration approached education through a relationship of separate development as opposed to the dominant French assimilationist model. This created a series of contradictions. Since initial educational endeavors were pursued by missionaries, the colonial government discovered a powerful competitor for the minds of Africans. Since Britain relied on arrangements with African

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<sup>198</sup> Achebe, 270.

<sup>199</sup> Achebe, 270.

<sup>200</sup> Barnes, 144.

“traditional” chiefs to enforce their system of governance, educated Africans were only needed to fill the lower-level administrative positions in the government and some private enterprises.<sup>201</sup> The primary goal of the missions was to convert Africans to Christianity; literacy, and therefore education, was crucial to this divine calling. While colonial administrators were busy restricting Africans’ access to their language, missions were providing them with opportunities. Furthermore, the colonial system also found itself competing with the products of its education program. As Britain continued to promote what it viewed as “indigenous” culture, the educated “elites” found themselves doubly-suppressed: European education was not the road to power as they had believed.<sup>202</sup> Rather than being adopted into the European system, they continued to play subservient roles while simultaneously being controlled by these “indigenous” institutions. They occupied a middle-ground, not British, yet no longer fully African. They were “British in all but color,” adopting the language, the dress, and other cultural aspects that had originally belonged to Europe.<sup>203</sup>

Beginning in the 1920s, colonial governments became more interested in controlling the education of their subjects as Africans began to agitate for reform. Rather than receiving European schooling that had been “adapted” to the African continent, they demanded the direct transplantation of metropolitan educational standards, including language.<sup>204</sup> This helps explain the modern usage of foreign languages as the dominant medium of instruction (MOI) in post-colonial colonies. Those, like Uganda, that were under indirect, separate development British rule sought the same standards as in Europe; those controlled by direct, assimilationist powers had by-and-large received them. Thus, when Uganda negotiated for its independence it began to

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<sup>201</sup> Nwauwa, 172-3.

<sup>202</sup> Oyebade, “Colonial Political Systems,” 83.

<sup>203</sup> Okuth, 143.

<sup>204</sup> Nwauwa, 171.

utilize the use of English as an official language and as a MOI in schools. Many celebrated as their hard-won demands were instigated in schools, including the use of English.

### **Medium of Instruction**

When students learn in the language of their former colonial oppressor, they find that they are “met at the school gate by an ex-colonial language.”<sup>205</sup> In many cases, indigenous languages are used as the MOI for the early years of primary school and English is taught as a separate subject, much the same way many Western societies teach foreign languages. However, midway through primary school the MOI is abruptly switched from a student’s mother tongue to English.<sup>206</sup> When one considers that most children do not speak English in their homes, then they are not only forced to learn this new language but must also master the subject’s material being taught in it. In almost every instance, students have not yet sufficiently mastered English enough to understand the material being taught: they cannot learn because they cannot understand.

A major consequence of this is rote learning – simply memorizing facts and copying down notes from the board. Rather than attempting to understand what they are being taught, students simply regurgitate what has been said to them. This is not a new phenomenon; it has direct roots in the colonial system. Togo students in 1909, taught by German missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, spent thirty minutes being tested on their calligraphy skills, copying a passage from the blackboard. That afternoon, one of the geography assignments was to name

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<sup>205</sup> Silvester Ron Simango, “Weaning African from Europe: toward a mother-tongue education policy in Southern Africa,” in *Languages and Education in Africa: a comparative and transdisciplinary analysis*, edited by Birgit Brock-Utne and Ingse Skattum (Oxford: Symposium Books, 2009), 202.

<sup>206</sup> Simango, 203.



and note the direction of important German rivers. Beneath this question, the recorded included the following: “The last question was intended to show whether pupils could not only reproduce the names mechanically, but could also visualize a map.”<sup>207</sup> There was no attempt to apply the knowledge to the German context, only to regurgitate what they had been given. Rote learning means that pupils are “unable to apply what has been taught or relate the content to their daily life” and notes are “reproduced in examinations without any added information or explanations.”<sup>208</sup> This, of course, is disastrous for the country as a whole – without critical thinkers, Uganda and other African will be forced to rely on other, more developed nations, indefinitely. When children can only recite facts, they will not develop new ideas. If they have never been taught to think for themselves, they cannot improve existing structures.

The use of a non-indigenous language can also make the classroom environment one that is hostile to learning. Jalima Mohammed Mwinsheikhe performed a study in which she conducted interviews and observations pertaining to science courses in Tanzanian secondary schools, comparing those taught in English, Kiswahili, and a combination of the two, called “code switching.” She found that when English was used the atmosphere was tense, student interaction minimal, and teacher confidence low; by comparison, the use of Kiswahili meant that the atmosphere was cheerful, students were actively engaged, and teachers were more at ease with themselves, their students, and the material.<sup>209</sup> Classrooms that employed both languages fell somewhere in the middle depending on how much each language was used.

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<sup>207</sup> “A Togo School Examination, 1909,” 128.

<sup>208</sup> Mulumba, 442.

<sup>209</sup> Jalima Mohammed Mwinsheikhe, “Spare No Means: battling with the English/Kiswahili dilemma in Tanzania secondary school classrooms,” in *Languages and Education in Africa: a comparative and transdisciplinary analysis*, ed. Birgit Brock-Utne and Ingse Skattum (Oxford: Symposium Books, 2009), 226.

Furthermore, Mwinsheikhe identified four prominent coping mechanisms employed by teachers using English. First, code-switching was often used even when it was not explicitly supposed to occur. When it was clear that students did not understand what was said, teachers would often say it again in Kiswahili; this was received with signals indicating agreement and understanding by the students. Second, teachers would confine themselves to “safe talk.” Rather than asking their pupils about the material or to apply what they have learned, they instead stick to lecturing and asking basic response questions: do you understand?, does that make sense?, and the like. When more comprehensive questions were asked, Mwinsheikhe observed a third coping strategy: negative reinforcement. Fed-up with their students’ lack of understanding, teachers might make their students stand until they give a correct answer. Since most students do not understand the material, this can make for a prolonged and embarrassing experience. Finally, teachers often revert to teaching English rather than relevant material. They spend their class time working on pronunciation and spelling rather than the concepts of their disciplines and applications to daily life.<sup>210</sup>

This research points to an overwhelming truth: English as a MOI inhibits the dissemination of knowledge from both ends. Students are not placed in an environment that is conducive to learning. In addition to the difficulties of simple comprehension, they are less likely to actively participate. Without understanding, they cannot ask questions and explore other topics. They do not contribute to the classroom because of a fear of failure that can result in punishment from their teacher and ridicule from their peers. On the other hand, teachers cannot pass on what they know to the next generation. Their time is spent mostly dealing with the repercussions of this language policy rather than on actual teaching. With so much

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<sup>210</sup> Mwinsheikhe, 228-230.

negatively surrounding them, it would be easy for teachers to lose confidence in both themselves and their students. Apathetic instructors and pupils will play no positive role in determining the future of the country.

Because of the preference for European languages over indigenous, the African continent remains in a state of mental colonization. Children and young adults are taught that their languages – and by extent, their history, their culture, and their people – cannot and will never measure up to Europe's.<sup>211</sup> Rather than embracing their heritage, students are “rejecting everything African including African languages and indigenous education” and instead “cherishing anything European.”<sup>212</sup> As students turn into workers, this form of colonialism maintains a hold on them. With their mother tongue stigmatized and their English ineffective, the masses are kept subordinate beneath the African elite, those who have mastered the language. They are reduced to the role of “passive bystanders,” unable to involve themselves in the social and economic discussions occurring in their countries.<sup>213</sup> Their futures are being decided for them. Even the most courageous and driven of the masses would be unable to gain the wisdom necessary to better themselves without mastering these ex-colonial languages: of all the intellect and knowledge produced by the African people, approximately 90% of it is stored within foreign languages.<sup>214</sup> This too shows the remaining shackles of colonization; scholars, academics, and other influential members of the elites are “labouring for information and knowledge then rendering it in the language of former masters for them to access easily while making it

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<sup>211</sup> Ngũgĩ *Moving the Centre*, 31.

<sup>212</sup> Mulumba, 436.

<sup>213</sup> Simango, 202-3.

<sup>214</sup> Qorro, 73.

inaccessible to the African communities.”<sup>215</sup> How can the average African better her or himself when they cannot reach the goldmine of information at their fingertips?

## Scholarly Debates

This debate has expanded beyond simply the education system because language has implications for all facets of life. Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o explored the possibilities for a universal language in *Moving the Centre*. He notes that in non-African countries like Japan, Germany, and those in Scandinavia, English is taught in schools but “only [as] a means of communication with the outside world.”<sup>216</sup> Pupils are not expected to use the language between one another or even in their daily lives. This is not true in Uganda and other former colonies. To this day, markers of advancement – billboards, menus, advertisements, newspapers – are predominantly in English; where indigenous languages are used, it is in addition to English rather than as the primary means of communication. English remains the language of administration, commerce, and schooling. While Ngũgĩ argues that the preferences for English as a universal language stems from colonial enterprises, Achebe instead fingers linguistic plurality as the root of Africa’s linguistic difficulties. Taking a stand opposite his Kenyan comrade, who argues with an “either/or” approach, Achebe instead believes that it is “both.”<sup>217</sup> Writing from his perspective as a Nigerian, he emphasizes that he does not use English as his written/academic language because of its status as a “world language” but because his country has no choice. “As long as Nigeria wishes to exist as a nation it has no choice in the foreseeable future but to hold its more

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<sup>215</sup> Qorro, 73.

<sup>216</sup> Ngũgĩ, *Moving the Centre*, 31.

<sup>217</sup> Achebe, 268.

than two hundred component nationalities together through an alien language, English.”<sup>218</sup>

Although he also speaks Igbo, one of the big three languages in Nigeria, this still does not allow him the potential to communicate to all people in Nigeria; this can only be done in English.<sup>219</sup>

Other scholars ignore the difficulties of practical usage and delve into the emotional implications. Raja Roa, writing about India, describes India as “the language of our intellectual make-up . . . but not of our emotional make-up.”<sup>220</sup> This is true around the world, in any country or region where foreign languages dominate. During my time in Uganda, I spent some time assisting Sister Schools, a non-profit that my family is associated with. During my second week, three American educators, four organization employees, and I helped clean out and organized literacy centers that the NGO had sponsored. At Kisowera Primary School in Mukono District, we came across several boxes of donated supplies from Sister Schools; the non-profit had not delivered supplies to this school in nearly five years, so these materials had been gathering dust all that time. William Mukisa, a Ugandan team member, was particularly upset that the effort required to get these supplies to Uganda had gone to waste. A meeting was called with many of the faculty members to discuss this. Before it started, William gathered the American educators and me to ask if it would be alright if he spoke in Luganda. He wanted to be sure that we did not feel excluded from the conversation, but he needed to make sure that the faculty understood what he was saying. The only way he could do this was by using their native tongue.

On the ride home that evening, William told us what had been said during the meeting. He had asked the teachers how many of them had sent students home that year for a lack of supplies; many raised their hands. He asked how many of them had to ration their available

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<sup>218</sup> Achebe, 268.

<sup>219</sup> Achebe, 269.

<sup>220</sup> Raja Roa, “Language and Spirit,” in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, edited by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (Reprint, London: Routledge, 1995. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition), 276.

supplies in order to keep kids in school; again, many raised their hands. Finally, he asked how many of them had spent their own money on supplies for the classroom; almost all had. William then began taking the donated materials out of the boxes: construction paper, notebooks, erasers, pencils, colored pencils. The teachers were shocked that these materials had been in their library all this time. William then began to convey the process it took in order to get the supplies to Uganda: children in Seattle had given up their own school supplies, donating own materials because they wanted to help their counterparts in Uganda. The materials in the boxes and the books on the library's shelves were not being used for the intended purpose. The breadth of emotion was something William could only convey in Luganda; English was simply not satisfactory.

### **Global Implications**

This theoretical and scholarly debate has implications for the daily lives of Ugandan citizens as well as the country's politics. In terms of selecting a national language for administration and education, there are many options, none of which are ideal. The first option would be utilizing an indigenous language from within Uganda's borders. This has the benefit of not being imposed by a foreign power. Since many colonial languages implicitly carry racially-charged images of the host culture, "African people would have had to define themselves in a language that had such a negative conception of Africa as its legacy."<sup>221</sup> However, Achebe's assertions about linguistic plurality come into play here. The question remains, which indigenous language will be chosen? In his opening address at the "Mass Media and Linguistic Communications in East Africa" seminar hosted in Kampala in April 1963, then-President

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<sup>221</sup> Ngũgĩ, *Moving the Centre*, 35.

Milton Obote addressed this issue. Utilizing Lugbara, a language dominate in northern districts, was well beyond the capabilities of the newly independent state. Obote worried that the economic power and elevated government standing would lead to riots and instability.<sup>222</sup> Selecting Luganda or Lunyoro, languages that dominate in districts surrounding Kampala, would have similarly negative side-effects. At that time, half of Parliament and Obote himself would not meet the qualification and would have to resign.<sup>223</sup> Selecting any single indigenous language would restrict who could serve in the government. According to Obote, “The areas we not represent would not like to have just any person who speaks Luganda represent them. They would feel underrepresented.”<sup>224</sup> Thus, Northern provinces would be limited in who they could elect to Parliament: in an area dominated by Lugbara, more people have access to English than they do to Luganda.

Equally important to this discussion is a discussion of culture: languages owe their primary creative basis to the culture of its people. Though Luganda, Lunyoro, or Lugbara could be imposed as the administrative language, at best it would only be a surface level adjustment; at worse, it will corrupt or eliminate other ethnic cultures. Milton Obote said in his address, “I have my doubts whether Lwo language can express in all its fineness Lusoga songs.”<sup>225</sup> Simply put, Lwo cannot capture both the hearts and minds of non-Lwo people without irreparable damage. Songs, dances, stories – these evolve in relation to a particular language. Even without the political concerns of privileging one language over another, the possibility of cultural genocides bears significant resemblance to many accusations levels towards colonialism. If Uganda selects

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<sup>222</sup> Milton Apollo Obote, “Language and National Identification,” *Ideologies of African Liberation, 1856-1970: Documents on Modern African Political Thought from Colonial Times to the Present*, edited by J. Ayo Langley (London: Rex Collings, 1979), 387.

<sup>223</sup> Obote, 387.

<sup>224</sup> Obote, 387.

<sup>225</sup> Obote, 387.

an indigenous language as the national language, then it assumes the position that English once did. Selecting one indigenous language over all others would serve to amplify its culture, its people, and its discriminatory ethnic images.

There are those who would argue that, to circumvent issues surrounding Ugandan languages, a non-indigenous but still African language should be utilized. Most argue for Kiswahili. Ngũgĩ advocates for its consideration, on equal footing with English, as a language for the world: “It already has the advantage of never having grown in the graveyard of other languages. Kiswahili has created space for itself in Africa and the world without developing any national chauvinism. The power of Kiswahili has not depended on its economic, political, or cultural aggrandizement. It has not history of oppression or domination of other cultures.”<sup>226</sup> The Swahili language was even endorsed as a possible official language by Milton Obote: “It is possible today for the people of Uganda to communicate with the people in the neighbouring countries in broken Swahili, but it is not possible for the people of Uganda to communicate with the neighbouring countries in broken Luganda.”<sup>227</sup> This is one of the strongest arguments for Kiswahili as opposed to any other indigenous African language: it would facilitate easy communication with other East African nations. Uganda cannot afford isolation; this is as much true in today’s increasingly technology-driven era of globalization as it was in the years immediately following independence, as the country struggled to establish itself on its own terms. An indigenous, Ugandan language like Lunyoro, Lwo, Lugbara, or Luganda would be a liability in relating to geographic neighbors.

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<sup>226</sup> Ngũgĩ, *Moving the Centre*, 41.

<sup>227</sup> Obote, 338.



Despite the ease of East African communication, Kiswahili might not be the best option for Uganda. Worldwide, Kiswahili is spoken by 150 million people, 10 million of whom inhabit a 1.500 mile stretch of East African coastline and consider it their first language.<sup>228</sup> Very few people in Uganda fall into this category. William Mukisa is of both Uganda and Kenyan heritage; his mother, a Uganda women, was one of the wives of his father, a Kenyan man. Though primarily raised with his mother in Uganda, he had spent enough of his childhood with his father's family in Kenya to be fluent in both Kiswahili and Luganda, in addition to several minor Ugandan languages. Those in Uganda who speak the Swahili language are typically East African immigrants to Uganda, those who regularly engage in commerce between countries, or those, like William, who have strong family ties to other countries. Uganda is unique in the degree to which Kiswahili has not infiltrated the country. This is because the Gandan people actively resisted its usage. It was used as a threat to their own dominance because of its association with Arab slave traders.<sup>229</sup> Thus, it represents a potential competitor for colonial dominance, both then and now.

Despite its complexities, Kiswahili is an official language of Uganda, alongside English. Theoretically, it is being taught in the schools so that future generations will better identify and communicate with other East African countries. This however, has not been the case. As I worked to help clean out the literacy center at Mukono Town Muslim Primary School, we also tried to make more room on the shelves by removing unnecessary or damaged materials. At this school, the faculty could not let us remove the Kiswahili textbooks, despite the fact that they had never once been opened by a student. Not a single teacher at the school could speak Kiswahili,

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<sup>228</sup> Benson Oduor Ojwang, "Prospects of Kiswahili as a Regional Language in a Socioculturally Heterogeneous East Africa," *Journal of International and Intercultural Communicatoin* 1, no. 4 (November 2008): 328.

<sup>229</sup> Ojwang, 331.

let alone teach it! The government mandated that the language would be taught in schools, paid for and delivered the necessary scholastic materials, but were unable to fulfill their promise to support the hiring of teachers. Though Mukono is not a large city like Kampala, its relative urbanization level and proximity to the capital lend it considerable influence compared to other municipalities. Yet, they are unable to follow through on the government's mandate because Kiswahili teachers are in such short supply. We moved the textbooks to the top shelf to make more room at eye-level for the students; they gather dust, waiting for a teacher or a government inspection.

Yet, even if Kiswahili was adopted as Uganda's national language, the country would still be crippled when it comes to engaging with the world at large. Africa is not linguistically represented at the United Nations by any indigenous language.<sup>230</sup> Though Arabic is an official language, its connection to the continent is geographically- rather than culturally-based. The remaining five languages are Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish.<sup>231</sup> The continents that are not linguistically represented at the United Nations are those whose histories have been dominated by colonial endeavors; no language from North or South America's First Nations, indigenous Africa, or native Australia has been given official designation. Accordingly, UN representatives are expected to speak in any of the six languages and an interpretation is provided into the others; were a statement to be made in a non-official language, then "the delegation must provide either an interpretation or a written text of the statement in one of the official languages."<sup>232</sup> African representatives are therefore left with two alternatives: express

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<sup>230</sup> Ngũgĩ, *Moving the Centre*, 38; United Nations, "Official Languages," United Nations, accessed May 31, 2017, <http://www.un.org/en/sections/about-un/official-languages/>.

<sup>231</sup> United Nations.

<sup>232</sup> United Nations.

themselves in their native tongue and shoulder the burden of translation, or restrict themselves to another, likely colonial language.

Although utilizing English as the MOI has ensured that a sector of the population is prepared to engage with the world, it has not done so evenly. In more rural settings, English is still less accessible to pupils than it is in urban settings. This is in many ways indicative of the peculiarities of the rural-urban dichotomy. Urban towns and cities offer more opportunities to encounter the language informally: billboards, businesses, newspapers, and restaurants are all readily accessible. As students walk to and from school, they can engage with these materials and practice their language skills. They have cause to celebrate as their family and socio-economic situations allow them to learn English and engage with the outside world. These informal educational tools become scarce as one travels further into rural areas. Within a few hours' drive, students spend their walks home examining farms, foliage and dirt roads instead. Those who have sufficiently mastered the language, making themselves candidates to represent the country, are typically those from urban settings. Based on previous analysis, this would dictate that those most prepared by the enduring colonial system to engage with the outside world would be urban, educated, linguistically-knowledgeable males.

## Chapter 6 - Epilogue

The modern relationship between Europe and Africa finds its roots in the colonial experiment. This historical phenomenon is more complicated than the casual observer is led to believe by the dominant narrative. In initial interactions between explorers and natives, it is clear that the impressions of individuals were sometimes inconsistent with government policy. While Linant, Speke, and Livingstone found cause for both celebration and concern, especially when they encountered the Bugandan kingdom, the Berlin Conference clearly placed the northern continent in a paternalistic role, guiding the other towards civilization and modernity. The study of gender in Africa is unique because colonialism has subverted the narrative and utilized women to redeem European actions. Gender roles were fundamentally altered for both men and women during the course of colonialism, and not all of it was to a woman's benefit. Europeans both restricted female autonomy and provided opportunity to exploit opportunities created by cracks in the competing systems. Additionally, education and schooling were vital aspects of the colonial project; while the dissemination of knowledge was fundamentally changed from traditional methodologies, the transposed British system utilized many of the same concepts inherent in the original structure, such as perennialism. Western education during the colonial era had difficulties in applying the principle of functionalism, ensuring that learners would be able to apply their skills regardless of occupation. With the current global design leaning so heavily towards Western standards of success, pupils today are finding an obscure though not impenetrable job market. Colonialism thus prepared Africa for the international system as it exists today. This also occurred through the imposition and adoption of former colonial languages as the MOI in schools and official language on the national scale. While

indigenous languages are argued to be a viable option within and between African nations, the best way to facilitate communication globally remains through European languages.

This begs the question: did it always have to be this way? Many of these celebratory aspects of colonialism are only considered positive within a society that has already been dominated by a Western-capitalist mindset. The only reason why English's preeminence in Uganda is praised is because so much of the world speaks English; the language allows representatives to be understood at the United Nations and in many other situations. The supremacy of English and other former colonial languages is a direct result of the colonial process. The United Nations may not have even existed had it not been colonialism; if it or something similar had been, perhaps Kiswahili, Hausa, or any number of indigenous languages around the world would be recognized languages on the floor. Expansions in formalized education is applauded because it reinforces a colonized mindset on the part of the African. Europeans believed that they liberated women from traditional constraints because they saw the system as restrictive instead of recognizing the cultural peculiarities that occurred as adaptations to an African environment. Explorers, administrators, and missionaries condemned those traditional attributes that did not meet their own standards.

In many ways, the view of Africa as “fundamentally static and inflexible,” in desperate need of the European to help them meet the standards of civilization, persists to this day.<sup>233</sup> It can be seen in foreign direct investments (commonly called foreign aid), the phenomenon of volun-tourism, nongovernmental agencies, and chronic economic underdevelopment. By these aspects of modern relations between Africa and European powers, it is possible to say that Africa

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<sup>233</sup> Sean Stilwell, “Imposition of Colonial Rule,” in *Africa, Volume 3. Colonial Africa, 1885-1939*, edited by Toyin Falola (Durham: Carolina Press, 2001), 18.

has not really been decolonized and that the continent is still under the indirect influence of these other countries. Some of this stems from a genuine desire to develop the continent of Africa or to atone for the damaging consequences of colonialism. This too brings up several fundamental questions: to what extent do the people who created a problem have the obligation to fix it? What does the Western world “owe” to its former colonies? What is the best way to go about repaying this “debt”?

History has deposited us at this point in its long and continuous journey; it is up to us to determine the path we follow henceforth using the limited resources at our disposal. The most valuable tool we have available is history itself. This discipline, utilized alongside others, can inform modern decision-making and analysis. In order to forge forward towards a more inclusive and equitable world, informed citizens, not just scholars, must engage in this level of critique. It starts with advancing the study of neglected fields, such as Uganda. It necessitates the critical analysis of long-told narratives and an acceptance of contradictions. It is through this that modern society can accept the past, learn from it, and move forward.

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