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Introduction to this Issue

This special edition of the MISR Review stems from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's supranational project. It involves a consortium of five universities (Makerere Institute of Social Research, Makerere University; Center for Arab and Middle East Studies, American University of Beirut; the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta; the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, and the Ifriqiyya Colloquium, Columbia University), under the leadership of Mahmood Mamdani, Director of MISR at Makerere University. This collaborative research endeavour was on the subject 'Decolonization, the Disciplines and the University' and addressed the central question: what should be the mission of the university in a post-colonial context, and how should this mission be reflected in the curriculum?

As part of the project, a workshop and institute on Historical Methods were held, in October 2020 and March 2021 respectively, to introduce PhD students and post-doctoral fellows to the relevant literature and debates on decolonization in general and the two themes of research and writing specifically. Participants were guided to adapt their research to address questions centered on decolonization as a methodological imperative, a perspective from which to rethink the study of the humanities. The six articles that comprise this special edition have risen to this challenge and demonstrate critical application of decolonial perspectives on pressing historical concerns across the Global South.

In his essay, *Beyond Ethnic Patriotism: A case study of the intellectual and political history of Toro and Kigezi districts in Uganda*, Evarist Ngabirano makes the case for rethinking post-independence ethnic nationalism in Uganda. He destabilizes the pervasive notion that native elites mobilized along ethnic lines. Using colonial archives and oral accounts, the paper examines native intellectuals in Toro and Kigezi. The essay argues that Toro was shaped by the colonial structure of indirect rule and mobilized along ethnic

lines while Kigezi took inspiration from forces outside the structure of indirect rule politics, mobilizing a residence-based identity rather than an ethnic one.

David Ngendo-Tshimba's essay *A returning gaze at the 'political' in the 'precolonial': Towards a decolonial history of state formations in Upper Semliki Valley*, seeks to throw light on thinking about the pre-colonial, as well as about clanship as a political formation. It creates a genealogy of political formation in the Upper Semliki valley prior to the European colonial state. Ngendo-Tshimba draws upon oral accounts and memories of the precolonial political while contesting a history of the pre-political itself and sketches the contours of an understanding of the historical away from a colonial-modern rendering of Africa's distant past.

In the *Uses and Abuses of History: How Uganda's historiography affected Bunyoro's development*, Mary Kajumba Muhuruzi tackles the problem of privileging one ethnic group over another in post-colonial Africa through a historical lens. With parallels in Ghana and other African nations especially in the early colonial and post-independence period, she examines how a colonialist divide-and-rule approach to historiography and governance is at the root of a lot of current regional imbalances especially between the Buganda and Bunyoro people in Uganda. The essay contends that a decolonial method of writing Ugandan history, utilizing oral histories, might give space to multiple voices, peoples, and institutions, and regional differences.

Continuing the process of reading the colonial archives differently to recover voices of resistance, Manuel Manu-Osafo's article *Interrogating Silences in Asante Historiography on Anti-Colonial Resistance, 1896-1957* discusses the silences and gaps in Asante historiography, and the possibilities of decolonizing the field of Asante history. The essay provides three ways forward for this historiographic decolonization, namely to: acknowledge everyday

resistance, consider archives other than the colonial archive, and to explore non-state-centric histories. Some of the archival alternatives the essays suggest are the realm of cultural practice and everyday life that can help re-temporalize, as it were, the narrative of Asante history punctuated by big epochs and watershed events.

Ammel Sharon's *Historical Errors: Debates in Kannada Text Criticism* explores the field of text criticism in Kannada to engage 'error' as a site of interest for decoloniality. It tracks a shift in the relationship of error to knowledge. It highlights the ways error was deployed and understood in colonial philosophy specifically by University scholars in twentieth century southern India who took up the study of language, specifically Kannada-language literary-religious texts as their object of inquiry. Through the debates on text criticism in Kannada about error, Sharon interrogates the relationship between truth and knowledge in philology, and the importance and dangers of interrogating strong community-held truths through philological approaches and historical research in contemporary post-colonial India.

The concluding article of this special edition is Victoria Openifoluwa Akoleowo's *Gender(ed) Scholar-Activism: Towards the Quest for Epistemic Justice in the Nigerian Academia*. This article speaks to the need for decolonization within the academe. It exposes and critiques the hegemonic power relations in the Nigerian academe and rethinks the inequalities embedded in knowledge production and the role of women's agency in epistemological production of ideas. It argues that to achieve epistemic justice, the post-colonial Nigerian university curriculum requires a commitment to include the voices of female-authored texts and theorists.

All the papers in this special issue, therefore, grapple with different archival sites, methodological approaches and conceptual frameworks to explore the ways in which decolonial perspectives can help open up received historiographical landscapes. They foreground hitherto unexplored or marginalized oral histories to supplement written archives, non-state-centric archives to decenter colonial, statist archives, cultural practice and everyday

life to flesh out narrow, bony political narratives, female theorists and texts to counter patriarchal canons, the critical unpacking of foundational categories that have shaped disciplinary formations and colonial pasts, and the teasing out of imaginations and belonging outside those mandated by colonial discourses and policies.

The papers emerge out of rich conversations across several months of the “Historical Methods” Workshop and Institute where the question of decoloniality as a method, of decolonization as an approach and the very centrality of history (and history-writing) were robustly debated. The papers demonstrate that decolonization necessitates a critical apparatus not only against colonial archives (and their attendant silences) but nationalist projects of myth-making and histories as well. The foregrounding of voices outside of the hegemonic structures of power—the marginalized, oppressed, minority positions—creates an important source of solidarity across the Global South. These engaged essays make clear that to think and write from a decolonial perspective is to enter into dialogues across languages, archives and embedded structures of power.

Cyrelene Amoah-Boampong | Manan Ahmed | Prachi Deshpande
January 2022

Contributors to this Issue

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Beyond Ethnic Patriotism: A Case Study of the Intellectual and Political History of Toro and Kigezi Districts in Uganda

Evarist Ngabirano

Abstract

The explanation given for post-independence ethnic nationalism in Uganda is that native intellectuals and leaders summoned ethnicity to compose self-interested history books, mobilize society and inspire future generations. I want to argue that this mainstream historical claim, which emphasize African agency outside the politics of indirect rule is insufficient. I want to deploy interdisciplinary qualitative tools to focus my study on five main ideas. The first idea is that pre-colonial modes of thinking and mobilizing society focused on residence as opposed to ethnicity. The second idea is that history and politics shaped the self-interested writing, thinking, and mobilizing society around ethnicity in Toro. The third idea is that colonial ethnographers like Tom Stacey who studied the history and traditions of minority ethnic groups provided the necessary inspiration and leadership to these projects. The fourth idea is that there exists non-self-interested history writing, thinking, and mobilizing around residence in Kigezi that reflects pre-colonial modes of mobilization and solidarity. The fifth idea is that the latter derived inspiration from a multiplicity of sources including pre-colonial, colonial and the socio-economic aspirations of the society in Kigezi. My sources include, the colonial archive, interviews, the literature of native leaders and historians of Africa.

Key words: Ethnicity, patriotism, African agency, indirect rule politics, Toro and Kigezi, Uganda

Introduction

The main historical argument advanced in this paper is that wars and/or conflicts between clans and/or ethnicity were in the pre-colonial setting averted through bonds of friendship, sharing area of residence and marriage. I claim that these modes of life are reflected in the ways in which pre-colonial societies mobilized. They are also reflected in the intellectual and political works of native/indigenous elites like Paulo Nologoza of Kigezi.¹ I claim that this explains why Kigezi though multi-ethnic like Toro has remained relatively free from ethnic violence and I propose it as a starting point to think about decolonization projects. In this paper, I deploy this argument to explain Uganda's post-independence realities focusing on Toro and Kigezi.² Toro exemplifies a prototype post-independence political space in which politics of ethnicity survived colonialism. I will unpack the perspective in which I deploy the concept ethnicity later.

Conventional history seminal works emphasize the idea that ethnic projects, which are widespread in Toro, are products of native elites known as "ethnic patriots"³ who mobilize their people along ethnic lineages. In Toro for instance, historians have identified Isaya Mukirane who led a separatist movement of the Bakon-

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- 1 I use the concept native/indigenous to refer to the colonized subjects. The word native was a colonial concept for the colonized. So, I will use it interchangeable with the word indigenous, which give the same meaning but has no colonial roots. Paulo Nologoza was a colonial subject who was also an intellectual and political leader. He wrote a history book, "Kigezi and its People" on Kigezi which reflected the pre-colonial, colonial and the social economic aspirations of the people in Kigezi.
 - 2 I developed these ideas from my PhD thesis entitled: "Beyond ethnic patriotism: A comparative study of Toro and Kigezi districts in Uganda." The product was this paper presented in the online Mellon History Institute of March 2021. The main idea here is to contribute to de-colonial thoughts and ideas.
 - 3 The concept "ethnic patriots" or "ethnic patriotism" is deployed by conventional historians to imply "ethnic nationalists" or "ethnic nationalism". The idea here is to explain how political leaders mobilized their people along ethnic lines to demand for rights over land and political power.

zo from Toro.⁴ I claim that these projects of ethnic patriotism were derivative of colonial politics of ethnicity. I also argue that they received inspiration from European ethnographers like Tom Stacey who studied the history and traditions of minority ethnic groups. My argument is that the narrative in the existing literature has largely ignored the history and politics that brought forth these projects of ethnic nationalism in Uganda and Toro in particular.

The second political space namely Kigezi manifests a native response that was dialectical to the colonial politics of ethnicity. Native elites in Kigezi like Paulo Ngologoza and Festo Karwemera mobilized their people around the idea of territory of residence as opposed to ethnic lineage and/or identity. They also composed history books that reflected inter-ethnic solidarity and focused on building a residence-based mode of governance as opposed to the one based on ethnicity. For example, Ngologoza's history book, "Kigezi and its People" did not restrict itself on one identity but focused on multi-ethnic identity narrative of the Bakiga, Bahororo and Bafumbira.⁵ I claim that this mode of mobilization, thinking and writing derives inspiration from a multiplicity of sources including, the pre-colonial, colonial and the socio-economic and political realities of Kigezi.

I deploy qualitative interdisciplinary approaches to study the history and politics of the two political spaces in Uganda namely Toro and Kigezi. My most invaluable source of data is the colonial archive. In addition, I use interviews of specific informants, the literature of native leaders and historians of Africa to answer the following questions: How did the pre-colonial modes of thinking and mobilizing society focus on residence as opposed to ethnicity? How did the history and politics of Toro shape the self-interested writing,

4 Isaya Mukirane was a political leader in Toro. The Bakonzo is an ethnic group to which Mukirane belonged and mobilized. A separatist movement is a rebellion of the Bakonzo ethnicity that Mukirane led to form the Rwenzururu Kingdom out of Toro.

5 Bakiga, Bahororo and Bafumbira are ethnic groups in Kigezi. Colonialism recognized all the three identities as political in Kigezi. But in Toro colonialism recognized only one identity of the Batoro as political, suppressing the rest namely Bakonzo and Bamba.

thinking and mobilizing society around ethnicity? What role did colonial ethnographers play in these projects? Why did the history writing, thinking and mobilization of society in Kigezi revolve around territory of residence as opposed to ethnicity? Where did the native elites of Kigezi derive inspiration to think, write and mobilize around their territory of residence as opposed to ethnicity?

Colonialism and Ethnic Patriotism

There is a diversified body of literature that advance the view that colonial legacy accounts for the pervasive ethnic patriotism in East Africa and Uganda in particular. The idea here is that the reproduction of ethnic politics in post-independence period can best be described as derivative. Notwithstanding the validity of this argument, a noticeable body of literature caution that the emphasis placed on colonial legacy could be exaggerated and simplistic. As an example, this group of literature cites African led activism and self-interested politics in late colonial and early post-independence period.⁶ Carol Summers for instance argued that the Baganda of Uganda were patriots who understood power in terms of its relationship with the land and the tribe.⁷ That is how the activism of the 1950's in Buganda that advanced the cause for the return of the Kabaka were understood and explained by scholars.

The body of literature that builds on this idea of African agency is significant. The first set focuses on the role of indigenous intellectuals. The argument advanced here is that colonialism did a good job by introducing local council government reforms after the end of World War II. The idea here is that the colonial officials went about organizing local councils, holding elections and culti-

6 I expound on these same ideas in the article I published recently in *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* Journal. Cf; Evarist Ngabirano, "Beyond Local Government Reforms: A Case Study of Toro and Kigezi Districts in the Politics of Post-colonial Uganda" *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, (December 2021) online: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2021.1990704>

7 Carol Summers, "Local Critiques of Global Development: Patriotism in Late Colonial Buganda." *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 47, no. 1 (2014): 21-35, 22.

vating the rituals of representative government.⁸ The introduction of these local councils before independence affectively brought indirect rule politics to a close end.⁹ Thus the colonial regime had succeeded in imposing “strict limits” on ethnic governments established in the early period of colonial rule.¹⁰ The implication here is that the ethnic nationalism that happened in the 1950s onwards can only be explained from the angle of African agency outside the colonial ethnic structures of governance. It is in this context that the 1953 pro-monarchy activism advancing the cause for the Kabaka’s return from exile is explained.¹¹ Moreover, the literature also advances it to justify a wave of post-independence federal demands elsewhere in Uganda.¹² For instance Derek Peterson claims that this discourse of monarchical nationalism in Buganda gave colonial Uganda’s other monarchies a path to follow.¹³ Furthermore, Peterson argues that even native intellectuals like Isaya Mukirane got inspired by Buganda to lead a rebellion against Toro.¹⁴ On this basis native intellectuals were branded “ethnic patriots” to place emphasis on African agency in this project of “ethnic patriotism.” To these actors Jonathan Glassman attributed the rise of racial thought in colonial Zanzibar.¹⁵ However, Yahya Sseremba makes an important point when he argues that the agency of native actors should be analyzed from the context of the circumstances within which colonialism made ethnicity the basis for political inclusion.¹⁶ I aug-

8 Derek Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival: A History of Dissent, c. 1935-1972*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 253.

9 Frederick Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

10 Derek Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival*, 154.

11 Carol Summers, “Local Critiques of Global Development: Patriotism in Late Colonial Buganda.” 22.

12 Derek Peterson, ‘States of Mind: Political History and the Rwenzururu Kingdom in Western Uganda’ in *Recasting the Past: History Writing and Political work in Modern Africa*, eds. Derek Peterson and Giacomo Macola (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009), 174.

13 Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival*, 154.

14 Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival*, 154.

15 Jonathon Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011), 6-7.

16 Yahya Sseremba, “The Making and Remaking of “Native Tribes” in Uganda’s

ment this claim and further improve it with a comparative analysis of Toro and Kigezi districts in Uganda.

To illuminate on the above point, let me probe it further. In his recent publication, Sseremba argued that the initiative of African indigenous intellectuals in presenting their societies as “tribes” is not an independent initiative but rather something that developed out of circumstances within which the colonialists made ethnicity the basis for qualifying for land and other rights.¹⁷ It is these circumstances along which the Bakonzo and Bamba intellectuals mobilized their societies as distinct “tribes” to convince the colonial power that they met the requirements for being natives with rights over land and political power.¹⁸ In this way Sseremba claims to go beyond the critics of scholars who advance the agency of colonialism. While these critics focused on how indigenous intellectuals shaped their own societies, Sseremba analyses how they were shaped by the circumstances in which colonialism privileged ethnicity. My argument here is that Sseremba did not historicize sufficiently because he ignored the agency of ethnographers like Tom Stacey who took a leading role in the projects of indigenous intellectuals. I claim that indigenous intellectuals were not in most cases self-interested, and I give Paulo Ngolongoza of Kigezi as an example. I argue that Ngolongoza derived inspiration from a multiplicity of sources including pre-colonial, colonial and the socio-economic aspirations of his society, Kigezi to think in terms of residence as opposed to his ethnicity, the Bakiga.¹⁹

The second body of literature that emphasize native agency focuses on the *longue duree*. Here the agency of colonialism is recognized in addition to insisting that the pre-colonial past needs to be examined to unearth processes that explain contemporary

Toro kingdom”, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 25:3, (2019): 311-328.

17 Sseremba, “The Making and Remaking of “Native Tribes” in Uganda’s Toro kingdom,” 311-328.

18 Sseremba, “The Making and Remaking of “Native Tribes” in Uganda’s Toro kingdom,” 311-328.

19 I make these same arguments in my recent publication, Evarist Ngabirano, “Beyond local government reforms: A case study of Toro and Kigezi districts in the politics of postcolonial Uganda.” 5

politics of ethnicity in governance. Paul Nugent for instance believes that colonialism was significant but insists that it was not the first historical moment to determine the way Africans related with their neighbors.²⁰ The implication here is that colonialism had antecedents upon which it was able to build the project of ethnic-based governance. There is a significant debate here advanced by Terence Ranger, Leroy Vail and others who suggest that ethnic patriotism was a colonial creation. Leroy Vail for instance thought that colonialism crafted tribes into being and were therefore never organic to African way of life.²¹ Terence Ranger gave the example of the Manyika ethnic consciousness concluding that it was an invention of missionaries in Zimbabwe.²²

However, Thomas Spears argued against the idea of colonial invention, which he claims is often overstated. In his view, colonialism did not have sufficient power and ability to manipulate African institutions such as ethnicity to rule Africa.²³ The implication here is that ethnic institutions of governance were negotiated pre-colonial practices. In response to this claim, it has been clarified in literature how ethnicity and traditions existed in the pre-colonial but how these were multiple competing and constantly changing. However, in a self-interested manner, colonialism singled out several of these for their administrative practice, setting a stage for derivative responses similar to that of Bakonzo and Bamba in Toro.

A significant body of literature attests to the above colonial practice in several parts of Africa. When Yusufu Bala Usman identified this practice, he insisted on studying the formation and transformation of communities of the area as a historical process.

20 Paul Nugent, "Putting the History back into Ethnicity, Enslavement, Religion, and Cultural Brokerage in the Construction of Mandinka/Jola and Ewe/Agotime identities in West Africa c 1650-1930" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50 no. 4, (2008): 922.

21 Leroy Vail, ed., *The Creation of Tribalism in South Africa* (London: James Currey; Berkley: University of California Press, 1989).

22 Terence Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa", in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

23 Thomas Spears, "Neo-Traditionalism and the limits of invention in British Colonial Africa," *The Journal of African History* 44, No. 1 (2003): 3-27.

For instance, he argued that it made sense to treat the Fulani as a territorial group of people as opposed to treating them as an ethnic category with land and political rights.²⁴ Mahmood Mamdani identified the category “Arab” and argued that colonialism compressed “varied identities of multiple histories into one single identity- a uniform Arab identity, by legal and administrative fiat complemented by history writing.”²⁵ Sseremba recognizes that this freezing of hitherto complex identities in several parts of Africa is what happened in Western Uganda.²⁶ I agree with Sseremba in as far as Toro was concerned but go further to demonstrate how Kigezi was treated differently producing a different form of response from the indigenous political leaders and intellectuals.

The Context

This study focuses on two formerly colonized spaces in Uganda namely Toro in Mid-western Uganda and Kigezi in Southwestern Uganda. These two spaces were composed as district administrative units under the District Commissioner (DC) as a top colonial official who reported to the Provincial Commissioner (PC). Toro and Kigezi fell under the same province of Western Uganda whose headquarters were in Fort Portal, the capital of Toro district. Even though Toro and Kigezi shared a province, and were both multi-ethnic in composition, the colonial administrative practice differed considerably. As a consequence, the colonized also responded based on the circumstances created by the colonial administrative practice. While the political identity of Toro was homogenized as that of Batoro extinguishing all hopes for Bakonzo and Bamba to be recognized, that of Kigezi recognized the heterogeneity of residence to include Bahororo, Bakiga and Bafumbira.

This context partly explains the circumstances within which the post-independence response from the native intellectuals in

24 Yusufu Bala Usman, *Beyond Fairly Tales*, (Zaria: Abdullahi Smith, Center for Historical Research, 2006), 43-45.

25 Mahmood Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics and the war on Terror*, (New York: Panteon Books, 2009), 93.

26 Sseremba, “The Making and Remaking of “Native Tribes” in Uganda’s Toro kingdom,” 311-328.

Toro was derivative while that of Kigezi was dialectical. Moreover, there were colonial ethnographers in Toro who studied the history and traditions of the minority Bakonzo and Bamba and are believed to have not only inspired native leaders but also took a lead in these projects of ethnic patriotism. In Toro, Isaya Mukirane mobilized Bakonzo and Bamba to create the Rwenzururu kingdom arguing that they were different from Batoro. But behind this project was an Anglo-European ethnographer, Tom Stacey who not only inspired but directly took a leading role in Mukirane's project. On the contrary Paulo Ngologoza of Kigezi wrote a history book, "Kigezi and its People" and mobilized people around an area of residence called Kigezi comprised of Bahororo, Bakiga and Bafumbira. His work reflected pre-colonial modes of governance, the flexible colonial practices in Kigezi that recognized the multi-ethnic identity of residence and the socio-economic aspirations of the people. Moreover, unlike the elites of Toro, Ngologoza did not reproduce the colonial ethnographic work of May Edel who wrote a book on the *Chiga* of Southwestern Uganda in the 1930's.

Conceptual Explanations

In this paper I deploy the concept ethnicity to imply that it is similar to tribalism, which refers to the use of ethnic identity in political competition with other groups.²⁷ This is the perception that informs my discourse on political mobilization based on tribe in Toro that accounts for the persistent violence. This is the conception in which the expression "ethnic patriotism" is deployed to emphasize the agency of indigenous intellectuals and/or political leaders, which I critique.

I also deploy the concept ethnicity in the sense in which Benedict Anderson used it. Here the term ethnicity is used to refer to the identity that develops as a result of common human instinct

27 John Lonsdale, "Moral Ethnicity and Political Tribalism" in *Inventions & Boundaries: Historical and Anthropological Approaches to Ethnicity and Nationalism*, ed. P. Kaarsholm & J. Hultin (IDS Roskilde Occasional Papers 11, 1994), 131-150. Also see Evarist Ngabirano, "Beyond ethnic patriotism: A comparative study of Toro and Kigezi districts in Uganda," (PhD thesis; Makerere University, 2020), 15.

to create out of the daily habits a system of moral meaning and ethical reputation within an imagined community.²⁸ I suggest that this perspective of ethnicity reflects the residence-based politics of Kigezi. I deploy the expression “beyond ethnic patriotism” in the title to suggest a mode of political mobilization that does not summon ethnicity. I claim that this form of thinking and mobilizing society was typical of pre-colonial mode of governance but also reflected the flexible colonial administrative practice and the socio-economic aspirations of the people of Kigezi. Be that as it may, it is widely accepted and articulated in academic debates that ethnicity existed in multiple, overlapping but also competing and constantly changing modes in pre-colonial period.

Conventional historians have focused on the “intellectual cultures” in East Africa because their aim is to emphasize the agency of indigenous intellectuals.²⁹ I derive my focus on the intellectual and political history from this and argue that the idea of “intellectual cultures” in East Africa is exaggerated. I illustrate this point by focusing on the historical and political processes in Toro and Kigezi that brought forth the derivative and dialectical responses. Moreover, I demonstrate how colonial ethnographers were behind these derivative responses in Toro to prove how insufficient it was to advance the idea of “intellectual culture” in East Africa.

Pre-colonial modes of thinking and mobilizing in Toro and Kigezi

Ethnic heterogeneity was celebrated in Toro and Kigezi districts that were predominantly inhabited by a diversity of Bantu agriculturalists whose political unit did not go beyond that of a clan, commonly referred to as *oruganda* in the Bantu dialect of the inter-lacustrine region.³⁰ Let me use the Bakiga ethnicity to illustrate my

28 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (London: Verso, 1983). Also see, Lonsdale, “Moral Ethnicity and Political Tribalism” and Evarist Ngabirano, *Beyond ethnic patriotism*, 15.

29 This focus is most evident in the works Derek Peterson and other historians of East Africa.

30 David Lee Schoenbrun, *A Green Place, A Good Place: Agrarian Change, Gender, and Social Identity in the Great Lakes Region to the 15th Century*. (Portsmouth, NH:

point. The Bakiga were a conglomeration of clans each of which settled on a hill that supported an independent political unit. The ragged terrain made it impossible for Bakiga to traverse their territory limiting their interaction. In these circumstances variations in language and culture developed.³¹ Moreover, these clans (*enganda*) constantly engaged in war with each other. In Ngologoza's narrative 'the Bakiga of Basigi clan for instance went to war with Abatimbo who were also of Basigi stock; Bamusigi in addition used to fighting with Abahesi. The Abahundu fought with Abarihira or Abanyangabo while the Abagyeri went to war with Abarihira of Kasheregyenyi. The Abainika fought with Abagyeyo or Abakongwe, et cetera'.³² I found more compelling evidence about the Bakiga clan wars in the narratives from my mother who recounted how her clan Bungura used to fight with Basigi her husband's clan and how Basigi fought with Bahimba.³³ In that narration about wars between clans and families that were only related through marriage and perhaps proximity of residence I found no evidence to justify the existence of an ethnic polity/tribal homeland of the Bakiga. Indeed, ethnographers like May Edel who took a lead in the project of constituting the Bakiga into an ethnic polity rightly observed that the Bakiga were only united in their own disunity.³⁴ It is this disunity or diversity that Ngologoza celebrates in his work 'Kigezi and its People'. Wars in Ngologoza's opinion were a result of ego; that is, a bigger clan seeking to grab land, animals and food of a smaller clan or revenge.³⁵ In Ngologoza's analysis, it is bonds of friendship, sharing area of residence and marriage that helped avert the crisis of Bakiga clan wars because they feared to

Heinemann, 1998).

31 Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival*.

32 Paulo Ngologoza, *Kigezi N'abantu Baamwo* (Nairobi, Dar-es-salaam, Kampala: East African Literature Bureau, 1967).

33 Narratives from Paskazia Keigambagye, my mother who passed away in 2013. According to her Baptismal Card she was baptized in 1936 when she was an adult and married. Even if girls married at an early age, her year of birth would be estimated to be around 1920's.

34 May Mandelbaum Edel, *The Chiga of Western Uganda*, (New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1957).

35 Ngologoza, *Kigezi N'abantu Bamwo*, 32-33.

kill friends and relatives.³⁶ It is this theme of friendship, area of residence and marriage that Ngologoza's history book; 'Kigezi and its people' sets out to extend to the multi-ethnic district of Kigezi.

Toro's pre-colonial landscape was not different. Like the Bakiga, the Bakonzo's political union rotated around ridges of the Rwenzori ranges in which clans interspersed. While I did not come across a narrative similar to that of Bakiga clan wars of Kigezi, it is acknowledged that no single ridge/clan leader could mobilize Bakonzo beyond his clan. Stacey singles out Ruhandika for his ability to mobilize Bakonzo to fight Kabarega's army that had invaded the mountains in search of Kasagama and his mother.³⁷ The other significant group of people in Toro is the Batoro who also mobilized politically along clans but later (in colonial period), constituted as rulers and only natives of Toro. The origin of this political project may well be explained in the fact that the Lwoo-Babito who were the rulers of Bunyoro Kitara identified themselves more as Banyoro and Batoro. In the pre-colonial period, the Bakonzo and Bamba either recognized this arrangement or constantly took refuge in the Rwenzori Mountains whenever they came under threat of subjugation by Banyoro invaders. The Bakonzo like the Bakiga were described as people of low type, uncivilized and susceptible to attacks from enemy tribes/ethnicities. They were also described, as weak people who faced with enemy attacks would either take refuge in the mountains or pay ransom.³⁸ If the Bafumbira of Kigezi were subdued by the Tutsi lineage of Rwanda, the Batoro fell under the control of the Babiito lineage who were the rulers of Bunyoro Kitara. Likewise, the Bahororo of North Kigezi fell under the control of the Bashambo. The Bakonzo like the Bakiga appear to have remained independent in their mountainous enclaves. If however, colonialism constituted the Babiito of Toro into rulers of Toro, it did not do so for the

³⁶ Ngologoza, *Kigezi N'bantu Bamwo*, 32-33.

³⁷ Tom Stacey, *Tribe: The Hidden History of the Mountains of the Moon*, (London: Stacey International, 2003), 17.

³⁸ John Roscoe, *The Soul of Central Africa: A general Account of the Mackie ethnographical expedition*, (New York: Negro University, 1969).

Tutsi and/or Bashambo of Kigezi.

Several theories accounts for the origins of lineage groups that politically mobilized beyond clans in Toro and Kigezi. I will mention two broad theoretical accounts. The first suggests that these groups were not Bantu though they shared Bantu language and culture. This account associates these lineages to the pastoral Hamites in Kigezi and the Lwoo in Toro. Both lineage groups are alleged to have come from the direction of Northern Uganda.³⁹ Existing literature describe them as distinct and intrusive with unique structure and mode of life.⁴⁰ They became overlords in Kigezi and Toro ruling peasants like Bafumbira, Batoro and Bahororo who were kin to the Bakiga and Bakonzo. The second account suggests that these groups of lineages were not of alien culture and that the distinction was political and historical; not cultural.⁴¹ For that matter these pre-colonial groups could pass for a class of people who were pastoralists and rulers of the inter-lacustrine region. My interest in this discourse is in how the Babiito lineage was institutionalized as a Batoro ethnic lineage and became a political project in Toro and not in the distinction between Babiito and Batoro or Bashambo and Bahororo. If Ruhandika and the Bakonzo recognized and defended the Babiito lineage against Kabarega, its transformation into a Batoro institution homogenized Toro and excluded the non-Batoro. If the pre-colonial project of Ruhandika and the Bakonzo like that of Ngolongoza was to defend their area of residence and the Babiito lineage against Kabarega, the colonial project was to defend one ethnicity, the Batoro through whom the British would gain control of Toro. This is evident from the treaties that the British signed with the king of Toro recognizing only one identity of Batoro as the only natives of Toro.

39 Kabba. Box 18. Rwe Mov't. Civil Authority file. Ethnographic Survey of Africa. Daryll Forde Ed; East central Africa, part XIII, The Western Lacustrine Bantu (Nyoro, Toro, nyankole, Kiga, Haya and Zinza with sections on the Amba and Konzo).

40 Edel, *The Chiga of Western Uganda*.

41 Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University press, 2001).

The history and politics of ethnicity in Toro

The driving force in this section is to problematize the general knowledge about East Africa in which emphasis is placed on African agency outside the structure of indirect rule politics to explain the phenomenon of ethnic nationalism in the post-independence period. The idea here is to focus my debate on the history and politics of ethnicity in Toro in comparison with Kigezi to explain why Toro native elites wrote self-interested history books, thought, and mobilized their people along lines of ethnicity. The debate revolves around two main ideas namely native law politics and the question of agency.

Native law politics in Toro

Toro was strategic for the colonial project in Uganda because it was part of Bunyoro kingdom, which at the dawn of colonialism was second to none and its leader, Kabarega was a threat to Buganda and the British. On his mission to bring Toro under the British sphere of influence, Frederick Lugard identified Prince Kasagama of Toro through the mediation of Baganda chiefs. Kasagama had taken refuge in Buganda after Kabarega's re-conquest of Toro. While Toro was multi-ethnic, the British decided to elevate only one ethnicity, the Batoro to build a state bureaucracy based on assumed pre-colonial patron-client relations supported by the native majority, the Batoro. This was politically significant for the British to gain control over Toro, which they hoped to use as a base to fight Kabarega. As it were, Toro was colonized through agreements with one ethnicity, the Batoro, the first of its kind being a treaty between Lugard and Kasagama in 1891 before Uganda could be declared a British protectorate. The second was the 1900 agreement, which recognized one ethnicity, the Batoro as the only official natives of Toro.

The native law defined a native basing on ethnicity in Toro. Moreover, the structure of indirect rule that the British established in Toro was ethnic composed of the king Kasagama and below him were chiefs who administered law in six divisions or coun-

ties. These formed a native authority (council), *Rukurato*, which was empowered to make administrative decisions and dispense justice. The 1900 agreement gave the king, Kasagama the title of “Kabaka or supreme chief” otherwise referred to as the *Omukama* of Toro, *Rukirabasaija* locally. While the agreement in article 3 subjects the king and his chiefs to colonial authority, her Majesty, the Queen of England, article 6 empowers them to dispense justice between native and native.⁴² Moreover cases of appeal moved from divisional native courts to the Rukiko of the Kabaka of Toro unless the case involves “the imprisonment which exceeds a term of one year or property involved exceeds the value of 100 pound” in which case the appeal would move from the *Rukurato* to the principal European officer in charge of the district.⁴³ In 1912 a supplementary agreement, which empowered the king to ‘establish and constitute native courts’ to try cases between natives, was signed. In this agreement the king was also empowered to ‘define and limit the jurisdiction’ of these courts.⁴⁴ However, justice between natives and non-natives was altogether removed from native jurisdiction and placed in the hands of district magistrates in the district of Toro.⁴⁵

The 1900 agreement provided for the Toro customary law, which applied only to the natives of Toro. The agreement also articulated a law for non-natives, which applied to Ugandan natives other than those of Toro, and non-Ugandans who included Europeans, Asians, Arabs etcetera. Mahmood Mamdani explains how such laws produced bifurcated states of native and non-native.⁴⁶

42 KabDA. Box 18. Rwenzururu Movement file. Native Agreements (Toro). The Toro Agreement, 1900, Henry Hamilton Johnson, Daudi Kabaka Kasagama et. al. 26th June 1900.

43 Ibid.

44 KabDA. Box 18. Rwenzururu Movement file. Native Agreements (Toro). The Toro Agreement (Judicial), 1912, Henry Richard Wallis, D. G. Tomblings, Daudi Kasagama et. al.

45 ibid.

46 Mahmood Mamdani, *Define and Rule: Native as Political Identity*, (Kampala: Makerere Institute of Social Research, 2013) Also read Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, (Johannesburg and Kampala: Wits University Press and Makerere Institute of Social Research, 2017).

Thus the identity of being a Mutoro, of Toro begins from the 1900 agreement even if Toro was multi-ethnic. The identity Batoro, which was cultural and/or ethnic, was turned into a political institution when a separate law was created for them and another for non-Batoro. This law, which was tailored on the colonial imagination of ethnic customs, did not recognize Bamba and Bakonzo yet they were natives of Toro. The British here were replicating the ideas of Maine who advised that India would best be governed through native customs, not the European civil law. The claim was that civil law adapted to change and based itself on reason while custom only reproduced the past because it was an imitation of the behavior of ancestors. But customary law had colonial roots and did not in any way reflect the behavior of Batoro ancestors. Such a law became repressive to the native especially the non-Batoro natives of Toro.

The question of agency in Toro politics

The existing historical narrative ignores the above history and politics of native law politics and its implications in favor of emphasizing African agency outside the colonial structure of indirect rule. The idea here is that ethnic nationalism was age old as reflected in the ways in which native elites wrote, thought, and mobilized their people in Toro. Recent studies have assigned agency to individuals like Mukirane of Toro and Ngologoza of Kigezi. They categorize these individuals as 'ethnic patriots' who wrote inspirational history books to constitute their ethnic lineages. Mukirane for instance was singled out because he led a separatist movement to create the Bakonzo kingdom out of Toro. But if, Ngologoza was categorized as an 'ethnic patriot', for writing "Kigezi and its people", no explanation is given as to why his works did not generate a separatist movement in Kigezi. In the same vein, native agency in Kigezi was linked with Nyabingi, a religion in which Bakiga mobilized against alien rule while in Toro it was associated with ethnicity. In this section, I explore perspectives, which complicate the idea of native agency beyond colonial structures of power and justice in Toro.

The first perspective that complicates the idea of native agency is a focus on royalism, which originates from colonial imaginations of African customs. The British imagination of African customs reflected the royal customs in Britain and the writings of Maine about India. Ethnographers, missionaries, and explorers had described Batoro as having traces of royal descent, being well mannered and hospitable. On the contrary, the Bakonzo like the Bakiga were described as people of low type, primitive and lacking in leadership.⁴⁷ Colonial structures of power and justice that capitalized on the distinctiveness of Batoro royal descent became a custom in Toro and oppressive to the non-Batoro in particular Bamba-Bakonzo who were not defined/constituted in law as ethnicities/tribes.

The second perspective, which is linked to the first, is a focus on the subjugation of the native subjects. Colonialism thrived on suppression of natives who manifested habits of resistance. In itself, colonialism was all about control and maintenance of law and order. If the Bakonzo were of low type and lacking in humility before authorities, the Batoro took on the role of the colonizer to subjugate them (Bamba-Bakonzo) in Toro. I claim that native agency cannot be explained beyond this colonial arrangement. The archival materials that I read were replete with ways in which Batoro chiefs took on the habit of tutoring their Bamba-Bakonzo juniors on Toro customs. For example, while writing to his subordinates, the county chief of Bwamba emphasized, “work very much but speak little”.⁴⁸ While this could be interpreted as instructions from a senior chief to his junior chiefs, they could pass as customs of Toro. Indeed, a mere expression of discontent by Bamba-Bakonzo accounted for breach of custom in Toro. For instance, when Lazaro Makoma a Mukonzo and his fellow youth wrote to the king expressing their discontent over mistreatment, “they were summoned to the county chief’s court and imprisoned up to sunset.”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Roscoe, *The Soul of Central Africa*.

⁴⁸ KabDA. Box 984. Touring Bwamba file. Saza Chief Bwamba to Gombolola Chiefs, 17 September 1953.

⁴⁹ KabDA. Box 16. Rwe Mov’t. Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu file. A book: Bamusede

All forms of expression including action that stressed discontent or question Batoro ethnic authority were regarded as defamation of the person of the king. The first Bakonzo leaders namely Tibamwenda, Nyamucwa, and Kapoli who mobilized and resisted Batoro subjugation were accused of breaching custom and sentenced to death by Toro Native Authority.

The third perspective that I want to focus on is the idea of religion and ethnicity. The argument here is that if the Bakiga of Kigezi summoned religion to resist alien rule, the Bakonzo mobilized ethnicity to resist native ethnic domination. The idea here is that the Bakiga and Bakonzo were so much attached to religion and ethnicity respectively that they would wield them beyond the colonial structures of power. To explain my point, let me focus on the idea of religion. Peterson claims that Nyabingi religious spirit had sovereignty over the Bakiga even before colonialism. That the king of Rwanda left the Bakiga for Nyabingi to govern and that “in their devotion to Nyabingi, the proudly independent people of Kigezi affirmed their aversion to Rwanda’s autocrats.”⁵⁰ My claim is that this mobilization along religion like that of ethnicity cannot be explained beyond the colonial or similar structures of power. Moreover Peterson himself says “Bakiga converts positioned themselves alongside Nyabingi devotees as antagonists of the settled hierarchies that British and African polity builders sought to create.”⁵¹ I argue here therefore that beyond hierarchies and settled territorial order that colonialism sought to create in Kigezi and Toro, the Bakiga and Bakonzo would never have allied themselves to religion and ethnicity respectively.

The fourth perspective is the agency of colonial ethnographers like Tom Stacey who studied traditions and customs of minorities like the Bakonzo. My claim is that Stacey took a leading role in Mukirane’s project. For instance, it is Stacey who crafted

Bwambale and Augustine Kaminyawandi. 2000. *The Faces of the Rwenzururu Movement*, 5.

50 Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African revival*, 56.

51 Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African revival*, 52.

the structure similar to that of indirect rule in Toro for Mukirane.⁵² Mukirane never wrote a history book, Stacey did. While it is undisputable that there was agency and that Mukirane cannot be exonerated, it would be an understatement to isolate him from the structure that suffocated his identity as a Mukonzo and the inspiration he received from Stacey. While Mukirane may have been aware of his identity, it was not strong enough to give him agency until Stacey enrolled him on a research project to document the history and traditions of the Bakonzo. Abdul Baguma Kule gives testimony to Tom Stacey's work among the Bakonzo. He likened Stacey to "Isemusoki" which means father of the first-born.⁵³ This in Kule's opinion implies two things: the first is that Stacey enlightened the Bakonzo, giving them a tribal/ethnic political consciousness. The second is that Stacey showed the Bakonzo the way by creating a tribal/ethnic lineage.⁵⁴ Kule narrated how Stacey toured the whole region studying how the Bakonzo lived and in his view, "that is when they started traditions"⁵⁵ which gave the Bakonzo an identity that they previously lacked.

Mukirane had worked as a faithful subject of the colonial structure teaching in various schools in Toro. Even after losing his job, Mukirane was hopeful that he would be reinstated or work in other capacities. Mukirane never thought of replicating the structure of indirect rule in Toro but rather unsuccessfully sought to reform it. The opportunity to replicate it only arose after acquiring a strong identity through his work with Stacey and his leadership in the Bakonzo Life History Society (BLHRS). Certainly, Stacey's work gave identity to Bakonzo and Mukirane in particular equipping them with the agency to fight for their political rights. I want to underscore here that Mukirane was not an ethnic patriot in thought and action because his initial response was dialectical in the sense that it sought to reform rather than accommodate the

⁵² Stacey, *Tribe: The Hidden History of the Mountains of the Moon*, 17.

⁵³ Abdul Baguma Kule, Interview, Karangura, Burahya, Kabarole, 7 December 2018.

⁵⁴ Baguma Kule, Interview.

⁵⁵ Baguma Kule, Interview.

structure. However, the structure was static as manifested in the failed attempts. Moreover, my claim is that Mukirane's steps towards derivative demands got inspiration from Stacey a colonial ethnographer whose thinking was more inclined to ethnicity given his Anglo-European background.

It is also important to take into account the socio-economic factors that could have motivated Mukirane. I claim that Mukirane could have used the BLHRS not only to speak on behalf of his people but also for his social economic survival. I found evidence to confirm that the association did not claim to fight for the rights of the Bakonzo until early 1960's.⁵⁶ It is possible however that Mukirane could have seen the research society as both a source of livelihood and a tool to mobilize support for the rights of the Bakonzo. In 1955 Mukirane wrote to the District Commissioner (DC) requesting for a support letter to carry on his research work with Stacey across the Rwenzori about the present and past life of the Bakonzo.⁵⁷ In 1960, he was writing to Axel Sommerfelt bidding him farewell and emphasizing that the material he had "collected from our tribe" would be of great help once published.⁵⁸ From its time of inception, there was no indication that the research society was started with the aim of fighting for the rights of the Bakonzo. Certainly, Mukirane seems to have developed new ambitions in early 1960's. Moreover, I claim that even these cannot be divorced from his economic frustration after his loss of a teaching job in Toro.

Kigezi's history and politics

The existing historical narrative generalizes East African native leaders as "ethnic patriots" whose thinking, writing and mobilization of society summoned ethnicity. The idea here is that this is an age-old practice in East Africa and Uganda in particular.

56 KabDA. Box 16. New Collection, Rwe Mov't. Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu file. A book: Bamusede Bwambale and Augustine Kaminyawandi, *The Faces of the Rwenzururu Movement*, (2000), 12.

57 KabDA. Box 118. Miscellaneous Anthropology file. Isaya Mukirane to the Mr. Stone, District Commissioner, Fort Portal, 1st January 1955.

58 KabDA. Box 118. Miscellaneous Anthropology file. Isaya Mukirane, Rwenzori to Axel Sommerfelt, 12th June 1960.

Peterson's narrative on Kigezi for instance, placed Ngologoza in the same category with Mukirane of Toro and other East African native leaders who mobilized their people along ethnic lines. For instance, Peterson claims that Ngologoza spent many pages of his work "Kigezi and its people" on prominent men of his ethnicity, the Bakiga. That his aim was to "anchor contemporary political and religious authorities within an inspiring past and thereby impart to Kiga leadership both vitality and authority."⁵⁹ Moreover, Peterson also considers Ngologoza's antagonism with revival movement leaders particularly Julian Mufuko as a work of cultural reform and ethnic mobilization. Below I give the following analysis.

Ngologoza's history book, "Kigezi and its people"

Peterson claims that Ngologoza spent half a page of his work on a prominent Mukiga man called Magyengye to emphasize the idea that Ngologoza's thought and writing aligned him as an "ethnic patriot" who focused only on his ethnicity, the Bakiga. I argue that this claim reveals the weakness of Peterson's narrative because Ngologoza talks about Magyengye in only one sentence that opens up a paragraph: "Magyengye, son of Rwamushwa was a *mukuru* of Bakongwe at Mukyante."⁶⁰ It is Katuregye, the warlord and young brother to Magyengye that Ngologoza talks about in a few more lines of the same paragraph not as a hero but a villain who uses Batwa pygmies to annihilate the Bakiga.⁶¹ On the contrary Ngologoza paid tribute to the Muhororo king, Makobore, the *Omukama* of Rujumbura. In almost two pages, Ngologoza traces Makobore's lineage from king Kahaya of the Bashambo dynasty of Mpororo whom even the Bakiga respected and praised in their famous expression: '*Oshe Kahaya ka Ruguru*'.⁶² It would therefore be these Bahororo leaders that Ngologoza would be seen to identify and elevate as leading figures with an inspiring past but not men of his ethnicity, the Bakiga as Peterson suggests. Moreover, Festo Karwemera, a respected

59 Peterson. *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival*.

60 Paulo Ngologoza, *Kigezi and its People*, (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1968), 24.

61 Ngologoza, *Kigezi and its People*, 24.

62 Ngologoza, *Kigezi and its People*, 28.

elder in Kigezi confirmed that the Bakiga had no royal lineage to talk about. He argued that the Bakiga had no respect of elders and habits of good manners to support a lineage of royal descent.⁶³ In the Makobore lineage, Ngologoza identified his (Makobore's) son Karegyesa and grandson F. Kitaburaza who became leaders of contemporary Kigezi. These could be properly placed in a royal lineage unlike the Bakiga men that Ngologoza mentions in passing.

Ngologoza's history book on Kigezi concentrated on building a residence-based identity, the *Banyakigezi* as opposed to his ethnicity, the Bakiga. Unlike the Bakonzo native elites whose response to colonial rule was derivative of indirect rule politics and received inspiration from colonial ethnographers, that of Kigezi derived inspiration from a multiplicity of sources including, pre-colonial, colonial and the socioeconomic aspirations of the natives. Ngologoza for instance understood the customs of Kigezi like those of pre-colonial Africa to be loosely defined and infinitely flexible. He therefore examined the overlaps that extended across Kigezi and beyond. In his observation, wherever one went, one found the same appearance in relation to that of the Bakiga including dress, speech and way of life. For instance, Ngologoza likened the Bakiga with the people of Bukavu in the DRC, Burundi and Chagga country in Tanzania.⁶⁴ Moreover, his work demystifies the colonial conception of Bakiga as a coherent group of people. In his assessment of Bakiga clan wars for instance, Ngologoza is able to demonstrate that residence, bonds of friendship and marriage became the only basis upon which the Bakiga could co-exist and mobilize as opposed to claims of ancestry/lineage.⁶⁵ In all this, Ngologoza is able to build a residence-based cultural identity in which differences between groups of people in post-colonial Kigezi become political and not cultural. This I claim explains the absence of derivative responses in post-colonial Kigezi.

63 I got this information from Festo Karwemera, 90 during my field study in Kabale in Kigezi in 2018. Karwemera a respected elder and a cultural expert of the Bakiga culture in Kigezi died in 2020.

64 Ngologoza, *Kigezi N'bantu Bamwo*, 17.

65 Ngologoza, *Kigezi N'bantu Bamwo*, 32-33.

The political nature of Ngologoza's wars with revivalism

Peterson's narrative explains Ngologoza's antagonism with the Bakole (revivalists) in Kigezi as a defense of hierarchy and Bakiga culture. He says:

"Where Kiga chiefs sought to cultivate the habits of respect and obedience among their subjects, converts openly flouted chief's authority. Where cultural conservatives defended the sartorial and culinary practices that upheld social hierarchy, converts made a point of dressing and eating indiscriminately. In Kigezi, the 'pilgrims' progress was an engine for dissenting cultural politics."⁶⁶

I claim that Peterson did not historicize sufficiently because he apparently ignored the history and politics of religion in Kigezi. Ngologoza was a man of discipline and a faithful servant of the colonial state. But he did not align himself with the faith/religion of the colonial state, the Anglican/protestant religion to which her royal majesty the queen and the majority of her subjects subscribed. Revivalism as an offshoot of the Anglican faith was a threat to Catholicism and to Ngologoza's political position because they (revivalists) resented anything that was not protestant.⁶⁷ The idea here is that the aim of Mufuko's camping at Ngologoza's door in Bukinda was to convert him to Protestantism. I was told that Mufuko used to say that Ngologoza was lost as a Catholic; that if he became a protestant, he would rule the world.

Moreover, Peterson himself shows how revivalism went hand in hand with constituted authority and custom elsewhere in Uganda. For instance, he explains how Toro royalists found the revival to be a useful tool to enhance their kingdoms reputation. He acknowledged that royals such as Ruth Komuntale reinforced Toro's

⁶⁶ Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival*, 52.

⁶⁷ I got this information from the Catholic priests at Rushoroza Cathedral parish of Kabale Diocese. I talked with Fr. Vincent Kanyonza, 90 and Monsignor Silverio Twinomugyisha, 65 during my field research in 2018. These revelations were also confirmed by Ngologoza's daughter in law, Cecilia Tibahurira, 78.

political position while on their mission of the revival.⁶⁸ Peterson says, “Ruth Komuntale and other Toro polity builders moved fluidly between royalist nationalism and revivalist evangelism.”⁶⁹ While in Toro revivalists found it possible to be patriots, in Kigezi converts were the chiefs leading antagonists. “They would go to Ngologoza’s door preaching that if you don’t get saved you are going to hell.”⁷⁰

Moreover, John Bikangaga, the only polity builder in Kigezi to become a constitutional king of Kigezi in postcolonial Uganda was a Murokole Anglican who like Toro’s royalist found it possible to be patriotic.⁷¹ Generally, Uganda’s patriots cultivated a close alliance with the Anglican Church because this aligned them with the British monarchy. Peterson acknowledges that this was the case in Toro. It was also the case in Buganda, Ankole, Bunyoro and elsewhere in colonial and postcolonial Uganda. In Kigezi however, Ngologoza’s affiliation to Catholicism alienated him from patriotism attracting sharp criticism from the revivalist Anglicans. To become protestant was being patriotic and Catholicism was unpatriotic. That is the politics that colonialism bequeathed Uganda and Kigezi in particular. Ngologoza should have converted to Protestantism to become patriotic.

Sources of residence-based identity/ inter-ethnic solidarity in Kigezi

Generally, native elites in Kigezi thought, wrote, and mobilized their people along lines of inter-ethnic solidarity and territory of residence. I claim that they derived inspiration from a multiplicity of sources including pre-colonial, colonial and socio-economic and political realities of Kigezi.

Firstly, pre-colonial thought and practice in Kigezi made the Bakiga defy the colonial administrative practice of nativism and

68 Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival*, 260.

69 Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival*, 260.

70 Mentioned in Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival*, 67.

71 George. W. Kanyeihamba, *Canon John Bikangaga: His Life and Service*, (Kampala: Centenary Publishing House, 2003).

homelands. In 1912, Captain R. E. Critchley Salmonson, the then Acting colonial officer of Kigezi gathered prominent men at Ikumba to form native governments in the mode of indirect rule system in Kigezi. Rwambuka, a Musigi had suggested that the Bakiga were not ready to govern themselves.⁷² Rwambuka who had entered into blood pact with Yowana Ssebalijja, a Muganda who came with the British requested that the British should maintain the Baganda in Kigezi to advise the Bakiga in the art of government.⁷³ Indeed, while Salmonson succeeded in appointing well known traditional leaders such as Makobore as Saza chief of Rujumbura in Mpororo and Nyindo as Saza chief of Bufumbira, the appointment of Rwagara, a Musigi as Saza chief of Ndorwa to lead the Bakiga ended in a dismal failure. Fellow Bakiga from other clans including the Basigi of a different lineage rejected Rwagara. The British had no option but to appoint Ssebalijja as the Saza chief of Both Ndorwa and Rukiga. They also assigned Baganda agents to Makobore of Rujumbura and Nyindo of Bufumbira.

The above arrangement implies two most significant closely linked orientations for Kigezi. The first is that the British did not identify and work with one of the traditional leaders in Kigezi to defend and protect their interests. The second is that the British did not therefore enforce the customary law of any of the three tribes in Kigezi. This fact therefore implies that the British recognized the multi-ethnic character of Kigezi. Elsewhere in Uganda the approach was different. For instance, in Toro, the British installed Kasagama as the *Omukama* or King of Toro and signed an agreement with him as an enforcer of customary law. As a consequence, the 1900 agreement created the nativity of Toro privileging one ethnicity, the Batoro over others. Unlike Kigezi therefore, the British did not recognize the multi-ethnic character of Toro. Thus far, a combination of pre-colonial and colonial approaches fused together to inform Ngologoza's focus on Kigezi and its peo-

72 Yowana Ssebalijja, "Memories of Rukiga and Other Places" in *A History of Kigezi in South-Western Uganda*, ed. Donald Denoon, (Kampala: The National Trust. Adult Education Center, 1972), 179-199.

73 Ssebalijja, "Memories of Rukiga and Other Places" 179-199.

ple as opposed to his ethnicity, the Bakiga.

The second factor that could have inspired Ngologoza to think more of Kigezi than his ethnicity, the Bakiga is the Baganda agency and colonial response. Once the Baganda entrenched themselves in the leadership of Kigezi, they developed a feeling that they were indispensable.⁷⁴ For nineteen years (from 1910-1929), the Baganda chiefs determined the traditions and customary laws in Kigezi. Ngologoza explains the skewed nature of the Baganda laws: "In dealing with cases they did not distinguish between criminal and civil cases, for the simple reason that they wanted all cases to involve fines so that they could acquire goats and cows."⁷⁵ The colonial archive of Kigezi district testifies to the extortion by the Baganda chiefs. However, the British were opposed to the perpetual rule of the Baganda in Kigezi. Overwhelming evidence indicate that as early as 1918, the British supported the appointment of the natives as chiefs. As it were, the British believed that the Baganda chiefs were alien to Kigezi and therefore required temporarily until such a time when natives would acquire sufficient knowledge to govern themselves.⁷⁶

Thirdly, in relation to the above, the British deliberately de-emphasized ethnic patriotism in the way in which they prepared natives for leadership positions in Kigezi. Captain J. E. T. Philips, the DC founded the School that brought together Bakiga, Bahororo and Banyarwanda in Kisoro in 1920 to be trained as leaders of a multi-ethnic district, but in what looks like ethnic distinction, the school was split into two; one for the Banyarwanda located at Sesema in Kisoro and another for the Bakiga and Bahororo natives was moved to Rugarama in Kabale in 1922.⁷⁷ What is remarkable however is that in those schools, the teaching of Swahili was compulsory. As a consequence, the Kigezi district ar-

⁷⁴ Ngologoza, *Kigezi and its People*, 78.

⁷⁵ Ngologoza, *Kigezi and its People*, 78.

⁷⁶ KigDA Box 87. Administration. Native affairs: General file. Provincial commissioner, Western Province, Fort portal to the District Commissioner, Kigezi, 17 December 1918.

⁷⁷ Ngologoza, *Kigezi and its People*, 78.

chival materials at Kabale district were replete with correspondences written in Swahili. Moreover, the vast majority of the elders I met in Kigezi were fluent in Swahili.

Fourthly, the colonial enforcement of a uniform culture in Kigezi as opposed to native cultures could have inspired Ngologozza to think more of Kigezi as opposed to his culture of the Bakiga. While the British were content to use the Baganda agents in ruling Kigezi, they seem to have been averse to the entrenchment of either Baganda or any single native traditions and customs in Kigezi. This could explain why the British encouraged the teaching of Swahili and not Luganda in Kigezi. Alongside the Baganda chiefs, the British brought in Baziba from Tanzania to serve as Clarks and to teach Swahili to the natives. Available evidence indicates that Swahili became the language of communication both in written and verbal form in 1920's and 1930's. This also meant that natives of Kigezi who had received training from the colonial schools at Seseme in Kisoro and Rugarama in Kabale could be posted anywhere regardless of their ethnic affiliation.

There is adequate evidence to prove the above approach of inter-ethnic appointment of chiefs in Kigezi. For example, Bakiga chiefs worked in Bufumbira and Mpororo while Bafumbira were appointed as chiefs in Rukiga. Knowing Kiswahili as opposed to native language became one of the qualifications for the appointment. In recommending the appointment of two indigenous Bakiga as chiefs in Rukiga county, the DC, Kigezi wrote: "They have long years of exemplary service, are active men, speak good Swahili and are liked by the peasantry and have an unusual driving force of character."⁷⁸ As early as 1921, the DC was recommending William Biteyi a Muhororo for a position of gombolola Chief among his tribesmen in Rujumbura on the basis of his knowledge of Kiwahili that he learnt in the colonial school. The DC, Kigezi described him as, "an intelligent and useful boy who has been

78 KigDA Box 28. Administration. Kigezi District-Appointment and Dismissal of Chiefs file. J. E. P. Philips, the District Commissioner, Kigezi to the Provincial Commissioner, Western Province, 28 November 1929.

taught the three R's and Kiswahili.”⁷⁹ Ngologoza himself explains how his knowledge of Kiswahili helped him in doing his work as a Chief. Though he had no knowledge of English, having acquired no formal education, he overcame the problems of communication because he knew Swahili.⁸⁰ Swahili had become a medium of communication that even the Provincial Commissioner (PC) could write to the chiefs in Swahili. For instance, to the Mutwale of Bufumbira the PC wrote: “*Nimefuraha sana kuwona Bwana DC amenifahamisha kama umefanya kazi mzuri sana katika Bufumbira tangu ulichaguliwa kuwa Mutwale,*”⁸¹ (I am very happy to see the DC informing me that you have done good work in Bufumbira from the time you were chosen as Mutwale).

The British also tried to erase the Baganda traditions and customs by replacing Ganda names of chieftainships with Swahili names. The colonial language board meeting for instance suggested that the names *Saza*, *Gombolola* and *Muluka* be retained for the three grades of chieftainship apart from the latter, which should change to *Mluka* to suit the Swahili variation. In addition, it was recommended that the chiefs themselves be called *Mwenyi Saza*, *Mwenyi Gombolola*, and *Mwenyi Mluka*.⁸² While the British were getting rid of the alien Baganda customs, they did not emphasize native ones, a factor that could help explain the inter-ethnic comity in Kigezi. I claim that Ngologoza's thinking received inspiration from this colonial approach that enforced a uniform identity on Kigezi. My argument is that this colonial approach was able to in-

79 KigDA Box 29. Administration. Appointment of Chief's file. J. E. Philipps, District Commissioner, Kigezi to Provincial Commissioner, Western Province, 1 February 1921.

80 Ngologoza, *Kigezi N'bantu Bamwo*.

81 KigDA Box 29. Administration. Appointment of Chief's file. C. Sullivan, Provincial Commissioner, Western Province, Fort Portal to the Mutwale of Bufumbira, 31 October 1929.

82 KigDA Box 29. Administration. Appointment of Chief's file. The Chief Secretary to the Provincial Commissioners, Eastern, Western and Northern Provinces, 6 June 1929. It follows that the Swahili language policy did not only apply to Kigezi region but to the Eastern and Northern Provinces as well. However, it seems this policy did not apply to Buganda since its Provincial Commissioner was not copied. It is also possible that such a policy did not apply to Kingdom districts such as Toro and Ankole where the British emphasized native custom.

spire natives like Ngologoza because it emphasized the pre-colonial residence-based mode of political mobilization.

Lastly, the Kigezi native elites derived inspiration from the socio-economic and political realities of Kigezi for them to think in terms of ethnic solidarity and territory of residence. For instance, native elites reflected on the reality of population increase and land shortage in the Southern part of Kigezi. The debates on resettlement of people from South to North Kigezi and beyond inspired native elites to think, write and mobilize along the idea of territory of residence and inter-ethnic solidarity in Kigezi. For instance, while colonial officials like L.A Mathias wanted to resettle whole villages from Ndorwa and Rukiga to Ankole, the native elites rejected the idea in favor of north Kigezi. The Governor resolved the divergence between L. A. Mathias and the native chiefs in favor of the latter. He ruled, “the people should be resettled inside Kigezi and should not be compelled to leave Kigezi. But after the areas within Kigezi have been filled up, the people should be advised to move to other areas outside Kigezi.”⁸³ The point I want to drive home here is that the resettlement project focused its attention on Kigezi as an area of residence for the natives of Kigezi. The idea here is that the Bakiga and Bafumbira of South Kigezi once resettled to the North of Kigezi would still be considered as natives of Kigezi regardless of ethnicity. I claim that this approach reflected the pre-colonial mode of political mobilization from which Ngologoza derived inspiration to think more of ‘Kigezi and its People’ as opposed to his ethnicity, the Bakiga.

Conclusion

This paper focused on the intellectual and political history of East Africa particularly that of Toro and Kigezi in Uganda. The main aim in writing this paper was to critique the claims of conventional historians on East Africa who thought that ethnic patriotism was pervasive in East Africa. The driving force here is to contribute to the de-colonial thoughts and ideas. The idea that native elites,

⁸³ Ngologoza, *Kigezi and its People*, 88.

thought, wrote and mobilized their societies along ethnic lines de-emphasizes the agency of colonialism. As it were, this claim has been solidified and institutionalized. As such, the history departments at Makerere University and elsewhere on the African continent teach it. The African academia has taken it for granted because almost none has challenged it. While historians of Africa focus their attention on the study of native intellectuals to justify their pre-conceived knowledge, no one has devoted time to study the works of anthropologists and/or ethnographers and their imprint on native leaders. Moreover, very few have studied the history and politics that produced these so-called native intellectuals to explain why their thought and action was self-interested. In addition, no historian has acknowledged the non-self-interested thinking, writing, social organizing and/or mobilization.

I deploy qualitative interdisciplinary approaches to study the history and politics that produced native intellectuals in Toro and Kigezi. I use the colonial archive, interviews, and literature review to examine the history and politics of the two political spaces in Uganda. The findings revealed that the self-interested thinking, writing, social organizing and/or mobilization along ethnic politics in Toro was shaped by the colonial politics of indirect rule. While the response from native intellectuals like Mukirane was dialectical in the sense that it demanded reform from within the structure of ethnic politics right from the beginning, the colonial structure remained static. Armed with inspiration from Tom Stacey, an Anglo-European ethnographer, Mukirane eventually decided to adopt and accommodate the ethnic structure of indirect rule. That becomes the source of self-interested thinking, writing, and mobilizing in Toro.

The study revealed that the history and politics of Kigezi produced a non-self-interested thought and action. Here native leaders like Ngologoza received inspiration from pre-colonial, colonial and the socio-economic realities of Kigezi to set parameters outside the ethnic structure of indirect rule politics. Moreover, the study revealed that the struggle between accommodating and adopting

the demands of indirect rule politics was not limited to Mukirane of Toro but extended to Ngologoza of Kigezi as well. Nevertheless, I claim that the history and politics of Kigezi demonstrates a successful native response to colonial rule in which thought, and action produced an inter-ethnic solidarity and/or residence-based identity.

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A Returning Gaze at the 'Political' in the 'Precolonial': Towards a Decolonial History of State Formations in Upper Semliki Valley

David Ngendo-Tshimba

Abstract

This essay attempts to narrate anew the story of precolonial state formations astride the valley of Upper Semliki starting in mid-eighteenth century. At the core of the narrative is clan-ship as an historically unfolding political formation. The ambition here—conceptual and methodological—is to re-tell a political history of the precolonial in Upper Semliki Valley away from an analytic grid of European colonial understandings of the colonised's distant past. Primary data to substantiate this narrative were marshalled from two sources: archival (written) and ethnographic (oral). These were, in the main, collected in the course of my doctoral fieldwork (November 2017 through August 2018). Archival materials, most of which produced in the colonial period, were critically read against the grain of oral data collected. These oral primary data were thoroughly engaged to fill what Ranajit Guha termed 'the inescapable gap in the colonial archive'. Suffice to add, though, that in re-tracing the 'political' in precolonial Upper Semliki Valley, I exercised historical imagination *à la* Neil Kodesh. Resulting from this dual historical method of 'critical reading' and 'critical listening' is a novel story of historical reinterpretation of words, voices and si-

lences, which decolonises much of our historical understanding of culture and politics about this region's distant past.

Keywords: clanship, Katwe salt, ritual, trade, precolonial Upper Semliki Valley

Introduction

How can a contemporary African researcher of Africa's distant past successfully step out of conceptual and temporal registers of colonial understandings of Africa's precolonial past to study the latter on its own historical terms? This essay endeavours to come to grips with this intellectual preoccupation. The essay's theoretical ambition is two-fold: (i) to provide a nuanced genealogy of the political prior to the European colonial state and (ii) to sketch the contours of an understanding of the historical away from a colonial-modern rendering of Africa's distant past. Resulting from this dual ambition is an attempt at challenging much of the colonial received knowledge about clanship and state formations in this region. Different put, the decolonial history which this essay puts forth consists in provincializing allegedly universal standards of historical knowledge production yet rooted in a very specific colonial tradition. In the pages that follow, I attempt to narrate anew—giving surviving oral sources astride modern-day Uganda-Congo border a pride of place in the reconstitution of a distant past—the story of precolonial state formations in Upper Semliki Valley, starting in mid-eighteenth century. At the core of the narrative is clanship.

In articulating precolonial clanship in this region as a sophisticated *political* process, this essay fronts material (trade) as well as ideological (rituals) developments which embedded that process. In the realm of material changes, on the one hand, the salt reserves at Katwe occupy a pride of place. The institution of *erisinga* (crowning) originating from the genius of Batangi-basingya, on the other hand, is taken to be central to the ideological realm. Both realms here substantiate a novel narration of the genealogy of political formations in precolonial Upper Semliki Valley in ways that de-centre the primacy of the European colonial imagination

of clan (and later tribe or ethnicity) about Africa's precolonial past. Spatially, the essay is sutured to a territorial landscape straddling both the *Kalemba* (Semliki River) and the *Ngetsi* (Lake Edward)—an area covering the savanna grasslands from the saline of Katwe to the foothills of the Mitumba ranges north-west of the *Ngetsi*. Temporally, the essay confines itself to two centuries preceding the European colonial conquest—from the start of eighteenth to the last quarter to the nineteenth century.

A set of scholarly debates, particularly since the late 1950s, have shaped the corpus of historiography of the precolonial past in many non-Western societies. One such debate has pitted historians of oral tradition against anthropologists of cultural structure. In his path-taking book, originally published in French language in 1961 as *De la tradition orale* and later translated into English language in 1965 as *Oral Tradition*¹, Jan Vansina persuasively argues that oral accounts, narratives, including songs and proverbs should be admitted as historical evidence for consequential historical research projects about the African past. In his pioneering work originally in 1962 as *La Pensée sauvage* and later translated into English language in 1966 as *The Savage Mind*², Claude Lévi-Strauss on his part offered a theory and method for analysing mythic narratives in what he saw as the nonliterate native societies of the Americas. Far from evidencing historical events, oral traditions for Lévi-Strauss encapsulate the thinking of the mind in present rather than past times *per se*. Succinctly put, where oral historians (after Vansina) painstakingly listen to oral traditions as critical vehicles for historical sequence, structural anthropologists (after Lévi-Strauss) listen to them as pointing to cultural cognition, that is, society's present cultural values and ideas. This essay does not in any way seek to align itself on one side of this debate against the other. Rather, it attempts to critically engage with both positions and eventually sublate them by acknowledging both the pos-

1 J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co, 1965).

2 C. Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966).

sible connection between current words (oral tradition) and past actions (historical event), and the possibility of the mind of the teller to structure oral traditions squarely in accordance with cultural cognition (worldview).

Deriving from the syncretical approach to the above debate are three important historiographical lessons that this essay draws from the story of state formations in precolonial Upper Semliki Valley. Foremost among these is the pre-eminence of *basingya* being BaTangi of Musindi. The critical role played by these Batangi-*basingya* in the historical emergence of the precolonial Yira confederacy here unsettles the widespread claim of Bito hegemony.³ This claim is rife in the historiography of precolonial state formations in Africa's Great Lakes region following the epochal demise of the Cwezi dynasty in Kitara. Pursuant to the claim of Bito hegemony, it is often argued that precolonial polities that emerged in this wider space in the western Rift Valley all drew political imagination—directly or otherwise—from the subsequent rule of the Bito dynasty in Kitara. Inadvertently, such thesis fits well with the frequent trope that robust, sophisticated political order in this region is always something *brought in* from the outside. The case of the emergence of precolonial Yira clan-states disapproves this generalisation.

Second, to argue as Birgitta Farelius⁴ does that societies in this region simply evolved in accordance with conditions and potentials that environmental circumstances allowed is to impose a load of ecological determinism upon an otherwise far complex historical process. Unlike what Farelius foregrounds in her thesis on the origins of kingship in precolonial Africa's Great Lakes region, neither ownership of arable land nor ownership of cattle alone here consisted of centres of gravity around which power

3 See, for instance, R.M. Packard, *Chiefship and Cosmology: An Historical Study of Political Competition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981); K. Muwiri & K. Kambalume, *Identité culturelle dans la dynamique du développement* (Bruxelles: Academia-Bruylant, 2002); and C. Pennacini, "The Rwenzori Ethnic 'Puzzle'" In C. Pennacini and H. Wittenberg (eds.) *Rwenzori: Histories and Cultures of an African Mountain* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2008, pp. 59-97).

4 B. Farelius, *Origins of Kingship: Traditions and Symbolism in the Great Lakes Region of Africa* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2012).

evolved in each of these precolonial Yira polities. Away from the primacy of ownership of property—whether as fixed (arable land) or moveable (livestock)—power in precolonial

Upper Semliki Valley emanated from direct participation in the networked long-distance trade dominated by Katwe's salt. It was further legitimised by the ideologised political ritual of *erisinga* performed by Batangi-basingya. The latter bestowed upon a panoply of historical Yira actors—food and tool producers, traders, and protectors of trade routes—an inheritable political culture with a specific spatial organisation.

Third and lastly, there is yet another mainstream thesis in the historiography of precolonial Upper Semliki Valley that it is the absence of centralised power *à la* precolonial Bunyoro-Kitara which accounts for the proliferation of micro-states governed by dynastic clans.⁵ These dynastic clans, it is argued, fashioned a social stratification based on client-relationships among members of those micro-states. The story of clanship in precolonial Upper Semliki Valley in this essay, however, runs counter to this conventional thesis. The historical narrative here presented—accounting for the emergence and confederation of Yira clan-states—critiques both the equation of autonomy with fragmentation and that of lack of centralisation with hierarchisation.⁶ That autonomous Yira clan-states eventually coalesced not into a hierarchical but rather heterarchical confederacy illuminates the case of political autonomy without fragmentation. Confederated by virtue of a shared political culture of *erisinga*, each of these Yira clan-states nevertheless sought to preserve its political autonomy.

Foremost in the articulation of political autonomy within the

5 See, for instance, K.N.A. Waswandi, "Dieu Nyamuhanga Chez les Nande du Zaïre, Essai d'une Christologie Africaine dans ses Rapports Ethiques avec l'Évangélisation" (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Université Catholique de Lyon, 1981) and A. Syahuka-Muhindo, "The Role of Violence in State Formation in Mid-Western Uganda, 1850-1982" (Unpublished PhD thesis, Queen's University at Kingston, 2004).

6 Packard, R.M. 1981, Op. cit.; Waswandi, K.N.A. 1981, Op. cit.; and A. Syahuka-Muhindo, "Migrations and Social Formation in the Rwenzori Region" in C. Pennacini and H. Wittenberg (eds.) *Rwenzori: Histories and Cultures of an African Mountain* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2008).

framework of Yira confederation was the Yira-Songora state. Illustratively, therefore, this essay limits its analytic focus to this Yira clan-state of BuSongora, not least for his historical pre-eminence in the emergence of the Yira political confederacy (Buyira). But before delving into the story of formation of this Yira-Songora state (BuSongora), the essay starts with spelling out in great detail the study's methodology that enables what is here termed as decolonial historical rendition. It then proceeds with offering a genealogy of the political from the late seventeenth through the first half of the nineteenth century in Upper Semliki Valley. The essay finally turns focus on the emergence and consolidation of the Yira-Songora state starting in the second half of the eighteenth century. The Yira clan-state of BuSongora so formed here illustrates the very political nature clanship in precolonial Upper Semliki Valley, often explained away by some scholars of Africa's precolonial past in either ethno-cultural or socio-ecological determinism.

Researching Upper Semliki Valley's distant past: a decolonial methodology

Primary data for this essay were collected in the course of my doctoral fieldwork for a study that attempted an historical inquiry into violence in the wider Rwenzori region. They emanated from two sources: archival (written) and ethnographic (oral). Though largely colonial in terms of both content and temporal scope, some of the records in the colonial archives here consulted (British and Belgian) did stretch to a precolonial past of a wider geographic area of my research interest.

I visited four major sites for thorough consultation of archives, almost all of which were generated during the colonial period: The Uganda National Archives at Wandegaya in Kampala as well as the Mountains of the Moon University Archives for colonial Toro in Fort Portal were reached out for the historical account on Uganda's Rwenzori (East *Buyira*). For the historical account on Congo's Rwenzori (West *Buyira*), the *Archives du Territoire de Beni* at Oicha as well as the *Case des Archives sur le Bunande colonial* at the central li-

brary of *Université Catholique du Graben* in Butembo were consulted.

Of course, the colonial archive was by no means *the* sole source sought after to accomplish the task. To these written historical sources, oral sources were added. These were collected during ethnographic field visits between November 2017 and August 2018. Oral primary data were thoroughly engaged to fill what Ranajit Guha termed “the inescapable gap in the colonial archive.”⁷ The colonial archive, to paraphrase Guha, has a way of stamping the interests and outlook of the coloniser on every account of the colonised. One obvious way to combat such bias, Guha writes, “could perhaps be to summon folklore, oral as well as written, to the historian’s aid.”⁸ This was a no less uphill task, for “[u]nfortunately however there is not enough [of these folkloric sources] to serve for this purpose either in quantity or quality in spite of populist beliefs to the contrary.”⁹

However, in re-tracing the ‘political’ in precolonial Upper Semliki Valley, I exercised historical imagination à la Neil Kodesh.¹⁰ Through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions during which *Konzo* (on the Uganda side) as well as *Nande* (on the Congo side) oral traditions were recounted, the voices (and silences) of elderly men and women I specially engaged with in the course of fieldwork were here treated as scripts available for extrapolative historical interpretation. Even though these ‘local historians’ (as I would like to refer to them) were, in some respects, impressive repositories of Yira society’s grand historical narratives, I did rather treat their narratives as historical vignettes shrouding a much more complex past. In the reassuring words of Vansina, they offered the much sought-after key to the challenge in finding “a methodology that will make better use of other traces of the

7 R. Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 13).

8 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

9 *Ibid.*

10 N. Kodesh, “History from the Healer’s Shrine: Genre, Historical Imagination, and Early Ganda History” (*Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 49(3), 2007, pp. 527-52).

past than written documents.”¹¹ Even more fortunate, these ‘local historians’ had had their lived experiences both straddle across the Congo-Uganda border and span colonial and post-independence times. They were obviously identified by purposive (and then snowball) sampling techniques. They finally constituted “unique cases that [were] specially informative.”¹²

So, who consisted of these ‘local historians? To begin with, it is worth pointing out that historical inquiries into this region’s precolonial period—like elsewhere in formerly colonised spaces—have brought to the fore debates over the degree of fallibility of sources. Debated in the historiography is not only what constitutes historical evidence, but also its authenticity and reliability for sound historical scholarship. Historians of ‘hard evidence’ after John Sutton¹³ cherish archaeological explorations as well as written sources, while those of ‘soft evidence’ after Jan Vansina¹⁴ pride themselves mostly in historical linguistics and glottochronology in their bid to reconstruct the region’s precolonial past.

The local historians who recounted to me Yira oral traditions in the course of in-depth interviews and lengthy focus group discussions came from many different walks of life and so varied too were their bio-data: elderly men and women; not-so-old men and women; Abrahamic faith believers (Protestants, Catholics or Muslims) and non-Abrahamic faith believers (Animists); Yira-Nande and Yira-Konzo, and non-Yira folks (though dwellers in the Upper Semliki Valley during fieldwork); (former) fish-folks and Katwe salt extractors; descendants of former Yira leaders and those not; active (or descendant) members of famous long-distance trading families and those not; (former) civil servants and those not; and those able-bodied and those who were physically challenged—all of whom were united by the criterion of good mastery of the Yira

11 J. Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests: Towards a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, p. xi).

12 L.W. Neuman, *Basics of Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Pearson Education, 2007, p. 137).

13 J.E.G. Sutton, “The Antecedents of the Interlacustrine Kingdoms” (*The Journal of African History*, Vol. 34 (1), 1993, pp. 33-64).

14 J. Vansina, 1990. *Op. cit.*

language and the historical clues shrouded in its folkloric songs, riddles, myths, tales, and adages and proverbs. In a sense, therefore, these 'local historians' were all repositories of a precolonial Yira memory shrouded in historical narratives. With the aid of their memories—on some matter quite lucid, on others flimsy—I journeyed into the uncovering of a distant 'probable past'.

The real methodological challenge here, however, consisted not in pitting one strand of data ('hard evidence') against the other ('soft evidence'), but rather in exercising an inter-methodological iterative process of historical imagination with both strands of data sources. In the main, this historical imagination consisted of resisting to hear or read Upper Semliki Valley's precolonial past from the vantage point of the colonial (let alone post-independence) period. The methods and sources engaged in this essay thus combined two approaches to historical research—archival (critical reading) and oral (critical listening). Being critical here meant exercising a dose of historical imagination aimed at challenging (hence decolonising) much of received historical knowledge concerning clan and state formations in this region's distant past. Not unimportant too, this historical inquiry also drew further substantiation from some archaeological evidence available in secondary sources reviewed.

Pre-colonial Yira Clanship: a decolonial political history

In this study, the valley of the *Kalemba* (the Yira name for River Semliki) consists of a considerably larger swath of land and water resources: South to north it spans from the *Ngetsi* (Yira name for Lake Edward) to the *Mwita-Nzige* (Lake Albert), and west to east from the *Hutwe* (Mitumba mountain ranges) to the *Lwa-Nzururu* (Rwenzori Mountain ranges) and stretching to the grassland savannas south-east of the *Lwa-Nzururu* and northwest of the *Ngetsi*. Upper Semliki Valley, in this respect, runs north up to the latitude with the most northerly point of the northern spur of the *Lwa-Nzururu*.

Scholarly debates on the period(s) and origin(s) of those who eventually peopled Upper Semliki Valley at the advent of the Is(h)

ango lacustrine civilisation abound.¹⁵ Undoubtedly, however, waves of (considerably noticeable) migrating social groups, including from the (far) west and (far) north, made in-roads in Upper Semliki Valley in the course of the seventeenth century. These micro-migrations went over time and may have been triggered by a set of factors, ecological¹⁶, political¹⁷, or both.¹⁸ Becoming, in part, riverine fish-folks these in-coming migrants would join actively in the burgeoning long-distance trade by exchange of goods in regional relayed markets in the relay-network.¹⁹

Increased deforestation—at the hands of in-migrating farmers and herders—over time occasioned an increase in population density. By the end of the seventeenth century, going by interpretations of archaeological excavations carried out in different places of the wide western lacustrine region,²⁰ the only remaining unpopulated zones might have been a few forested pockets on the highest peaks and reed and papyrus fields in the bases of several valleys. As commodity exchange trade engulfed the entire valley of the *Kalemba*, social and political differentiation began to emerge.

In casting an historical gaze at clan formation since the late seventeenth century in Upper Semliki Valley this essay does associate with the anti-social evolutionist historical scholarship. Rather, it is here argued that efforts towards establishing control over material

15 A non-exhaustive bibliography on these debates is found in the 2008 edited volume, *Rwenzori: Histories and Cultures of an African Mountain* (C. Pennacini and H. Wittenberg, eds.)

16 J. Ford, *The Role of Trypanosomiasis in African Ecology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) and J.B. Webster (ed.) *Chronology, Migrations and Drought in Interlacustrine Africa* (New York: African Publishing, 1979).

17 E.R. Kamuhangire, "The Pre-Colonial History of the Salt Lakes Region of South-Western Uganda, c. 1000 - 1900 A.D." (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Makerere University, 1993).

18 A. Syahuka-Muhindo, 2004. *Op. cit.*

19 Quite seminal, to date, in terms of historical scholarship on precolonial regionalised markets in central and eastern Africa before 1900 are the contributions in the edited volume of Richard Gray and David Birmingham (1970). The doctoral study of the Congolese political economist Omer Mirembe (2005), though relatively succinct on the precolonial, brings this discussion home in Upper Semliki Valley.

20 J-P. Chrétien, *The Great Lakes of Africa: Two Thousand Years of History* (New York: Zone Books, 2003).

resources lay at the core of the historical process of clan formation. About the latter, the domains of long-distance trade and politics were intimately entwined in practical ways. Yira clan founders—shrouded in the mythical narratives of clan occupational names (Tangi, Songora, etc.) or clan totem names (Su, Kira, etc.)²¹—were primarily concerned with followers and not descendants per se, in a bid to extent their efficacy with control over material resources.

Indeed, as Kodesh postulates,²² the existing variety of terms by which the nomenclature of clan is designated (*umuryango* in Burundi; *ubwoko* in Rwanda; *kika* in Buganda and Busoga; *ruganda* in Bunyoro and Buhaya; etc.) suggests that the ideology and practices of clanship developed along different lines in various settings within this vast Great Lakes region. In the case of eighteenth-century Upper Semliki Valley, clanship inaugurally formed by no means along the familial models, invoking the image of a gradually expanding family tree sprouting from the clan's founder. Rather, it formed along a trading web consisting of dispersed yet connected networks of commodity exchange. A useful example of how to think historically about such clan formations is found in Michael Jackson's study of clanship among the Kuranko in contemporary Sierra Leone. Arguing alongside Sally Falk Moore and Jack Goody, Jackson underscored that clanship "is a 'thought-of' order rather than a 'lived-in' order."²³ Studying Kuranko oral traditions, Jackson discovered that all names of Kuranko clans are inaugurally names of professions. And while *Kebile* [clan or lineage group] among the Kuranko peoples nominally means 'an inheritance group'—making members of the same *Kebile* to literally mean 'inheritance sharers'—Jackson still found out that the *Kebile* remains a non-corporate grouping, in that, "members cannot trace direct descent to the founding ancestor of the *Kebile*."²⁴

21 Excerpt from an in-depth interview with an old Roman Catholic prelate and psycho-sociologist, Butembo (DRC), 26.03.2018.

22 N. Kodesh, "Networks of Knowledge: Clanship and Collective Well-Being in Buganda" (*The Journal of African History*, Vol. 49(2), 2008, pp. 197-216).

23 M. Jackson, "The Structure and Significance of the Kuranko Clanship" (*Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 44(4), 1974, p. 397).

24 *Ibid.*, p. 402.

In the case of precolonial Upper Semliki Valley too, commodity producers, craft artisans or spiritual mediums involved in the long-distance trade emerged to economic pre-eminence and social fame. As the seventeenth century wound up there, they eventually assumed the figure of clan founders. Whether as ritual leaders deeply involved in the processes of salt-mining at Katwe or iron-working in various spots southwest and northeast of the *Ngetsi*, food producers (cereals, tubers, livestock and fish), or guardians of trade routes to regional relayed markets, these historical Yira actors sought to sustain their wealth-generating endeavours in the cultural idiom of clanship: An important clue about Yira clan formations is found in Swaga oral traditions, particularly the mythical narration of its royalty in contradistinction to other Yira clans. Therein, *Muswaga* as the second male child (*ka-mbale*) of the Yira ancestor seats on the throne under the spiritual protection of his elder brother (*mutangi*), the physical protection of his immediate younger brother (*musu*), and with material support from his other younger siblings (*mumate*, *musongora*, etc.)²⁵ Although the Swaga oral tradition here biologizes an otherwise *political* story of Yira clan formations—a story about which agency and choice-making were key—one can still read in the Swaga oral tradition the roles hitherto played by historical Yira actors who progressively morphed into clan founders in the course of the eighteenth century.

Followership was key to maintaining such pre-eminence or fame. Undoubtedly, followers of these historical Yira actors (whether engaged in long-distance commodity exchange or ritual performances) would increase or decrease in numbers in accordance with the prevailing eco-techno-material circumstances. But it was the ideology of clanship—couched in a crafted common idiom of shared future, not past—that served as the discursive glue joining peoples living in dis-contiguous territories and across different temporalities. As Jackson cogently puts it, in a continual oscillation between consolidation and fragmentation in which clans

25 Information collected from an FGD with three Swaga elders (senior council members of *Ekyaghanda Yira*, Butembo Chapter), Butembo (DRC), 29.03.2018.

emerged and formed, “[yesterday’s] distinction can become unity, [yesterday’s] difference can become resemblance.”²⁶ So, then, did Yira historical actors articulate clanship along the lines of the fast-growing eighteenth-century long-distance trade.

Close participation in and control over the regional trade now gave rise to differentiation in clan formations: The *Abakasinga* (‘enthronable’ clans) put themselves in contradistinction to the *Abatasinga* (the ‘non-enthronable’ clans). Here, the ideologized political ritual of *erisinga* (crowing) met with the deep-seated desire for control over material resources. Ideology (*erisinga*) and material conditions of commodity exchanges (here dominated by salt of Katwe) thus became two outstanding components in state formation processes in precolonial Upper Semliki Valley. In this region-wide circulation of goods for exchange, which intensified as the eighteenth century unfolded, salt, livestock (cattle and goats), cereals, plantains, herbs, roots, and iron objects accrued enormous economic—and hence political—significance to those most involved in the trade. Those who constituted themselves into *Abakasinga* clans aimed to scoop a great deal of dividend from this regional trade. So did *Abakasinga* clans move to become clan-polities (*ebihugho*) in contra-distinction to *Abatasinga* clans, who remained non-polity clans (*ebyaghandu*). Here too, as was the case with Kuranko clan formations, the principles of a local group’s participation in and attachment to the Katwe salt-facilitated long-distance trade did override the principles of descent affiliation.

Most outstanding among commodities exchanged by the start of the eighteenth century was the salt from Katwe. To be sure, Katwe’s extracted salt would come to constitute the currency of exchange in this regional trade. The insatiable demand for the salt of Lake Katwe,²⁷ particularly since the dawn of the eighteenth

26 M. Jackson, 1974. *Op. cit.*, p. 414.

27 Estimations of the physical dimensions of the saline of Katwe in the centuries preceding the nineteenth is no less daunting task, not least for the massive climatological variations recorded throughout this region particularly in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. Going after such geo-historical data about the saline of Katwe lies beyond the scope of this study. All there is at our avail, scooped from the late nineteenth century’s explorations, is that the saline

century, made it a highly prized commodity. Charles Good, who traced the impact of this salt trade in precolonial Africa's Northern Great Lakes region, notes that Katwe salt was arguably circulated more extensively than any other commodity in this part of east central Africa. Taken by individual traders, the salt was "to be bartered near and far for hoes, spears, butter, and small livestock."²⁸

Yet, the complementarity which characterised this commodity exchange—goods exchanged among fishing, farming, herding and artisanal communities—did not preclude intense competition and even conflict within Upper Semliki Valley itself. To benefit most from this Katwe salt-centred regional trade, the *Abakasinga* likewise staked out their claims of the right of first-come into the area.²⁹ This claim was pitted against the *Abatasinga*, whose presence in the area was now rendered contingent upon members of the *Abakasinga* clans. Of all the social formations in existence in Upper Semliki Valley by the end of the seventeenth century—BaHambo, BaHera, BaHira, BaHumbe, BaKira, BaMate, BaNyangala, BaNyisanza, BaSongora, BaSu, BaSwaga, and BaTangi among others—only those that claimed *Abakasinga* status could furnish a leader to be enthroned (*Omwami w'embitha*).³⁰

To be known as one of the *Abakasinga* clans would therefore mean to belong to a social formation headed by *Omwami w'embitha* (crowned ruler). Economic incentives—key among which was the organisation of labour for Katwe's salt extraction³¹ and its redistri-

of Katwe is enclosed within one of the numerous explosion craters, which are scattered over the savanna grasslands immediately to the northwest of the *Ngetsi* (Lake Edward) and southeast of the *Lwa-Nzururu* (Rwenzori mountains). Katwe itself, at the times of Charles Good's fieldwork (late 1960s and early 1970s), consisted of "a consistently shallow body of saline water roughly one and one-half miles in diameter with an average depth of only three to four feet at the center..." (Good 1972, p. 548) See C.M. Good, "Salt, Trade, and Disease: Aspects of Development in Africa's Northern Great Lakes Region" (*The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 5 (4), 1972, pp. 543-86).

28 C.M. Good, 1972. *Op. cit.*, p. 561.

29 Information collected from an in-depth interview with an elderly Swaga local historian, Butembo (DRC), 26.03.2018.

30 Information collected from an FGD with three Swaga senior members of the *Ekyahanda Yira* - Butembo Chapter, Butembo (DRC), 29.03.2018.

31 The traditional method of collecting the first superior quality of salt (Grade I)

bution—precipitated the emergence of leadership roles. Intense interactions among the 'big men and women' (*bakulu*, sing. *mukulu*) of the various basic units of production (*byaghandanda*, plural of *nda*) through control of ritual, land and other economic resources (including labour power) ensued. These resulted in the emergence of the superintendent leader, the *mwami*³² (pl. *bami*). To the emerging leadership roles of the *mwami* and the *mukulu* were added that of the *ngabwe*, the chief of defence forces.

Both Nande and Konzo oral traditions hold that the leadership position of *ngabwe* in precolonial Upper Semliki Valley was bestowed upon whomsoever—pretty much irrespective of age and gender³³—that showed prowess in directing military campaigns against alien intruders/interferers. The *ngabwe* hence watched over the protection the polity's land and all other economic resources. What emerges in terms of plausible origins, however, is that leadership roles of *mwami* and *mukulu* across precolonial Upper Semliki Valley may have historically arisen respectively from ritual leaders and tool- and/or food-producers. That of the *ngabwe*, on the other hand, may have stemmed from guardians of precolonial trade routes in this regionalised commodity exchange.

It should be borne in mind that the basic unit of production—here referred to as *nda* (literally meaning the 'womb')—points to an historically significant fact that women were as much (if not even more) concerned with and involved in these emerging leadership roles as men were. A great many ritual performers, particularly in relation to salt extraction at Katwe, are in fact here recollected as being women.³⁴ The latter historically participated in the complex negotiations for the rise of a *mwami* as they indeed qualified

involved scrapping it from the lake surface with pieces of wood. This method, E. J. Wayland reported in 1934, yields about 2000 pounds of salt per day. See C.M. Good, 1972. *Op. cit.*

32 There is no historical linguistics evidence whatsoever in the oral sources I encountered pointing out that emerging as *mwami* in any of the precolonial polities in and across Upper Semliki Valley was the sole preserve of "big men" of *byaghandanda*.

33 *Supra* note 21.

34 Information collected from an in-depth interview with an elderly Swaga local historian, Bwera (Uganda), 04.08.2018.

for that position as well. The idea and practice of *mwami* as being solely a male figure, I posit, emerged clearly with the rise of the BaSu hegemony in the second half of the nineteenth century and would be further crystallised with the advent of the European colonial state.³⁵ Yira historical actors—food and tool producers, long-distance traders, guardians of trade routes, and above all ritual leaders—here developed a set of ideologies designed to preserve the accumulation of wealth (borne of the Katwe salt-dominated commerce) within particular social groupings. Progressively, seven Yira clan formations (Mate, Nyangala, Nyisanza, Songora, Su, Swaga, and Tangi) morphed into clan-states, coalescing into a Yira confederacy in the second half of the eighteenth century.³⁶

These ideological developments—summed up in the political ritual of *erisinga*—meant to secure and consolidate access to material resources: from the Katwe salt mining through ironworking to livestock and crops husbandry. At the core of this transformation (from societies to polities in eighteenth-century Upper Semliki Valley) was the agency of yesteryear ritual leaders, artisans, and guardians of trade routes to and from the saline of Katwe. This agency was historically produced by the broader spatial influence of Katwe, whose salt extraction was arguably one of the precolonial largest and most sought-after industries in the interior of east and central Africa. The desire by these historical Yira actors to exert monopoly over resources involved this Katwe salt-dominated regional trade laid at the heart of historical process of clan formation in precolonial Upper Semliki Valley. Here too, clanship still constituted “an ‘ideology of identities’, not of behaviour.”³⁷ But this does not suggest, as Jackson disappointingly does, that these lineage groups or clans so formed had no corporate unity of their own. Each clan so formed indeed constituted a complex and di-

35 For a detailed discussion of this topic, see chap. 5 and 6 of my doctoral thesis: D. Ngendo-Tshimba, “Transgressing Buyira: An historical inquiry into violence astride a Congo-Uganda border” (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Makerere University, 2020).

36 An extended account of the emergence of this precolonial Yira confederacy is laid in Chap. 2 of my doctoral thesis.

37 M. Jackson, 1974. *Op. cit.*, p. 397.

verse social universe, but its members were still unified by ritual-legitimising choices to survive together prevailing vagaries of their historical times.

It is this ideologised political ritual of *erisinga* that would eventually coalesce the otherwise autonomous, self-ruled precolonial clan-states in Upper Semliki Valley into a Yira confederacy (Buyira) in the first half of the eighteenth century. Power in this Yira confederacy would as such be institutionalised by one and the same clique of *basingya* (crowners) and heirs thereof. The *basingya* themselves could never assume power in any of the confederated Yira clan-states. Yet, without them, no one or group of individuals could legitimately ever claim it. From where then did these *basingya*, who midwifed precolonial clan-states in Upper Semliki Valley into a political confederation, emerge? And against what historical pedigree did they come to assume for themselves this critical role?

Oral tradition west of the Kalembo³⁸ holds that *basingya* always hailed from BuTangi; they were the BaTangi of Musindi. They are reported to have been the sole and rightful possessors of the *ritungu* (the royal drum). The latter, it is further reported, did contain a part of the lower jaw of the deceased mwami of BaTangi. To this lineage of *basingya* of Musindi alone was the power to admit or annul the candidacy of a *mwami* (and a *mumbo*³⁹) in any of the Yira clan-states. To put it differently, only these *basingya* of Musindi were real king-makers. Politically significant, their distributive ritual of *erisinga* brought the hitherto disparate and autonomous precolonial polities in and across Upper Semliki Valley into a shared political culture. So, then, did the *basingya*-spearheaded ideology of *erisinga* become the glue that tied together these precolonial clan-states into a political confederacy.

For, not only was the royal drum—symbol of Yira stately power—claimed to be exclusively theirs, but they also claimed owner-

38 Information collected from semi-structured group interviews with hereditary clan heads from the highlands of Isale (DRC) on the 14th and 15th of March 2018.

39 The official title of one with whom the *mwami* historically co-ruled; Yira social parlance today holds *mumbo* to be the title of the official wife of the *mwami* - one with whom the latter is enthroned and crowned, and henceforth expected to rule with.

ship of one of the two crucial relics found therein. The one relic claimed to be their *mwami*'s jaw—known as the *mukuko*—became the single most critical symbol of Yira stately power. In performing the ritual of *erisingya* across the relatively wider space astride the *Kalemba* the *mukuko* was here equitably transmitted in each of these Yira clan-states—thus giving them a politically confederated character. It was in this manner that these *basingya* of Musindi brought the hitherto disparate precolonial Yira political formations—those already claiming *Abakasinga* status—into the orbit of a single geopolitical imagination. Suffice here to add that there is no substantive historical evidence (linguistic or otherwise) to corroborate the claim that *aBami* in precolonial political formations in Upper Semliki Valley, since their historical founding moment, were always male figures. In fact, some historical inquiries do suggest that reigning families in each of these Yira clan-states became strictly patrilineal only in the course of the nineteenth century⁴⁰, and hence pointing to the choice of *omwami* in favour of a male candidate—the second born-male to be sure.

But what accounts for BaTangi of Musindi as the sole performers of *erisinga* in this precolonial space and time? Historical explanation is here shrouded in mythical fables. The latter, collected during the ethnographic fieldwork west of the *Kalemba*, allude to the primacy of BuTangi in precolonial Yira geopolitical imagination. Mutangi, so goes the mythical narrative, was the firstborn and first occupant of the *irungu*. While in the *irungu*—the term that the Bayira peoples actually referred to Upper Semliki Valley—Mutangi received from their⁴¹ father the northerly part of the lake (*Ngetsi*). As first-comer and unlike his other siblings (Muswaga, Musu, Mumate, Musongora, etc.), the narrative further goes,

40 See, for instance, K. Sirimuhugho, "Histoire des Relations entre les Bakondjo et les Banande Frontaliers (Uganda-Zaïre), 18^e s. - 1962" (Unpublished B.A. Thesis, Institut Supérieur Pédagogique de Bukavu, 1976).

41 Again, it is important here to note that the gender of the original *mutangi* in this mythical narration is not explicitly male; as such, the *mutangi* in question may as well have been a female or any other gendered character. It is therefore rather productive to think of this *mutangi* in a plural sense; *batangi*, and not just one single *mutangi*, are the characters in this narrative plot.

Mutangi was assigned the key role of chief representative of the ancestors. Consequently, Mutangi received the title of 'high priest' across the land (Upper Semliki Valley), at whose intercession (on behalf of their young siblings) the goodwill of ancestral power was granted. The *basingya* hence hailed from Mutangi's descendants (the BaTangi of Musindi).

A more plausible historical interpretation of this mythical narrative here confers to BaTangi the role of ritual leaders. Two outstanding human activities in which their ritual performance was irrefutably key consisted of iron-working and salt-mining. It was particularly from their involvement as ritual leaders for the extraction of salt reserves at Katwe that these BaTangi-*basingya* derived their pre-eminence in articulating a Yira geopolitical imagination. For, they alone would claim to be "directly privy to the secrets of the ancestors."⁴² Historical linguistics, moreover, offers important clues supporting the above historical interpretation. Using clan oral traditions, Efraimu Kamuhangire demonstrates that the leading clan groups among the (western) Bantu settlers east of the *Ngetsi* and the *Kalembe* were the Barungu, Bagahi and Bashambu. Arguably most preponderant in the historical peopling of the *irungu* was the Barungu clan.⁴³ The Barungu, whose original totem was the guinea fowl (*Entajumba*) are here "regarded as one of the oldest clan groups in the salt lakes region."⁴⁴

Barungu clan members, having inaugurally left, in the course of the seventeenth century, the increasingly densely populated *irungu* for swaths of arable land west of the *Ngetsi*, would be known as BaTangi.⁴⁵ So, then, came the pre-eminence of BuTangi—and particularly of Musindi, where the historical Mutangi⁴⁶ first reset-

42 Information collected from an in-depth interview with an elderly Swaga local historian, Butembo (DRC), 26.03.2018.

43 E. Kamuhangire, 1993. *Op. cit.*

44 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

45 An important clue is here taken from the verb form in Lhuyira language, *erítánga* (from the root -táng), which is an intransitive verb meaning "to precede". See Kinande/Konzo-English Dictionary by Ngessimo M. Mutaka and Kambale Kavutirwaki (Africa World Press, 2011).

46 To literally mean, in Lhuyira parlance, "the one who left first". I am here, again, taking cue from the Lhuyira transitive verb *erítángiríra* (from the root -tángirir-),

tled—in what would historically evolving into a Yira confederacy of clan-states in and across Upper Semliki Valley in the next century. That political life in precolonial Upper Semliki Valley was animated by some ‘closed subsistence communities’ with narrowly defined fields of socio-economic interactions (as some historians and anthropologists of Africa’s Great Lakes region had previously maintained) is one such obsolescent thesis in the historiography of this particular region. Rather, through the intermediary of ritual, technology, and a network of relayed markets for exchange of goods the confederacy of Yira clan-states (Buyira) emerged as one such important hinterland of the saline of Katwe. The spatial organisation of this hinterland—mapped onto the spatial influence of Katwe’s salt—was, in some intimate ways, tied to the others north and northeast of it into Amba and Nyoro lands as well as south and southwest of it into Nkore, Rwanda and even Haya lands.

The case of the Yira-Songora state: precolonial politics beyond nature-and-culture talk

The historical pre-eminence of the Songora polity in Upper Semliki Valley is tied to the exploitation *en masse* of the salt reserves at Katwe, starting in the eighteenth century. Environmental historians of Africa’s Great Lakes region argue that harsher climatic⁴⁷ or epidemiological⁴⁸ conditions occasioned people’s refuge to wetter lands near lakes, rivers, forests, and mountains. But when upsetting such conditions subsided, as was the case in eighteenth-century Upper Semliki Valley, the issue of paucity of land among competing occupiers grew in importance. In the wake of ecological normalcy, therefore, there could be observed return migrations of formerly displaced groups, who will have fled to much less stressed as well as much less dense areas. But this is not to mean that ecological circumstances alone definitively shaped social and political formations in this region in precolonial times. Simply put, ecological and epidemiological conditions were not the sole factor

which means “to go ahead”.

47 J.B. Webster, 1979. *Op. cit.*

48 J. Ford, 1971. *Op. cit.*

at play; other historically important factors (demographic, technological, and ideological) were involved.

To be certain, migrations in and out of precolonial Upper Semliki Valley can historically be best captured as a pattern of temporary dislocations. Occasional severe climatic and/or epidemiological conditions notwithstanding, one particular social grouping eventually stood out demographically and technologically (in terms of salt mining, crop and animal husbandry, etc.) in the lowlands east of the *Kalemba* in the course of the eighteenth century: BaSongora. Debates abound in both colonial and post-independence historiography of early peopling of Upper Semliki Valley about who actually consisted of this social group. Undeniably, both oral traditions and some of the oldest written sources give a pride of place to 'Wa/BaSongora' (a varying nomenclature in the literature) in the historical peopling of Upper Semliki Valley prior to European colonial conquest.

Were BaSongora historically a sub-clan of a clan or a different clan altogether as they differentially come to settle in this valley? Here, the Francophone historiography built mostly by Congolese Nande historians,⁴⁹ has evolved almost entirely in parallel to its Anglophone counterpart by Ugandan Konzo historians⁵⁰ regarding this Songora question. There are nonetheless some noteworthy exceptions in the Francophone historiography.⁵¹

By mid-eighteenth century, going by a host of oral traditions both east and west of the *Kalemba*, BaSongora distinguishingly claimed occupancy of much of Upper Semliki Valley's lowlands, which now came to be known as BuSongora in social parlance. Using extensive oral sources, including genealogical trees of dynastic

49 See, for instance, L.K. Kangitsi, "La Légitimité du Pouvoir Coutumier: Conflits Politiques chez les Bashu et les Baswagha de la Tribu des Wanande du Nord-Kivu (1800-1983)." (Unpublished MA Thesis, Institut Supérieur Pédagogique de Kananga, 1985) and K. Muwiri & K. Kambalume, 2002. *Op. cit.*

50 See, for instance, A. Syahuka-Muhindo, 2004. *Op. cit.* and S.M.B. Baluku, "The Dynamics of Ethno-Political Relations in the Rwenzori Region, 1900 - 2000" (Unpublished MA Thesis, Makerere University, March 2008).

51 K. Sirimuhugho, 1976. *Op. cit.* and K.T. Mashauri, "Méthodes de Colonisation Mentale chez les Yira: Balkanisation, perte d'identité ethnique et aliénation culturelle" (*Notes de Recherches d'ISRA*, No.6/Juillet 1988, pp. 1-53).

rulers of precolonial Yira states, the Congolese historian Kitavwira Sirimuhugho notes that the BaSongora moved to occupy, by the eighteenth century, the area from eastern shores of the *Kalemba* up to Lake Katwe. This area was coveted, by and large, for its salt reserves. Unlike the salt deposits at Kibiro on the north-eastern shore of the *Mwita-Nzige*, the salt at Katwe reportedly trumped in superior quality. As such, it hence consisted of an unrivalled source of attraction for all social formations in the whole western lacustrine region.⁵² Even the political leadership in Bunyoro where Kibiro was found still looked to Katwe in BuSongora throughout the nineteenth century for its provision of better salt for (domestic) consumption. Gaetano Casati, who escorted Emin Pasha to Kibiro in 1885 and reportedly lived there for eighteen months, later wrote:

The salt [at Kibiro] precipitated by evaporation is then dried, wrapped up and moulded into blocks, which are hung from the roof of the huts to keep them dry. The chief of Kibiro annually pays the king [of Bunyoro] a tribute of one thousand of these blocks, weighing twenty-two pounds each. The monarch [king of Bunyoro] distributes this salt to the Wahuma shepherds, to be given with water to their cattle; for the service of his household, he uses Usongora [Katwe] salt... The king, besides the quantity fixed as a tribute, purchases more, giving oxen in exchange.⁵³

Basing on his oral-genealogical sources, Sirimuhugho dates the first social utility of the Katwe salt reserves back to the years between 1730 and 1760.⁵⁴ Kathryn Barrett-Gaines too, relying on Toro oral sources, underscores that the saline of Katwe became a subject of great covetousness in the early eighteenth century when one brave local leader named Kato took control of Katwe, aided by

52 Information collected from an in-depth interview with a descendant of late nineteenth-century Katwesalt miner, Kisinga (Uganda), 25.01.2018.

53 G. Connah, *Kibiro: The Salt of Bunyoro, past and present* (London: The British Institute in Eastern Africa, 1996, p. 19).

54 Sirimughuho here uses generations by primogeniture as dating devices; a 25-year count of generation brings the inaugural date to 1730, while a 30-year count brings it to 1760.

Baganda soldiers. To Barrett-Gaines, there may be “a relationship between this leader [Kato] and the name that came to be given to the salt lake [Katwe].”⁵⁵ In the same vein, Kamuhangire points out that eighteenth-century migrations, precipitated by a severe drought that had struck the region, led to the establishment of hereditary states in this valley.⁵⁶ This wave of migrations, not entirely caused by the violent demise of the Cwezi empire as Syahuka-Muhindo⁵⁷ would argue, ignited the initiation of commodity exchange, especially salt and iron. As this commodity exchange progressed in the course of the eighteenth century—thanks to massive infusion of different social groups in the habitable valley and technology therein (ironworking and salt mining)—the salt of Katwe would progressively take centre-stage. The BaSongora group would eventually occupy a pride of place in the new civilisational turn taking shape in eighteenth-century Upper Semliki Valley.

A considerable social utility of the Katwe salt would thus accrue in the wake of this occupancy of the savanna grasslands east of the *Kalemba* (BaSongora). This utility of the saline of Katwe would not just be limited to economic dimensions; it would carry even more political essence. Katwe’s salt would subsequently be perceived as an essential resource, for “its widespread use as a standard of valuation, its influence on migration and settlement patterns... and its richly varied symbolic significance.”⁵⁸ This, however, is not to say that this part of the lowlands east of the *Kalemba* was void—with darkness over the face of it as in the Biblical story of the world’s creation—until this in-migrating group of BaSongora found their way in there. Rather, the point here is that those who eventually came to distinguish themselves as BaSongora—whether originally known as Ndu (Lendu and Lugbara or simply Sudanic to be generic) people in present-day Uganda’s West Nile region as

55 K. Barrett-Gaines, “Katwe Salt in the African Great Lakes Regional Economy, 1750s-1950s” (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Stanford University, 2001, p. 39).

56 E. Kamuhangire, 1993. *Op. cit.*

57 A. Syahuka-Muhindo, 2004. *Op. cit.*

58 C.M. Good, 1972. *Op. cit.*, p. 543.

Syahuka-Muhindo argues⁵⁹ or originally known as Huma from the disintegrated Cwezi dynasty giving way to the Bito one in present-day Uganda's Bunyoro region as Kamuhangire puts it⁶⁰—socially integrated with other Yira social formations including the BaHambo, BaSeru, BaHira, BaKira, and BaNyisanza already extant in the valley.⁶¹

To put it squarely, it is historically more plausible to argue that, from the very beginning of story of the peopling of Upper Semliki Valley more broadly, there was not a people (as one distinct social formation or group). There were rather peoples (various social formations or groups). Nonetheless, as decades of more human movement into Upper Semliki Valley followed this eighteenth-century Songora in-migration, so would the economic and political utility of Katwe salt be apparent. By the last quarter of eighteenth century these BaSongora (who had settled on northeast of the *Ngetsi* and on the east bank of the Upper Semliki) now moved to build and consolidate their polity. Turning their social formation (*Abatasinga* clan) into a political formation (*Abakasinga* clan), they soon staked their historical claim of first occupancy of these lowlands. The interests of ritual leaders deeply vested in the labour-intensive salt extraction at Katwe, on the one hand, and those of food and tool producers involved in the long-distance commodity exchange, on the other, now galvanised around the ideologised political ritual of *erisinga*.

Gravitating around the salt resource at Katwe and endowed with unmatched swaths of pasture and arable land, the BaSongora—having now distinguished themselves as one of the *Abakasinga* groups in contra-distinction to the rest of the social group in

59 A. Syahuka-Muhindo, "Migrations and Social Formation in the Rwenzori Region" in C. Pennacini and H. Wittenberg (eds.) *Rwenzori: Histories and Cultures of an African Mountain*. (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2008, pp. 18-58).

60 E. Kamuhangire, "A Pre-colonial History-The Hereditary Chiefdoms of Busongora: Kisaka-Makara, Bugaya and Kiyanja (1850-1915)" In C. Pennacini (ed.) *I Popoli della Luna/The People of the Moon: Ruwenzori 1906-2006* (Turin: Museo Nazionale della Montagna, 2006, pp. 231-36).

61 Information collected during two separate FGDS (one conducted in the town of Beni with 4 Nande senior members of the Ekyaghanda Yira-Beni Chapter, 04.04.2018, and the other in the town of Bwera with 3 Konzo elders, 05.04.2018).

the same lowlands, *Abatasinga*—will historically grow in importance alongside ironworking and cattle-herding. Their polity soon spanned the steppe between the *Ngetsi* (Lake Edward) up till the *Rwasimba* (Lake George) and the foothills of *Lwa-Nzururu* (the snow-capped Rwenzori Mountains). In this case of the Songora clan-state, the *mwami* only superintended the politics of alliance-making across *byaghandu*. Alliance-making was here sealed through payments (*ngemo*) as gifts as well as bride-wealth (*omuthaghyo*).⁶² Goats bartered with salt from Katwe were in demand among the younger traders for dowries.⁶³ Even as late as the dawn of the twentieth century, younger traders involved in this regional commodity exchange “would travel to the compounds of chiefs... where they would barter salt for these animals on very favourable terms.”⁶⁴

Control over salt extraction at Katwe together with cattle-herding in these lowlands in the course of the eighteenth century thus rested with Basongora *bami* who in turn were always checked by their *bakulu* peers.⁶⁵ Receipt of *ngemo* as any form of tribute from a land lease was pretty much devolved to various *byaghandu*. Many other forms of taxation from extraction and circulation of the Katwe salt as well as cattle-herding were equally devolved. So was power devolved and checked in this culturally mosaic precolonial Songora state. Other clan-states so formed in this valley following the emergence of the Songora state too would, to a great extent, be shaped by the geostrategic influence of the saline of Katwe. So affluent, indeed, was the Songora economy that by the turn of the nineteenth century it attracted the covetousness of a constellation of other polities north, west, east, and south of the valley. Packard documents six major raids against the Songora polity in the nineteenth century alone in the following chronological order: the Buganda raids during the reign of Kabaka Suna,

62 Information collected from an elderly descendant of the 1890s Songora ruling lineage, Mpondwe (Uganda), 15.02.2018.

63 C.M. Good, 1972. *Op. cit.*

64 *Ibid.*, p. 561.

65 *Supra* note 62.

ca. 1825-52; Toro raids during the reign of Mukama Kaboyo in the 1830s and 1840s; Nkore raids during the reign of Mugabe Mutumbuka, ca. 1852-78; the Buganda raid again during the reign of Kabaka Mutesa around 1871; Nyoro raids during the reign of Mukama Kabalega in the 1880s and early 1890s; and finally, the Toro raid again during the reign of Mukama Kasagama around 1894.⁶⁶

Fiercest among all were Kabalega's Bunyoro raids starting in the 1880s. But these Kabalega orchestrated raids were not the ones that actually ushered in the loss of hegemony of the Yira-Songora state hinged on the Katwe salt. At the origin of the loss of precolonial Songora hegemony, I here argue, are the Toro raids conducted at the onset of the reign of Olimi Kaboyo in the 1830s. The desolation of the Yira-Songora state in the wake of these Toro raids eventually heralded the subsequent rise of the Yira-Su state⁶⁷ over the dominance of saline of Katwe.

As a renegade Nyoro prince, Kaboyo successfully managed to establish his independence from his father, the king of Bunyoro, around 1830.⁶⁸ Being the new sovereign of independent Toro, Kaboyo moved to solidify his nascent principdom by acquiring control of the salt and cattle resources of BuSongora in a series of the raids that eventuated in the decline of the Songora hegemony. Packard's pioneering historical study of nineteenth-century Upper Semliki Valley does acknowledge that Kaboyo's raids into this valley did cause the forced displacement of many BaSongora to the west of the Kalembe.⁶⁹ In the wake of these Toro raids, another large number of BaSongora eventually took to the highlands of Lwa-Nzururu for refuge.⁷⁰

The Yira-Su state, perched in the highlands of the *Hutwe* since the late eighteenth century, rose to the challenge to face off Kaboyo's raiders. These BaSu challengers mobilised themselves against Toro raiders more to their own bid to recapture the sa-

66 R.M. Packard, 1981. *Op. cit.*

67 For a detailed discussion of this topic, see D. Ngendo-Tshimba, 2020. *Op. cit.* (Chap. 2)

68 E.I. Steinhart, *Conflict and Collaboration in the Kingdoms of Western Uganda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

69 R.M. Packard, 1981. *Op. cit.*

70 *Ibid.*

line of Katwe and less to the defence of the despoiled Yira-Songora state. In what principally consisted of an economic war over possession of the saline of Katwe, BaSu fighters (coming from around Isale, the heartland of the nineteenth-century Su clan-state) successfully challenged Kaboyo's Toro raiders. According to Sirimuhughu, these Toro raiders were eventually pursued up to Karambi, where they registered their ultimate defeat.⁷¹ Thus, in the aftermath of the dislodged Yira-Songora hegemony over salt extraction at Katwe the Yira-Su polity now emerged as the new hegemon. The latter would take to the political stage of nineteenth-century Upper Semliki Valley as the self-anointed guarantor of Yira pre-eminence over the valley west and east of the *Kalembe* up to the saline of Katwe.

Conclusion

Clan-states in Upper Semliki Valley since the eighteenth century were not simply lineages writ-large. The story here narrated underscores the fact migrations and periodic settlements of socially and culturally diverse groups coalesced into this region of Upper Semliki Valley. Progressively, starting in mid-eighteenth century, these groups differentiated themselves between social and political formations, thanks to both the increasingly networked materiality of the Katwe salt and the ideologised ritual of *erisinga*. The emergence of Yira clan-states in this precolonial space therefore attests to clanship in that temporal scope as an historical process rife with well-calculated choice—that is a *political* rather than cultural product. Social organisation of trade by relayed markets, ideologised rituals for material prosperity, and politics of spatial organisation mapped onto the trade routes of the Katwe salt, were all intimately entwined. In precolonial Upper Semliki Valley, the efforts of Yira historical actors sought to guarantee and extend their efficacy in the wealth-accumulating regionalised commodity trade. It was these efforts that lay at the core of clan-state formations in this vast locale. Instead of taking clan-state founders—

71 K. Sirimuhughu, 1976. *Op. cit.*

MuSongora, *MuSu*, *MuSwaga*, *MuMate*, *MuTangi*, *MuNyangala*, and *MuNyisanza*—in a singular sense as narrated in Yira mythical traditions of clanship, it is rather productive to think of each of them in a plural sense. Historically, there was, for instance, no single one *MuSongora* as founder of the Yira-Songora clan-state, but rather many *BaSongora* emerged—forged by both material and ideological conditions of their historical times—and so gathered together by a common tenacity of purpose, namely a metamorphosis from a social (*Abataisinga*) to a political (*Abakasinga*) formation. Emerging mythic narrations, which get preserved in oral traditions, therefore shroud this historically complex process of state-formation, and as such, they should be better deciphered “as instruments of social integration and political legitimation within the state or polity [so formed].”⁷²

This story of clanship in precolonial Upper Semliki Valley also espouses Yusuf Bala Usman’s critique of the ethno-history scholarship. In his *Beyond Fairy Tales*⁷³ Usman is notable among historians of Africa’s distant past to caution us compellingly that, insofar as social and political formations in precolonial Africa are concerned, clans—as with tribes or ethnicities, to use a toothsome lexicon—should indeed be perceived in terms of an historical process replete, to a great extent, with complex negotiation and choice-making. As such, they are not simply cultural products forged out biologized understandings of kinship, but rather *political* outcomes borne of historical material and ideological conditions. Therefore, to maintain—as many ethno-history Africanists often suggest—that kinship (distant or otherwise) lies in the origin and at the heart of precolonial African polities, such as the Yira-Songora state in eighteenth-century Upper Semliki Valley, is historically fallacious. More historically credible, accounting for the emergence of these precolonial Yira clan-states, are labour-intensive economic produc-

72 R.M. Packard, “Debating in a Common Idiom: Variant Traditions of Genesis among the BaShu of Eastern Zaire” In I. Kopytoff (ed.) *The African Frontier: The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987, p. 149).

73 Y.B. Usman, *Beyond Fairy Tales: selected historical writings of Yusuf Bala Usman* (Zaria: Abdullahi Smith Centre for Historical Research, 2006).

tion concerns and a ritualised ideology that buttressed a particular heterarchical (rather than hierarchical) political order.

From the above re-telling of the story of clanship in precolonial Upper Semliki Valley—taking the case of the Yira-Songora clan-state—this essay demonstrates that the precolonial social experience in this part of Africa should not be thought of as ‘pre-political’, that is, something as *only* decipherable in either cultural (such as kinship) or ecological (such as drought) terms. It is hence historically untenable to argue that precolonial Yira peoples (whether as Yira-Songora or any other Yira clan-state formations), who peopled this vast territorial space of the western Rift Valley since the late seventeenth century, essentially led primordial lives until the advent of the European colonial state. Re-telling the story of clanship in precolonial Upper Semliki Valley in its own historical right and not from the temporal vantage point of what followed (colonial conquest and rule) here emphasises clan formations as deeply *political* developments. At the core of such developments were choice and necessity, however much circumscribed. Understanding clanship in these precolonial times as political outcome does also enable us to elevate the emergence and confederation of precolonial Yira clan-states to an important historical pedestal from which the unfolding violence in subsequent colonial and post-independence eras can be intelligibly deciphered.

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The Uses and Abuses of History: How Uganda's Historiography Affected Bunyoro's Development

Mary Kajumba Muhuruzi

Abstract

There exists a debate on whether we can talk of an integrated history of Uganda. When does it begin? Who are its proponents, who does it include or exclude? And what kind of past does it articulate? This debate arose because of what emerged as a historical complaint that the history of Buganda had dominated the historiography of modern Uganda. I argue in this essay that there are some key features of a Ganda-centric history writing that influenced historical consciousness about Uganda. Showing how Buganda was presented as a model society and polity by European colonial imaginations seeking knowledge about the region, perceptions and images of Buganda entered into the chronicles of early writers like explorers and missionaries. As historiography cannot be an innocent endeavour, it has implications on the kind of social, cultural, economic, and political claims that are deployed to articulate a national past and future. Looking at the pre-independent and independent discussions that existed in Uganda, this paper shows how Buganda privileges were an obstacle to Bunyoro's advancement. Ideas about Uganda as a unified nation were articulated on the basis of historical entitlements that put Bunyoro (and other regions) at the periphery of the discussion. These early discussions about national integration laid the basis for future relationships between the central government and Bunyoro.

Key words: Bunyoro, Historiography, Colonial governance, national integration, development, ethnic conflicts, primitive accumulation.

Introduction

Bunyoro is currently experiencing various development challenges. Conflicts have arisen from different ethnic groups due to land wrangles. These conflicts have persisted because of two major reasons. First, contemporary political management of Bunyoro by the Uganda state has kept the region as a peripheral player in Uganda's progress due to the economic resources such as land and minerals that the state functionaries have tried to extract using primitive accumulation. Second, contemporary political management of Bunyoro has learnt from and in many ways reproduced the legacy of the colonial state in its governance over Bunyoro. This analysis is based on two core issues. First, a critical reading of Uganda's history shows that particular strategies and tactics of governance were applied by the colonial state when it sought to achieve various outcomes in different regions. Second, a historiography of modern Uganda produced a Ganda-centric history that put Buganda at the center of developments in Uganda and neglected other regions. By looking at the various ways in which the state has historically managed Buganda vis-à-vis Bunyoro, it can be seen that the differences in political management have implications on what kind of social conflicts were allowed to fester in Bunyoro and even persist to the present stage where they have become serious issues that produced social tensions and violence.

I begin by highlighting the contemporary challenges around land in Bunyoro as the first step to reveal the kind of interests involved. I proceed to identify these challenges with a type of political management that has pictured Bunyoro as a contemptible society. I link this development with the colonial legacy that introduced policies, which humiliated Bunyoro leaders and its people. Comparing the ways in which Bunyoro's neighbor Buganda was governed, we can see that British colonial governance was highly responsible for humbling Bunyoro leadership and its people, and successive gov-

ernments learnt from and reproduced it in various ways.

This essay is structured into various sections. The first section identifies the contemporary challenges in Bunyoro, which sets the scene for the discussion that follows. The second section identifies how these challenges are linked with a form of political management born in the colonial era, which was reproduced in varied ways after independence. The third section links this political management with an intellectual reading of Uganda's history and argues that a Ganda-centric historical project was useful for Buganda but ended up neglecting or humbling other societies like Bunyoro. The fourth section of the essay concludes the paper by discussing how historiography and political management can be reconciled to support inclusive national progress. The analysis in this essay is based on both primary and secondary sources. I undertook primary interviews and focus group discussions with three major categories of people: members of the intellectual community living in Bunyoro (Hoima district), elderly women and men living in Hoima, Kibaale, Buliisa and Masindi, who experienced colonial governance of Bunyoro. The key informants were aged between 75 to 96 years. I also spoke to some members of the public regarding their opinions on the current challenges in Bunyoro. The primary reports of various commissions have also been used to support the analysis.

Contemporary challenges in Bunyoro

Bunyoro is historically one of the most ethnically-diverse regions in Uganda. Twenty-four tribes consider Bunyoro their homeland. In the contemporary period, however, Bunyoro is experiencing various crises. First, ethnic tensions have risen in the region since the mid-1990s, rotating around land distribution, resource allocation, and political management. The claims over land rights and distribution has involved various groups such as the Bafuruki, Bakiga, Bagisu, Bafumbira, and the Balaro, all claiming native entitlement to the land. These land tensions have been experienced in Kibaale, Masindi, Hoima, Buliisa, Mubende, and Kiboga. Cas-

es of violence have especially been reported during the electoral periods. In 1996 a clash between the Banyoro and Bakiga was reported. In 2006, 2009, and 2016, elections have been engulfed with bloody fights between two ethnic groups over land and political power, especially in the historical counties of Buyaga and Bugangazi¹. Various pressure groups were formed in Bunyoro in the wake of the violence to mobilize those considered native to resist large migrations of “alien” groups into Bunyoro². Pressure groups such as BUKITAREPA³ and Mubende-Bunyoro Committee have focused on the objective of mobilizing “native” Banyoro against the “others” they consider aliens. Second, the discovery of oil in the districts of Bunyoro increased anxiety from various sections of actors including non-Banyoro and even multinational corporations. These new actors positioned themselves in how to access the land and the oil resources. Issues surrounding the oil resource forced the Omukama Gafabusa to remind a committee of Parliament that he was the “valid trustee” of the Bunyoro customary lands and the natural resources and that he needed a share of royalties from oil exploration to help develop Bunyoro⁴. Third, the state’s response to the crises in Bunyoro has been difficult to comprehend. The state established new political constituencies or districts and ring-fenced some political positions for the Banyoro by founding a fully-fledged ministry of Bunyoro affairs, constituted under the Office of the Prime Minister. The state also responded by founding tribal-like homelands in Buyaga county (Buyaga West and Buyaga East in 2009 and 2010). Hoima district was then split into two during 2019 to form Hoima and Kikube districts.

The above challenges have been identified both at the social

1 Masaba, Simon and Pascal Kwesiga, “Police Probe Ethnic Tension in Bunyoro,” *New Vision*, 24th May 2017, 5.

2 See Henry Sekanjako and Nicholas Wassajja, “Bunyoro Issue Goes to Parliament, ISO Summons Bukitarepa Group,” *New Vision*, 25th May 2017, 5.

3 BUKITAREPA stands for the Bunyoro Kitara Reparations Agency.

4 See Chris Byaruhanga, “Expecting Eldorado? An Analysis of Uganda’s Expectations of their Country’s Oil Wealth,” in *Oil Wealth and Development in Uganda and Beyond: Prospects, Opportunities, and Challenges*, eds. Arnim Langer, Ukoha Ukiwo and Pamela Mbabazi (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2020), 4.

and political levels. The Omukama, who considers himself the trustee of Bunyoro land, has on various occasions noted that he actually has little control over the land in Bunyoro than it seems in reality. The ways in which Banyoro have been denied avenues to own land, which has been misappropriated and enclosed off by powerful and wealthy land speculators, has reached humiliating levels whereby poor people have been chased off ancestral burial grounds, some of which have been erased to make way for large farm enclosures. This speaks to a weak society on the one hand. But on other hand, however, discussions with intellectuals linked to the royal household have shown that it is not only that society is weak, the Bunyoro leadership also has no authority to strengthen society. It was reported in recent history how the Omukama of Bunyoro was so powerless that he was also a squatter in his palace. There is a popular discussion in Bunyoro how the Omukama was humiliated in 2005 when state security functionaries assaulted his person and confiscated his property at Kyampisi Ranch⁵. There were other incidents when the Omukama was humiliated also when state security prevented him from surveying his land in Kyangwali county, prompting his officials to respond thus: “the Omukama is a squatter at his place, even where the palace sits, the Omukama does not have a land title. So, who is this king who is a squatter even in his palace”⁶ This kind of social and political weakness has witnessed wide ranging cases of land grabbing and the conflicts that ensue, from state functionaries, high ranking army personnel and even officials linked to state house⁷.

The above challenges highlight sustained patterns of state indifference to the proper management of Bunyoro and also to the respect of society and its leaders. The Banyoro that I spoke to during my interviews noted that society is facing “mistreatment” from the state and the Omukama is “disrespected”. Whereas these informants are correct by responding in this way, I argue that this

5 Government of Uganda, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Bunyoro Issues, 2006.

6 Ibid, 56.

7 Ibid.

kind of political management is not new, it has a long history in Uganda. When the person of the king is assaulted and his property confiscated, it speaks to a particular political management that seeks to humble, humiliate and degrade. These tactics cower and demean the target who is put at the mercy of those who hold power. For the sake of Bunyoro, I locate the history of this political management in the nature of colonial governance and especially in the nature of the first contact with British colonial rule, which set the stage for future relationships with Bunyoro. I highlight this in the section below.

Antecedents in colonial political management

The nature of the European encounter with Bunyoro set the stage for the form of governance that formal colonialism used on Bunyoro. Some scholars say that this happened because the person of Omukama Kabalega was aggressive and difficult to conquer⁸. But Kabalega's aggressive stance to protect Bunyoro from foreign annexation was formed within the social ethos of Bunyoro society. I hope to highlight on this issue below. Historians have shown that European encounter with Bunyoro occurred when Samuel Baker annexed the Kingdom on behalf of Ismail the Khedive of Egypt around 1871. As Kabalega was the Omukama at the time, he made a counterattack against the Egyptian military unit at Masindi, drove it north and defeated them in Madi. When the British heard of Baker's defeat, they recognized Kabalega as a formidable enemy in their imperial designs over Buganda and the neighbouring areas. In 1890, Captain Lugard arrived in Buganda and he also discovered that Kabalega was the obstacle to British interests in the region. Lugard thus befriended Toro and Ankole kingdoms, seeking to contain Kabalega. Lugard reinstated Kasagama of Toro to the throne although Kabalega had dethroned him in the attempt to reunite Toro with Bunyoro. Lugard considered Kabalega's actions as threats to British interests and he decided on

8 Samwiri Lwanga-Lunyiigo, *Mwanga II: Resistance to Imposition of British Colonial Rule in Buganda, 1884-1899* (Kampala: Wavah Books, 2011).

war as the best way to overpower him. In 1893, Colonel Colville invaded Bunyoro with 450 Sudanese troops accompanied by over 20,000 Baganda mercenary forces. Kabalega's military weakness vis-à-vis the invading army forced him to resort to guerrilla tactics that lasted nine years. The invading army drove Kabalega out of Bunyoro and he fled to Lango where he was captured at Kangai in 1899. Kabalega's capture and exile to the Seychelles drove Bunyoro into a humbling relationship with the victorious army of the British and Baganda.

Unlike Buganda, which was forced to accept Lugard's terms of protectorate without war, Bunyoro entered into the British sphere of influence as a vanquished territory. So, Bunyoro entered into the British Protectorate of Uganda without its consent. The Baganda and Banyoro had a rival history stretching back years before the European entry and when the British intervened in this historical rivalry, the Banyoro were embittered. Bunyoro began to receive different treatment, and British policy in Bunyoro humiliated society and its leaders. The British found this treatment justified since Kabalega had forced them into an expensive war. But the Banyoro did not accept and continued to contest British rule because they considered their leaders as sovereign over them⁹. This kind of humiliating treatment forced Kabalega's son Kitahimbwa to resign from the throne. British officers stationed in Bunyoro also despised and held the new Omukama Duhaga II in contempt. The legal formulations contained in the 1900 Buganda Agreement worsened British and Ganda relationship with Bunyoro.

British colonial officials introduced the 1900 Buganda Agreement for two major reasons. One, to define the nature of British relationship with the sovereign state of Buganda regarding various matters and formally annex it. Two, the 1900 Agreement formally rewarded Buganda for its support towards the defeat of Kabalega¹⁰. Of the 20 counties that formed Buganda, six were ceded from Bunyoro. The 1900 Agreement consequently uplifted the status of Buganda

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid. Colonel Colville had promised Ganda chiefs in the early 1894 that all land south of the river Kafu would be incorporated into Buganda.

vis-à-vis other regions. Specifically, the 1900 Agreement distributed land to the Kabaka and Ganda royals and notable chiefs to hold for their exclusive use. The Banyoro on the other hand did not have a relationship agreement with the Protectorate government until 1933, which was different from those concluded with Ankole and Toro. A very important article of the 1933 Bunyoro Agreement placed all Bunyoro land in the hands of the Governor and the Omukama and his subjects had usufruct rights to the degree recognized by the Governor¹¹. The Omukama's trusteeship over the land was still subject to the general or specific instructions that the Governor could issue¹². It should be remembered that even in the pre-colonial era, the Omukama had been the trustee of Bunyoro land, but a form of trusteeship rooted in sovereign control. The British trusteeship to the Omukama was based on the understanding that the Omukama had no sovereign authority over Bunyoro land. This colonial relationship has been termed quasi-sovereignty¹³. The real effect of this trusteeship was such that under the system of native customary administration, the British deployed the Ganda model to operate outside Buganda. Ganda chiefs were therefore sent to Bunyoro to administer those areas. Later in the 1960s the Referendum on the Lost Counties returned Buyaga and Bugangaizi to Bunyoro but the people did not benefit from this because the land was still under the control of Ganda chiefs.

Bunyoro's grievances

Bunyoro's humiliation affected its cultural and social institutions. When in 1901 Kitahimbwa abdicated his throne, Banyoro felt despised so much because British Officials resident in Bunyoro continued to despise the Omukama Duhaga II the successor. As the British war with Kabalega had decimated Bunyoro, the loss of population was such that with the end of the war other communi-

11 Bunyoro Agreement, 1933: Article 1.

12 Ibid.

13 Siba Grovogui, *Sovereigns, Quasi Sovereigns, and Africans: Race and Self-Determination in International Law* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 46-47.

ties immigrated into Bunyoro, and it became state policy from the 1970s to transfer non-Banyoro to settle in the sparse lands. The two major counties that the British had ceded to Buganda, Buyaga and Bugangaizi, were considered the heart of Bunyoro Kingdom because they contained the royal tombs of deceased Bunyoro kings and princes. Bugangaizi held the tombs of Omukama Duhaga I and Queen Masamba. Buyaga held the tombs of kings: Kyebambe, Nyabongo, Winyi I, Kyebambe III and others. Buwekula county is where all coronations of Bunyoro kings was done. Ganda administrators taken to Bunyoro were brutal towards the natives. This misrule brought resentment in the population especially in Mubende, Buyaga and Bugangaizi and in 1907 the Nyangire -Omuganda uprising¹⁴ began as a result of various grievances that worked on the nationalistic sentiment of the Banyoro. Later in 1918, the Mubende-Bunyoro Committee was formed as a political movement to: advocate for the return of Kabalega, recover Bunyoro land from Buganda, reinstate socio-cultural freedom of Bunyoro society, and to resist non-Banyoro rule, exploitation and other forms of subjugation¹⁵. Interviews with key informants and focus group discussions with many elders in Hoima, Kibaale, Masindi and Buliisa have confirmed that these grievances had more to do with social institutions and denial of access to education. All informants agreed how Ganda administrators in Bunyoro treated the natives with brutal tactics, overtaxed them, and denied them access to land. The Baganda chiefs sent to Bunyoro behaved like what Mahmood Mamdani has called a clenched fist¹⁶ whereby they had the legislative, judicial, and executive power in their person all at once. These chiefs personalized power so much that even a simple misunderstanding could be exaggerated, and the individual concerned paid a high price in either taxation, forced labor, or imprisonment. According to the informants, Banyoro were denied entry to the leading schools in Buganda because of their names. Even

14 Literary, "I refuse Ganda rule."

15 Report of the Colonial Secretary to Privy Council, 1962.

16 Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018.)

those who wanted to study priesthood were denied admission to the leading seminaries because of their Nyoro identity¹⁷.

These grievances formed part of the various petitions sent by members of Bunyoro's delegations to the different levels of colonial government up to the Privy Council. According to the discussions of the Privy Counsellors, which were contained in a report presented to the British Parliament in 1962, Bunyoro's grievances were real but somewhat exaggerated. The authors of the report argued that the grievances were just part of the old rivalry between the two kingdoms and that the political atmosphere of the 1950s intensified these. The authors argued that the looming transfer of power to an independent government made the Banyoro anxious because they did not know what was to happen when the British, the "impartial arbiter" had left. As I shall discuss below, the British were not an impartial arbiter in the historical rivalry between Buganda and Bunyoro. In fact, they were responsible for creating the "attitude of superiority adopted by many Baganda" as mentioned in the report¹⁸. Although the colonial government had many opportunities to correct its tactics of governance towards Bunyoro, it failed to act and passed on these challenges to independent governments. When a referendum on the lost counties was conducted in 1964, the disrespect and contempt for Bunyoro affairs remained and was carried through various governments using different strategies and tactics. In the following section, I argue that these strategies and tactics of humbling political management persisted because they had been based on an intellectual history that debased Bunyoro society and leadership and placed the justification for such treatment.

The uses and abuses of biased historiography

Mr. Yoram Nsamba Ndoleriire is among the Bunyoro intellectuals I spoke to when researching about this paper. Nsamba told me that all Bunyoro's misfortune begun with the European encoun-

17 Interviews with informants, January/February 2021.

18 Report of the Colonial Secretary to Privy Council, 1962, 15.

ter. He is convinced that the nature of Bunyoro's encounter with the British was violent, and since it was a display of asymmetrical power relations between the British and Kabalega, the party with the most advanced military machine worn the day and begun to dictate the terms of the ensuing relationship¹⁹. Nsamba further emphasizes that Kabalega was misunderstood and Bunyoro was looked at as the enemy. But for Nsamba, this did not come from a vacuum. Rather, it was based on writings that celebrated Ganda culture but denigrated the Banyoro. This is why the end of Kabalega's rebellion saw the British institute policies aimed at cowering Bunyoro's power and replacing it with the Buganda model²⁰. Nsamba for instance mentions the book written by Mrs. Ruth Fisher *Twilight Tales of the Black Baganda*, which seemed at first to be a book on Buganda but was in fact talking about Bunyoro. The book could not be entitled after Bunyoro because it was claimed that Europeans could not buy a book on Bunyoro. And the book describes the Banyoro as savage, lacking moral law, standards of righteousness or justice, and no thought of tribulation. Fisher largely attributed the disintegration of the Bunyoro-Kitara monarchy to Fetishism. On the contrary, Fisher describes Buganda as a tribe filled with an insular spirit and racial pride, who are a conquering and predominant race. Nsamba emphasizes that this kind of history writing placed the Banyoro as a mad people and this was the reason for the British to construct a mental Hospital in Bunyoro, which is currently used as a prison. When the Banyoro were defined as mad and lacking civility, this justified any sort of violence that they received from the British and the Ganda agents²¹.

The writings of the European explorers on Bunyoro also influenced the kind of details that later native writers would record from Bunyoro's past. Native writers like Kamugungunu feared that the British would reprimand them for writing the true history of Bunyoro's deeper past. As the traditional social-cultural institutions were being destroyed and replaced with the European

19 Interview with Yoram Nsamba Ndoleriire, Hoima, February 2021.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

Christian missionary beliefs and practices, many Banyoro were intimidated to continue talking about traditional knowledge systems. Limited information was given to British colonial agents for their own consumption²². In the intellectual battle, the knowledge systems of the Baganda were championed, written about, and performed. For instance, Bunyoro traditional religion of Kubandwa, was the first casualty of the civilizing mission, because it was considered backward. For the case of Buganda, traditional cultural beliefs and practices were merely driven to the private space. In Bunyoro, self-regulating institutions that supported the Omukama in his leadership over society were discouraged and yet these were the depositories of Bunyoro history. Other institutions like Kogere, Nyinamwiru, Batebe, Okwiri Muchwampaka, Abaramansi, and others, were all considered primitive and were replaced by colonial offices dealing with European modes of government. The Bunyoro folklore, stories, idioms, songs, and other practices were considered primitive as well. Even shrines were burnt in many places.

On the contrary the traditional folklore, songs, and other cultural practices of the Baganda were considered as regalia and preserved. Ganda songs circulated in the public sphere and many music groups were formed to advance Ganda culture both within and outside Buganda. In a different discussion, Mr. George Isoke, noted that the problem of Bunyoro's intellectual history and how it affected political practice arose from the first chroniclers. As the first writers were Europeans, their biases tainted the intellectual mind of the political actors who believed what the chronicles had said²³. Isoke argues that Bunyoro historians came later and although they attempted to correct the first biases written by the Europeans, it took long for writers to unlearn what had been defined before. Since Buganda had been defined as a civilized society and Bunyoro a primitive one, all the benefits of civility and the privileges of modern political life went to them²⁴. There are some salient features of a Ganda-centric history writing that was used to

22 Ibid.

23 Interview with Mr. George Isoke, Hoima, February 2021.

24 Ibid.

prop up the Baganda as critical players in Uganda's progress vis-à-vis the Bunyoro. These can be seen below.

Uganda's history begins with Europeans in Buganda

Many early chroniclers on Uganda equate its history to the entry of European explorers Speke and Grant in Buganda. This points to a "legitimizing presence" by some form of power. Richard Reid critiques this assumption because the 'legitimizing' power at that time was exogenous, which would mean that it is external forces which brought history to Africa. But Reid agrees that foreigners are also part of the history of the nation and rarely does a history become understood without othering²⁵. This nevertheless means that an organic history looking at deeper historical roots must acknowledge the shared experiences and external influences such that the history of Europeans in Buganda become another influence in time. This is however difficult to realize because historical chroniclers are conscious agents who seek to order knowledge according to existing interests. Reid says that historians of Uganda have always been fascinated with the political structures of the Baganda, and this history overshadows Uganda's history as a nation²⁶ Reid says that this came about because the colonial order of knowledge was partly responsible since it imposed "European visions of worthy and unworthy Africans"²⁷. Partly, however, Reid argues that it had less to do with Europeans visions but more with the nature of the societies concerned and how they responded to colonial governance. For instance, Reid argues that both the Ganda and Acholi participated in slave trade, but the latter could not participate in the colonial agricultural economy and contribute "positively" because they inhabited a poorly arable geographical zone. Instead, the Acholi became exporters of labor and were recruited into the colonial army. Reid calls this a classic case of internal underdevelopment.

25 Richard Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 17.

26 Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 11.

27 Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 12.

I disagree with this analysis because it contradicts his thesis. He cannot say that the Acholi were internally underdeveloped because they could not participate in the colonial agricultural economy. The colonial system underdeveloped them because it sought to coercively integrate them into an agricultural economy that played by different rules of production and exchange. What needs to be appreciated is that the colonial logic of divide and rule propped up leaders from Buganda because it felt they were best suited to support its imperial needs. This may have had little to do with the nature of the social organization of the different groups. As the Banyoro were naturally a proud people who hated foreign rule, their behavior in challenging foreign interference in their affairs was interpreted as aggression. The only difference is that the British possessed powerful war machinery that defeated Kabalega and allowed them to set the stage for the politics of humiliation that targeted Bunyoro.

Early chroniclers focused on Buganda

Early writers on Uganda focused on Buganda and their descriptions influenced later studies. This had tremendous implications on how the Uganda national consciousness was articulated. Early Europeans were explorers like Burton (1860) and Speke (1863, 1864), who focused on Buganda as a dominant kingdom in the region. Speke even documented more information about state formation, king list of Buganda and described Buganda as an advanced state in comparison to the surrounding states and societies. The high regard for Buganda alongside the othering and denigration of Bunyoro can be seen in the records of Samuel Baker²⁸. In *Ismailia*, there are many passages in which Baker presents Bunyoro as a country of “deceitful” “negroes” incapable of fair dealings and if he saw any such signs of “unfairness”, he would proceed to “the country of Mtesa” (Muteesa) who would instead receive all the benefits Baker had hitherto intended for Bunyoro²⁹.

28 Samuel Baker, *Ismailia* (Project Gutenberg, 2003).

29 Baker, *Ismailia*, 332.

Baker describes Bunyoro as a “detestable country” of “treacherous people” ruled by Kabalega a “miserable” king³⁰. Baker uses every opportunity of sour conversations or misunderstandings in Nyoro kingly protocols to paint Kabalega in the worst scenario but at the same time heap praise on Muteesa and Buganda. In one meeting with Kabalega, Baker describes the king’s movements as “enormous strides” “caricaturing the walk of a giraffe”, which were however “imitations of Muteesa” who attempted to “walk like a lion.” When Kabalega finally arrived at their meeting, Baker describes the king’s entry as the most “undignified”, undertaken with an “air of extreme shyness half concealed by audacity”³¹. It is clear that Baker interpreted Kabalega’s actions using racist lenses that tried to undermine the sovereign power held by a twenty-year old Kabalega. In a few paragraphs, Baker describes Kabalega’s personal physique in good light. But he still comes to the conclusion that though Kabalega’s eyes were very large, they were still “projected in a disagreeable manner” and the robe of backcloth that Kabalega wore was “exquisitely made” in Buganda, a country “celebrated for its curious production”³². Regardless of his qualities, Baker considered Kabalega as a “gauche, awkward, undignified lout of twenty years of age, who thought himself a great monarch” and he was “cowardly, cruel, cunning, and treacherous to the last degree”³³.

The above description worked to present Buganda in better light and present Bunyoro and its people in the worst manner. This early description, as Reid confirms, represented a “general European fascination” with Buganda at the expense of other kingdoms³⁴. Reid acknowledges however that Europeans gazes on Buganda were expected because it was centrally located near Lake Victoria a major means of travel through the region. This central location made the Ganda the region’s gate keepers. Speke and other Europeans were intrigued by the orderly Ganda society vis-à-vis

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 343.

³² Ibid., 343-4.

³³ Ibid., 344.

³⁴ Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 2017.

other societies they described as hostile.

The second group of chroniclers included missionaries and they also wrote extensively about Buganda's historical past in Christian print. A missionary-led intervention in the political crisis in Buganda was amplified by the writings of C.T. Wilson & R.W. Felkin *Uganda and the Egyptian Sudan*, 1882, and R.W. Felkin 'Notes on the Waganda Tribe of Central Africa, 1885-6. Missionaries like Alexander Mackay and Robert Ashe wrote extensively about Ganda attitudes towards the success of the Christian evangelization. Others like Karl Peters, who desired to secure the Ganda for Germany tried to link the Baganda to ancient Egypt while Gerald Portal produced what Reid called a 'prosaic survey' concerning the political evolution of Buganda. John Roscoe, the missionary amateur anthropologist said he had gathered his work on the Baganda using oral history crediting the Ganda for having such accurate accounts of their past³⁵. Roscoe replicated his work on Buganda onto the Banyoro³⁶ and the Banyankole³⁷ and he supplied his field data to James Frazier who was involved with 'semi-professional ethnographic history'. These and other studies on Ugandan society provided the intellectual legitimacy for the political idea of indirect rule under British colonialism in Uganda, a system that *implied* some understanding of 'the native's past.'

The early native writers in Uganda were the newly converted Christian elites, especially the protestant Ganda historians, who were also key historical actors in their political and military aspect. Reid emphasizes that men like Apollo Kaggwa the Katikiro of Buganda in 1889 were important political actors in many ways. Besides recording history events, they were attached to Ganda society as partisan defenders of culture and politics. So, writing was for them about both history and politics since historical and political authority could not be separated³⁸. Other native writers emerged in Buganda including such individuals as: Bartolomaayo

³⁵ Roscoe, *The Bakitara of Banyoro*, 3.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Reid, *A history of Modern Uganda*, 2017.

Zzimbe, Albert Lugolobi, James Miti Kabazzi, Ham Mukasa, and others. These emerging Ganda intellectuals begun to critique one another within a new public forum provided by Christian-founded journals and periodicals such as *Ebifa Mu Buganda*, *Munno* and later the *Uganda Journal*. This literacy experience in Buganda created a lively and informed Ganda public that participated in debates about the topical issues of the time. This Ganda dominance in the literacy scene reflected and underpinned the “political order in the British Protectorate”³⁹. Learning from the literary experiences of Ganda historians, other historians from different regions emerged to also contribute to the historical debates of the time. For instance, Lubogo wrote the history of Busoga in the 1920s and P. Bikunya wrote about the history of Bunyoro in 1927.

Literary texts were slowly produced in other areas like Teso, Acholi and others. When in the 1950s scholarship of Uganda proper was written, Buganda still dominated the literature about Uganda due to its historical prominence in the body politic and because many sources were available. For instance, research of the time included: D.A. Low, *Buganda and British Overrule, 1900-1955*; M. Southwold, *Bureaucracy and Chiefship in Buganda*; P.C.W. Gutkind, *The Royal Capital of Buganda: a study of internal conflict and external ambiguity*; Fallers, ed). *King's Men*; M.S.M. Kiwanuka, *A History of Buganda: from the foundation of the kingdom to 1900*; Low, *Buganda in Modern History*; M. Wright, *Buganda in the Heroic Age*. Although other regions like Busoga, Lango, Teso, Bunyoro, Ankole and others also received attention from historians, there was no doubt that research on Buganda dominated and outweighed the combined effort in all the rest.

Ganda political model celebrated as the rest were denigrated

The early chroniclers of Ganda history were highly impressed by the political sophistication of Buganda. This European impression allowed Buganda to acquire a privileged position. As the question

³⁹ Ibid.

of historiography is a matter of social order, the colonial order of knowledge was based upon perceptions surrounding a Ganda dominance in all aspects of life. This means that what the early chroniclers wrote about Buganda and how they interpreted it supported the early relationships with colonial power and future relationships beyond the colonial state. Reid says that because many African people did not document their past in written books, European visitors had concluded that African societies had 'no history'. Yet, many Europeans became interested in African pasts. "During the era of the partition itself, the past mattered greatly because the histories of states, as the political form which was the mark of relative civilization, and with which Europeans sought legitimate and stable partners in the civilizing mission. Europeans used historical inquiry to seek legitimate and stable partners in the civilizing mission"⁴⁰. This shows that history could not be deployed for its sake only, but rather to support a profound political interest in the management of the Uganda protectorate. Early European chroniclers like John Speke looked for "centers and symbols of power and sovereignty", looking for "ancient lineages and genealogies" that implied "nobility and aristocracy". These early chroniclers were looking for "emperors, kings, big men, and princely heredity"⁴¹.

John Speke wrote that when he reached Buddu in Buganda, he felt inclined to stop for a month because "everything was so very pleasant". The "temperature" was perfect, the roads were broad, everywhere, cut through the long grasses and a contrast to the "wretched tracks" in "all the adjacent counties...Wherever I strolled I saw nothing but richness, and what out to be wealth. The whole land was a picture of quiescent beauty, with a boundless sea in the background"⁴². Reid says that such descriptions by Speke about Buganda were appealing to Victorian minds in Europe and were part of the European wonders and imagination. But this description of Buganda should be contrasted with what Samuel

⁴⁰ Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 18.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 20.

Baker thought about Kamurasi and Bunyoro. Baker described Kamurasi as “childlike” and “insecure” in comparison to Mutesa of Buganda. Baker also considered Bunyoro as a “land of primitives who were hostile to the outside world”⁴³. The descriptions about Buganda as different from everyone showed that the Ganda were receptive to new ideas and willing to improve themselves. This was confirmed when Christianity entered Buganda in the 1870s⁴⁴. The descriptions of Bunyoro as a hostile society influenced the confrontational approach towards its rulers during the colonial time. Elsewhere, Emin Pasha described Northern Uganda as unstable, “brutally chaotic, and under the shadow of the sinister Mahdist state”⁴⁵. These varying “miscomprehensions” and descriptions of diverse groups shaped British perceptions and attitudes that co-opted the Ganda and at the same time marginalized the rest.

The abuses arising from a Ganda-centric history

A Ganda-centric history-writing project of Uganda presented problems because it had profound implications for the social, political and economic development of Uganda as a whole. By propping up Buganda as the most important center of all activities in Uganda, early historiography cemented Buganda’s role in the relations that came after. This implied that other regions were peripheral to the progress of Uganda. Writing on Luganda, Margery Perham has emphasized that British protection crystalized Buganda into a critical actor, like a “heart” that could not easily be “torn from the larger body politic and economic”⁴⁶. When the British colonial government chose Buganda as the model society for the rest of Uganda, it showed that everything could flow from the center and spread to the peripheral areas. In this, they overturned centuries of relations that came from the other areas into Buganda.

43 Douglas Murray, *Sir Samuel Baker: A Memoir*. London: Macmillan, 1895.

44 Roland Oliver and Caroline Oliver, *Africa in the Days of Exploration* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965).

45 Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 22.

46 Margery Perham, *Lugard: The Years of Adventure, 1858-1898* (London: Collins, 1956).

A look at the economic history of the pre-colonial societies can highlight this. In precolonial societies, economic exchanges took place between the Baganda and Banyakitara, Basoga and Alur, Langi and Acholi, and economic direction followed the sources and demands of the commodities. Alur could move to Bunyoro for salt just as the Langi went to Bunyoro for hoes. This stimulus was reversed when Buganda became the central area for organizing economic relations in the colonial moment especially when a settler class opened up shops to sell wares sourced from abroad. These new intermediaries changed the direction of local relations towards the center. This economic reversal had a social-political significance as well since it supported the “growth of ethnic and insular nationalism” and also supported divide and rule tactics of the colonial state. The social significance of this reversal is that other societies were considered as lacking in initiative, possessing outdated systems of organization that were not adequate for “modern” life. Bunyoro was for instance described as having a primitive ethos that did not only desire progress but would also disrupt whatever good that others had.

Phares Mutibwa however disagrees with the analysis that positions Buganda as a central player in Uganda's historical development in neglect of Bunyoro. Mutibwa presents an image of Buganda victimhood and says that Buganda also suffered from British colonialism as everyone else. Mutibwa presents what he calls the “ladder syndrome” which he describes to mean that all those who aspired to power in Uganda have used Buganda as a ladder. Mutibwa therefore emphasizes that historical factors such as Buganda's central location were responsible for positioning the kingdom as a central player in the national political development. Mutibwa mentions that what the leaders of post-independence Uganda did was not new but rather they learned from the British mode of statecraft when the British “used” the Baganda as the central location to extend their colonial administration to other areas and reaches of Uganda. This geographic centrality therefore made Bu-

ganda a victim of British colonialism⁴⁷. But Mutibwa also falls into the same trap that he seeks to argue against. He proceeds to say for instance that unlike the rest of the colonized societies of Uganda, the Baganda took their victimhood to use and took advantage of the colonial imagination to see the opportunities it entailed and turn them into benefits. For instance, Mutibwa says that the Baganda concluded the 1900 Agreement which provided some privileges such as the distribution of land to chiefs and later the land tenants were protected further by the Envujo Law of 1928. Citing Harry Johnson, who negotiated the 1900 Agreement on behalf of the British, who said that the Baganda had “proved hard and sagacious bargainers” in negotiating the 1900 Buganda Agreement. Mutibwa also emphasizes how the Baganda recognized the advantages contained in the new missionary schools and hospitals and partook in them to improve their levels of literacy and standards of health. Furthermore, when the Baganda began to participate in the colonial economy, they improved on their surplus income to build better houses and improve their economic benefits. Mutibwa says for instance that these economic benefits came to the Baganda because they worked for them and since the Baganda were the first victims of British colonialism, “perhaps it was not as bad if they were the first beneficiaries of the benefits from their early contact with foreigners, and which their detractors labelled collaboration” (Ibid).

But I think that Mutibwa is already reading from the script of the Ganda-centric historiography including Speke, Roscoe and others who amplified Ganda acumen, ingenuity and order vis-à-vis the rest. By saying that the Ganda leaders saw opportunity in their victimhood, he is emphasizing that they were wiser than others who failed to do so. By saying that the economic benefits came to the Ganda because they worked hard in the colonial economy, Mutibwa fails to see how the colonial structure was already set up to support that outcome. And I think these are statements

47 Phares Mutibwa, *The Buganda Factor in Uganda politics* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2008), xv.

that speak to a history of Ganda patronage and privilege from the British. Mutibwa's statements amplify colonial mistreatment of Bunyoro from the start. Since the purpose of the missionary institutions pretended to civilize the natives, the fact that early chroniclers had described the Banyoro as primitive savages meant that "civilization" would be slow to enter the region. Informant interviews showed British colonial officials discouraged secondary mission schools to be established in Bunyoro. As early as 1902, two primary schools for boys and girls were established in Hoima (Duhaga Boys/Duhaga Girls). The attempt of missionaries to found secondary schools was discouraged. When the church missionary society wanted to construct a boys' secondary school in Hoima, the colonial authorities discouraged this and forced the Church Missionary Society (CMS) to shift the school to Busoga instead. This school became the famous Mwiri College School (for boys).

What would have been a girls' school in Hoima was also discouraged, forcing the Scottish Lieutenant Commander Ernest Ebohard Calwell to take the school to Fort Portal in Toro. This became the famous Nyakasura School. Secondary schools in Bunyoro were founded in the early 1960s by private individuals. This shows that civilization could not have been the priority for a people described as "mad"⁴⁸. And since the British wars with Kabalega had decimated Bunyoro, brought disease, famine and death, people had also migrated outside of the area, which left swathes of unoccupied territory that the colonial state begun to gazette as game reserves. Murchison Falls national park in Masindi was gazetted in 1927 and others like Kazinga channel national park (renamed Queen Elizabeth to commemorate the Queen's visit in 1954). To conclude on this, Mutibwa fails to see that what he champions as Ganda agency in taking advantage of events in the colonial era was actually an outcome of the colonial structure and its mode of rule.

48 Interview with Mr. George Isoke, Hoima, February 2021.

The challenges of post-colonial national integration

In concluding on this essay, let me highlight the argument I have tried to make. I have argued that the contemporary challenges in Bunyoro speak to a particular kind political management which speaks to humiliate, denigrate, and hold in contempt in order to cower its subject as the basis of governance that supports resource extraction and exploitation. I have argued that this form of political management is a remnant of colonial governance and post-independence leaders reproduced it because it allowed them to achieve particular interests. I have also argued that as a form of political practice, humbling political management did not arise in a vacuum. Although it arose from such events as the colonial wars between Kabalega and the invading British/Buganda army, humbling political management first emerged in intellectual writings that depicted the Ganda society as superior to that of Bunyoro. I have argued that such Ganda-centric writing of Uganda's history praised and acknowledged Ganda social, cultural, and political beliefs and practices while at the same time denigrated those of the Banyoro. This worked like a stigma that prevented serious state support towards social progress in Bunyoro.

There are many challenges that this history of political management presents. On the one hand, it has maintained a pattern of relationships between successive governments and Bunyoro. The largest ethnic immigration in Bunyoro (Kibaale) from non-Banyoro occurred in the 1970s for instance because the area was sparsely populated and basically because the Banyoro were considered weak to challenge a government policy to transfer population to the area. When the land theft and enclosures begun during the recent oil exploration in Bunyoro, state functionaries used various weapons of violence because they are convinced that the people could not challenge this, and the cultural leadership had also been weakened to put any stiff resistance. This shows that there is a history of disrespect and humiliation whereby Bunyoro take whatever the central authorities want to implement. But this also speaks to how sovereign control has been historically conceived

by leaders on the opposite sides. Before the British encounter with Uganda, Bunyoro rivalled with Buganda for the control of resources and territory. When the British intervened in this rivalry on the side of Buganda, the Banyoro were weakened, humbled and humiliated, and have been paying the price of Kabalega's rebellion up to now. Bunyoro's loss of its sovereignty led to disastrous consequences. But why did this not change in the context of an integrated unified nation after 1962? I think we have to explain this in light of the whole history of Bunyoro denigration vis-à-vis Buganda's privilege. I think this had to do with projects to construct a nationalistic history as opposed to a fragmented history of Uganda's kingdoms and regions. The challenges of national integration in the post-colonial era are very much intellectual as they are social, cultural, economic, and political. One of the best ways to overcome humbling political management is to conceive of nationalizing intellectual histories that accord respect to nation and its regions. But I think such a project would have to acknowledge the similarities and differences enjoyed by the various regions during the experiences of unified state management especially in the colonial era.

Samwiri Karugire is among the intellectuals who attempted to overcome the Ganda-centric writing of history in Uganda. Karugire argues that there are various justifications for writing an integrated history of Uganda. He says that unlike those that identify Uganda's history with the coming of Europeans into the territory that became Uganda, the societies that constituted that substance already existed in the deeper past and should be the first focus of history-writing. Karugire says that many historians have focused on the form of the Uganda as opposed to its substance; the territory as opposed to the nationalities that constitute it. He emphasizes that historiography must move away from a political abstract history to a people's history⁴⁹. By this, Karugire is emphasizing that communities that became Uganda had related well for

49 Samwiri Karugire, *A Political history of Uganda* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2010), 1-2.

centuries in various aspects and those relations in the deeper past should be the focus of study as opposed to the moment when they came under colonial rule. This is just to emphasize that the history of Uganda pre-dates the colonial moment, which should also be included as a chapter in the deeper history Karugire provides the histories of different societies and he tries to show the different relations among the people, which were based on respect, mutual understanding and sometimes violence. All forms and characters of relations are shown to prove that pre-colonial Ugandan societies had robust relations.

Karugire's attempt at writing a unified history however suffers from a deeper respect for the colonial state and its impact. It can be said that whereas many events have impact on the trajectory of the body politic, some more powerful events and episodes can occur which can have a far deeper impact than others. This means that the colonial era impacted deeply on the historical trajectory of Uganda. But the way in which Karugire describes the impact of the colonial system on Uganda society shows that he considers a monumental stage in the history of Uganda, much more important than pre-colonial social relations and inter-communal exchanges. Karugire goes to the question of agency and method and highlights the impact of Buganda as the model society. For him, the character by which Ganda agents extended to other areas a mode of government imagined by the British colonialists spoke a language of violence which made a unified Ugandan history difficult to understand because those other areas were integrated into the whole in varying ways⁵⁰. The prevailing mood of the leaders of the time influenced the character and nature of integration. For instance, because Buganda was quick to accept British protection, the Bunyoro leaders were not, and this created the perception that the Banyoro leaders were hostile to British interests⁵¹. Without even questioning why the Banyoro were indifferent to British rule, this display of hostility was hyped to such a level that seemed to

⁵⁰ Ibid., 99.

⁵¹ Ibid., 107.

erase all the historical grandeur and prestige of Bunyoro-Kitara in favor of a friendly Buganda that seemed to accept British interests even without knowing them. Karugire also emphasizes that regardless of the nature and character of the colonial encounter and rule, British control over Ugandan societies became a fact, and with this the history of Uganda had to bear the cost of colonial historiography⁵².

Looking at the impact of the colonial system, Karugire seems to show that the history of Uganda was being rewritten as if to construct a new way of understanding Uganda's historical past. Karugire argues that legal transformations like the 1900 Buganda Agreement did not seek just to improve colonial political relations with Buganda but to alter the political structure. When the 1900 Buganda Agreement created an independent class of landowners independent of the Kabaka, this swept away the basis of Ganda social political organization and imposed limits on the Kabaka's government over many aspects. Karugire here means that the colonial state sought to rewrite the history of Uganda and champion its own systems. The Ganda model of administration written in the 1900 Agreement was exported to other areas of Uganda with the support of Ganda agents in Bukedi (Semei Kakungulu), Bunyoro, Kigezi, Toro, Nkole, and others. The Ganda model has therefore permeated historiography of Uganda. Karugire confirms this when he acknowledges that if the British also tried to unify Uganda and failed, there is no historiography that can overcome the Ganda-centrism because it is already in the design of colonial governance. Since colonial governance followed the principle of divide and rule, the implications of this system went to the core of local society and politics. How can we expect to have a unified history of Uganda when the leaders have shown determination to divide society into so many tribes located in different homelands so as to enable a cost-effective mode of rule? I think that we need to undertake vigorous research into how intellectual history supports political practice and find out how intellectualism can be chan-

52 Ibid., 116.

neled to support integrative and unifying political practices that accord respect to social-economic-political difference as opposed to humbling and humiliating entire sections of people and regions.

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Interrogating Silences in Asante Historiography on Anticolonial Resistance, 1896-1957

Manuel Jojo Manu-Osafo

Abstract

Asante's historiography, mainly built from the archival information left behind by the British colonial state, appears to give the impression that there was little or no resistance to colonial rule in Asante after the 1900 Yaa Asantewaa War of resistance. This essay argues that this is a major flaw in Asante's historiography that needs to be addressed. If contrarian voices to British colonial rule in Asante existed during the colonial period, they need to be unearthed and given the appropriate historical attention they deserve. Searching for broader forms of resistance to colonial rule that can be gleaned from the actions of certain Asantes will be in line with the drive to decolonize the field of Asante history.

Keywords: Asante, Ghana, anticolonial resistance, decolonization, archival silences

Introduction

This is an exploratory essay which aims to contribute to the agenda of decolonizing the field of Asante history. It does so by addressing some of the silences in Asante historiography concerning Asante resistance to colonial rule. It argues that the extant literature narrowly defines resistance, which means the voices and perspectives of the British and their African collaborators have gained implicit dominance over contrarian Asante voices in both the archives and

the historiography. Drawing inspiration from Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja's classic work on the history of resistance in the Congo, this essay advocates for the scope of definition of what resistance entails in Asante historiography to be broadened. It argues that certain unacknowledged sources of information and understandings of the diverse mechanisms Asantes resorted to in resistance to colonial rule must be incorporated into mainstream historiographical dialogue on Asante society under British domination.¹ The first section sets out three points of action historians of Asante should consider in order to decolonize the field. The second section reflects on some of the sources and perspectives for Asante history useful in this regard. The third and final section offers some preliminary conclusions and observations on the topic of decolonization in Asante and Ghanaian history.

Teasing out the silences in the literature

Firstly, this essay contends that scholars must strive to integrate into the definition of resistance many day-to-day cultural actions which may have appeared unconnected to resistance during the colonial era. Examples of such actions include religious beliefs and rituals, general social commentary and conversations, Africans' participation in politics, etc. In hindsight, looking at events which took place during the colonial period, some Asantes disapproved of British rule and the changes it brought. This is a perspective which contradicts the generally uncontested picture of Asantes, painted by the archives and secondary literature that they completely tolerated, if not welcomed, colonial rule.² Thus, through

- 1 G. Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History* (London: Zed Books, 2002), see especially the preface, acknowledgements, and introduction.
- 2 Central to this perspective within the literature is the rise of the Asante *Akonkofo* (rich young men who made their wealth from trading on the coast but had no prospects of attaining political office) narrative which suggests that the *Akonkofo* welcomed, and even called for, British colonial rule as a way of neutralizing the Asante state so as to liberally engage in free trade and enterprise, something the Asante state strongly frowned upon. On the *Akonkofo*, see K. Arhin, 'A note on the Asante *akonkofo*: A non-literate sub-elite, 1900-1930,' *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 56, no. 1 (1986): 25-31; K. Arhin, 'Some Asante views

this radical reassessment of Asante history, room will be created for exploring the possibility that Asantes relied on some covert forms of resistance not acknowledged by the colonial archives and Asante historiography.³

The narrow definition of resistance in Asante history springs from two sources. The first is the colonial archive from which much of the history is built. The archival information left behind by the British colonial state is made in its image—chauvinistic in its appreciation of African culture, belief, and religious practice; androcentric in its outlook on politics; and paternalistic in its view of African participation in governance. It is no surprise, then, that resistance has come to be seen as military, structured, and organized. This way of seeing resistance has led to the impression that there was little or no opposition to British rule in Asante after the famous Yaa Asantewaa War.

The second source of this narrow perspective is the fact that Asante historiography is highly state-centric. It has long been recognized that the literature privileges the Asante state over all other historical actors.⁴ The unfortunate implication is that the viewpoints of non-state actors (that is, the numerically larger collective of individual Asantes) are usually subsumed under the aegis of state-oriented/sanctioned interpretations of the Asante past and present. And this state-centric perspective is taken to be the singular, authentic, and authorized Asante perspective on issues of interest at any given historical point. This essay argues that this is a major flaw in Asante historiography which needs to be addressed. If contrarian voices to British rule in Asante—especially from non-state quarters—existed during the colonial period, they need to be

of colonial rule: as seen in the controversy relating to death duties,' *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 15, no. 1 (1974): 63-84.

- 3 Terrence Ranger provides a synthesis of this in the broader African historiography, see T. Ranger, 'African initiatives and resistance in the face of partition and conquest' in *UNESCO General History of Africa, Volume VII: Africa under Colonial Domination, 1880-1935*, ed. A. A. Boahen (London: UNESCO, 1985), 45-62.
- 4 See T. McCaskie's two essays 'Asantesem: Reflections on discourse and text in Africa' and 'Inventing Asante,' in *Asante, Kingdom of Gold: Essays in the History of an African Culture* (Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 2015), 333-63.

unearthed and given appropriate historical attention.

Searching for broader forms of resistance to colonial rule that can be gleaned from everyday actions of certain Asantes will be in line with the drive to decolonize the field of Asante history. It is true that besides the Yaa Asantewaa War, historians are yet to uncover direct actions that indicate explicit Asante resistance to colonial rule. Nevertheless, that does not completely rule out resistance by other means. Indeed, there were certain forms of day-to-day activities which Asantes adopted to demonstrate covert resistance to colonial rule. These actions were derived and distilled from the very building blocks of Asante culture and are worthy of further exploration. As K. Asare Opoku profoundly observes:

The imposition of European colonial rule on Africa was not merely the forceful establishment of European political, economic, and social power on colonial possessions. It was also a cultural imposition and it used culture to buttress the political, economic and social superstructure which colonialism represented.⁵

In the Asante case, it is safe to say that colonial rule was not by brute force alone, but by both subtle and overt incursions and displacements into the society's culture as well. In this regard, it makes sense to view the diametrically opposite 'non-state' Asante resistance as possibly occurring through the same medium of culture, with emphasis on aspects such as religious belief and ritual, the arts and crafts, and patterns of social thought, philosophy, and behavior, among other examples. As will be seen in selected cases below, even at the point of death, Asantes, in the spirit of resistance, held on to beliefs rooted in the culture of their ancestors which not even colonial rule and threats of imprisonment and exile could overcome, as opposed to the foreign religious teachings Christian missionaries introduced.

Secondly, scholars must strive to bridge the gaps between Asante's historical epochs. The literature divides Asante's historical

5 K. Opoku, 'Religion in Africa during the colonial era,' in *UNESCO General History of Africa, Volume VII: Africa under Colonial Domination, 1880-1935*, ed. A. A. Boahen (London: UNESCO, 1985), 508.

time into precolonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras.⁶ The larger part of the historiography concentrates on the precolonial era with the colonial period remaining comparatively under studied. Asante's history after independence remains virtually unwritten when compared to the two preceding epochs. The implication is that while all points of epistemic references within the historiography begin and end with the British colonial project, the colonial system which forms the very basis of this epistemic regime remains relatively unexplored. Thus, the voices and perspectives of the British and their African collaborators have gained implicit dominance over contrarian Asante voices in both the archives and the historiography. Thus, there should be more emphasis on the agency of Asantes who lived under colonial domination as historical actors in their own right so as to bring into view the legacies of British colonial hegemony in Asante.⁷ The goal of this essay is to draw attention to

6 Kwesi Kwaa Prah has strongly argued against this false division of Africa's historical time, that "the whole of African history is pigeon-holed into three slots; each of them conceptually revolving around the colonial encounter.... [and that] this periodization schema locks [Africans] into western colonial history and reduces [Africans] to the footnotes of this Western colonial history." Furthermore, that "the precolonial period which accounts for over 90% of African history is fossilized and rendered analytically inert. For now, it is cognitively unyielding and devoid of any attempt or possibility for further detailed chronological differentiation...it implicationally assumes a static, 'pre-contact/precolonial' view of African societies. The cultural traits that were found on the eve of colonialism are treated as if they were timeless and refied phenomena that have no origins in specific periods or junctions in African history." See K. Prah, "The Centrality of the Language Question in the Decolonization of Education in Africa," *Alternation* 24, no. 2 (2017): 227-8.

7 An important contribution here is Jean Allman's use of records of court cases on ayerefa (adultery) to capture the vibrant agency of Asante women in their determination to not only navigate but challenge the rapidly changing legal and moral foundations of Asante society under colonial rule. Changes in social relations engendered by transformations in the Asante economy sought to limit and proscribe women's social and economic independence. Allman lucidly discusses the contradictions contained in court proceedings and judgements across both precolonial and colonial timelines as reflections of these wider changes, and makes solid conclusions on the implications they had on postcolonial Asante and Ghanaian society, see J. Allman, 'Adultery and the state in Asante: Reflections on gender, class, and power from 1800 to 1950' in *The Cloth of Many Colored Silks: Papers on History and Society, Ghanaian and Islamic in Honor of Ivor Wilks*, eds. John Hunwick and Nancy Lawler (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 27-65.

and challenge this constrained approach to Asante history.

The essay advances the view that further research is needed to establish more solidly within the literature the continuum of social, economic, and political continuities and changes historical Asante actors experienced. Emerging scholarship on the Asante past must make painstaking efforts to move away from narratives which weave Asante's entire history around the stalk of British colonial rule. By so doing, a solid foundation will be created on which to approach the important work of satisfactorily addressing and critiquing the silences on colonial rule within the existing literature. Silences in Asante's historiography, Jean Allman warns, are often times reflections of the colonial state's constitution of its archives to support its own hegemonic narratives.⁸ Sara Berry also cautions of Asante elites' ability to insert their own hegemonic narratives into the colonial archives parallel to, and mostly in agreement with, those of the British colonial state and its officials.⁹ These are important issues scholars of the Asante past cannot continue to ignore, given that the identified issues constitute the very building blocks of Asante history.

This essay proposes that one way to overcome these problems is for scholars to consciously engage in uncovering and bringing to academic awareness oral and archival sources not yet considered in the literature, but which offer contrarian group and individual Asante perspectives from the colonial era concerning British rule. It is imperative that more research be undertaken consciously aimed at bridging the knowledge and temporal gaps which exist within the historiography between the three epochs. Such scholarship will be significant in that it will add to the comparatively sparse literature which exists on Asante under colonial rule. It will also expand our knowledge of the varieties of Asante reactions to colonial rule.¹⁰ Furthermore, it will offer alternative approaches for

8 J. Allman, 'Fathering, mothering and making sense of "ntamoba": Reflections on the economy of child-rearing in colonial Asante,' *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 67, no. 2 (1997): 296-321.

9 S. Berry, 'Unsettled accounts: Stool debts, chieftaincy disputes and the question of Asante,' *The Journal of African History* 39, no. 1 (1998): 39-62.

10 See, for instance, Arhin, 'Some Asante views of colonial rule.'

studying Asante history which deviate from the strict division of Asante historical time into the identified epochs. Finally, such long overdue studies will offer a rethinking of the silences contained in the colonial archives and Asante historiography by critically interrogating the philosophical foundations of this historiography.

Historians of Asante, including this writer, have treated the three epochs of Asante history as if the historical actors perceived a stark break in historical time during which nothing from the preceding era survived.¹¹ Asante's historical time is thus restarted within the historiography based on the fact of colonial rule. However, in reality that is not what happened. For many ordinary Asantes at the periphery of the state structure, daily life continued unabated.¹² Many were almost untouched by the profound changes which occurred at the center as the British toppled the Asante state and imposed colonial rule. Actual changes in daily living were felt gradually; and these changes were intensely contested. But the literature has largely not taken account of this fact, leading to the problems in the historiography highlighted above.

Thirdly, to successfully decolonize Asante history, scholars must consciously, and perhaps critically, reassess Asante's history on anticolonial resistance as currently exists. Consider the following. In 1896, the British took over Asante and exiled *Asantehene* Prempe I with some of his high-ranking officeholders. They then declared Asante a colony in 1901 after the Yaa Asantewaa War. Besides this unsuccessful uprising, Asante's historiography does

11 See, for example, Tom McCaskie's assertion that with respect to 'a coherent world view and an integrated belief system, the nineteenth century—together with all antecedent Asante history—effectively ended in the 1880s,' T. McCaskie, *State and Society in Pre-colonial Asante* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 266; see also T. McCaskie, 'Accumulation, wealth and belief in Asante history. I. To the close of the nineteenth century,' *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 53, no. 1 (1983): 38. In this particular instance, McCaskie ends Asante's precolonial historical time by a combination of the upheavals of the 1880s civil wars and colonial rule. Ivor Wilks' critique of this perspective is also relevant here, see I. Wilks, 'Review: Asante state and society,' *The Journal of African History* 37, no. 1 (1996): 138-140.

12 As clearly demonstrated by T. McCaskie, *Asante Identities: History and Modernity in an African Village, 1850-1950* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), see especially Chapter 4.

not mention any other instance of resistance to 61 years of colonial rule. Does the literature not appear to suggest, by this silence, that all Asantes stopped resisting and unquestioningly cooperated with the British? In the Gold Coast colony within the same period, the likes of Mensah Sarbah and Caseley Hayford are noted for their staunch resistance to the British. Of Course, the literature mentions the cocoa holdups of the 1930s and 1940s. But these holdups are presented as campaigns which sought for specific economic redresses for Asante—and generally, all Gold Coast—cocoa farmers, and not a challenge to British rule per se.¹³ Although evidence of anticolonial resistance beyond the Yaa Asantewaa War might exist in unexplored archives, they have not been unearthed or considered in a suitable context in the existing literature.

The silences on Asante resistance to colonial rule are especially surprising when one considers that in the nineteenth century, Asante remained a constant block to British imperial designs for the wider Gold Coast region. Asante challenged the British in at least five major military confrontations and fiercely demonstrated on several occasions an ideology of complete independence from foreign interference.¹⁴ The silences within the literature however imply a monumental sudden shift in Asante attitudes, from one of total abhorrence for foreign intrusion in Asante's internal and external affairs, to one of unquestioning cooperation with an external adversarial political entity. This creates the false impression that Asante was a homogenous society whose members shared a composite set of values, needs, and aspirations.

The resultant effect is that the history of colonial rule in Asante is presented as one where contestation over the legitimacy of the colonial state was non-existent—or, in other words, a com-

13 On the cocoa holdups, see S. Rhodie, 'The Gold Coast cocoa hold-up of 1930-31,' *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 9 (1968): 105-118; G. Austin, 'Capitalists and chiefs in the cocoa hold-ups in South Asante, 1927-1938,' *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 21, no. 1 (1988): 63-95.

14 See, for instance, Prempeh's reply to the government of the Gold Coast Colony in I. Wilks, 'Asante at the end of the nineteenth century: Setting the record straight,' *Ghana Studies* 3 (2000): 18.

pletely tamed, pacified, and satisfied Asante.¹⁵ The literature inadvertently does this by focusing largely on the histories of two branches of state-level factions and functionaries who existed in the colonial era. First, those to whom colonial rule meant an enhanced access to power—that is, the ‘collaborators’ and second, those whose access to power British rule truncated—that is, the deposed pre-1896 ruling groups. However, the extant literature also makes faint hints of non-state groups and individuals whose advancement, progress, and very existence the colonial state structure threatened, and who, in all probability, challenged the colonial state and its African allies. Examples include the anti-witchcraft movements which persistently sprung up throughout the colonial era, young men who challenged, attacked, and destooled chiefs, the people who refused to join labour gangs for the colonial state’s infrastructural projects, and those who fled military conscription during the two world wars.

In relation to this, Maxwell Owusu argues that Akan societies, of which Asante is but one branch, have in-built systems of checks and balances on central power and authority. One of these checks and balances is that commoners could legitimately band together, revolt, and overthrow an unpopular or authoritarian chief or leader. The young men who destooled chiefs in colonial Asante reflect the typology Owusu proposes, although he focuses on the Asafo system of coastal Gold Coast. The crux of his argument is that the people rebelled not just against the persons of chiefs, but also against the new and sweeping powers, unknown in the previous dispensation, that the colonial state granted chiefs.¹⁶

15 Take into account the fact that even the Asante state’s seemingly omnipotent power was never spared from constant challenge from both internal and external adversaries, see E. Akyeampong and P. Obeng, ‘Spirituality, gender, and power in Asante history,’ *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 28, no. 3 (1995): 498-504. This is also a clear example of how the literature privileges the state’s perspective on Asante history above all other perspectives.

16 See M. Owusu, ‘Custom and coups: A juridical interpretation of civil order and disorder in Ghana,’ *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 24, no. 1 (Mar., 1986): 69-99; M. Owusu, ‘Rebellion, revolution, and tradition: Reinterpreting coups in Ghana,’ *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 2 (Apr., 1989): 372-97; M. Owusu, ‘Democracy and Africa – A view from the village,’ *The Journal of*

To better understand British colonial rule and its legacies, it is necessary to unearth, revisit, and give voice to these groups and individuals who resisted British colonial rule in Asante, but who, unfortunately, are yet to be given due or appropriate attention in the historical literature.

Sources of evidence for individual and group forms of resistance to colonial rule

There are numerous archival and non-archival sources largely unexplored for evidence of non-state anticolonial resistance in Asante. In Ghana alone, archival sources for Asante history include the national archives in Accra and its regional branches in Kumase, Sunyani, Cape Coast, and Sekondi-Takoradi. The Manhyia Royal Archives in Kumase also holds significant information on life and politics in colonial Asante. The University of Ghana boasts of the Balme Library and the Institute of African Studies Library. These two libraries contain not only books but newspapers, magazines, periodicals, and documents of immense value to Asante history. There are also private archives which might provide further valuable information.

Many sources of Asante history exist outside Ghana. In the U.K., holdings include the National Archives at Kew, the British Library, and Oxford and Cambridge's vast libraries and repositories. There are other university, museum, private, and newspaper archives as well. The French archives in the Ivory Coast are also notable in this regard. German archival sources are also of importance due to the German presence in Kete Krakye and Togo. For example, Donna Maier expertly uses German sources in her study of the relationship between metropolitan Asante and Kete Krakye, an important town on the periphery of Asante's imperial sphere of influence.¹⁷ The sources mentioned above are illustrative of the

Modern African Studies 30, no. 3 (Sep., 1992): 369-96; and M. Owusu, 'Tradition and transformation: Democracy and the politics of popular power in Ghana,' *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 34, no. 2 (Jun., 1996): 307-43.

17 D. Maier, *Priests and Power: The Case of the Denteh Shrine in Nineteenth-Century Ghana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983).

wealth of useful information that could be uncovered for use in any project on anticolonial resistance in Asante. And these by no means constitute an exhaustive list of potential sources.¹⁸

However, knowing the locations of Asante's vast archives is not enough. Uncovering evidence of anticolonial resistance will also be of little value if interpretation is found wanting. To be able to use these sources effectively, one needs to appreciate the intrinsic nature of archives and the voices which emanate from their constituent documents. Archival documents, irrespective of their physical states and location, were created by actors operating within diverse physical, epistemological, and cognitive milieus. And the documents themselves existed—and still exist—in relation to other documents within different official and unofficial channels and archival networks. That is to say, archival documents tell two stories. The first story is the readily apparent information inscribed on their faces which is available to the researcher at a glance. The second story refers to the untold, seemingly unimportant and background, stories, notions, and ideas which shaped and made the creators of the documents as well as the socio-political environments they lived and worked in. These comprise what Ann Stoler calls the 'not written'. Not written into the colonial archival documentation because 'it could go without saying and "everyone knew it"', or 'because it could not yet be articulated,' or simply, 'because it could not be said.'¹⁹

The unwritten must be taken into cognizance because they were central to the formation of the ontologies upon which colonial state and society were founded. Ontology here is used as defined by Stoler: 'the ascribed being or essence of things, the categories of things that are thought to exist or can exist in any specific domain,

18 As an illustration, for my master's thesis research on the medical background of the 1874 Sagrenti War, a few of the archives and museums I consulted in the U.K. include the British National Archives, the Museum of Military Medicine at Aldershot, the Pitt Rivers Museum and the Balfour Library, the Taylor Anthropology Library, and the Weston Library. There were other archives and museums I could have consulted, but for want of time and funding.

19 A. Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 3.

and the specific attributes assigned to them.²⁰ For instance, the colonial state in Asante categorized the bulk of the African constituent members of society as ‘natives.’ All manner of terms could have been chosen to describe Asantes and their culture but ‘native’ was what gained prominence, why? What did ‘native’ mean to the colonial officials and Asantes themselves? Native here connoted a category of persons and its use elicited particular conscious and unconscious official reactions in affairs involving those classified as such. Thus, by knowing what the term ‘native’ meant in the context of the colonial state’s administrative networks, one might glean the underlying philosophies which directed the policies the state undertook. This will then lead to a better understanding of the nature of resistance Asantes offered to the type of colonial rule perpetuated in Asante. ‘Native’ is just one example out of the many that could be given. And these are issues that can only be properly understood by reading the constituent documents of the Asante archives not only in the context of their creation and continued existence, but that of a diverse range of sources not just archival.

The documents in the colonial archives were created by people in the employment of the colonial state. The context within which they lived and worked certainly influenced the documents they created. This raises questions of what we know of the officials who formed the echelons of the colonial state’s bureaucracy. What ideas and philosophies did they bring from Britain to the Gold Coast, and how were these ideas recast and reformulated in the work and social environments they operated in? In other words, how did the interaction of persons, ideas, and environment leave residues and imprints on the documents we now have available to us? Take, for instance, the issue of ‘feelings’ and ‘attachments’ to family. Stoler remarks that

Architects of colonial rule saw familial attachments as implicated in political security in nuanced ways. They not only sought to intervene in the secreted domestic arrangements of European homes, but wor-

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

ried over whether weak—or excessively strong—personal attachments would trump political loyalties.... The colonial state could only be selectively panoptic; it was directed less at the internal dynamics in domestic spaces of the colonized than on the minute movements and psychological perturbations of their white and not quite white agents—in their clubs, offices, with their children, at school and at home.²¹

In light of the above, and to paraphrase Stoler, it is important to recognize that

Documents in the colonial archives are not dead matter once the moment of their making had passed. What was “left” was not “left behind” or obsolete. These colonial archives were an arsenal of sorts that were reactivated to suit new governing strategies. Documents honed in the pursuit of prior issues could be requisitioned to write new histories, could be reclassified for new initiatives, and could also be renewed to fortify security measures against what were perceived as new assaults on imperial sovereignty and its moralizing claims.²²

Thus, paying attention to the two stories archival documents tell should be of paramount concern to reconstructions of Asante history under colonial rule. It is by this that we can fully understand why and how Asante’s anticolonial resistance is recalled as solely based on the agency of elites and never those of commoners. And it is also through this that we can make efforts to redress this.

Pioneering works exist in Asante historiography which offer nuanced readings of the Asante archive in combination with other sources to uncover the ‘not written’, not only from the perspectives of the colonial officials, but of African actors, Christian missionaries, and European businessmen as well. A few examples include Tom McCaskie’s essay on Basel missionary Edmond Perregaux,

²¹ *Ibid.*, 99–100.

²² *Ibid.*, 3.

his treatment of R.S. Rattray's enduring influence on Asante history, and Jean Allman's investigation of the considerations which went into the colonial state's understanding of Asante laws and customs.²³ This by no means constitute a definitive list of Asante historiography's methodological lighthouses useful in the quest to bring to awareness the diverse strands of Asante anticolonial resistance. The overarching point here is that comparing a wide range of sources to interrogate Asante's archives can help to better understand not only the Asante context of resistance, but the measures the colonial state put in place to forestall resistance altogether.

Asante's historiography was founded on the works of colonial-era anthropologists. These works have proven invaluable to Asante history—especially those of R.S. Rattray and Meyer Fortes. The oral data they collected in the course of their fieldwork have been useful in providing inroads into Asante history before and during colonial rule. For example, data collected by Fortes in the course of the *Ashanti Social Survey* project is instrumental in McCaskie's micro historical reconstruction of Asante society from 1850 to 1950.²⁴ But it goes without saying that the works of the early anthropologists are not without their faults. In Rattray's case, he ironically resented the transformative impact colonial rule had had on Asante society. This resentment influenced not only the scope of his questions, but his choice of sources and how he interpreted them. As McCaskie observes:

In terms of his personal attitude towards the evolution of Asante society, Rattray was a researcher with a purpose, almost a missionary. His self-imposed task was to record and document a world that he conceived of as being on the very verge of extinction—a world uncontaminated by Europe, or by 'the seventh stand-

23 T. McCaskie, 'La seconde patrie of a Basel missionary: Inscription, inclination, and initiative in the life of Edmond Perregaux among the Akan,' *Journal of Religion in Africa* 47, no. 3 (2017): 380-404; T. McCaskie, 'R.S. Rattray and the construction of Asante history,' in *Asante, Kingdom of Gold: Essays in the History of an African Culture* (Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 2015), 189-206; and Allman, 'Adultery and the state.'

24 See McCaskie, *Asante Identities*.

ard board-school philosophy' of educated Africans, a world of elders and 'greybeards' in 'remote villages', a world, above all, of pristine custom and tradition.²⁵

Rattray was hardly alone in this. Early ethnographic work on Asante imagined society before colonial rule as a pure society operating according to timeless 'traditions.' This was essentially a static, unchanging, and manifestly ahistorical view of Asante society.

Thus, as Fiona Wright perceptively notes, early anthropology generally has little to offer on resistance as a topic:

Resistance as it is generally considered—as a challenge to power or domination—was thus largely written out of anthropology of this period. When it did appear, it reinforced the view of prevailing political anthropology approaches at the time: that societies were rather static and maintained a basic equilibrium. This went hand in hand with the almost total absence in these writings of the colonial authorities' presence in the places where anthropologists were working. The ways in which European powers maintained their rule but also faced persistent challenges to it by colonized peoples emerged later, as Marxist and postcolonial theoretical approaches gained ground in anthropological work.²⁶

To overcome this challenge in the anthropological data on Asante society, two approaches can be adopted. Firstly, the data anthropologists collected can be mined for information on events which indicate direct or indirect resistance to colonial rule. The testimonies people gave in the course of interviews tended to offer more than the formulations of society as captured in the final published works. Secondly, as suggested by Stoler in the case of archival documents but also applicable here, is to compare the data from anthropological sources with that from archival, newspaper, oral, and other sources for inferences and conclusions which one

²⁵ McCaskie, 'R.S. Rattray,' 192.

²⁶ F. Wright, 'Resistance,' in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology* (2016), <http://doi.org/10.29164/16resistance>.

source alone might be unable to offer. These suggestions are consistent with the practice of historical research generally.

The need for Asante history to broaden not only its scope of definition of 'resistance' but bases of evidence cannot be overemphasized. James Scott cautions that armed uprisings are but only one way resistance to crushing power and oppression is mounted—and that armed uprisings do not always appeal to the oppressed due to the overwhelming likelihood of failure.²⁷ Scott's recognition that resistance can and do take diverse forms which fly under the radar of mainstream definitions of resistance is significant to this essay. These include what he terms as 'the weapons of the weak'—theft of the property of the ruling classes and withdrawal of labour by the dominated constitute common examples. A clear example in Asante history is the early stages of the career of the Methodist preacher, Opon Asibe Tutu.²⁸ Another form of resistance Scott identifies is gossip. This has well known parallels in Asante history in the form of *mpoatwa*. *Mpoatwa* was—and still is—

Literally a challenge, a setting at defiance, an act of defamation. [It means] to challenge or defy with vilification or debasing words, gestures or other understood forms of expression....[A]s widespread social practice, *mpoatwa* was a form of 'distancing' and 'positioning', i.e. it connoted distance and defamation of some other person, primarily by means of an assertion or display (verbal, gestural, behavioural) of superior social position by the person practising it.²⁹

Mpoatwa was useful as an instrument of indirect defiance to power and authority. Its obliqueness and subtlety means that it is easily missed by the inattentive reader of the historical record. I cite the

27 J. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); see also J. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990).

28 See T. McCaskie, 'Social rebellion and the inchoate rejections of history: Some reflections on the career of Opon Asibe Tutu', in *Asante, Kingdom of Gold: Essays in the History of an African Culture* (Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 2015), 28.

29 McCaskie, *State and Society*, 305.

case of *mpoatwa* here to show that Asante society commanded a diverse range of tools for indirect defiance and resistance which hardly registered on archival pages, but which nonetheless provided Asantes with potent pathways to [anticolonial] resistance. The point therefore cannot be emphasized enough that evidence of anticolonial resistance in Asante history will be uncovered only through a vigorous and sustained engagement with Asante's diverse documentary and oral sources. And the same goes for any attempt to correctly interpret such evidence.

In addition, the focus of Asante historiography has mainly been on the organised forms of primary resistance.³⁰ Thus, the literature has implicitly accepted the erroneous view, originating from within the colonial archives, that all resistance to and dissatisfaction with colonial rule in Asante ended when the British successfully defeated the last organised primary resistance and purged from Asante all of its organisers into exile on the Seychelles Islands. However, this is a view unsupported by evidence from within the literature itself. Two illustrations are those of *Asantehehene* Agyeman Prempe I and *Akyeamehene* Akwasi Nuama. Chief Nuama was one of the most powerful men in colonial Asante and noted as a principal collaborator of the British. Emmanuel Akyeampong records an important episode in his life which has the capacity to shed light on the Asante context of resistance to colonial rule.

Akwasi Nuama was one of the most influential persons in colonial Asante in the 1910s and 1920s. He was a good friend of Father Horsfield, the Anglican priest in charge of the Kumase parish, and held lengthy conversations on Christianity with him. Yet Chief Nuama refused to convert—much to Father Horsfield's frustration. Nuama's nephew, Albert Mawere Poku, was present at many of these sessions as translator. Nuama explained his position to Father Horsfield.

"Our fathers and mothers had all served God. If

30 See, for instance, A. A. Boahen, *Yaa Asantewaa and the Asante-British War of 1900-1* (Oxford: James Currey, 2003).

now the way to God is only through Jesus, then Christianity is offering a shortcut in the worship of God and all Asante know that kwantia ye mmusuo ('short cuts bring ill fortune'). If the Christian heaven is in the distant future, and humans will be buried, rot, and wait for generations until Christ returns for their rising and judgement, then he finds this concept of heaven very alienating. It does not suit his Asante religion and culture. When he dies he wants to go to the place where he will be reunited with his mother, loved ones, and abusua (matrilineage). If this heaven is not where his loved abusua members are, then he does not want to go to heaven. That he knows God created everyone, and to each person he assigned a mission, a destiny. God later calls each person [death] and takes them to a place which is like our earthly existence and where our ancestors await us. On close inspection, he had detected that Christians feared death. That puzzles him about Christianity. If there is a Christian heaven, where Christians dwell eternally in the presence of their God, why are Christians afraid of death? He believes in God and understands his relationship with God. He is content with his religion and does not want to be baptised."³¹

Akyeampong continues that

Nuama was certain in his convictions. He suffered a long illness before his death. Nuama lay bedridden and could not speak. Father Horsfield came to visit Nuama and attempted to baptise him. Horsfield admired Nuama and found the thought of Nuama dying without being 'saved' unbearable. Nuama, who had not spoken for a long time, found his voice and told Father Horsfield in front of his abusua that he

31 E. Akyeampong, 'Christianity, modernity and the weight of tradition in the life of "Asantehene" Agyeman Prempeh I, c. 1888-1931,' *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 69, no. 2 (1999): 306-7.

did not want to be baptised.³²

Akyeampong interprets the episode rendered above through the prism of the inherent contradictions forced on Asantes by the ironies and realities of the colonial situation. That, on one hand, Nuama was a staunch supporter of the colonial state and the socio-political order it had imposed on Asante. On the other, he was an unflinching believer in ancestor hood and the religion of his ancestors which the colonial state structure and its religion, Christianity, sought to supplant. Akyeampong also uses this dichotomy to discuss the tradition-affirming actions of Prempe on his return from exile. In Prempe's case, even 28 years of exile and attempts at brainwashing through education by the British were unable to completely eradicate the cultural beliefs of his ancestors. On his return, he immediately resumed Asante kingship practices and privileges which contradicted his Christian indoctrination.³³ Can the interpretive net be cast wider? Certainly.

Asantehene Prempe and Chief Nuama's cases just described—and others like it—without doubt offer windows into perceiving the likely forms and directions unorganised—and perhaps, mainly individual—Asante resistance to colonial rule took. It should be stressed that unorganized and uncoordinated forms of resistance by individuals had the capacity to effect significant change over time and cannot be discounted. Individual, mostly protracted, forms of resistance to power are very important in the study of long-term structural change in Asante society.³⁴ This is simply because the accumulation of the effects over time of unorganized individual resistance has the potential to weaken, and even topple, centuries-old socio-political systems. This form of resistance can also undermine state systems to the point where minimal external or internal pressure can lead to state capture and/or capitulation—

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 301-5.

³⁴ The place of the individual as an analytical unit in long duree historical accounts of Asante history should be given more prominence. For instance, the influence of individuals' awareness of Asante history on political action during Asante's fight for self-determination in the 1950s is important in understanding Asante's twentieth-century history.

as happened several times in Asante between 1874 and 1896.³⁵

Concluding remarks and observations

The catalyst for writing this paper came from a discussion with Prof. Mahmood Mamdani at the Mellon Institute on Decolonization and the University in early 2021. There was a general conversation and reflections closing session where one of the topics discussed was the ongoing Ethiopian civil war. Prof. Mamdani pointed out that a narrative exists that Ethiopia and Liberia are the only African countries not colonized by Europe, thus being exceptional cases in African history. In the case of Ethiopia, it is even emphasized that not only was the country not colonized, but that it actually successfully resisted and defeated a more superior European army. The conversation that day touched on how Ethiopia's exceptionalism continues to support the actions and inactions of internal and external political power players.

This discussion just recalled influenced the way this essay approaches Asante resistance to colonial rule. Indeed, there are similar narratives of exceptionalism in Asante and Ghanaian accounts of resistance to colonial rule. And these exceptionalisms have come to greatly influence the scope and direction of Asante and Ghana's respective historiographies' examination of colonial rule itself. Without a doubt, in the Asante situation one such narrative has overshadowed all other Asante contributions to Ghana's decolonization. Significantly, it has blinded scholars to the contribution of the people of Asante to the decolonization process. This instance of exceptionalism is the famous Yaa Asantewaa War of 1900 and how it has implicitly come to be accepted as the only occasion of Asante resistance to colonial rule.

The Yaa Asantewaa War was undeniably clear in its objectives: to overthrow and drive away the British and their supporters from Asante, and to reinstate, somehow, the deposed Asante

35 M. Manu-Osafo, 'The days of their heedless power were over and done: Dynamics of power in the military structures of the precolonial Asante state, 1874-1900', *The Journal of African History* 62, no. 2 (2021): 254-70 <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853721000281>

state. It is interesting how, based on retelling and reinterpreting the events of the war, the broader history of Asante's resistance to colonial rule has been reimagined ever since. To understand the Yaa Asantewaa War's enduring influence on Asante historiography, one has to unravel the metamorphosis of the narrative of the war through colonial and post-colonial time. One also has to appreciate the utility of these sometimes-conflicting narratives to different state and non-state actors in both Asante and Ghanaian politics. One has to begin, of course, with the colonial state.

Throughout the period of colonial rule, and especially after the uprising, the British, apprehensive about their fragile hold on power, never relented in securing legitimation for their domination of Asante. They used every opportunity to demonstrate Britain's military power and might over Asantes, whom they considered little better than warlike savages. Several tools in the colonial propaganda arsenal were used to this end and one of these happens to be the story of the Yaa Asantewaa War. The history of Yaa Asantewaa herself and the events of the war are well known and need not detain us here.³⁶ Of importance is how the British cast Yaa Asantewaa as the symbol for how futile resistance by armed rebellion was. They never missed the opportunity to depict Yaa Asantewaa 'as a "dangerous subversive," ... and portrayed her as a coward who had ran away from the battlefield and was vanquished by the British.'³⁷ They encouraged disparaging songs to be composed about her and even museum artifacts at what is now the Military Museum in Kumase were arranged and displayed to support this narrative of a rebellion that was not only totally defeated, but was foolhardy and ridiculous in conception.

Under Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, the newly formed nation needed heroes and heroines through whom a new, Pan-African national identity could be forged. The Yaa Asantewaa story possessed the desirable mix of traits and qualities for this pro-

³⁶ See Boahen, *Yaa Asantewaa*.

³⁷ H. Fuller, 'Commemorating an African queen: Ghanaian nationalism, the African diaspora, and the public memory of Nana Yaa Asantewaa, 1952-2009,' *African Arts* 47, no. 4 (2014): 62-3.

ject. Nkrumah accordingly revamped the Yaa Asantewaa narrative to reflect the novel Pan-African agenda he had set for the country. This new direction the Yaa Asantewaa narrative took emphasized how she was 'a heroic Pan-African and anti-colonial military and cultural leader who raised an African army to challenge the most powerful colonial force on earth.'³⁸ It is interesting to note that Nkrumah's adoption of Yaa Asantewaa to aid in building national glory did not go unchallenged. Some Asante elites insisted Yaa Asantewaa, and her heritage was Asante's alone, emphasizing the region's refusal to be part of the Ghana nation.³⁹ Subsequent governments have deployed the Yaa Asantewaa image in similar fashion. However, in many instances it has rather exposed the sharp cleavages in the undercurrents flowing between the wider Ghanaian national sociopolitical formation on one hand, and Asante society which exists as part of post-colonial Ghana on another.⁴⁰

It should also be pointed out that in all the articulations and interpretations of the Yaa Asantewaa War, what appears is a clear emphasis on the centrality of the state; whoever constitutes the state is of secondary importance. In the colonial era, it was the colonial state against the deposed Asante state; Yaa Asantewaa herself was a key and prominent actor for the Asante state; her opponents acted in the name of the colonial state. In the independence era, it was the freshly independent Ghanaian state against the internal, newly reconstituted Asante state on one hand, and external, imperial western state interests on another hand. Even in the years since Nkrumah's overthrow, the Yaa Asantewaa image and narrative has mainly been deployed top-down from the highest echelons of the Ghanaian state. It might even be said that without state impetus, the story might fade from general social conversation, consciousness, and importance.⁴¹

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ See L. Day, 'Long live the Queen! The Yaa Asantewaa centenary and the politics of history,' *Ghana Studies* 3 (2000): 154; T. McCaskie, 'The life and afterlife of Yaa Asantewaa,' *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 77, no. 2 (2007): 163-5.

⁴¹ Fuller, 'Commemorating.'

The point of the foregoing is that the history of the Yaa Asantewaa War has so far been a largely elitist project. And the problem with elitist historical projects of this sort is that they allow no room for imagining or conceptualizing alternative perspectives on the events of resistance. In other words, that which did not emanate from or was not expressed through the agency of elites simply did not exist. Ranajit Guha makes incisive observations on elitist historical projects through his reassessment of India's historiography on peasant resistance. It is worth quoting him extensively:

To acknowledge the peasant as the maker of his own rebellion is to attribute ... a consciousness to him.... This amounts, of course, to a rejection of the idea of such activity as purely spontaneous—an idea that is elitist as well as erroneous. It is elitist because it makes the mobilization of the peasantry altogether contingent on the intervention of charismatic leaders, advanced political organizations or upper classes....[What India's historiographic traditions] share is a 'scholastic and academic historico-political outlook which sees as real and worthwhile only such movements of revolt as are one hundred per cent conscious, i.e. movements that are governed by plans worked out in advance to the last detail or in line with abstract theory (which comes to the same thing)'. But as Antonio Gramsci whose words are quoted above has said, there is no room for pure spontaneity in history. This is precisely where they err who fail to recognize the trace of consciousness in the apparently unstructured movements of the masses. The error derives more often than not from two nearly interchangeable notions of organization and politics. What is conscious is presumed in this view to be identical with what is organized in the sense that it has, first, a 'conscious leadership', secondly, some well-defined aim, and thirdly, a programme speci-

fyng the components of the latter as particular objectives and the means of achieving them....To those who prefer this device it offers the special advantage of identifying consciousness with their own political ideals and norms so that the activity of the masses found wanting in these terms may then be characterized as unconscious, hence pre-political.⁴²

There are differences and similarities between the Indian case just cited and Asante's. The people of Asante were undeniably capable of originating and articulating resistance to state power. For instance, in 1883, Asantehene Mensa Bonsu was overthrown by a commoner revolt which, by all indications, was popular in character through and through.⁴³ In the 1950s, Asante's commoners organized and formed the National Liberation Movement to challenge Kwame Nkrumah's government and demand for self-determination in the run up to independence.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, in both cases, the histories end with the people ironically channeling their opposition through chiefs, themselves elites and state actors. But the similarity is that Asante historiography, as pointed out above, is also largely silent on non-state forms of anticolonial resistance because of the proclivity to privilege state perspectives over all other perspectives, sometimes discarding them altogether.

In light of these observations, it is important that Asante's state-dominated history of anticolonial resistance be reoriented to incorporate every day, ordinary, non-state actors and their perspectives. These apparently 'background stories' are vital in gaining a more nuanced understanding of the philosophies which underpinned British colonial rule in Asante—its beginnings, its entrench-

42 R. Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 4-5.

43 See G. Austin, "No elders were present": commoners and private ownership in Asante, 1807-96', *The Journal of African History* 37, no. 1 (1996): 25.

44 See J. Allman, *The Quills of the Porcupine: Asante Nationalism in an Emergent Ghana* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993); J. Allman, "The young men and the porcupine: class, nationalism and Asante's struggle for self-determination, 1954-57", *The Journal of African History* 31, no. 2 (1990): 263-79.

ment, its demise, and its vestiges in the post-colonial era.⁴⁵ This is even more so because, as pointed out above, armed challenges to power rarely appeal to dominated peoples due to the high probability of failure. In such instances, resistance to power is often mounted through seemingly innocuous, grass-root ways, and usually by people deemed of little consequence by both contemporary and later observers. After the Yaa Asantewaa War, armed resistance to colonial rule certainly lost its appeal. But does that mean resistance to colonial rule was abandoned completely? Certainly not.

Besides, it is important to observe that incorporating seemingly minority viewpoints into the history of Asante's anticolonial resistance does not imply wholesale acceptance of anything at all that appears to be 'evidence' from the past. As Dipesh Chakrabarty asserts in his influential essay 'Minority histories, subaltern pasts', assimilating minority viewpoints into mainstream historiographical debates would have to meet two litmus test criteria. Of the evidence supporting the minority viewpoints, he asks, first, 'can the story [the evidence presents] be told/crafted?' And second, 'does [the evidence] allow for a rationally-defensible point of view or position from which to tell the story?'⁴⁶ Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing the Past*, includes in the litmus test the historical actors involved in the creation of the evidence. Trouillot argues that for any historical narrative based on such evidence to be admissible, the actors must be shown to be

Purposeful subjects aware of their own voices. [The narrative] needs their voice(s) in the first person or, at least it needs to paraphrase that first person. The narrative must give us a hint of both the reasons why [the actors have taken such a course of action] and the objective they think they are pursuing—even if that objective is limited to the voicing of protest.... [In other words, the actors'] subjectivity is an integral part of the

⁴⁵ For an in-depth coverage of this, see Allman, 'Adultery and the state.'

⁴⁶ D. Chakrabarty, 'Minority histories, subaltern pasts,' *Postcolonial Studies* 1, no. 1 (1998): 15-29.

event and of any satisfactory description of that event.⁴⁷

I believe these are sound rules which should be prudently applied to Asante history's quest to broaden its points-of-entry into the past. However, care should be taken that they are not turned into rigid, inflexible rules. This is because resistance, as Fiona Wright points out, 'can [also] be an unintentional, unconscious, and ambiguous feature of the everyday.'⁴⁸ She follows that up with the weighty question: does resistance cease to be resistance when the actors do not call it as such or their resistance entrenches domination? Quoting Lila Abu-Lughod, she answers that resistance, instead of being framed in all situations as in opposition to power, could also be seen as informing us of the nature of power structures within a specific context.⁴⁹ Thus, the importance of resistance does not diminish even if it is unconscious or does not eventually lead to emancipation. For instance, by looking at resistance from Wright's perspective, we can see that although the people of Asante were numerically larger compared to state actors in the 1950s struggle mentioned above, theirs was—and still is—the minority viewpoint in the historiography in terms of historical narrative building. And that, although they failed to obtain their set targets in resistance to Nkrumah, it does not affect any conclusions to that effect. Taking such issues into cognizance can shed further light on why historians of Asante have generally privileged state views over peripheral and individual perspectives.

In our examinations of Asante's anticolonial resistance, it is also important to keep in mind Trouillot's caution that the work of historians is closely bound to articulations of power and the reinforcing of social justice in society.⁵⁰ Some of the questions which plagued Asante and Ghana in the past remain unresolved. These include polarizing topics such as identity, citizenship, and belonging, the extent to which the state can interfere in private lives and

47 M.-R. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 24.

48 Wright, 'Resistance,' 2.

49 *Ibid.*, 7.

50 Trouillot, *Silencing*.

businesses, public policy formulation and administration, etc. New and even more conflicting matters will arise. If Ghanaian society is to handle these issues in a manner that ensures that the rights, freedoms, and dignity of all persons are protected, historians with conscience are needed to robustly address the challenging questions of the future. And in Chakrabarty's words, the histories they will write will have to aim, above all else, to 'be good, and not subversive, histories.'⁵¹

Thus, returning to the main discussion of this section, in remembering the Yaa Asantewaa War the way we do, who and what are we forgetting? Also, can one construct a history of resistance to colonial domination in Asante that arises organically out of Asante society? And can this resistance be said to have incorporated as its weapons the cultural features of Asante society: that is, the beliefs and rituals, patterns of thought, social mores and values, etc. of the Asante people? This essay answers strongly in the affirmative.

Studies of decolonization in Ghanaian and Asante history can mainly be described as epics in that the histories told are male-dominated and state-centric. What this does is that it pushes to the background the important and critical roles played by nameless, ordinary women, men, and children. One wonders what the contribution of Asante's unknown individuals were to obtaining and securing their own freedom. One also wonders what their views and opinions were concerning the changes the imposition of colonial rule occasioned in Asante society.⁵² In the telling of Ghana and Asante's decolonization history, the big men—and sometimes women—of action speak for the people. But the people themselves have been muted and are voiceless. Is there a way to capture the voice of the ordinary individual in the historical narrative on resistance to colonial rule? As has been argued throughout this essay, there is.

Some four decades ago, Tom McCaskie issued a similar call to

⁵¹ Chakrabarty, 'Minority histories.'

⁵² Viewpoints from below are important in gaining a more nuanced appreciation of Asante history as demonstrated by the example of Kwabena Osei of Adiebeba, see McCaskie, *Asante Identities*, 78; Manu-Osafo, 'Heedless power,' 16.

historians of Asante in his highly significant but overlooked short study of the career of Methodist preacher Opon Asibe Tutu. It is quoted here at length:

In conclusion, it is necessary to reiterate that Opon Asibe Tutu was an uneducated man. His ideas may have been confused, ill thought out, and, at times, contradictory; his Christianity may have wavered, enigmatically, between the sincere and the baldly opportunistic. However, I stand firm in detecting a perceptible thread of social criticism, of desire for a better world, of yearning for a revision of history and inheritance, in his life and opinions; I trust I have not grossly simplified or misrepresented his case. He stands for the underbelly, the anonymous mass, the largely unrecorded common people of the Asante past; we need to know much, much more concerning him and his fellows. Is he an isolated case, or does he represent a perceptibly coherent tradition of protest and dissent springing from the bottom levels of the social hierarchy? I suspect that he does, but the proof or denial of this assertion lies in much needed further research on the social history of Asante.⁵³

This essay was written in a similar spirit and with a modest goal in mind. It argues for the incorporation of the lives and stories of ordinary Asantes into Asante and Ghana's broader histories of anti-colonial resistance. It is hoped that sources and perspectives which will aid in achieving this objective will be uncovered in due time.

More research is certainly needed on the social history of Asante, especially during the colonial era. However, this can only take place in an environment that allows for incisive research to be conducted. Presently, some of the issues which militate against new entrants into the field of Asante history include the limited avenues for mentorship and guidance, the paucity of research funding, low access to recent/seminal publications, and punitive visa

53 McCaskie, 'Social rebellion,' 31-2.

acquisition rules which make it virtually impossible for Ghana-based scholars to travel to the scattered Asante historical material that exists in archives at far-flung corners of the world. Although there are promising indicators that these issues are being tackled, one can only hope that additional opportunities emerge to aid scholars in uncovering more of the murky Asante past.

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Historical Errors: Debates in Kannada Text Criticism

Ammel Sharon

Abstract

This paper plots methodological debates in text criticism, that contrast with truth-seeking historical method, over the twentieth century in South India, mainly among scholars in the Kannada speaking regions. It conducts a reparative reading of error that is central to the text critic's conceptual apparatus. Error enables an abstract, genealogical reconstruction of a text from manuscript copies, that comes as close as possible to the author's autograph. While such efforts of creating critical editions are criticized for their asocial and anti-political nature, this paper reads error as a productive site for decolonial thinking, extending its capacity for an ethics of reading that the feminist historian, V. Geetha, has called 'quiet pedagogy'. By reading error through its variant potential as recent text critics have done, and through Hegel, Adorno and Geetha, we might arrive at plurality that challenges the superiority of the mind over the world, and suggest instead an epistemology that does not reproduce subject-object relations while bearing in mind that error creates the potential for reflection. *Pedagogy Commentary* has yielded to *criticism*.

Keywords: Philology, Text criticism, Error, Kannada, Decoloniality, Pedagogy

Commentary has yielded to criticism.

Michel Foucault, *Order of Things*

This essay engages the field of text criticism in Kannada to study ‘error’ as a site of interest for decoloniality.¹ Error is what makes us human; St. Augustine’s famous line comes to mind: If I am mistaken, I exist.² Despite this recognition, committing error often causes us shame. Kathryn Schulz in her book, *Being Wrong: Adventures in the Margin of Error*, calls this a “pessimistic model”.³ The relationship of error to knowledge has come to be reworked substantially and no longer poses the existential threat it once did, prompting Schulz to posit the “optimistic model” of error which causes “surprise, bafflement, fascination, excitement, hilarity, delight”. We owe this generative model to science where experiment and error are a source of insight. It is at this juncture that the methods of scientific text criticism come into relief. Text criticism which is concerned with the historical transmission of works through manuscripts and printed editions fell in with that endeavour of the colonialism, to develop ‘the command of language and the language of command’.⁴

In this paper, I suggest that while the colonial encounter was accompanied by deliberate violence and myriad forms of loss, Kannada manuscriptologists embraced the epistemological project of text criticism, and opened up an uneasy, reparative space to reckon with error. I begin with DR Narasimhachar who taught Kannada literature at the University of Mysore in southern India between the 1930s and 1960s. I contrast his critical method with scientific history of the time, through the work of his well-known historian colleague Nilakanta Sastri. His scholarship influenced the work of embattled manuscriptologist MM Kalburgi who responded differently to error, and whom I situate within the rela-

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- 1 I am grateful to the participants of the Mellon History Institute on Decolonization, Disciplines and the University, and would like to thank Profs. Prachi Deshpande, Manan Ahmed and Rajarshi Ghose, in particular, for their insightful comments.
 - 2 Henry Bettenson and J. O’Meara, *St Augustine: City of God* (Penguin, 1984), Book XI:26.
 - 3 Kathryn Schulz, *Being Wrong: Adventures in the Margin of Error* (Granta Books, 2011).
 - 4 Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton University Press, 1996).

tionship between the university and religious matha to highlight certain fault lines that scholars may pay more attention to.

DL Narasimhachar (1906-1971, henceforth DLN) was a Kannada professor, lexicographer and text critic, known for a masterful introduction to text criticism in Kannada, his contribution to the multivolume Kannada to Kannada dictionary, as editor of *Prabudha Karnataka*, the journal of the Mysore University, and for his lectures on Kannada literature on the radio. The publishing wing of Mysore University in his time brought out lecture pamphlets by faculty members on issues of note. They were intended as pedagogical tracts for people who could not afford to attend university and the price was kept low. Faculty authors of these pamphlets were required to travel to villages to teach from these lectures and where they might spend the night.

DLN's tract on text criticism, published in 1964,⁵ continues to serve as a standard reference for those who work with Kannada manuscripts. Though several critical editions had been published before him, he was the first to lay out principles in Kannada for Kannada texts. His study was based on vs Sukthankar's prolegomena to the Adi Parvan of the critical edition of the Mahabharata⁶ and sm Katre's primer in English.⁷ Expanding on these works, DLN consulted text critical scholarship available to him in English. He coined terms for technical words (such as the numerous kinds of errors scribes make and the specific errors that help build genea-

5 D. L. Narasimhachar, *Kannada Granthasampādane*. (Mysore: DVK Murthy Prakashana, 1964).

6 V. S. Sukthankar, "Prolegomena," in *The Ādiparvan for the First Time Critically Edited*, vol. 1 (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1933).

7 Katre, S. M. *Introduction to Indian Textual Criticism. With Appendix II by P. K. Gode*. Deccan College Handbook Series 5. Pune: Deccan College, 1954. For a recent discussion on the Mahabharata, see Nell Shapiro Hawley and Sohini Sarah Pillai, *Many Mahābhāratas* (SUNY Press, 2021). For scholarship on the critical edition of the Mahabharata, see particularly Vishwa Adluri and Joydeep Bagchee, *Philology and Criticism: A Guide to Mahabharata Textual Criticism* (Anthem Press, 2018); M. A. Mehendale, "The Critical Edition of the Mahābhāratā: Its Achievement and Limitations," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 88 (2007): 1-16; Simon Pearce Brodbeck, "Analytic and Synthetic Approaches in Light of the Critical Edition of the Mahabharata and Harivamsha," *Journal of Vaishnava Studies* 19, no. 2 (2011): 223-50.

logical trees following Karl Lachmann's stemmatic method). Manuscripts were to be copied syllable by syllable and compared for their variations.

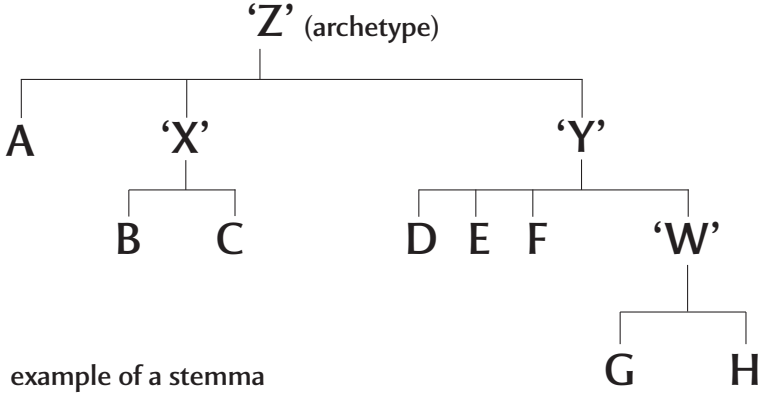
The principle of text criticism lies in the impossibility to demonstrate the dependence of one manuscript from another, that is, whether a manuscript has been copied from another. Instead, what can be proved through the identification of scribal error, is whether a copy is independent from another, and whether two copies come from the same scribal tradition against an independent one.

ಪ್ರತಿಯ ಸಂಕೇತ	ಸಂಧಿ, ಪದ್ಯ ಪಾದಸಂಖ್ಯೆ	ಅಕ್ಷರ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ										
		೧	೨	೩	೪	೫	೬	೭	೮	೯	೧೦	೧೧
ಕ	೧-೧-೧	ಎ	ನ	ಗೆ	ಕೂ	ಫ	ದ	ನಾ	ಫ	ಟ	ಸಂ	ಭ ವಂ
ಖ	..	ಯೆ	ನ	ಗೆ	ಕೂ	ಫ	ದ	ನಾ	ಫ	ಟ	ಸಂ	ಭ ವಂ
ಗ	..	ಎ	ನ	ಗೆ	ಕೂ	ಫ	ದ	ನಾ	ಫ	ಟ	ಸಂ	ಭ ವಂ
ಘ	..	ಯೆ	ನ	ಗೆ	ಕೂ	ಫ	ದ	ನಾ	ಫ	ಟ	ಸಂ	ಭ ವಂ

Comparing manuscripts in *Kannada Grantha Sampadane*, p. 30

DLN translated the three special scribal errors as

- Viśiṣṭa skhālitya (Peculiar error): Errors committed when a scribe copies a manuscript from another with its errors, and commits some of his own.
- Vicchedaka skhālitya (Separative Error): When two manuscript copies contain different, independent errors.
- Samyōjaka skhālitya (Conjunctive Error) : Those errors which occur in two manuscripts copies and are unlikely to have been independently committed.



To briefly describe the above genealogy of manuscript variants towards the reconstruction of an archetype:

The editor begins with manuscripts A, B, C, D, E, F, G and H. They learn that A is separate from the rest of the manuscripts based on its peculiar differences. They see that B and C share common errors that are absent in D, E, F, G and H. This makes them a separate family. Studying B and C together enables the editor to create a *hypothetical* X which may have the character of being older and more authoritative (that is, without the errors present in B and C). G and H share more characteristics within the family of D, E, F, G and H and hence, may be said to derive from a hypothetical 'W'. D, E, F and 'W' are then compared to create the hypothetical 'Y' which they derived from. A, 'X' and 'Y' are then compared to create the archetype 'Z' from which all the families derive and which is closest to the work intended by the author. At every stage, having created the hypothetical text from which a manuscript is derived, derived manuscripts can be discarded.

History and Error

To think about the difference in method between history and text criticism, I begin with Nilakanta Sastri's *Historical Method in Relation to Indian History* published in 1941 at the University of Madras. Before the early modern turn opened new archives for scholars to consider, Nilakanta Sastri remained the preeminent historian

of South India. His magnum opus, *A History of South India* (1955) ranged from 'prehistoric times' and stopped at the fall of Vijayanagara in the sixteenth century. *Historical Method* was revised in 1956 when he was Professor of Indology at the University of Mysore. He was also Director of Archaeology for the Mysore State. Sastri's book on method contends with the familiar question of whether history is an art or a science, a niggling trouble as historians sought to extricate themselves from the rhetorical impetus of moral instruction in historical narrative. The universal claim of science did not convince him;⁸ he was more interested in the relation of the method of science to historical method. Before discussing historical method, Sastri laid out the common errors made by historians:

1. Didactical error: historians 'discover' lessons in the past that they value in the present,
2. Patriotic error: discovering all the great and good in the past of one's country,
3. Partisan error: to take a side in a historical dispute,
4. Chronic inaccuracy or 'Froude's disease'⁹

Errors haunted the scientific historian whose methods were divided into four stages: heuristics, criticism, synthesis, and exposition. The second is pertinent for our purpose, where the historian, following the identification and collection of documents, proceeds to determine the credibility of a document. "Criticism", Sastri says, "is not the end and aim of historical research. It can prove no fact. It only yields probabilities. Its work is purely negative." Sorting the valuable from the worthless is better appreciated in text criticism where it involves a painstaking exercise in *abstraction*.

Here, then, is the difference between history and text criticism:

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- 8 "The facts of history are like the wine given by the priestess in Rabelais's story. It tasted differently in the mouth of everyone to whom she gave it. In other words, the data of history are past, dead, and gone, and they are also unique. No two historical situations are alike. It is often said that history repeats itself. It would be perhaps truer to say that history never repeats itself." K A Nilakanta Sastri, *Historical Method in Relation to Problems of South Indian History* (University of Madras, 1941), 9.
- 9 Named after James Anthony Froude (d. 1894). See Ian Hesketh, "Diagnosing Froude's Disease: Boundary Work and the Discipline of History in Late-Victorian Britain," *History and Theory* 47, no. 3 (2008): 373-95.

where history sought to externalize error, text criticism internalizes it. To reconstruct a text requires assembling available manuscript copies into genealogies, based on scribal error. Errors indicate difference, and thereby, different scribal traditions of copying.

Error/Skhālitya

Error derives from the Latin root, *errare*, which means to wander freely or to deviate from proper course (the latter informing English usage since the seventeenth century). DLN chose the word *skhālitya* in Kannada to indicate error. It derives from the Sanskrit root *skha* which also means to deviate or fumble. I suggest that the field of text criticism invites us to take the role of error, or deviations from truth and origins seriously.

Among influential philologists in colonial India, Henry Thomas Colebrooke (1765-1837), President of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta and founder of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, developed Indology as a professional and transnational discipline. Encouraged by the orientalist William Jones, he chose to write on *sati* or the immolation of Hindu widows for his debut publication. As his biographers say, Colebrooke's essay was neither a policy – the Bengal government had decided that *sati* was a religious institution to be respected – nor an interpretation of the practice:¹⁰

Instead it was framed as evidentiary: what did the 'Hindu' tradition stipulate for widows? Colebrooke offered a compilation of translated 'authorities from Sanskrit books'. Too much had been written about India, he stated, in which there was 'great want of judgment in the selection of authorities'. What was needed was to revert to the original sources and devote separate essays to particular topics.¹¹

Original sources as evidence would be a hallmark of Colebrooke's approach. But of these there has been much debate. He worked

10 Ludo Rocher and Rosanne Rocher, "The Making of Western Indology: Henry Thomas Colebrooke and the East India Company" (London, 2011).

11 Quoted in Rocher and Rocher, 24.

before the emergence of critical editions and probably relied on pandits and selections from a variety of manuscripts. His translations reflected the times, while his translation of the *Rg Veda* verse 10.18.7 is testimony to a not-slight error. Colebrooke's translation reads: "let them pass into fire, whose original element is water". HH Wilson, first professor of Sanskrit at Oxford University, disputed this reading which he thought an,

'error, if not a wilful alteration of the text', in which an original *agre* 'first' was changed into *agneh* 'of fire'. He translated the stanza in accordance with the reading corroborated by Sayana, the leading exegete of the *Veda*, in a way that does not refer to widow-burning: 'let them first go up into the dwelling' ... Picking up on Wilson's hint, Muller charged pandits with tempering with the Vedic text, rating this circumstance as 'perhaps the most flagrant instance of what can be done by an unscrupulous priesthood'.¹²

The recent, complete translation of the *Rg Veda* by Stephanie Jamison and Joel Breton provides a note on the three verses in 10.18,

*three verses (7-9) have been much discussed, especially in the context of "suttee" (sati) or widow-burning, though the verses are emphatically not a depiction thereof. From verse 8 it appears that the widow lies down, temporarily, beside her dead husband, but is summoned back to life and indeed symbolically reborn to become the wife of a new husband (quite possibly her brother-in-law, in levirate marriage). The happy women in verse 7 apparently approach the funeral pyre to adorn the widow for her return to life. A similar "return to life" is granted to the dead man's bow in verse 9, where someone, quite possibly the dead man's son, repossesses the bow to put it to future use.*¹³ (italics mine)

¹² Rocher and Rocher, 25.

¹³ Stephanie W. Jamison and Joel P. Brereton, *The Rigveda: The Earliest Religious Poetry of India*, vol. 1 (South Asia Research, 2014), 1399. Verses 10.8.7-9 in Jamison

By signalling the ‘symbolic’ act of the woman beside her deceased husband, Jamison and Breton have arrived at a reading that is at odds with Colebrooke. Without taking away credit for the latest translation by two accomplished scholars, we can only say that it is better than the others for our time, whose value is recognized by the correction of error.

Karl Lachmann and Paul Mass on Text Criticism

Strange as it seems now, philology was the pride of modern universities, and referred to *all* studies of language.¹⁴ In effect, it encompassed three fields study: one, textual philology, that is, classical and biblical studies, medieval and modern European writing and oriental literatures including those in Sanskrit and Arabic; two, theories of origin of language, and three, the comparative and historical evolution of language families. Text criticism was regarded as a part of this disciplinary field. The historiographical shift in text criticism that followed in the modern period was the controversial development of scientific principles to mitigate the idiosyncrasies of individual editors. Foundational to this field was Karl Lachmann’s method of building genealogical trees based on a variety of differentiating errors in order to come close to the author’s original from a range of manuscript copies (called “witnesses”). Paul Mass glossed Karl Lachmann’s approach to error in a condensed, mechanical way that would influence text critics in India. In *Text Criticism*, Maas says,

Errors arising in the course of transcription are of decisive significance in the study of the interrelationships of manuscripts—I may be allowed to use

and Breton’s translation: 7. These women here, non-widows with good husbands—let them, with fresh butter as ointment, approach together. Without tears, without afflictions, well-jeweled, let the wives first mount the womb. 8. “Arise, woman, to the world of the living. You lie beside him whose life is gone. Come here! You have come into existence now as wife of a husband who has grasped your hand and wishes to have you.” 9. Taking the bow from the hand of the dead for our dominion, luster, and strength, you there and we here—may we with good heroes win all contests and hostile engagements. (p. 1409)

¹⁴ James Turner, *Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities*, vol. 70 (Princeton University Press, 2015).

the term ‘stemmatics’. Hitherto investigations of errors have been mainly concerned with how they arise and how they can be removed. In what follows, I mean to ask simply what characteristics an error must have in order to be utilized for stemmatic purposes, and how many of these errors are required to prove the main types of stemma¹⁵

Text criticism is a component of textual scholarship that prepares a scholarly edition for public consumption.¹⁶ While text criticism has developed scientific methods to collate texts and develop genealogies, it nevertheless requires *judgement*, making the endeavour ‘critical’. The scientific basis of this study has the veneer of ‘authority’ and is sometimes called upon by governments even to produce reliable, critical editions. As we shall see, such projects are rarely the last word in text criticism, since the exercise depends as much on *interpretation*.

Till the 1950s, the notion of what a text was seemed fairly straightforward. S.M. Katre’s primer, *Indian Textual Criticism*, defines it as “a document written in a language known, more or less, to the inquirer, and assumed to have a meaning which has been or can be ascertained”¹⁷ The primer was regarded as necessary after the experience of working on the critical edition of the Mahabharata, a large project centered in Pune involving hundreds of manuscripts from libraries across India and oriental libraries in the world. Recent works have highlighted both the specific character of orientalist scholarship as well as individuals.¹⁸ Standing slightly apart from this scholarship, have been works in several Indian languages on the individual contributions of linguists as well as

15 Paul Maas, *Textual Criticism* (Clarendon Press, 1958), Appendix I, 42.

16 David C. Greetham, *Textual Scholarship: An Introduction* (Routledge, 2015), 295.

17 This definition is taken from John Percival Postgate. “Textual criticism.” *A Companion to Latin Studies* (1929) in S.M Katre, *Introduction to Indian Textual Criticism*, 791.

18 Illustrative ones being Thomas R. Trautmann, *The Madras School of Orientalism: Producing Knowledge in Colonial South India* (Oxford University Press, 2009)., Rama Mantena, *The Origins of Modern Historiography in India: Antiquarianism and Philology, 1780-1880* (Springer, 2012); Eva Maria Wilden, *Manuscript, Print and Memory* (De Gruyter, 2014).

on the Mahabharata critical edition published by the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI) in Pune.¹⁹ The importance of these works cannot be overemphasized for at least two reasons: one, they signal, understandably, the desire for standard, edited texts. The establishment of colleges required such editions for student's study. Second, a study of the debates highlights how philologists were not above political and social concerns of the day, but that the field was shaped by such contestations.

The long—if selective—tradition of memorization ensured not only the oral preservation of texts, but also resulted in mnemonic devices used by scribes in routine matters of administration. In the case of non-Vedic texts, a teacher could 'improve' upon a text, resulting in significant changes. Moreover, it was not rare for the transmission of texts to be interrupted and resumed at a later stage. Accompanying this formidable preservation was a vast culture of writing. After a brief survey of writing materials, the authors of *Indian Textual Criticism* move quickly into a discussion on error. Seen as inevitable human action, Katre divides scribal errors into two categories: errors in words/passages, and omissions of syllables/words/phrases. Scribes corrected these errors in numerous ways – using dots, crosses, pigments or a little arrow often called *kākāpada* or *hamsapada* (feet of the crow or the mythical hamsa bird, recalling, perhaps, an Indian goose). Within these categories are errors of deletion, addition and substitution as well as several others. This work, drawing on Lachmann, also reflected the possibilities and difficulties of adapting European text critical

19 I have in mind primarily festschrifts to linguists in European and Indian languages, as well as articles in the popular press. A recent translation of these articles by a Kannada journalist can be found in Ramaswamy, S.R. Ramaswamy, *Evolution of the Mahabharata and Other Writings on the Epic*. (Bangalore: Prekshaa Pratishthana, 2019). Sheldon Pollock has been at the forefront of reviving philological thinking with a series of manifestoes, essays and edited volumes. See, Sheldon Pollock, "Future Philology? The Fate of a Soft Science in a Hard World," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 4 (2009): 931–61; Sheldon I. Pollock, Benjamin A. Elman, and Ku-ming Kevin Chang, *World Philology* (Harvard University Press Cambridge, MA, 2015); Silvia d'Intino and Sheldon Pollock, *L'espace Du Sens. Approches de La Philologie Indienne/The Space of Meaning. Approaches to Indian Philology*, Fasc. 84 (Collège de France, 2019).

methods to Indian texts.²⁰

The Anti-Politics of Text Criticism?

In this section, I consider the twin charge of internalizing error in Paul Mass' work, that is, the potential of *not excluding* error while creating an abstract text, as well as the depoliticization of a text by incorporating error into an abstract genealogical tree. In Indian conditions, where manuscripts, available in their millions, are susceptible to humid weather and insects, or where artifacts are absent, critics construct an apparatus. The vast and disparate archives of manuscripts indicate a wide range of texts. In some cases, like in the instance of the aforementioned *Rg Veda* (mentioned here for the irony of how it has come to stand in for an Indian heritage while remaining in large parts undecipherable), there are few contemporary artifacts with which to understand the text. Scholars can only create an apparatus from within the text (though H. M. Bailey said of Louis Renou's scholarship on the *Rg Veda*, "Each translator tends to read into the obscure texts his own theories.")²¹ Jamison's cool approach to an obscure work lies in its own commentaries, "As the Brāhmaṇas tell us so often, 'the gods love the obscure'... and in investigating Vedic matters, we must learn to cultivate at least that divine taste".²² Not all scholars are content with the efforts of the Brāhmaṇas which they consider confused and adding to the obscurantism. What has come as a relief to modern scholars of the ancient text is what did not exist before: a written text and a concordance to facilitate comparison and decipherment. Indologists pride themselves on the sovereignty of the text, despite rich accounts of cultural, architectural and social histories. The purpose of this paper is not to call for greater exchange between the two fields, for scholars have been doing this for a while anyway, but to trace the multiple ways in which error

20 On this point, see Jürgen Hanneder, "The Indian Inculturation of European Textual Criticism," 2019. 495-513.

21 Jonathan Solcum, Series Introduction, Ancient Sanskrit Online, <https://lrc.la.utexas.edu/eieol/vedol>

22 Stephanie W. Jamison, *The Ravenous Hyenas and the Wounded Sun: Myth and Ritual in Ancient India* (Cornell University Press, 1991), 41. .

inhabits and shapes discourse.

Sebastiano Timpanaro offers a rich critique of the Lachmannian method. Timpanaro was an Italian Leftist who, despite his well-regarded and formidable scholarship in philology, did not take up a position in the university, and was, instead, a proof-reader for a publishing house. He was able to “devote his free time entirely to scholarly research and publication without becoming embroiled in university administration and examinations, and to direct his pedagogical activity to friends and to anonymous readers rather than to the physically present, always unpredictable, sometimes rather unruly students who often seemed to inspire in him a degree of diffidence bordering on dread.”²³ *The Genesis of Lachmann’s Method* argues that the decline of Lachmann’s method began when it was used in comparative historical linguistics to construct Indo-European genealogical relationships but yielded few results. Besides, scholars like Johannes Schmidt in 1872 had begun thinking of ‘horizontal transmissions’ rather than unitary mother languages with branches of daughters.²⁴ In text criticism too, trying to make the method work required forcing insufficient evidence and making greater claims than what could be backed up. He considered Maas’s exposition of Lachmann too mechanical and exacting, whereas he himself was given to probabilities. As his translator says, his study was “to rescue Lachmann’s method from Lachmann’s own errors.” It was limited to a technical critique of Lachmann, in line perhaps with his own belief in the gradual, non-triumphant progress of reason and science. I discuss Timpanaro here not only for the importance of his critique but to remain open to sites outside the colony from where decolonial thinking can emerge.

²³ Glen W. Most, Editorial Introduction in Sebastiano Timpanaro, *The Genesis of Lachmann’s Method* (University of Chicago Press, 2005), 3.

²⁴ Timpanaro, 126.

MM Kalburgi: A Social Critique of Text Criticism

The texts DLN chose to edit or comment on were usually in a high vernacular, pre 15th century style. Most were literary poems composed for royal courts. His commentary on the first Kannada literary retelling of the Mahabharata by Pampa (considered the first poet in Kannada) remains the standard reference on which subsequent interpretations are based. It was published by the Mysore University and is now out of print. Looking at this state of affairs, an intrepid publisher acquired the rights to many of DLN's publications, compiled an omnibus of his essays and ensured their availability and distribution. These books as well as the collection of his essays are printed on inexpensive paper to keep the price low. DLN's choice of works - high vernacular style, sometimes with Jaina/Brahmin/Virashaiva content, or otherwise treatises of systematized knowledge - set limits for the understanding of Kannada literature. As a Brahmin academic, he was aware of winds of change sweeping through the university, as dominant, non-Brahmin castes asserted their presence, challenged Brahmin dominance and contested Brahmin interpretation. A significant portion of these challenges were from the Lingayats.

North Karnataka is known for its predominance of Lingayats also called Virashaivas, a heterogenous caste community, whose educational status was second (by a considerable margin, however) only to the Brahmins in the early 20th century. At the end of the 19th century, the caste census classified Lingayats as 'Shudra', the lowest ranked in the caste hierarchy. But it was not only this that caused them affront. Newly educated Lingayats began to read community texts in a new light. Visiting homes, religious institutions, collating, editing and publishing these texts gave rise to a new genre of Virashaiva 'literature' that was strongly anti-caste and anti-temple worship. While this created some consternation among the Virashaivas themselves, it also strengthened caste-based discourse.

R. Narasimhachar, who compiled a volume of over one thousand precolonial poets in Kannada, was widely criticized for not including Virashaiva saint-poets. In the enlarged second edition,

he explained that it was not caste animosity but on-going research that prevented him from publishing more information. The second edition listed many Virashaiva poet-saints.²⁵ DLN made it a point to write essays on these saints, drawing directly from R. Narasimhachar's book. At the beginning of his career, DLN was appointed to study Virashaiva literature at the Oriental Research Institute in Mysore. A number of colleges in Mysore, including Maharaja's College to which DLN was attached, were established in the late-19th century under the patronage of the Mysore king. The northern Karnataka region, however, was a diffuse landscape overseen in part by the Bombay Presidency, Hyderabad Nizam and small kings. The first college was established only in 1917 in Dharwar after many petitions and donations from private groups. Its first university was established post-independence. To access higher education, students usually went to Poona and Bombay. The contrast between Mysore and Dharwar was acutely felt as we shall see in our discussion of a Dharwar based text critic, MM Kalburgi.

In 1972, MM Kalburgi was 34 years old and had been teaching Kannada literature to postgraduate students at the Karnatak University, Dharwar for ten years. That year, he published his *Kannaḍa Grantha Sampāḍane Śāstra*, which he called a 'new text criticism'²⁶ aimed primarily at DLN, whom he footnotes extensively and largely follows in the layout of chapters. Kalburgi deviates from DLN in three important ways. First, Kalburgi's corpus of texts relates mainly to the post-15th century period when Virashaivas began to collect and narrativize floating oral vachanas of saints. These manuscripts were commissioned by religious institutions and individual patrons. There are a great many of them, and Kalburgi edited 25,000 vachanas which were published by the Government of Karnataka, besides other works while also writing literary criticism. There are no manuscripts from the period of the saints themselves, who are said to have lived in the 12th century and many of them would have been unable to read or write. There are

25 R. Narasimhachar, *Karnataka Kavi Charite, or Lives of Kannada Poets. Vol. I (To the End of the 14th Century, Revised Edition)*. (Bangalore Press, 1924), xii-xiii.

26 M.M Kalaburgi, *Kannaḍa Grantha Sampāḍana Śāstra*. (Bengaluru: Sapna Book House, 2019).

numerous saints, devotees of Shiva, some known locally and some whose reach is wider. Their sayings are ‘popular’ in the sense that they speak from their marginalized experience and sometimes criticize power. Court poetry, characterized by adherence to metre and high aesthetic, is found in fewer manuscript copies when compared with vachana manuscripts which are found in greater numbers, often though not always in colloquial language and containing many variations.²⁷ When I asked Kalburgi’s long-time collaborator about how they managed to trawl through so many manuscripts, he said they did not. There were too many variations and so they limited the number of manuscripts they considered.

Second, where DLN treats scribes with some degree of frustration at their carelessness or for being too smart for their own good, Kalburgi revels in the information scribes provide. He is especially sympathetic to their work. Scholars of Lingayat thought and practice have often resorted to Max Weber’s work to explain this ethic, rooted as they see it in the many artisan groups that comprise the Lingayat caste. Max Weber’s work resonated with scholars in the twentieth century, resulting in many comparative studies between figures and religions. Kalburgi gives numerous examples of colophons about scribes describing the difficulty of their task or any biographical details; it provides us a sense of the spread and environment in which they work. Finally, Kalburgi provides a lengthy consideration on the scholarship of the editor in the final chapter of his book. He begins with adage, “*abdhigaḍi mitiyunṭu buddhigaḍi mitiyilla*” (The ocean has its limits but the mind has none) and proceeds to caution against errors that editors may make. He makes a case quite opposite to DLN, emphasizing not the creation of genealogical trees and hypothetical archetypes, but the social conditions under which texts are written, and an appreciation for the ways in which orality becomes textualized. Driving home the point, he takes a short poem from an anthology

27 Bernard Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology*, trans. Betsy Wing (JHU Press, 1999). For a reparative reading of the alterity of the medieval scriptum that I cannot address here, see John Dagenais, *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture* (Princeton University Press, 1994).

where the editor has put a question mark next to a word:

baḷeda tamavemba karaḍama (?) |
naḷavallade suṭṭu keḍisalendajanudayā |
caḷadoḷ tagulce taḷtoḍa |
naḷarva davāgniyavolarkanudayaṅgeyam||

(In the verse, the poet describes a sunrise; where darkness spread out like the karaḍa grass, is touched violently, setting off an infernal blaze.) Kalburgi says: “The word ‘karaḍaman’ has left the Mysore region editor in doubt. Karaḍa is a kind of dry grass that requires just a spark to spread a wildfire. The word is in use in North Karnataka even today.” The insinuation is that Mysore editors are divorced from the grassroots of language. He goes on to explain the distinction between ‘mārga’ poetry that follows Sanskrit conventions and ‘dēsi’ poetry written in a regional idiom. (This distinction was laid out in the 9th century Kannada treatise on poetics, the *Kavirājamārga*.) Popular desi poems are kept alive by people in accordance with their interest. They read, write and sing them. They correct them too as is convenient, and such errors of deletions, addition and substitutions take place in the process. But mārga poems appeal to the particular taste of pandits. They have lost half their readers and their distance from people has reduced the number of alterations in them. Further, few scribes were interested in copying them because of the difficulty involved in understanding them. Hence, Kalburgi says, these texts remained free from errors. However, this is also why editing dēsi texts is far more difficult because it requires a knowledge of how people use language and the history of this use. In Kalburgi, we see a formidable scholar, deploying region, an everyday use of language, and the appearance of error to flesh out the relationships that had atrophied into thin lines between texts.

From Postcolonialism to Decolonize

What has error to do with decolonization? Error indexes deviations from truth claims and organizes diverse responses to authorial power. Such wandering from authority is brought into special focus in an essay Albert Memmi wrote in 2006. This is

his problematic: while national and ethnic movements were/are necessary for liberation, it is just as important for us to examine *why those pitched battles did not produce the anticipated results*.²⁸ One of the greatest disappointments of the decolonized individual was his belief in an end to violence. Instead, “the nation-state exhausts itself before it has had a full opportunity to affirm itself”. It is not only nepotism (“those in charge of oil are always close to the heads of state”) or religious violence, but “an endless stream of lost illusions” that haunts the decolonized citizen. If decolonization is a condition of permanent disappointment, a feeling of being stuck and from which emerges the desire to escape, how may we bring this reading to our understanding of language and disciplines?

There are a few reasons why I find Memmi useful to think with. One, he shifts focus from the violence of the colonizer to the violence perpetrated by the decolonized. Two, that decolonization is a permanent state of deprivation and crisis that compels desire for escape. Three, when speaking of the immigrant who has escaped, he notes the end of the myth of return. Where Memmi will be unpopular is in his uncompromising censure of immigrant’s refusal to integrate. For Memmi, the immigrant is a second register of desperation in the decolonized country. Historical amnesia has rendered colonized subjects exiles in their home too.²⁹ From here develop fantasies of historical injury deployed as truth in narratives of belonging as well as in the murderous rage towards politicized opponents. In the decolonized country, identification of the traitor shifts from, or exists with an external threat (the terrorist) to a constantly shifting internal one (the Maoist, the university student, the anti-national). In India, we are reminded of ‘popular’ censorship, what recognized writers have called intellectual suicide.³⁰

28 Albert Memmi, *Decolonization and the Decolonized* (U of Minnesota Press, 2006), x.

29 Indian critics have explored these themes in particular ways. See Ganesh N. Devy, *After Amnesia: Tradition and Change in Indian Literary Criticism* (Orient Longman, 1995). and Ashis Nandy, *Exiled at Home: Comprising, at the Edge of Psychology, the Intimate Enemy, Creating a Nationality* (Oxford University Press, 1998).

30 The Tamil writer, Perumal Murugan, and the Kannada scholar, ಮಮಿ ಕಾಲ್ಬುರ್ಗಿ, both use this term in response to community outrage over their depictions of caste portrayals.

If the exile is condemned to wander without the security of return, the narrative of wandering is similar to that of the role of error. Seth Lerer shows that in the fields of rhetoric and philology, literary study fashions itself in its encounter with error. “Being wrong is also about being displaced, about wandering, dissenting, emigrating, and alienating.”³¹ Lerer’s book is set, consciously, within a recent turn to self-reflection in disciplinary scholarship,

Histories of academic methodology and practice have come, more and more, to stand as the defining gestures of familiar fields seeking new places in a changing curricular terrain. But there is, in fact, little new here. Philology and rhetoric have been writing and rewriting their own histories since their inception. They are the original self-historicizing disciplines: forms of inquiry that take as their subject the origins and social value of their practice and the relationship of truth to felt opinion or expressive argument. No two disciplines have spent more time trying to determine just what they are—and just what their practitioners do—than philology and rhetoric, and I must give them their time now.³²

Lerer provides us with an approach by which we can take the historical imperative within philology seriously, while distinguishing it from history proper, as well as recognize the particular form error takes within the field.

A Philosophy of Error?

I have attempted to examine a few circumstances related to text criticism and decolonial thought in order to focus on the work of error within them. I must attend now to the elephant in the room: Hegel, the modern thinker par excellence on error. In *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel addresses the question of cognition. We assume in philosophy, he says, that to understand what truly is,

³¹ Seth Lerer, *Error and the Academic Self* (Columbia University Press, 2003), 2.

³² Lerer, 5.

we must have some idea about cognition. Yet, cognition is accompanied by a fear of error. The fear of error arises, the philosopher Jay Bernstein explains, when “there is a difference between ourselves and this cognition.”³³ Bernstein has glossed this subject-object dualism (through which epistemology arises) as a structure of jealousy. It is not only that we can see how the relation between the coloniser and the colonized is structured by the anxiety of a jealous lover—a creepy state of affairs. The fear of error is the error, Hegel says, because it is a blind spot for modern philosophy engendered by the superiority of the mind over the world.³⁴ That we can be so sure of ourselves while flummoxed by the world is a kind of madness.

And so, we have arrived at the challenge for decoloniality: to develop an epistemology that does not reproduce subject-object relations while bearing in mind that error creates the potential for reflection. Yet, this arrival is engendered by the discussion of violence of decolonized societies that Albert Memmi wrote of. At the moment of positing social relations as an equitable form of life without the dyad of subject and object, we are confronted by violence in the social and political sphere. Where does decolonial work begin when faced with the degradation of social relations, the manipulations of institutions and fraying of the contract that protected freedoms? If the possibility of strengthening against a dogmatic opposition is pointless, where might we turn? In his despairing book of aphorisms,³⁵ Adorno casts a wide net and considers retreating into the private sphere only to find decay in love, marriage and family. Ethics itself is compromised. Instead, we may think of Mignolo’s description of liberation,

“Liberation is not something to be attained; it is a process of letting something go, namely, the flows of energy that keep you attached to the colonial matrix

33 Philosophy Overdose, *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit-Introduction* (Bernstein-2007), accessed 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TOCTN9NL88c>.

34 G. W. F. Hegel, Arnold V. Miller, and J. N. Findlay, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford University Press, 1977), 47.

35 Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life* (Verso Books, 2005).

of power, whether you are in the camp of those who sanction or the camp of those sanctioned.”³⁶

In his commentary on Adorno, Jay Bernstein considers a passivity from which can spring a *spontaneous* fidelity.³⁷ It brings to mind an essay by the feminist historian and activist, V. Geetha, called ‘Quiet pedagogy’³⁸ where she contends that our response to violence, with its urgent need to be political, often elides new possible feminist understandings. On the other hand, a quiet pedagogy need not respond to power or claim entitlements, but instead to social suffering, such that it may not coincide with resolutions of justice. Where “a pedagogy of dissent ... stands to be stifled by its own investment in justice,” she calls attention to compassion, “the ineluctable nature of our fraternal existence, of the social fellowship that binds us”. It is in this sense that a decolonial practice may pause at the door to political claims of truth and justice.

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³⁶ Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality* (Duke University Press, 2018). 304.

³⁷ Jay Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

³⁸ Geetha, V., “Quiet Pedagogy,” Seminar Vol:686, accessed September 2, 2021, https://www.india-seminar.com/2016/686/686_v_geetha.htm

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Gender(ed) Scholar-Activism: Towards the Quest for Epistemic Justice in the Nigerian Academia

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Abstract

The history of knowledge production, from Greek to Western and African philosophical contexts, was one that, until recently, exemplified the marginalisation of women's agency in knowledge production. While there is a recent recognition of the trajectory of the contribution of women's agency and acknowledged role in epistemological production of ideas in contemporary times, it is not yet *uhuru* in feminist discourse. One of such remaining challenges confronting feminist discourse is the continued patrilineal academic orientation in universities. In the Nigerian academe, while more women are actively involved in knowledge production and dissemination than previously, their chances of shaping curriculum content or formulation remain precarious. This is further compounded by their underrepresentation in the decision-making organs of the university. The structural and curricula content of the Nigerian academia thus, portends one of epistemic injustice towards women academics. While women in academia have shown their readiness and eligibility to participate in knowledge production, their role in shaping knowledge production and social action remains under-acknowledged. Available records show that the percentile ratio of women's material composition that is included and understudied in disciplinary sub-fields is comparatively low to their male colleagues'. This paper, therefore, argues that decolonising the post-colonial Nigerian university curriculum

requires a commitment to including female-authored texts and theories. Using Miranda Fricker's notion of 'Epistemic Injustice', it interrogates the imperative of achieving epistemic justice by the inclusion and understudying of relevant African women scholars.

Keywords: Curriculum, decolonisation, epistemic justice, Nigerian universities, scholar-activism.

Introduction

In higher education, textbooks and learning materials, as recommended by academia in the university, provide learners with the necessary knowledge and information on areas of their studies.¹ As such, textbooks form the most viable components of a teacher's curriculum and help in the teaching process by leading the knowledge acquisition process in specific directions.² However, as Jagadish Paudel and Prebin Khadka note, textbooks are rarely evaluated to determine how such texts portray relevant social and epistemic ideologies, and if they do, to what extent. Archetypally, textbooks hardly present multi-layered, nuanced identities, opting in most cases for general, stereotypical understandings of phenomena. The resultant effects of such stereotypical understandings manifest in form of cosmetic biases which neglect the possibility of nuanced explanations of phenomena in favour of the stereotyped explanations to arrive at 'essential' features of such phenomena.

Given the importance attached to textual writings as valid sources of knowledge, the perpetuation of essentialisms arising from textual writings constitutes a *problematique*. It is particularly troubling where these texts 'inadvertently' reproduce outdated social and epistemic ideologies. This is particularly poignant in gender concerns, where societal gender ideologies are 'reproduced' by educational processes and practices.³ In most cases, these re-

1 Jagadish Paudel and Prabin Khadka, "Analysis of an English Textbook from a Feminist Perspective," *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)* 6, no. 9 (2019): 10-21.

2 Jagadish Paudel and Prabin Khadka, "Analysis of an English Textbook," 10.

3 Abolaji Samuel Mustapha, "Gender-biased Representation in English Language

produced gender ideologies perpetuate social constructions of prescribed and acceptable conduct for men and women in society that are instrumental to societal issues of equality and justice. This research, therefore, concerns itself with such perpetuated social constructions in higher educational texts, to argue that women and girls remain underrepresented in these texts. I argue that this portends a form of epistemic injustice – an unfair distribution of knowledge – where textual writings utilised in higher educational institutions are largely authored by men, and present knowledge from the male perspective, thus, inadvertently presenting the field of knowledge acquisition and dissemination as a male enterprise.

This research borders on issues relating to knowledge production-by whom, for whom and what. As Rebecca Ropers-Huilman and Kelly T. Winters ask, “(w)hose truth is heard and validated? Whose perspectives are trusted and valued? Whose manner of communication is reinforced and whose is ignored?”⁴ This research approaches these questions through the lens of history to argue that history has shown that where knowledge is presented from a ‘singular’ perspective, truth is determined by the presenter’s perspective. In this case, the historical trajectory of the contribution of women’s agency and acknowledged roles in epistemological production of ideas and fostering of social actions has been established by feminist scholarship. However, as is equally obtainable in global academe, the post-colonial Nigerian academe evinces a continuing trajectory of epistemic injustice that challenges acknowledged and recognised roles of women scholars as earlier established. This informs the intentional focus of this research—that given the increased number of women actively involved in knowledge production and dissemination within the Nigerian context, there is an urgent need to inculcate the ideal of epistemic justice through gender(ed) scholar activism, by actively working to bring female voices into academic scholarship, and not just as

Textbooks in Nigeria Educational System,” *Multidisciplinary Journal of Gender Studies* 2, (2014): 368.

4 Rebecca Ropers-Huilman and Kelly T. Winters, “Feminist Research in Higher Education,” *The Journal of Higher Education* 82, no. 6 (2011): 671.

a form of tokenism, but to the forefront of academic scholarship.

This paper is presented in three parts. The first examines epistemic injustice in knowledge production over the ages. The second part explores the history of the structure and curriculum content of the Nigeria Academia. Here, I address the under-acknowledgement of women's role in shaping knowledge production and social action. The last part of the paper outlines the imperative of epistemic decolonisation as a means of achieving epistemic justice.

'Herstoricising' Epistemic Injustice

Knowledge was constructed thus: that there was no knowledge without knowledge makers, and that those who were responsible for making the knowledge were almost exclusively male: that far from being objective, and impartial, disciplinary knowledge was the product of a particular group of men whose subjectivity, partiality, priorities, and power base were deeply embedded in the knowledge-making process.⁵

Feminist scholarship has exposed the existence of a historical, universal foundation of the marginalisation of women's agency in knowledge production.⁶ From Greek to Western and African contexts, men have been the main subjects and objects of study. The history of Philosophy, from which all disciplines emerged, is dominated by knowledge production by men.⁷ (Till date, many philoso-

5 C. Kramarae and D. Spender, *The Knowledge Explosion: Generations of Feminist Scholarship* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1992) 1-2.

6 Kathleen Wider, "Women Philosophers in the Ancient Greek World: Donning the Mantle," *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (1986): 23; Mary Ann Dzuback, "Gender and the Politics of Knowledge," *History of Education Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (2003): 171-195; Annica Collette, "Women and Misogyny in Ancient Greek Philosophy" November 27, 2018, <https://womeninantiquity.wordpress.com/2018/11/27/women-and-misogyny-in-ancient-greek-philosophy/>. (Accessed July 2, 2021); Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya, *General Framework for Incorporating the Gender Perspective in Higher Education Teaching* (Barcelona: AQU Catalunya, 2019), <https://www.aqu.cat/en/universities/Guies-metodologiques/general-fram>. (Accessed August 22, 2021).

7 See Paul Edwards, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, Free Press) whose eight volumes detail nine hundred male philosophers but mention only one female philosopher, Hannah Arendt, just once under its exposition of the concept 'Authority'.

phy departments' teachings on Ancient Greek philosophers detail only male philosophers.) This has created the impression that Ancient Greek women were not intellectuals, and were therefore not capable of being philosophers. This 'fact' is further compounded by historical accounts of Ancient Greek women written and transmitted by male sources, filtered through the male source's prejudices and biases, with the emphasis more on the women's sexual status than their intellectual prowess.⁸ The content of Greek Philosophy itself was predominantly misogynistic, with many of the early Greek philosophers, including Aristotle, believing and espousing that men were superior physically, spiritually and intellectually to women.⁹

Contemporary narratives of this period however provide evidence to refute this 'fact'.¹⁰ These narratives show how women's participation in philosophical and intellectual discourses were ignored and erased from historical accounts of 'professional' disciplines.¹¹ Fortunately, feminist scholars have, centuries later, been able to pierce together details of the women intellectuals of that era from classical stories in which these women were detailed as minor characters. In that wise, feminist scholars have argued that women intellectuals and leaders existed in the Ancient Greek period, contrary to predominant accounts which labelled them as 'nagging wives' who distracted their husbands from intellectual activities.¹²

To buttress this argument, specific details of such women have been unearthed and exposed to provide irrefutable evidence

8 Kathleen Wider, "Women Philosophers in the Ancient Greek World"; Annica Collette, "Women and Misogyny in Ancient Greek Philosophy."

9 See Susan R. Bordo, *The Flight to Objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 100; Nancy Tuana, *Woman and the History of Philosophy* (New York: Paragon Press, 1992); Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1993) ix, on the analyses of how reason and objectivity were associated with maleness, thus, precluding the possibility of any form of female philosophy.

10 Annica Collette, "Women and Misogyny in Ancient Greek Philosophy."

11 Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya, *General Framework*.

12 Kathleen Wider, "Women Philosophers in the Ancient Greek World," 21.

of their existence and intellectual prowess, including extant writings which have been attributed to many of them.¹³ These details include that these women included heads and teachers of ancient schools of philosophy, mathematicians, astronomers and cosmologists.¹⁴ Available evidence posits that these women qualify to be recognised as leading scholars in their areas of expertise, the sciences inclusive.¹⁵

The age of enlightenment was equally plagued by debates on whether women had the capabilities to become intellectuals, primarily in the attempt to justify or limit women's access to formal schooling and intellectual participation.¹⁶ The enlightenment's prevalent ideology about women's education and invariably, women in education, is best seen from Rousseau's *Emile* in which Rousseau avers that man is intellectually superior to the woman and that the only contributions women have to offer in society lie in their aesthetic value and their social relevance as emotional care providers.

It took establishing the *Hypatia* journal for the intellectual world to recognise that women intellectuals also existed during the ancient era, and despite this knowledge, much of what is known about these women remain distilled through male historians. Even where their status as philosophers and intellectuals are undisputed and corroborated with extant writings, historical accounts do not present their histories and works like those of male philosophers and intellectuals. This set the pace for the epistemic injustice plaguing women intellectuals and scholars to date where many lecturers and students alike remain ignorant of the existence of women scholars and intellectuals at the recorded dawn of western intellectual scholarship. Even with extant writings, these ancient women scholars are almost forgotten and with them "the memory that women were a part of the intellectual life of the an-

13 Kathleen Wider, "Women Philosophers in the Ancient Greek World," 22.

14 Maria Dimou, "The Greek Female Philosophers You Really Should Not Ignore" August 27, 2019, <https://www.definitelygreece.com/greek-female-philosophers/> (Accessed July 3, 2021).

15 Kathleen Wider, "Women Philosophers in the Ancient Greek World," 21-62. 22, 27, 40.

16 Mary Ann Dzuback, "Gender and the Politics of Knowledge," 171.

cient world from which...civilisation and culture spring.”¹⁷

Suffice to say, history is replete with accounts of past events which only involve men, thus, making women passive agents. This relates an undeniable truth—the fact that there is injustice in the epistemic sphere, as characterised by the silencing and erasure of women’s voices and intellectual products over the ages. Miranda Fricker dubs this ‘Epistemic Injustice’, and in her *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, she presents an essential understanding of how injustice exists subtly in public spaces, sustained by power asymmetries and social inequalities which privilege certain groups of persons as more rational and intellectual than others.

In explicating this notion of injustice, Fricker distinguishes between two types of epistemic injustice namely Testimonial Injustice and Hermeneutical Injustice.¹⁸ Testimonial injustice in the knowledge sphere occurs where the hearer’s biases and prejudices imbue the speaker’s words with a reduced level of credibility. The speaker’s credibility as a knower is undermined, resulting in a credibility deficit.¹⁹ While noting that varying rationales can be adduced for such a reduced level of credibility, Fricker avers that the only reason that moves the hearer’s judgment beyond the pale of innocent error to injustice is prejudice. Prejudices/biases are derived from stereotypes in which a given social group is widely associated with one or more attributes. These prejudices and biases not only result in a credibility deficit for persons associated with such identified groups, they also provide the basis for Hermeneutical Injustice.

Hermeneutical Injustice is defined as the injustice done to members of a group in society due to social interpretations. These social interpretations are derived from group practices that interpret and define members of the group in marginalised ways, particularly as persons who lack the ability for effective intelligible communication. Thus, the marginalised group finds itself in the society unable to communicate its experiences to other members

¹⁷ Kathleen Wider, “Women Philosophers in the Ancient Greek World,” 58.

¹⁸ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1.

¹⁹ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 17.

of society due to the latter's prejudicial belief that the former is not rational or intelligible. This type of epistemic injustice also presents as a form of structural injustice, given that the marginalised group also participates in the practices that birth these social interpretations and even believes them.²⁰

Early accounts of knowledge production as exposed above highlight that academia is characterised by epistemic injustice against women. While knowledge production lays claim to an objective, inclusive and multifaceted approach/process, praxis proclaims academia's nature as a 'saturated masculine space'. To arrive at knowledge production as a truly objective, inclusive and multifaceted phenomenon, it is, therefore, necessary to deconstruct epistemic hegemonies, and in this instance, identify and incorporate the contributions of men and women to the growth of disciplines. As Swarna Jain asserts, this is imperative to critique knowledge as presently constituted, its sources, and those permitted to disseminate it.²¹ This, it is hoped, would serve two main purposes: 1) Engender wider and more inclusive histories and meanings of disciplines;²² and 2) Ensure that learners are guided to all knowledge producers as reliable sources.

This research, therefore, derives from an epistemic decolonisation perspective, one which recognises that epistemic decolonisation, the undoing of epistemic hegemonies necessarily implies a feminist aspect, one inclusive of feminist scholarship; and one where the epistemography presents that knowledge and ultimately, truth, is not the sole preserve of any singular episteme or gender.

The 'Patrilineal' Academic Orientation in Nigeria

Western-styled education in Africa began with missionary schools. The colonisers relied on these missionary schools to educate African masses to enable easier communication at the initial instance

20 Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 18, 147-9.

21 Swarna Jain, "Women Producing Knowledge in the World of Epistemic Injustice" July 30 2019, <https://feminisminindia.com/2019/07/30/women-producing-knowledge-world-epistemic-injustice/>. (Accessed February 17, 2021).

22 Agència per a la Qualitat del Sistema Universitari de Catalunya, *General Framework*, 27.

in the colonisers' quest to exploit Africa. Colonial education was thus, undertaken primarily for two purposes: one, to convert African masses and two, to ensure the colonisers had a steady supply of labour.²³ Both colonisers and missionaries operated on patriarchal values which defined women as inferior to men. These Western patriarchal biases dictated women's subordinate position in society, and women's education was tailored to fit this role. They were taught rudimentary knowledge designed to prepare them for domestic duties, while men were educated to fill in clerical administrative roles in the colonial government.²⁴ Colonial education was thus, utilised to define societal roles between the sexes as hierarchical, in opposition to the traditional complimentary social stratification which characterised African societies.²⁵

Due to the rudimentary nature of the girl-child education, secondary schools were initially only open to male intakes. In Nigeria for example, although the first primary school was established in 1845, and the first secondary school in 1859, the first secondary school to admit girls was CMS Girls Seminary, Lagos, founded in 1872 with the mission of nurturing 'good' wives and mothers.²⁶ By 1960 when Nigeria gained political independence, the total number of secondary schools in Nigeria equalled 85, with sixty-one (61)

23 Emlyn Ashley Ricketts, "Women's access to secondary education in colonial and postcolonial Tanzania and Rwanda." Masters Thesis, 2013. Loyola University, Chicago, http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/1472, 5. (Accessed December 18, 2018).

24 Akosua Adomako Ampofo, Josephine Beoku-Betts, Wairimu Ngaruiya Njambi, and Mary Osirim, "Women's and Gender Studies in English-Speaking Sub-Saharan Africa: A Review of Research in the Social Sciences," *Gender & Society* 18 (2004): 685-714.

25 Olabisi Aina, "Gender Equity and Higher Education in Africa." *1st International Interdisciplinary Conference on Gender and Higher Education in Africa: Emerging Issues*. 2013, https://www.academia.edu/5781614/GENDER_EQUITY_AND_HIGHER_EDUCATION_IN_AFRICA_Lead_Paper_Presented_at_the_1st_International_Interdisciplinary_Conference_on_Gender_and_Higher_Education_in_Africa_Emerging_Issues. (Accessed August 19, 2021).

26 J. F. Ade Ajayi, "The Development of Secondary Grammar School Education in Nigeria," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 2, no. 4 (1963): 523; Adetunji Ojo Ogunyemi, "A Historical Reconstruction of the Colonial Government's Education Expenditure in Nigeria and the Place of the Girl-Child, 1940-1957," *Historical Research Letter* 27 (2015): 21-29.

boys-only, fourteen (14) girls-only, and ten (10) mixed schools.

In this manner, Africa's tertiary institutional framework was created with gendered systemic hierarchies. The University of Ibadan (UI) as an example, started with only three female students out of a total number of one hundred and four intakes.²⁷ To date, many African universities continue to operate with these systemic hierarchies, where Eurocentric patriarchal values remain in place in form of policies and practices. While contemporary universities claim gender-neutrality, the proportion of male to female academics and male to female students remains predominantly in favour of men.²⁸

Varying factors have been adduced for the low number of women academics, including sexual prejudices, socio-cultural and religious beliefs. These reasons all border on gender marginalisation, and as studies have established, while university systems present as gender-neutral institutions, women are not only under-represented in the academia, they are also marginalised when existing gender stereotypes are internalised and acted out in the decision-making processes, plans and programs of the university.²⁹

One would be tempted to assume that international advocacies for gender equality and their resulting policies would have resolved issues of women's marginalisation, not only in the larger society but also in academia. This is more so when it can, and has been proven, that female lecturers are not intellectually inferior to their male counterparts. However, these advocacies have failed to 1) Account for the deconstruction of persistent gender constructs, 2) Present a blueprint for teaching gender equality and equity, as well as 3) Monitor and evaluate gender biases in learning methods and texts, given

27 Abiola Odejide, "Navigating the Seas: Women in Higher Education in Nigeria," *McGill Journal of Education* 38, no. 3 (2003): 454.

28 Olabisi Aina, "Gender Equity and Higher Education in Africa." 9.

29 Femi Sunday Akinwumi and A.L. Ogunsola, "Women Participation in the Nigerian University Teaching Profession." In *Reforming Higher Education in Nigeria*, edited by Joel B. Babalola, Labode Popoola, Adams Onuka, Soji Oni, Wole Olatokun and Rosemary Agholabor, 259-268 (Ibadan: Higher Educational Research and Policy Network, 2008); Oluwakemi Igiebor, "Women, Academic Leadership and the 'Constricting' Gender Equity Policies in Nigerian Universities: An Integrated Feminist Approach," *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* (2020): 1-15.

the importance of such learners' understanding of social realities.³⁰

Tainted by Eurocentric ideologies, Nigerian higher institutions remain spaces characterised by gender inequalities. The Nigerian government is a signatory to conventions designed to eradicate gender inequality, however, these conventions have yielded little results, and Nigerian higher educational institutions present in this sense, as microcosms of the larger society. As established by available data, the proportion of female to male lecturers remains abysmally low, ranging from the University of Port Harcourt's 12% to 88% to ESUT's 34% to 66%.³¹

In cognisance of the essential need to promote policies encouraging gender equality and equity, and as a resultant effect of the failures of such international advocacies to fully capture the gender issues in the Nigerian higher educational system, UI organised a workshop on gender mainstreaming in higher education in 2006. Eighteen (18) Nigerian universities sent representatives to this workshop. In the workshop's report, the gender assessment of the various institutions noted that while all represented universities had some level of gender awareness, the Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife was the only university with a centre for gender policy studies, while the University of Jos, Jos had formulated a gender equity policy. Both institutions had the support of external funding sources.³² The report also detailed the number of female academics currently at the management level of the represented institutions: none had a female vice-chancellor, one had a female deputy vice-chancellor, one, a University Librarian, one, a Registrar and one, a Bursar. This detailing was essential to determinations of how women academics have successfully overcome the glass ceilings occasioned

30 Abolaji Samuel Mustapha, "Gender-biased Representation in English Language Textbooks," 377.

31 James Adeola Olaogun, Anthony Abayomi Adebayo and Catherine Ajoke Oluayemo, "Gender Imbalance in the Academia in Nigeria," *European Scientific Journal* (2015): 297.

32 The Working Group on Higher Education (WGHE) Of The Association For Development Of Education In Africa (ADEA) And The University Of Ibadan Workshop On Mainstreaming Gender In Higher Education Held On Monday and Tuesday, 25-26 September, 2006 *Workshop Report* (Ibadan: The University of Ibadan. 2006), 7-8.

by patriarchal norms. Given the resultant details, participants at the workshop noted that women scholars in Nigeria, just as in global circles, remain undervalued as knowledge producers and disseminators. They, therefore, advocated for individual and institutional plans to help ensure gender equity through adequate gender mainstreaming and curriculum development.

As a follow-up to the workshop report, this research sought information on how participating institutions had implemented their action plans and the level of progress that had been made. It found that the oAU's gender policy had yielded very little in terms of its stated objectives in ensuring gender equity. The workshop highlighted the foundational nature of affirmative action as instrumental to gender equity, but the female students and academics of this institution claimed that they achieved the little they had without any form of affirmative action.³³ The proposed establishment of a special general course on gender, to be taught to all students in the university also remains in limbo and has not been captured by the University's curriculum, despite its Gender Policy's strong mandate to do so.³⁴

In 2012, UI's Senate approved a Gender Policy document for the institution. This document stated the lofty goal of achieving institutional gender equity and the inclusion of gender-friendly perspectives in both its academic and social aspects.³⁵ However, this policy has been criticised for its lack of budgetary provision, its heavy dependence on external funding sources, and its lack of specific action plans to achieve gender parity.³⁶ As Oluwakemi Igiebor avers, the policy merely pays lip service to the goal of gender balance, ultimately portending an implicit, institutional resist-

33 Caroline Okumdi Muoghalu and Friday Asiazobor Eboiyehi, "Assessing Obafemi Awolowo University's gender equity policy: Nigeria's under-representation of women persists," *Issues in Educational Research* 28, no. 4 (2018): 990-1008.

34 Caroline Okumdi Muoghalu and Friday Asiazobor Eboiyehi, "Assessing Obafemi Awolowo University's gender equity policy," 1001-3, 1005.

35 The University of Ibadan, *The University of Ibadan Gender Policy* (Ibadan: University of Ibadan, 2012), 8.

36 Oluwakemi Igiebor, "Women, academic leadership and the 'constricting' gender equity policies," 8.

ance to the stated goal through its lack of determinate sanctions. The university's conservative nature also makes it easy for scholars to adopt and continue with old age 'appropriateness', rather than effecting resistance.

What do these updates portend for women academics in Nigeria? Simply put, it is not yet *uhuru* for women in Nigerian academia. In 2018, the National Universities Commission (NUC) published its 2017 statistical report on Nigerian universities and noted that out of a total number of 61,999 members of academic staff, women comprised of only 14,801, roughly 21.86%. In that same period, women accounted for only 12% of full-time professors.³⁷ Statistics for the 2018/2019 academic session in UI showed that women accounted for 29% of the academic workforce,³⁸ and while the NUC report did not aggregate vice-chancellors by gender, a manual perusal of the NUC's website yields the fact that as at 2021, only 11 vice-chancellors out of 196 were female, bringing the total number of female vice-chancellors in the history of Nigerian tertiary education to under 20.

From the above, the statistics paint a bleak picture of gender equality or equity. The material composition of women participants in knowledge production and dissemination is informative on the extent of the under-acknowledgement of their role in shaping knowledge production and social actions. While it is true that part of the reasons for the low number of women in the academia could be a result of their eligibility (qualifications), or where eligible, their willingness to participate in the knowledge production and dissemination process, it is visibly obvious that eligible and willing women are not as sufficiently represented in knowledge circulation and production as their male counterparts in the post-colonial Nigerian Academia.

It is for this reason that scholars argue that a multi-pronged approach is necessary to resolve this ostensibly obdurate un-

37 National Universities Commission, *Nigerian University System Statistical Digest 2017* (Abuja: National Universities Commission, 2018), 26-9, 34-7.

38 Academic Planning Unit, *University of Ibadan 2019 Pocket Statistics* (Ibadan: University of Ibadan, 2019).

der-representation of women in knowledge production and dissemination in the university.³⁹ This approach must include affirmative action policies prescribing the minimum percentile ratio of women academics in senior management positions, as well as strategies to ensure adequate sensitisation, monitoring and evaluation of the progress made. Of primary concern to this work is that while, as earlier noted, some Nigerian universities have enacted affirmative action policies, albeit enforcement is of minimal impact, such affirmative action policies remain handicapped in the absence of a decolonised curriculum. In its present state, the Nigerian university curriculum remains predominantly Eurocentric, its epistemic standards as set by Euro-American male scholars. Indigenous Nigerian epistemes which conceptualise gender constructs and relations as complementary remain displaced in favour of the Western one where gender constructs are binary oppositional and hierarchical.

This condition, with the existent curricula's underpinning framework of Eurocentric hegemony, where Western standards are upheld as the norm to which all others must conform to be valid, presents a classic case of epistemic injustice. As Rajeev Bhargava asserts, epistemic injustice involves "a form of cultural injustice that occurs when the concepts and categories by which a people understand themselves and their world is replaced or adversely affected by the concepts and categories of the colonisers."⁴⁰ The prevailing Eurocentric episteme underlying the Nigeria tertiary educational system does not recognise women as knowledge producers and disseminators, rather, it rates them lower than men who are regarded as the primary knowledge producers. Given this rating, recognising and acknowledging women's agency in knowledge production and dissemination remains an uphill task.

Women scholarship is not the only victim of European epistemic hegemony. Contemporaneously, the global agitations for

39 Christiana O. Eboiyehi, Ike Fayomi and Friday A. Eboiyehi, "From exclusion to discrimination," 192.

40 Rajeev Bhargava, "Overcoming the Epistemic Injustice of Colonialism," *Global Policy* 4, no. 4 (2013): 414.

epistemic decolonisation are based on this oppressive nature of Eurocentric thought. Global epistemography is saturated with and has internalised Eurocentric conceptual tools, and these tools are the primary instruments of interpreting and theorising reality.⁴¹ However, while acknowledging the usefulness of such Eurocentric conceptual tools, they have been criticised 1) for their hegemonic nature; 2) as constituting a form of neo-colonialism; 3) their inadequacy in explaining reality outside of the western context; and 4) their failure to provide solutions to contemporary global challenges.⁴² Proponents of epistemic decolonisation have therefore argued for a deconstruction of Eurocentric hegemonies in the global knowledge space, and a reconstruction of this space as an inclusive one devoid of the privileging of one episteme over others in the quest for truth, in other words, a democratisation of the global knowledge space.

In the African setting, epistemic decolonisation involves: one, a critical deconstruction of Eurocentric hegemonies in the quest to achieve educational curricula devoid of biases; two, a reconstruction of African worldviews to reject 'othered' definitions of Africans and to reflect Africans as definitive agents in relation to others; and three, deconstructed curricula premised on an African heuristic core, where Africa and African concerns form the crux of study. As laudable as these epistemic decolonisation goals are, they have been criticised for their pervasively androcentric nature.⁴³ Although the discourse on epistemic decolonisation is premised on attempts to emphasise and rectify the epistemic injustice done to African endogenous epistemologies by the coloni-

41 Lerato Posholi, "Epistemic Decolonisation as Overcoming the Hermeneutical Injustice of Eurocentrism," *Philosophical Papers* 49, no. 2 (2020): 284.

42 Lerato Posholi, "Epistemic Decolonisation as Overcoming the Hermeneutical Injustice of Eurocentrism," 280-2.

43 Louise du Toit and Azille Coetzee, "Gendering African Philosophy, or: African Feminism as Decolonising Force," In *The Palgrave Handbook of African Philosophy*, edited by Adeshina Afolayan and Toyin Falola, 333-347 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 333; Yolande Bouka, "Women, Colonial Resistance, and Decolonisation," In *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies*, edited by Olajumoke Yacob-Haliso and Toyin Falola, 1-19 (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 1.

al system,⁴⁴ and espouses a supposedly gender-neutral nature, it is characterised by androcentric stance-point formulated researches and a paucity of recorded women's experiences in textual analysis.⁴⁵ This constitutes a lack of recognition of the double jeopardy African women scholars operate under – as Africans, under the yoke of Eurocentric epistemic hegemony, and as women, conceptualised by the Eurocentric episteme as inferior. The epistemic hegemony of white, male authors remains a bane in higher education, however, epistemic decolonisation approaches at resolving this hegemony benefit African male scholars than women.

Given that epistemic decolonisation argues for an epistemic liberating perspective from which one views knowledge in relation to others, and is a re-humanisation project in which new narratives, with particular emphasis on subaltern ones, are welcomed, this androcentric bent contradicts its very goals. In arguing for inclusive scholarship in higher educational institutions, the research, therefore, recognises the imperative of women's emancipation from gender dynamics as an essential aspect of epistemic decolonisation. It also recognises that such emancipation cannot be achieved without a prerequisite evaluation of how university curricula perpetuate gender biases. This will be the subject matter of the next section.

Deconstructing the Nigeria Academia: Imperative of Epistemic Justice

Epistemic decolonisation aspires towards epistemic justice, which cannot be achieved without a necessary inculcation of gender justice. Gender justice is ensured where, in the face of the existing challenges, provision is made for women in the construction of knowledge; educational policies are reframed to affect women positively; and research methods which present more accurate understandings of women's world or how women understand reality, that is, methods that are inclusive of more variables than previ-

44 Dennis Masaka, "Attaining Epistemic Justice through Transformation and Decolonisation of Education Curriculum in Africa," *African Identities* (2019): 1-12.

45 Olabisi Aina, "Gender Equity and Higher Education in Africa," 10.

ous, and that enable a more inclusive understanding of reality are accommodated. In the light of pre-existing educational policies which address challenges encountered by women in academia, it is necessary to examine the major tool of knowledge production – the curriculum – to understand how women-sensitive research methods and research can be better accommodated.

Decolonisation, Epistemic Justice and the Nigerian University Curriculum

The curriculum is one of the strongest tools utilised in transmitting and transforming values, beliefs and knowledge claims to learners. It is implemented through textbooks and learning methods in which these beliefs, values and knowledge claims are portrayed, and through which, learning minds are moulded. However, given the imperative of challenging the dominant narratives of the identified Eurocentric hegemony, scholars have noted that women academics' research publications remain under-represented in higher educational journals, textbooks and learning materials.⁴⁶ While such feminist research products pervade gender themed texts and journals, they are largely absent in mainstream higher educational publications. As earlier established, the processes that lead to knowledge productions determine knowledge and knowledge constructions.⁴⁷ Knowledge production, thus, represents the different ways of interpreting social reality. The paucity of women-authored academic publications in varying fields of study connotes the existence of a gender bias in such curricula and runs the risk of concluding that such gender-biased curricula nurture stereotypes on gender.

To drive home this point, Jagadish Paudel and Prabin Khadka's analysis of an English textbook provide enlightenment: in the text, men are qualified in analytical and strong terms, for example,

46 Rebecca Ropers-Huilman and Kelly T. Winters, "Feminist Research in Higher Education," 667; Mwaura, Job. "Read African Books Collective," Read African Books, <https://www.readafricanbooks.com/opinion/marginalisation-and-exclusion-of-women-in-scholarly-publishing>. (Accessed August 9, 2021).

47 Rebecca Ropers-Huilman and Kelly T. Winters, "Feminist Research in Higher Education," 670.

as rational, powerful, and independent, while women are presented as docile and dependent.⁴⁸ Invariably, the occupational roles for both sexes derive from these characterisations, with women being relegated to roles as nurses, teachers and men, doctors, engineers. The duo also note that not only are more males represented than females, male characters are also presented before female ones. They, therefore, conclude that, given the normalcy and average nature of their case text, most textbooks utilise gender-biased language in favour of men.⁴⁹

As noted, the curriculum plays an essential role in ensuring gender-equity based transmission of knowledge, skills and competencies, with its identification as one of the many ways gender inequality is produced and sustained. As such, decolonising the curriculum involves a critical evaluation of recommended texts and materials to ensure inclusivity, and to challenge biases and prejudices militating against such inclusivity. The fact that many of the textbooks and reading materials on recommended lists are written by an overwhelming number of male authors (White/ Euro-American), introduces and constitutes a systematic distortion in the sense that it informs that these are the persons who can qualify as intellectual authorities. These texts and reading materials represent interpretations of reality as encountered by the writers, and as determined by the location and perspective of such writers. These interpretations, in turn, inform readers of acceptable research and scholarship, inadvertently making determinations of dominant and subaltern authors and ideologies.⁵⁰

From the above, it is evident that there is a need for a complete revision or reconstruction of Nigerian universities' curricula if they are to attain the lauded status of decolonised curricula. These curricula have emphasised more on male authors, and it is therefore important that this emphasis is reversed to focus, at

48 Jagadish Paudel and Prabin Khadka, "Analysis of an English Textbook from a Feminist Perspective."

49 Jagadish Paudel and Prabin Khadka, "Analysis of an English Textbook from a Feminist Perspective," 13-5.

50 James Muldoon, "Academics: it's time to get behind decolonising the curriculum." *The Guardian*, March 2019, Accessed December 5, 2020).

the initial stage, on female authors whose works remain hidden where they exist. Epistemic decolonisation hinges on the acknowledgement of multiple ways of knowledge production, and, to ensure that the decolonised curriculum is holistically inclusive of all knowledge production systems, the epistemic agency of female academics must be recognised.

Epistemic decolonisation demands the acknowledgement that the current university curricula comprise a low volume of women authors, and a diversification of these curricula must involve the inclusion of such relevant scholarship by competent authors. Such intellectual interventions from women would detail the nuanced perspectives to interpreting reality from women's lived experiences, as well as serve to present such women as authorities in their field of study, and as such, viable role models for learners.⁵¹ As Charmaine Pereira asserts, authority and representation matter, and in textual matters, the voice that interprets experience is the voice that is recognised as the voice of authority in the text.⁵² Thus, alternative depictions of women in well-nuanced contexts will help to decolonise gender constructs of women as authoritative agents in the intellectual sphere, as opposed to the colonial ideology of their limited intellectual capabilities.

We must note two things at this juncture: First, previous gender mainstreaming efforts have identified the university curriculum as essential to transforming gender conceptualisations. In UI as an example, part of the highlighted outcomes of the 2006 workshop centred on understanding how the curriculum can play a vital role in transforming conceptualisations of gender issues in terms of human rights and development, and in the light of such understanding, ensure a high level of gender justice through the curriculum. To achieve this and help measure the progress of such

51 Charmaine Pereira, "Locating Gender and Women's Studies in Nigeria: What Trajectories for the Future?" In *Gender Activism and Studies in Africa*, edited by Signe Arnfred, Babere Kerata Chacha, Amanda Gouws, Josephine Ahikire, Ayodele Ogundipe, Charmaine Pereira, Mansah Prah, et al, 1-26 (Dakar: Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, 2004), 1.

52 Charmaine Pereira, "Locating Gender and Women's Studies in Nigeria: What Trajectories for the Future?" 17.

endeavours, recommendations were made on the importance of gender-segregated data/statistics which would double as monitoring tools and benchmarks.

However, just like other gender mainstreaming efforts in higher education, this measure has also failed due to its inability to achieve its stated objectives. As Tania Verge argues, these measures fail in the presence of an organisational ethos which not only passively resists the implementation of policies that run contrary to its underpinning ideologies, which in this case is patriarchal, but also engenders lax institutional oversight.⁵³ UI's current ethos espouses gender neutrality. However, as previously established, African, and therefore Nigerian higher educational institutions retain underpinning colonial ideologies, of which gender marginalisation remains prominent. UI's 'gender-neutral' ethos, therefore, works against the stated outcome of ensuring gender balance by neglecting the need for gender equity occasioned by the identified paucity of female-authored learning materials, thus, inadvertently constituting a form of epistemic injustice.

Second, the organisational ethos is not just resistant to change, it is also responsible for social-cognitive accounts which have gradually provided men with more advantages than women in the professional setting. Virginia Valian presents an intriguing analysis of how unconscious biases derived from social-cognitive accounts affect male and female academics' evaluations.⁵⁴ She terms these accounts Gender Schemas, resultant effects of the human's innate ability to categorise and on this basis, form hypotheses about such categorised existents.⁵⁵ In this case, gender traits are captured in the cognitive schemas (accurately and inaccurately), and these cognitive schemas birth beliefs about gender categories. On their own, gender schemas do not imply any sense of sexism; however, they can be used to justify sexist ideologies and beliefs systems.

53 Tània Verge, "Gender Equality Policy and Universities: Feminist Strategic Alliances to Re-gender the Curriculum" *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 42, no. 3 (2021): 191-206.

54 Virginia Valian, "Beyond Gender Schemas: Improving the Advancement of Women in Academia," *Hypatia* 20, no. 3 (2005): 198-213.

55 Virginia Valian, "Beyond Gender Schemas," 199.

Gender schemas in that sense embody the innate categorisation of traits attributable to particular genders, and in that wise, present as underlying biases (typically occasioned by societal beliefs).

To buttress her analysis, Valian cites specific experiments conducted which show that unconscious mechanisms (gender schemas) play an essential role in how men and women are observed.⁵⁶ She asserts that the paucity of women as visible and competent academic authorities does not necessarily derive from an overt misogynistic outlook. Gender schemas in form of unconscious biases typically pervade evaluations. These unconscious biases are worse in professional settings where men are overvalued and women are undervalued, and where leadership is automatically assumed as male. They not only affect external evaluations, but also instil certain values or entitlement to persons of either sex. Using entitlement as an example of such values, she claims that men tend to feel more entitled than women, and this has translated in different ways in academia. This is primarily due to gender schemas through which women are perceived as more caring, acting for others' good, and working based on emotional rather than financial satisfaction.

Valian's notion of gender schemas ties in neatly with Fricker's epistemic injustice, with particular emphasis on hermeneutical injustice where the subject also internalises the stereotypes associated with their group. These gendered schemas pervade the university curriculum, forming in that sense a gendering of the curriculum where different subjects and disciplines are associated based on stereotyping. Women, for example, are expected to operate based on care and perform mothering, nurturing roles rather than professional mentoring ones, and are historically stereotyped as best suited to early childhood education and gender studies. Once associated in this manner, it becomes difficult for any member of the sexes to opt to study courses/disciplines associated with the other sex.

To provide a pertinent example of a Nigerian university characterised by a quest for decolonisation and a patriarchal organ-

56 Virginia Valian, "Beyond Gender Schemas," 201-2, 205-6.

isational ethos, this research considered the case of UI, Ibadan, Nigeria. Established in 1948, the university prides itself on its distinguished status as the first Nigerian university, and its rich history of scholar activism, as evident in its early agitations for epistemic decolonisation. In its Gender Policy, the university lists and acknowledges its locational limitations, as well as its shortcomings on gender issues, noting that its first affirmative action policy, the Female Faculty Start-up Grant, was in fulfilment of conditionality for a 2005 faculty's application for a MacArthur Foundation Grant. It also notes that despite this action policy, the university did not have a gender policy until 2012. In line with this policy, it claims to be striving towards a gender-friendly and gender-sensitive environment and lists various objectives to enable it to achieve this goal. Primary amongst these listed objectives is its commitment to ensuring gendered curricula, monitoring such curricula, and the levelling of sanctions on faculty who contravene this objective.⁵⁷

In evaluating whether UI had met these stated objectives, this research conducted a study of course outlines/faculty syllabi across faculty lines.⁵⁸ It observed the following:

1. A preponderance of male-authored recommended texts. The study sampled twenty-seven students from faculties of Arts, Education, and Social Sciences. Eleven of the respondents were at the postgraduate level, where they registered for not less than five courses in a semester, while others were undergraduates who registered for an average of seven courses per semester. Of all the respondents, two indicated that recommended female-authored texts numbered not less than five for a single semester, one indicated four texts, eight indicated three texts, three indicated two texts, while twelve indicated none was included.

⁵⁷ The University of Ibadan, *The University of Ibadan Gender Policy* (Ibadan: University of Ibadan, 2012)

⁵⁸ The study was conducted on both students and faculty of the University of Ibadan. The students' responses were recorded through the google form <https://forms.gle/arhGod5mN8dvg2rf6>.

2. Gender plays little if any role in considerations of recommended materials. The study interviewed fifteen faculty members divided into four senior lecturers and eleven professors. The respondents were drawn from Faculties of Arts, Social Science, Renewable Resources, Veterinary Medicine, and Sciences. Four of them were women, and one of the women was the administrative head of her department. All respondents acknowledged the importance of decolonised curricula and asserted that their syllabi had inculcated the decolonisation imperative, and all but one noted that gender considerations did not come into play when selecting materials for their reading lists, rather, competence and relevance were the primary rationales for making such choices.⁵⁹

3. There is a paucity of women in senior management positions in the university. While the university boasts of an enviable number of female academics as professors and heads of departments, most faculties have never been headed by a female Dean. Out of its twenty-eight deputy vice-chancellors, only four have been women, with the first appointed after sixty years of its existence; and in more than 70 years of existence, the first Nigerian university is also yet to have a female vice-chancellor.⁶⁰

From these observations, this research determined that UR's patriarchal foundation has imbued it with an underlying gender schema that privileges men over women by crediting them with superior intellectual and leadership skills. As such, UR's ethos inhibits active female participation. It does this through its gendered identification of the woman's identity as a 'nurturer', thus, positing

⁵⁹ Interviews with Professors A. G. A. Bello, A. B. Ekanola, E. K. Ajani, A. Jenyo-Oni, F. Offor, F. Egbokhare, O. Aregbeyen, H. A. Labeodan, Drs. S. Olorunyomi, O. Adegoke, B. Adesina, B. Olugasa, O. Omobowale, I. Meroyi and an anonymous professor of science. July 2020 – September 2020

⁶⁰ See National Universities Commission, *Nigerian University System Statistical Digest 2017*, 26-9, 34-7; Academic Planning Unit, *University of Ibadan 2019 Pocket Statistics*.

an identity, a schema through which a woman experiences a sense of worth/value in relation to men, and through which she is also valued. Not only is the woman academic subject to hermeneutical injustice in this manner, she is also a victim of testimonial injustice where her 'testimony', her professional competence, is valued as less than a male academic's.

As earlier noted, gender schemas are not in themselves misogynistic. They are often unconsciously developed/adopted. However, their intersection with other societal factors determine how these unconscious biases manifest, covertly, overtly or unconsciously. The paucity of gender-sensitive texts presents a significant case in point in how these unconscious biases manifest, with all respondents but one, claiming to be gender-neutral in syllabi development, but devoid of any impetus to achieve a level of equity by the inclusion of female-authored learning materials. It also portends a case in point as to how these unconscious biases are transmitted, given that these syllabi are utilised to transmit knowledge of competent authorities in varying fields of study to learners.

Given the above, and in line with contemporary agitations for epistemic justice as encapsulated in epistemic decolonisation, there is an urgent imperative for the deconstruction of all epistemic hegemonies in the university curricula, and its reconstruction in more reflexive and dynamic ways to include diverse critical perspectives and interpretations. The current system of higher education in Nigeria demands gender equality, which cannot be achieved until gender equity is entrenched to recover the lost grounds of the past for women. While equality holds that every human being has similar value, equity holds that people can be treated unequally on the rationale that people need different things to succeed. In this case, the imperative of epistemic justice necessitates that emphasis is placed on inculcating female-authored learning materials in the university curricula. Such emphasis cannot be achieved in the current passive, supposedly gender-passive, gender-neutral institutional ethos. It requires a form of scholar-activism.

Gendered Scholar-activism and the Nigerian University Curriculum

Scholar-activism is a form of activism that seeks to enable the validation and/or development of knowledge through critical scholarship. It seeks to empower persons in the teaching and learning process to become subjects and producers of knowledge.⁶¹ Typically, academics are differentiated from activists by the former's professional, 'objective' application of their cognitive skills, the latter's emotional, partisan application of their cognitive skills. However, this dichotomy has been criticised as false, deriving from a false metaphysical foundation of binary opposites, and as limiting adequate understandings of what knowledge is, and who can know.⁶² It limits knowledge to its 'objective', rational and in that sense, masculinist nature, in opposition to the fact of knowledge derived from lived experience, termed subjective and emotional, and in that sense, feminine ways of knowing.⁶³

The essential nature of activist scholarship lies in its two-pronged nature, first, as an outlook that encourages the development and validation of diverse knowledge claims, and second, as the mode through which such developed and validated knowledge is utilised for change. In the case of gendered scholar activism, its concerns target the inclusion of women's voices in the curriculum, in their various forms to accommodate the wide variety of experiences, with full recognition of the contextual backgrounds. This would ensure, in lieu of the accepted canons, students' fuller engagement with the theoretical aspects of their disciplines, turning them from passive objects to active subjects in the quest for knowledge.

Gendered scholar activism, therefore, presents as instrumental in helping to ensure a critical outlook on prevailing relations of power that sustain the patriarchal order of the university curricu-

61 Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca, "Bridging the Academic/Activist Divide: Feminist Activism and the Teaching of Global Politics," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 35, no. 1 (2006): 119-137.

62 Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca, "Bridging the Academic/Activist Divide," 119.

63 Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca, "Bridging the Academic/Activist Divide," 120.

la. This critical outlook is essential to arrive at an initial awareness of such relations of power, and from there move to an analysis of the root causes of such power matrices through to its deconstruction and reconstruction to arrive at a position of epistemic justice.

Gendered activisms are evident from the volume of movements that continue to organise against stereotypical representations of women in society, politics and within the educational sector. However, such organising has borne very little fruit, and each victory is hard-won. How then do we achieve gender equity and epistemic justice in academia in the light of the challenging nature of reforming societal gender constructs? How will gendered scholar activism achieve what remains a 'mission impossible' for gender activists in the larger society? First, by acknowledging the problem, which has been succinctly exposed in this paper. Second, by providing justifications for gender equity and epistemic justice. This has also been provided in this paper. Third, by enacting relevant policies to encourage and mandate the inclusion and understudying of relevant African women scholars. This is a form of Affirmative Action, where the university specifies a minimum baseline for female-authored texts in recommended reading lists, thus, making women's research output more visible, and encouraging students to incorporate female-authored research in their assignments. This, it proposes, should set the pace for future conceptualisations of gender, where learners are acquainted with relevant competent authorities, women and men inclusive.

Learners come from communities where stereotypes about women view them (women) as emotional, instinctive, and inferior to men. The women they have interacted with outside of academia have hardly shown evidence of their capacity for abstract rational thinking, which is understandable, given existential concerns which burden African women more unfairly than men. When such a learner, male or female, gains admission into the university, studying alongside female students, taught by women, this stereotypical prejudice is likely to persist in the face of counter-evidence, with the cited counter-evidence trivialised as anomalies. Textbook

authors are regarded as authorities on their subject matter, and when confronted with evidence of a plurality of them as such, the reflexive critical social awareness of the learner should be stimulated to identify and quarantine the initial prejudicial beliefs.

Fourth, by seeking external help in implementing and sustaining enacted policies. Here, I acknowledge that policy making, and implementation are two different things. Countless gender policies have been enacted without much visible impact. Non/Low implementation of such gender policies has resulted in policy rhetoric where the policies are lauded, but implementation is nil. Given the reality of such policy rhetoric, this paper advocates that other measures can be adopted to help ensure the implementation. Such measures include external monitoring agencies which would monitor such implementation.

Fifth, by possessing gendered statistics of the curricula and syllabi. Justice and equity demand constant efforts. One of such is ensuring accountability. Gendered statistics help to ensure that the recommended minimum baseline(s) are met, and in that sense, help in measuring progress made. Ultimately, they help to improve future policy formulation and implementation. They also help in cases where the university determines to reward its faculty for a high level of compliance, or where there is a need to penalise for non-compliance.

Sixth, through gendered scholar activism where scholar-activists organise seminars, workshops, and form support groups to highlight the epistemic injustices in the curricula and to lobby for policies that mandate the inclusion of female-authored texts and pedagogies where absent. Of particular importance here is the fact of building strategic alliances within and outside academia. Strategic alliances are essential - within the academia where female academics collaborate with male allies to achieve full acceptance and legitimacy as competent knowledge producers in their areas of specialisation; and outside the academia in a two-way benefit system with the gender activist-scholar providing expertise to societal pressure groups, and societal activists providing their ex-

pertise on gender initiatives to the gender scholar-activists.

Conclusion

This study explored the concept of epistemic injustice in relation to the paucity of female-authored learning materials in the Nigerian university curriculum. It identified the existence of gender schemas, in the Nigerian academia, underpinning, unconscious, social gender constructions which reflect as unconscious biases in daily institutional practices, and through which women academics remain marginalised as the intellectual inferiors of their male colleagues. Despite the pervasive nature of contemporary gender mainstreaming policies in Nigerian universities, the Nigerian university system remains under hegemonic masculinity where knowledge production and dissemination are primarily done by male agents. As a result of this, this study has argued that women academics are doubly disadvantaged – first, as African scholars trying to ensure that the African epistemography is rescued from the prevalent and persistent Eurocentric epistemic hegemony, and second, as women scholars agitating to be recognised as agents of equal value in the African quest for epistemic decolonisation.

To overcome these disadvantages, this research has argued that epistemic justice is achieved in the contemporary quest for epistemic decolonisation where the marginalisation of women as knowledge producers and disseminators is acknowledged and rectified. This necessitates the undertaking of critical gender and activist scholarship, where gender activism is incorporated with critical scholarship to achieve inclusive and diverse canons and to encourage monitored affirmative action policies that aim at resolving the marginalisation of women as knowledge producers and disseminators.

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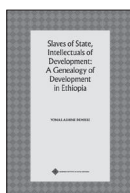
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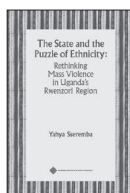
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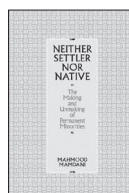
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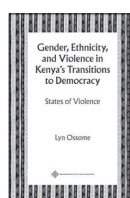
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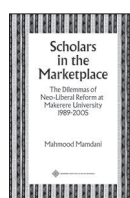
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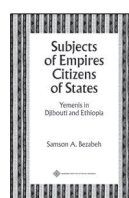
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