

Surveillance, Anonymity, and Disciplinary Violence in the Buganda Anti-Asian Boycott of 1959/1960

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In October 1959, a mechanic in Kibuye, on the outskirts of Kampala, arrived at his garage one morning to find an anonymous letter threatening him with death if he did not cease trading with Asians¹ and Europeans. In a similar incident reported by the *Uganda Argus*, a schoolmaster at Vumba village in south-western Buganda “has been told in a letter signed ‘Muzinge, leader of the Underground Movement’ that he would be killed and his school and home burned down if he did not stop teaching.” The letter specified, “The threats were made because he deals with Asians.” Uganda’s Protectorate police reported hundreds of such threats in 1959 and 1960, many of which were followed by acts of violence under cover of night. In Bulemezi, a man awoke to find his coffee plants destroyed; he suspected that it was retribution for having entered an Asian-owned shop. After a tailor in Kayunga bazaar received a threat for serving Asian customers, an unknown assailant shot and injured his wife.²

The men and women behind such incidents were enforcing a trade and social boycott against Asian traders and the foreign consumer goods they sold. They forced urban residents to regard their business and social interactions as ethical and political acts in shaping a new political and moral order. From the margins of Uganda’s urban economic and political life, they carved out novel forms of authority with which to sever what they believed were the unequal and immoral relationships that bound Africans and Asians in rapidly expanding centres of urban life and commerce. Surveillance, anonymous threats, and violence – usually under cover of night – allowed people who were otherwise cut off from political and economic capital to discipline their future fellow citizens and claim a space in an emergent political order at a time when political party, kingdom, and protectorate elites debated what a future self-governing polity

would look like. Moreover, these largely decentralized and anonymous acts enabled forms of activism devoid of a unitary constituency or identifiable leadership.

The sort of subaltern surveillance that flourished in Buganda's small towns and peri-urban trading centres in 1959 was strongly influenced by royal elites who hoped to consolidate a popular hegemonic loyalty to Buganda Kingdom's institutions. However, many ordinary people who sought economic advancement in competitive urban centres without the support of chiefly patronage networks carved out alternative means of commanding authority. In so doing, they exposed rifts among Buganda's young urban underclass and compelled both Protectorate and Kingdom authorities to change their strategies of urban governance. Launched by a coalition of Baganda politicians and royalist pressure groups, this boycott quickly escaped the control of its organizers. After the arrest or deportation of its leaders, the boycott continued to be enforced through mysterious anonymous threatening letters and violence. Although loudspeakers and printing presses were an infrastructure for politicians and journalists appealing for support, subaltern activists used writing, road networks, and urban congestion to circulate anonymous threats that bypassed existing centres of power.

Despite shaping the manner of Uganda's decolonization and the character of urban protest, the boycott is largely absent in scholarly accounts of the country's late colonial politics. Nationalist historians largely condemned it as a failed moment of ethnic nationalism³ while scholars drawing on a Marxist framework dismissed it for failing to seize state power or to consolidate African traders' class position through revolutionary violence.⁴ In a national historiography subsequently dominated by narratives of state decline and violence, there has been no space for the story of a popular trade boycott animated by small traders and other commoners, except as a portent of the economic disaster that accompanied Idi Amin's 1972 Asian expulsion.⁵

The boycott's conspicuous absence from scholarly attention reflects not only historians' preoccupation with elite politics, but also an approach to social activism and racial ideas that privileges print debate and moments of violent rupture. In the few efforts cited above to make the boycott legible, historians have concentrated on its

political leaders, most of whom had little or no influence after the first four months. More recently, scholars of Buganda Kingdom have noted the boycott in passing as an episode in the steady victory of conservative royalism over a previously more egalitarian populist politics.⁶ Historians of the 1940s and early 1950s have analysed the use of loudspeakers and newsprint to address large numbers of people who could be reached or summoned together simultaneously thanks to the wider availability of bicycles and expanded road networks linking rural areas.⁷ However, political activism changed with dramatic demographic shifts of the 1950s. Between 1948 and 1959, the population of Buganda's urban centres, and that of its Asian trading community, doubled thanks to post-World War II economic expansion and revised immigration policies tied to developmental colonialism.⁸ Unlike the predominantly rural UAFU and Bataka Union movements of a decade earlier,⁹ the boycott relied on the concentration of people in urban centres, where public rallies and newspapers were supplemented with networks of surveillance over the social and consumption habits of ordinary people. Without a rallying cry around an imagined collectivity, such as "the Bataka" or "workers," the boycott has fallen through the cracks of historical analysis.

The boycott's supporters pursued a form of activism that left neither a written archive for scholars of Buganda's intellectual history to read nor accounts of explosive racial violence. They aimed to discipline participants in urban commercial and social life by putting people under surveillance, circulating threats, and inflicting violence anonymously. Theirs was not an appeal to fellow citizens in an open public sphere, but a campaign of disciplinary violence meant to change commercial and social habits in anticipation of a new political order.

A political history of the boycott

In February and March 1959 near Kampala's taxi park, a series of rallies held at the "Tree of Freedom," included one reportedly attended by 15,000 people.¹⁰ The speakers consisted of men, women, Anglicans, Catholics, Muslims, traditionalists,

progressives, journalists, members of Buganda's parliament (the Lukiiko), and members of several competing political parties. Their presence together on the same stage was remarkable. On February 7th, the president of one faction of the Uganda National Congress (UNC) Ignatius Musazi and Paulo Muwanga of the United Congress Party (UCP) had held competing rallies 50 yards apart; they heckled one another through loudspeakers and dodged stones and eggs thrown at them by their respective opponent's supporters.¹¹ A week later, they joined some of their fiercest adversaries at the same location to champion unity among all political factions. Musazi heralded the meeting as a "revival of nationalism," while his erstwhile opponent and Progressive Party president Eridadi Mulira revealed that "leaders of political parties had resolved to set their parties aside" and form the Uganda National Movement (UNM).¹² At this and subsequent public rallies, Musazi, Muwanga, and Mulira joined the lawyer and UCP secretary-general Godfrey Binasisa, its president Dr Eria Muwazi, and other party leaders to champion the UNM as an anti-colonial movement.

Political party elites regarded the UNM as a political coalition that would challenge government policies and struggle to take state power from the Protectorate administration. They also hoped to increase their fledgling popular support in Buganda by extracting concessions from Protectorate officials on a range of government social and political programs. Binasisa condemned a proposed Education Bill, which he decried as an effort "to curtail the development of education in the country and to retard the granting of self-government."¹³ He declared that the UNM would peacefully take power and provide free education after independence. Binasisa and Mulira also announced the UNM's aim to disband the Constitutional Committee, which they warned was Government's effort to entrench the political rights of non-Africans. Multi-racialism, they argued, was an immoral affront to democratic ideals; it signalled the "death warrant" for Ugandans seeking self-rule.¹⁴

In the new movement, however, political elites played a secondary role to a larger group of less affluent leaders of pro-royalist pressure groups from Kampala's suburbs. The UNM's primary organizer and leader was a 29-year-old building

contractor named Augustine Kamyā.¹⁵ Kamyā had been director of the Mugogo Farmers' Association and was president of the "Third Party to the Agreement," which was active among people in Kampala's suburban trading centres who were cut off from chiefly patronage and from economic advancement in peri-urban economies dominated by Asian traders. The latter group, "Third Party to the Agreement," made explicit its role as an autonomous defender of royal interests rather than a direct extension of the Kabaka's will. It took its name from the Buganda Agreement between the Kabaka and the British Governor. Pamphlets circulated by the group spoke of a third party, "we, the people of the Buganda Agreement," who would protect the Kingdom's sovereignty and the Kabaka's "peace and happiness."¹⁶

The UNM, like the "Third Party," did not follow direct orders from the King, but they worked to sustain moral order in the kingdom by demanding loyalty to him. Kamyā and his associates (including Musa Bulwadda, Yosia Sekabanja, Hajji Busungu, and Christine Nkata) were political entrepreneurs who were eager to please the King at a moment when Buganda appeared to be on the cusp of a new political order. Kamyā believed that "Buganda was going forward daily [toward] self-government" and that the Kabaka's position should be protected regardless of what sort of polity emerged, because Mutesa "was fitted to be the Kabaka of East Africa."¹⁷

Unlike political elites such as Mulira and Binaisa who promised legislative concessions from a distant Protectorate administration, the UNM's populist leaders used public rallies to appeal directly to men and women in Uganda's competitive urban centres. The Kabaka remarked that the boycott was "ably led by a demagogue" Augustine Kamyā, whom British intelligence officers considered "a master of mob oratory."¹⁸ Kamyā was a powerful speaker, he dressed stylishly, and he was often seen in the company of beautiful women or cruising through Katwe in a new car.¹⁹ Elite politicians such as Mulira and Musazi were no match for powerful orators and charismatic personalities such as Kamyā, Musa Bulwadda, Hajji Busungu, and Christine Nkata. The latter group believed that they had greater liberty to speak as they pleased, while educated political party leaders felt vulnerable to arrest under draconian sedition

laws.²⁰ Indeed, as Godfrey Binaisa later remembered, Kamyā was a “very articulate” orator in Luganda, “and could convince thousands of people,” while “the educated ones [had to] play it cool, until we convince the masses.”²¹ As Nkata recalled, an effective speaker had to “get to people’s hearts [and] remind them of their losses and what they had to gain.”²²

The UNM’s leaders used increasingly powerful loudspeakers at political rallies to provide an emotional appeal to royalism and promises of economic advancement for men and women lacking access to chiefly patronage or to stable employment. Two features dominated each rally. First, each was concluded with the singing of Buganda’s anthem *Ekitibwa kya Buganda* as everyone faced in the direction of Mengo, the site of the Kabaka’s palace. *Ekitibwa*, or “that which is feared,” connotes “honor, glory, prestige, dignity and respect,” but as the linguist John Murphy observed, “None of the preceding equivalents expresses the full meaning of *kitibwa* which is perhaps the greatest ideal and the most sought after attribute of the Baganda.”²³ John Iliffe has described the ostensibly egalitarian connotations of the concept, which would have appealed to the UNM’s followers: “Buganda’s politics centred on competition for office and its associated *ekitiibwa*, a competition open in principle to any man of talent and courage.”²⁴ Unlike at smaller meetings of pressure groups such as “The Third Party to the Agreement,” persons from other regions like Teso and Bugisu were invited to speak. Kamyā also promised, “tribal anthems throughout the protectorate will be sung facing the tribal centre of administration.”²⁵ This rhetorical strategy enabled speakers to appeal to a generic authority without precluding participation of non-Baganda who still expressed allegiance to the royal authority ruling their area. Thus, non-Baganda living in Buganda were included as long as they submitted to the Kabaka. The UNM did not promise civic rights to autonomous citizens in an open public sphere; rather it attempted to shape how people performed their submission to decentralized royal authority.

The second ubiquitous characteristic of UNM rallies was working up of the crowd up with shouts of “Freedom!” or “*Eddembe!*” which became the movement’s

slogan, along with a “V” finger sign.²⁶ *Eddembe* may connote “freedom” as well as “opportunity,” “lack of worry,” and “peace.”²⁷ As Mikael Karlström describes, the term suggests “liberty to carry out some particular activity without constraints imposed from above” and is often used interchangeably with “*emirembe*, meaning ‘peace’ and also ‘royal reign’” or ‘epoch’.²⁸ With forced labour and the commercialization of land in the early twentieth century, Baganda who were rendered landless were also cut off from patronage relationships and burials that bound them to ancestors, descendants, and kingdom authorities; they often complained of enslavement by land owners. Freedom implied the ability to show love for patrons and dependents through reciprocal obligation without coercion.²⁹

Kamya anchored his appeal to freedom by attacking racial pluralism not only in electoral politics but in the economic and social life of Uganda’s towns and trading centres. He dramatically announced a boycott of Asian-owned shops and the foreign items they sold. “From now, ten minutes to six,” he declared in March 1959, “all trade is put into the hands of Africans. From this hour no African should enter a non-African shop.”³⁰ The goal was to “remove Asians from the villages and to bring trade into the hands of Africans.”³¹ In addition to boycotting foreign shops, he called on his audience to avoid other imported leisure goods, such as cigarettes. A reporter for the *Uganda Argus* noted that Muslims in the crowd interrupted him and successfully lobbied for the boycott of bottled beer, a prohibition that Protectorate officials, in an effort to turn elite Christians against the boycott, were eager to point out was ruthlessly enforced.³² The UNM also banned the use of public transportation regulated by the Protectorate Government.

In Buganda’s competitive towns and trading centres of the late 1950s, Kamya’s boycott was well received by people who felt marginalized in burgeoning urban economies. Still, it provoked heated responses from groups that articulated activist politics on behalf of workers and established traders. A British confidant of the Kabaka noted that the boycott took root primarily among “the newly educated and the town dwelling idlers.”³³ By contrast, many African traders who lacked connections with

exempted wholesalers and lost revenue from the prohibition of consumer goods reacted angrily, as they depended on Asian suppliers. When the UNM's Alamanzani Kizito presented a list of 30 authorized African wholesalers to a meeting of 200 African traders in Kampala, the traders demanded that a committee first be formed to liaise with importers, who dealt primarily with large Asian-owned firms.³⁴ Likewise, workers dependent on wage labour actively opposed the boycott as businesses with declining revenue began to lay off employees. By May, around 2,000 people had lost jobs leading some to form an association of jobless youth affiliated with the anti-boycott faction of the UNC. This group engaged in violent clashes with boycott supporters in Kampala throughout the month.³⁵

Faced with a public with divided loyalties and interests, UNM leaders used public meetings to rally support and encourage supporters to meet one another, assess others' commitment, and organize networks of enforcers. The boycott's spread within Buganda closely followed the concentration of political rallies in March and April of 1959. For example, it was slow to take hold in Masaka district until Eridadi Mulira and Elizaphan Mawagi held a large meeting there on April 3rd.³⁶ Rallies were lively affairs, with speakers and attendees from diverse social backgrounds. At an early meeting, the *Uganda Argus* reported, "There were over 13 speakers including leading politicians, school mistresses, farmers and traders."³⁷ Speakers cultivated charismatic styles that attracted large crowds with rhetorical flourishes, dramatic hand gestures, and props.³⁸ Audience members were active participants, in some cases urging those on stage to modify boycott policy.

Public rallies, however, were vulnerable to government surveillance and repression. Protectorate police used sound recording equipment in an effort to capture potentially seditious speeches and to intimidate speakers into moderating their language.³⁹ In April, Governor Frederick Crawford banned public rallies of more than 250 people, and police acted ruthlessly in breaking up a large rally in May, killing several people.⁴⁰ He then banned the UNM and a series of successor organizations as seditious. By the end of May, authorities had arrested nearly all of the movement's

leaders, who faced prison sentences or deportation to the north of the country. Hundreds of others were placed under house arrest, where police monitored their visitors.

Government crackdowns exposed rifts in the UNM's leadership. At Eridadi Mulira's trial, prosecutors allegedly found a document in which he wrote, "The traditionalists will have to be put to sleep [with concessions. ...] But as soon as their guard is down we shall smash them with clenched fists."⁴¹ Deported to the north of the country, neither the UNM's elite politicians like Mulira, Musazi, Muwanga, and Mawagi, nor its traditionalist leaders, such as Sekabanja, Kitayimbwa, and Hajji Busungu, could exert further influence on events in Buganda.⁴²

The boycott and the vernacular press

Protectorate officials believed that the boycott was driven by public proclamations by public figures, who could command their followers to behave as they directed. Governor Crawford blamed the Kabaka and threatened to withhold the Kingdom's tax revenue if he did not openly condemn it. Kabaka Mutesa, by contrast, responded "that the boycott had become a political issue and for that reason was all the more difficult to terminate," regardless of his own disposition toward it.⁴³ Crawford bemoaned how the boycott seemed to undermine the formal channels of elite negotiation through which his predecessors had ruled. In a letter to his Tanganyikan counterpart, betraying the impotence of colonial paternalism, he complained, "What problem children are these bumptious, beer-swilling, bible-punching, bullying, braggart Baganda."⁴⁴ As we shall see below, the beer that he denounced Baganda for drinking was locally produced *omwenge* that came to symbolize the rejection of boycotted bottled beer taxed by the Government.

The boycott continued for another year after the arrest of its leaders. Luganda language newspapers, several of them owned by boycott leaders and distributed by pro-UNM pirate taxis, provided one way to continue to reach Buganda's urban publics.

Newspapers enabled writers to do a number of things. First, like speakers at a rally, they could attempt to control boycott policy. Articles explained the rationale behind the boycott of particular goods, “because they did not help Africans,”⁴⁵ while attempting to tell readers how to be a responsible supporter. One *Uganda Eyogera* editorial noted that the “Movement only declared three issues. ... But it has come to our notice that when some women go to the markets with their hair plaited, traders do not sell matooke to them. There is no reason why a woman with her hair done should be denied merchandise. It is a violation of one’s rights.”⁴⁶ Another article warned against using the boycott to promote ethnic discrimination: “Any person who refuses to sell to Batooro or Banyankole but only Baganda does not know what UNM’s aims are. UNM’s goal is to bring together all people to make one country.”⁴⁷

Newspapers could also rally weary boycott followers. For example, A.D. Lubowa used his position as editor of *Uganda Eyogera* to appeal directly to his readers. He wrote, “Even though the protectorate Government has become so foolish to ban meetings that exceed 250 people, thinking that it will force people to get money out of their pockets to buy from foreigners, all that is meaningless. The Africans will not stop but only to tighten more because they now know that what they are doing is hurting.”⁴⁸ Reports of the boycott’s progress could be equally galvanizing. Common stories in the early months of the boycott included accounts of how Asians had begun to perform activities that were ordinarily only done by Africans. *Uganda Empya* reported “an Indian man who has lived [in Nakisunga Kyaggwe] for more than 30 years is fetching water for other Indians for money. The male black servants who have been working for Indians have quit.”⁴⁹ Likewise, in Mityana town, “Indian women fetch water from wells which are a quarter of a mile distance, something they had never done before.”⁵⁰ Another article reported, “now Indians go to those Africans who have lost relatives and share with them moments of grief [which] was never seen before.”⁵¹ Meanwhile, articles celebrated the boycott for “teaching Africans trade,” which made the UNM boycott like a “university of commerce for Africans.”⁵²

As Stephanie Newell has shown, newspapers allow writers to manipulate and play with self-naming practices that render unstable the links between their work as writers and their social lives.⁵³ One reporter used the pseudonym Nicodeme Salis in place of his given name Nick Ssali. In this way, he attempted to convince readers that the author was a foreigner and therefore difficult to prosecute or censure. Thus, Ssali recalls, when an article by “Salis” appeared detailing Kabaka Mutesa’s marital troubles, the furious Kabaka wondered how a foreigner could have acquired such insider information, even though Ssali was a regular presence at the Kabaka’s palace.⁵⁴ He also escaped prosecution on at least one occasion when Protectorate intelligence officials failed to identify him with his pen name.⁵⁵

Journalists’ social mobility could open them to social censure and vulnerability from police and activists even as it enabled their participation in political struggles. Reporters not only sought out boycott enforcers as informants for stories, but they also often saw themselves as participants in a common struggle. “We reporters were not political but were protesters,” recalled Ssali.⁵⁶ This approach, especially among those who worked for papers that were associated with political organizations, required journalists to carefully navigate between protest writing and other forms of political action. By-lines were coveted prizes for particularly well-researched and well-written articles, but, as Ssali’s story suggests, they could expose writers to harassment from police and activists. Although press ordinances placed legal responsibility for seditious articles with a newspaper’s editor rather than with individual writers, participating in illegal meetings or in acts of intimidation could be punished with substantial jail sentences. As a result, just as journalism enabled some forms of social mobility and protest, it could prove less conducive to others.

Subaltern surveillance and anonymous violence

There were things that newspapers could not do. By late 1959, public rallies were banned, the Kabaka had issued statements through his Katikiro Michael Kintu

condemning the boycott, and several newspaper editors and journalists had been prosecuted for libel and sedition. Some newspapers, including *Uganda Eyogera*, turned against the boycott. In public addresses, in elite politics, and in print, the boycott appeared to be over by November 1959.⁵⁷ However, economic data, police files, and newspaper accounts show that the boycott, and an increasing level of intimidation and violence to enforce it, continued long after public expressions of UNM activism had disappeared from the public sphere. Even as former UNM leaders and the Buganda Government turned attention to mobilizing against Legislative Council elections scheduled for March 1961, the trade and social boycotts continued into late 1960. A Government report from October 1960 concluded that the boycott “has become a habit” as sales of beer and soft drinks remained low and use of foreign-owned buses were at half of pre-boycott levels.⁵⁸

Anonymous letters, threats, and disciplinary violence provided a different register for boycott supporters to work in. This register sustained a politics with an amorphous constituency, which opened political space for women and challenged the authority of Kingdom elites even as it was used to promote conservative ethnic patriotism. The following pages trace how boycott enforcement escaped from the control of UNM leaders through the use of anonymous threatening letters and violence against wayward consumers. Tactics of boycott enforcement, including intimidation, social boycott, and violence, momentarily transformed the gendered and ethnic dynamics of urban protest in Buganda as women and non-Baganda carved out limited spaces of authority.

The UNM, in rhetoric and in organization, sought to establish parallel structures of governance through surveillance. In towns and trading centres across Buganda, its leaders appointed “mayors” who monitored the boycott’s enforcement. At a rally in Mityana town, A.D. Lubowa presented the UNM as a conquering army establishing a new administration. “Those who have abandoned UNM should know that Mityana is now taken by Black people,” he stated before declaring Mr Mugwisa “the new mayor of Mityana.”⁵⁹ Those appointed to such positions were often traders who acted on the

promise that they would receive assistance in importing goods from UNM leaders.⁶⁰ By July, the Resident of Buganda (the equivalent of District Commissioner) estimated that the UNM had appointed around 200 mayors. “These men were taking over the functions and duties of the African chiefs,” he observed, in a manner “unpleasantly reminiscent of Mau Mau organisation in Kenya.”⁶¹ Some Kingdom ministers supported the boycott, as its leaders exempted their businesses from restrictions. As a result, fearful chiefs refused to strongly intervene against UNM activities in their areas.⁶²

With the support of members of the Buganda Government establishment, the UNM promoted networks of surveillance and punitive enforcement. In its early months, individuals who broke the boycott were often warned that they were under surveillance and subject to disciplinary violence through face to face encounters. For example, in Bakuli in Kampala, a police report indicated, “Four men entered a bar and swept several bottles of beer off a table because it was European manufactured” only to be arrested by an off duty police officer who happened to be inside.⁶³ Others approached people in public places and interrogated them about the goods they had purchased. In Masaka, Eriyabu Katongole approached an elderly woman, Salima Namatovu, as she exited an Asian shop with her purchase and “ordered her to pour the paraffin away as she had broken the boycott.” When she refused, he allegedly seized the paraffin and threatened to burn her house.⁶⁴ In other instances, crowds formed to intimidate and sometimes beat boycott breakers. For example, the *Uganda Argus* reported on August 14th, “Two Baganda women who had bought clothes from an Asian shop on Wednesday were surrounded by a crowd shouting ‘freedom’.”⁶⁵

Supporters of the trade boycott further targeted undisciplined individuals through social boycott. Ranajit Guha has described social boycott as a tool for severing relationships that entwine people together in a community by depriving them of the material and social basis of survival.⁶⁶ Asians in small towns and trading centres faced social and economic isolation. When a British intelligence official J.D. Gotch secretly conducted a survey of boycott activity in Makwota and Gomba counties in August 1959, he reported from Kabulasoke trading centre, “The Asians here ... are finding it

impossible to employ any African staff, even house-boys and night-watchmen.”⁶⁷

Meanwhile, in Kituntu and Kammengo, he observed, “the Asian residents are quite unable to buy any local produce.” As one UNM chairman described, “The milk was all poured down and people left their sewing machines.”⁶⁸

Such acts against Asian traders and employers were not always the product of personal conviction but rather fear of social retribution or violence. Africans who broke the boycott were labelled *babaliga* (singular *abaliga*), literally those who walk with splayed or crooked feet. The label implied being unfaithful and lacking discipline. Kabaka Mutesa later recalled, “If a man bought some foreign product in one part of Kampala and then went on his way to buy the bananas on which we live [*matooke*] at an African market, he would find himself preceded by a stranger walking with a slightly peculiar gait, with the toes turned out, and goods would become unobtainable or prices soar as he arrived.”⁶⁹ As Mr S.K. Mukasa of Kyadondo warned in an article for *Uganda Empya*, “*Babaliga* are like bats,” which only wake up at night and fail to find anything to eat.⁷⁰ In late March, Augustine Kamyia made social boycott an official UNM policy when he instructed a mass rally, “Regarding beer drinkers he said that should one have a bicycle and get a puncture he should not be lent a pump ... He told sellers of [*matooke*] they should not sell [*matooke*] to anyone rebelling against the order of the nation.”⁷¹

Accusations of indiscipline could also render an individual vulnerable to violence. One former trader who was active in enforcing the boycott recalled, “There was a saying in those times, ‘Never get off track [*tobaligabaliga*] or Kamyia will beat us, never get off track or Busungu will kill us.’” When asked how enforcers dealt with *babaliga*, he responded, “They were whipped with canes; there weren’t any games.”⁷² Those victims who spoke with police or reporters often described receiving threats days, weeks, or even months earlier.⁷³ Violence was both punishment against *babaliga* and a warning for others.

Boycott enforcers used writing and photography as tools of surveillance in order to discipline urban consumers. In towns and trading centres across Buganda, young people sat outside Asian-owned shops with notepads and pencils, threatening to record

the name of anyone who entered for future punishment. The Chief Secretary noted, “A favourite trick of those supporting the movement was to wait outside a boycotted shop with a camera, to create in the minds of those who used the shop the fear that they had been photographed and recorded and would be dealt with later.”⁷⁴ Barnado Kabogoza was jailed for “carrying a camera and photographing – or pretending to – people who defied the boycott.”⁷⁵ A barman reported to the police that a man approached him, took his photograph, and told him that his house would be burned if he did not leave his Asian employer.⁷⁶ Passengers reported that as they alighted from boycotted buses, people waiting outside wrote notes and took pictures of them.⁷⁷ In Kammengo, the *Uganda Argus* reported, “two Baganda were seen writing down the names of other Africans who work for Asians.”⁷⁸

Boycott supporters needed to use threats, violence, and social boycott to combat consumer habits and desire. Elites often conducted business and politics in leisure settings where alcohol, cigarettes, and other boycotted products helped to lubricate deals and debate.⁷⁹ The prominent Lukiiko member and UNM leader A.D. Lubowa visited a Kampala club with a European and was recognized by “UNM chaps [who] flashed the news across Kampala.” The next day, market vendors refused to sell him food.⁸⁰ Godfrey Binasisa recalled, “There were a few of the educated among us who were already drinking beer ... mainly government civil servants, the elite at Makerere [University] and elsewhere” who did not follow the boycott.⁸¹ Non-elites’ consumer habits were also difficult to reshape. An unusually ambivalent article by a *Uganda Eyogera* writer reported, “The boycott brought back the *tadooba* [small paraffin lamp] to my home ... because I did not want to disobey the boycott rules” by buying parts for his old lamp.⁸²

UNM leaders attempted to control the boycott’s enforcement in order to claim moral authority. Mayors and improvised courts operated independently of agents of the Protectorate or Buganda Kingdom. The UNM’s political leaders claimed that this enabled them to act as guardians of a new moral order. For example, Yosia Sekabanja hailed the boycott for combatting drunkenness, while Eridadi Mulira’s *Uganda Empya*

celebrated popular obedience to the UNM for eliminating robberies and preventing drunk driving.⁸³

As UNM leaders lost control of the boycott, the movement's promise of a new moral order opened political space for people who were previously marginalized by conservative ethnic patriotism, particularly women and African non-Baganda. Scholars have pointed to two situations in the 1950s in which women worked to expand their participation in Uganda's political affairs: the movement to bring back the exiled Kabaka in 1953-55 and elite multi-racial women's organizations that achieved legislative victories in the years preceding independence in 1962. While there was significant overlap among these campaigns, the boycott movement saw a qualitative shift in the manner of women's political participation.⁸⁴ During the Kabaka's exile, women intervened as mourners, using dramatic expressions of grief to disrupt the calm negotiations through which British officials sought to placate male political elites.⁸⁵ Unlike the Bataka Union campaign of 1949, some women also addressed rallies demanding the King's return. However, as activist Christine Nkata remembered, those who did were often subjected to verbal abuse and accusations of prostitution. She recalled, "At that time women were not included in many things [but] my country is what was aching at my heart."⁸⁶ The boycott's male supporters urged women to take a prominent role in organizing the boycott. Eridadi Mulira, whose wife Rebecca was politically active in both 1954 and 1959, argued "the English fear women" because they appear peaceful but are "hard like stone."⁸⁷ His emphasis was not on women's status as wives or their embodiment of grief, as the 1954 campaign demanded, but on the forcefulness of their actions. A writer to *Uganda Eyogera* echoed this view,

Sir, I thank women who are moving together with UNM and who are not caring about what some people are accusing them that they are violating Ganda culture when they stand on podiums to speak about whatever is not going well. Those accusing women also say that women should stay and attend to the affairs of the homes. I call those accusers the successors of the foreigners.⁸⁸

The new emphasis placed on women's power as speakers and organizers, rather than embodying loyalty and grief, grew in response to the organizational work that

trade boycotts and social boycotts required. During the Kabaka's exile in 1953-55, Christine Nkata had recruited women from markets across Buganda to join mourning processions. In 1959, women from those markets were responsible for commercial and social transactions – selling food and alcohol and buying household goods such as cloth – on which the boycott hinged. By the mid-1950s, women took increasingly prominent roles selling food in markets, assisting men in shop-keeping, and selling homemade beer.⁸⁹ This placed women in important positions in the UNM's campaign against *babaliga*. As a UNM chairman from Masaka remembered, it was a political and practical necessity for the movement to include women. "She [Nkata] was so powerful. ... [T]hat was the beginning of involving women in politics. We had to include at least a woman on committees."⁹⁰ Although some participants remember UNM enforcement as a male-dominated exercise, contemporary accounts suggest otherwise.⁹¹ In one case, a woman selling home-brewed beer noticed a bottled beer in a customer's pocket and reportedly "told him it was boycotted, and attacked him."⁹² In another example out of dozens of similar reports in the *Uganda Argus*, "Two Baganda women shouted 'Freedom' and pointed at a Mukiga who bought cloth from an Asian shop in ... Kampala."⁹³

Grace Bantebya Kyomuhendo and Marjorie Keniston McIntosh have argued that the history of women's status in Uganda has been dominated by hegemonic "Domestic Virtue thinking" that has limited ideas of women's political agency to the home even as women seek access to, or are forced into, the market economy.⁹⁴ However, accounts of boycott enforcement suggest that women's position in the market economy took on a central role during the boycott in a manner that encouraged wider acceptance of women's participation in political and social activism in Buganda.

The boycott had an ambivalent effect for non-Baganda in Buganda. As many non-Baganda rejected the UNM as a Buganda royalist movement and the boycott as a campaign to enrich Baganda businessmen, intimidation and social boycotts sometimes took on an ethnic character that reflected the character of colonial indirect rule. Non-Baganda were already more dependent on wage labour than Baganda, especially in newly urban settings where they could not rely on the support of relatives in the nearby

countryside.⁹⁵ People without a safety net were more likely to continue working for non-African employers during the boycott and become subject to social boycott, intimidation, and violence. Jonathon Glassman has described how perceptions of criminality may be used to consolidate the discursive construction of racial groups associated with immoral or criminal behaviour and thus justifiable targets of dehumanization.⁹⁶ Prosecutors alleged that after the murder of a Muganda man in Kasawo, a vigilante group of “100 Baganda volunteers” burned down three Lugbara homes and tied and beat a Madi who worked for a non-African, before taking people “into custody because they were Lugbara or because they worked for Indians,” under the guise of being a “tax patrol.”⁹⁷ One Madi witness “heard somebody in the crowd giving instructions to arrest all Lugbara who were working for Indians, and saying they should be killed.”⁹⁸ Although “a non-official court [also] sentenced several Baganda employees of Asian shopkeepers to three months imprisonment,” the Baganda vigilantes regarded an incident of criminality (a murder) as a prompt to attack Lugbara as disloyal *babaliga*.⁹⁹ In other cases, all non-Baganda came to be regarded as automatically *babaliga* and thus justifiable targets of social boycott. In April 1959, *Uganda Eyogera* reported, “non-Baganda people but who are black around Kamwokya, Wandegeya and Kawempe are not sold food” and are discussing plans to boycott Baganda shops and beer in retaliation.¹⁰⁰ In a Luweero market, “a large crowd of Baganda gathered [around an alleged Alur thief] and ... were heard to be shouting ‘Okubaliga’” before killing six Alur men.¹⁰¹ They apparently assumed that Alur would be *babaliga* because, as seasonal labourers for cotton cultivation, Alur men often sold cotton to Asians.¹⁰²

Confounding the situation in Luweero, according to the Governor, was “the fact that at these markets there is much drunkenness.”¹⁰³ As the consumption of home-brewed beer came to signify solidarity with the boycott, it could embolden enforcers and become a means of expressing solidarity with the boycott. When a *Uganda Eyogera* correspondent asked a Toro newspaper editor S.K. Baguma if he followed the boycott, he did not answer directly but told the reporter, “He drinks Buganda beer and he even

uses a straw, but what he does not like is not being sold food.”¹⁰⁴ Just as “bottled beer offered itself as a useful icon for those who sought to stress the moral dangers posed by ... the ways in which colonialism offered wealth, and new sources of power, to others,” home-brewed beer could simultaneously lubricate and become a sign in contestations over belonging.¹⁰⁵ Beer consumption could facilitate a collective intoxication with boycott enforcement even as it offered a feeble means for individuals perceived as foreign *babaliga* to perform loyalty to the boycott.

The boycott, however, was not organized and implemented by a coherent constituency that advocated on behalf of a particular ethnic, class, or gender group. Protectorate police and the elite *Uganda Argus* each worked to portray the boycott as an expression of exclusive Buganda chauvinism, and thus had no incentive to emphasize the participation of non-Baganda. However, their reports reveal that people whom police did not identify as Baganda worked to enforce the boycott throughout 1959 and 1960. “Yohasi Kantoli, a Mutoro,” reported the *Uganda Argus*, “told a crowd that [Mr John H.S. Kekinyumu] a 73-year-old market stall holder who had refused to close” on the anniversary of Augustine Kamyá’s imprisonment “should be beaten and have his house burned.”¹⁰⁶ “Yekosafati Ochwo, a Mudama, and John Nyawadde, a Jaluo” were convicted of assaulting a Muganda who was drinking a bottled beer.¹⁰⁷ Some traders, like their Baganda counterparts, may have acted in order to drive business away from non-African competitors, while others may have attempted to police the behaviour of non-Baganda in the hope of undermining views that all non-Baganda were automatically *babaliga*. Surveillance and violence associated with the boycott offered Baganda and non-Baganda ways of shaping and contesting belonging and authority in Buganda’s towns and trading centres.

Anonymous letters and alternative registers of authority

Arrest records and newspaper accounts of face-to-face provocations ascribed coherent identity categories to attackers and victims. However, one of the most ubiquitous forms

of enforcing the boycott prevented such categorizations of its social base. Anonymous threatening letters circulated throughout Buganda in 1959 and 1960. Some were handwritten, others typed. Some were posted outside the homes or residences of the individuals to whom they were addressed, while others were found in the street addressed to a general public. Some appeared mysteriously in the night. Others flew out the windows of speeding vehicles. These letters not only concealed the identities of their authors, but they also enabled the boycott to develop amorphous politics without an identifiable constituency. At rallies and in newspapers, politicians and journalists encouraged audiences to consider themselves part of a group with shared desires and aspirations. Letters instead commanded from a position that was not readily identifiable with a central authority or a single activist project.

Threatening letters were part of a wider campaign of intimidation and violence that sustained the boycott. In addition to appointing mayors to enforce the boycott in particular areas, the UNM also cultivated an ethic of collective surveillance. In April, a leaflet circulating in Kampala warned, "Anyone who behaves as a traitor to the Uganda National Movement will be put before the public eye and it is the public that will deal with him accordingly."¹⁰⁸ Supporters celebrated the UNM's seeming omniscience. *Uganda Empya* gloated, "policemen went to one radio repairer in Katwe and grilled him about where he put the meter that taps voices from their [police] radios. It is said that whatever they communicate within themselves, UNM publishes it fast."¹⁰⁹ Over time, however, the surveillance that supported the boycott became separated from the central authority of the UNM. In the wake of leaders' deportations and the Katikiro's condemnation of boycott related violence, a leaflet found in Kampala instructed, "Every person should act as a detective on his friend."¹¹⁰ Enforcers who engaged in performative acts of surveillance, by holding a camera or notepad outside of Asian-owned shops, presented a threatening spectacle, but, for this reason, they could be vulnerable to arrest or to accusations of self-interest depending on their reputation in the community.¹¹¹ Enforcers thus were thus compelled to cultivate other methods of intimidation and social control.

Anonymous threats in epistolary form reminded Africans that their commercial and social behaviour was under surveillance from an authority that they could not see and to which they could not respond. Some letters informed individuals of their transgressions and the punishment that would be inflicted on them. "At Kibuli, near Kampala, a Muganda found a letter this week threatening nine named people with death by shooting with a double barrelled shotgun unless they stopped buying from Asian shops within seven days," police told the *Uganda Argus*.¹¹² An anonymous letter to a chief threatened him with death if he did not stop buying from Asians and print a notice of his reformed behaviour in the press.¹¹³ Other letters urged a larger public to engage in a social boycott of a particular *babaliga*. "Late on Saturday night," reported the *Argus*, "copies of a cyclostyled letter were thrown out of a motor vehicle in Katwe, Kampala, urging people not to buy from shops belonging to an African on the grounds that he had been buying goods from Asians."¹¹⁴

These menacing letters created a sense of fear and uncertainty in recipients who could not attribute them to an individual author. "The anonymous threatening letter," remarked E.P. Thompson on eighteenth century England, "can be frightening and disturbing to [its recipients]; it can induce extreme anxiety, night-watchers, suspicion of friends and neighbours, and justified forms of paranoia."¹¹⁵ In some cases in Buganda, the receiver tried to help police identify individuals whom they suspected of writing the letter. After a tailor found a note posted to a window of his house warning that his children would be killed and his coffee trees destroyed, he reported that he suspected someone who had previously threatened him for buying goats from an Asian.¹¹⁶ In most cases, however, recipients of anonymous threats were either unable to identify a specific culprit or were too frightened to report their suspicions to chiefs or to the police. With rare exceptions, letters were delivered under cover of darkness or from the safety and anonymity of speeding vehicles. Although some chiefs opposed the boycott for undermining their own authority, they often lacked the power or information to prevent the spread of such anonymous threats.

Writers of threatening letters adopted identities that positioned them outside of normative relations of authority. In July 1959, letters began to appear signed by “Muzinge” or “Son of Muzinge” that claimed an authority to direct boycott activity and dispense punishment independently of the UNM or Kingdom officials. Some letters claimed that Muzinge was the leader of a “Uganda Underground Movement” that issued orders from a remote cave.¹¹⁷ This mysterious figure could appear anywhere and at any time to issue new instructions and to threaten wayward consumers. One Muzinge letter read, “Traders are hereby warned for the last time that I forbid the sale of Brook Bond Tea by all shopkeepers, without exception. I warn the people of Katwe and Wandegeya and other trading centres that I will not give another warning. If I inspect the shops again and find Brook Bond Tea, I will sentence the offender to death as I did to the ‘beer drinker’.”¹¹⁸

Muzinge was a messenger and a commander, rather than a reporter. In Luganda, the name refers to a peacock.¹¹⁹ As “king of the birds,”¹²⁰ a peacock does not connote the benevolent distribution of privileged knowledge associated with a heron (*sekanyolya*) as in the Luganda saying, “Grey heron, you are tall: tell us the news of the city.”¹²¹ Rather, *muzinge* implies the power of a messenger issuing draconian instructions to impertinent children. A folktale tells the story of a young girl who released a peacock from its cage against her parents’ instructions, which caused her family to die of hunger without its eggs. The story tells how the girl’s doomed parents drove her from home to be haunted in an endless search for the missing bird.¹²² The folktale, like Muzinge letters, warns of social boycott against those who neglect Muzinge’s importance and whose disobedience causes collective disaster.

Muzinge letters commanded people using a language of authority detached from any particular position in social relations and not answerable to its audience. Letters often referred to directives issued by the “Office of Muzinge.”¹²³ Some designated the mysterious author to be “commander-in-chief” or “chairman” of the equally shadowy Uganda Underground Movement.¹²⁴ Other letters usurped formal positions of authority by providing a return address at the Kabaka’s palace, while others indicated Entebbe,

the capital of the Protectorate.¹²⁵ However, Muzinge did not occupy a single position in Uganda's political and social landscape. Its return address – whether the Kabaka's palace or an isolated cave – was remote and inaccessible to return mail. As a result, there was no outlet for the individuals and publics that it addressed to appeal against its decisions. Muzinge's danger and its position outside of institutionalized hierarchies were emphasized in one letter that indicated "Son of Muzinge" had recently returned from obtaining a B.Sc. from "Killer University, Russia."¹²⁶

The mystery of Muzinge's identity enhanced its power while confounding the efforts of other authorities to bring it under control. A letter to the editor of the *Uganda Argus* noted, "We are sure, for example, that nobody, apart from Muzinge's company, can show us Muzinge's home though even he himself is not hidden!"¹²⁷ A leaflet warned, "The Government is of opinion that it can arrest me; this is completely wrong and a waste of their time. They cannot see me whereas I am often among them."¹²⁸

Protectorate police reported having "done a great deal of work in trying to detect the identity of Muzinge letter writers" with little success. They suspected that "Salis, Taifa's No. 1 reporter, was probably inventing Muzinge letters as a press stunt."¹²⁹ While detectives apparently failed to connect the alias "Salis" with the journalist "Ssali," their suspicion that he composed Muzinge letters suggests that such letters occupied a register that journalistic prose, even under a pseudonym, could not enter. Newspapers allowed writers to play with self-naming practices, but they were more difficult to wield as instruments of surveillance over others. Muzinge letters, by contrast, were pinned to shop doors, placed in home windows, attached to trees, or scattered in public streets, with threats against everyone from ordinary shop employees to Protectorate officials. Muzinge's omnipresent aura was reinforced by one letter that referred to the "Office of Muzinge and his Son in the Air."¹³⁰ Even UNM chairmen did not know what it did: "It was a secret organization but no one knew what it consisted of. It did some secret work."¹³¹ An Asian member of the Legislative Council expressed concern over Muzinge's amorphous identity: "I would like to ask the honourable the Chief Secretary as to who this gentleman Muzinge is? Is he a man, is he a woman, is he just a mythological figure

or is he a ghost of a long vanished disgruntled Civil Servant? ... this mythological figure is causing a very great deal of concern to many people in the country. ... I think it is the primary duty of the Chief Secretary to dispel the aura of superman which surrounds this gentleman, Muziinge."¹³²

The nebulous form of Muziinge shielded boycott enforcement from Government crackdowns while facilitating the entrepreneurial politics of non-elites. Members of labour unions and political parties exerted authority by seeking recognition as office-bearers in institutions that shaped public political life. By contrast, the boycott not only rendered veteran politicians and elite figures dependent on the initiative of non-elites, but it thrived through the mystery and anonymity of the forces behind it. Some individuals attempted to secure political credibility by claiming a prominent place among these unseen forces. Intelligence officials reported sceptically about individuals who had claimed to be behind Muziinge, and over fifty years later, former UNM supporters suggested the names of a half dozen additional people whom they heard were behind it.¹³³

The case of James Sekagya suggests how individuals used writing and pseudonymity, outside of petitions and the vernacular press, to place themselves at the centre of late colonial politics. A corporal in the Buganda police force Kulanima Mukasa reported that while he was on patrol in Katwe on September 24, 1959, a young man introduced himself as Awusi Sekatawa and presented him with a document he claimed to have written that described a plot to assassinate several Buganda Government ministers and the Muluka Chief of Katwe. The document alleged that a certain James Sekagya had organized a secret meeting with the prominent UNM activists Eriabu Lwebuga and Godfrey Binaisa to plan the assassinations. Sekatawa reportedly prodded Corporal Mukasa to arrest the men named in the document. Suspicious of how he could have obtained such information, the corporal arrested Sekatawa and soon found that he was actually 18-year old James Sekagya, the alleged mastermind named in the document. On a search of his home, police found documents in Sekagya's handwriting signed "Muziinge." Binaisa and Lwebuga acknowledged that Sekagya was active in the

UNM but denied hatching an assassination plot with him.¹³⁴ When I met Sekagya fifty-three years later, he also presented me with a document he had recently written that placed himself in the centre of the UNM's leadership and the Kabaka's good graces.¹³⁵

At stake here is less assigning authorship or evaluating the accuracy of documents than understanding how texts that circulate in particular registers reframe relations of authority. Muzinge letters enabled experimentation with command and surveillance outside the direct control of the Protectorate Government, elite politicians, Kingdom officials, and UNM leaders. Just prior to the Katikiro's July speech that mildly criticized disorder associated with the boycott, leaflets appeared outside of the Top Life Club in Kampala, urging people to continue the boycott.¹³⁶ Muzinge's letters quickly pushed the boycott in a direction that the Kabaka and his ministers found threatening to their authority. In September, letters signed by Muzinge instructed farmers and produce buyers to refuse to sell matooke for shipment to Kampala as punishment for Kampalans' continued consumption of bottled beer. "Leave us to die of starvation; we do not want bananas, beer is enough for us," mocked one handwritten letter found on a Kampala street. "Anybody found selling or bringing bananas to Kampala ... will be heavily punished as one who has no respect for one's country."¹³⁷ Though Buganda Government ministers had rejected Protectorate officials' pleas to intervene against the boycott, some worried that matooke shortages could turn public opinion against them.¹³⁸ As Muzinge leaflets continued to appear condemning its intervention, the Buganda Government sent lorries, under armed escort, to transport matooke to Kampala and briefly took over its distribution in the city.¹³⁹

Faced with the unregulated circulation of documents claiming the authority to command and direct the boycott, UNM leaders and Protectorate officials attempted to make Ugandan publics distinguish between authorized and unauthorized texts. As early as May, Hajji Busungu warned that boycott instructions could only come from the UNM's executive committee. "The only valid notices and instructions were those from the movement's head office at Katwe, and signed by the acting chairman," he said in a press statement.¹⁴⁰ After the deportation of Busungu and his colleagues, Protectorate

officials struggled to contain the increasingly violent tactics of boycott enforcers. As insurgent violence against *babaliga* and against Asians escalated in April 1960, officials arranged for 15,000 “anti-crime” pamphlets to be dropped by aircraft across the worst affected regions of Buganda.¹⁴¹ In so doing, they intervened in a struggle with boycott supporters over the authority of prescriptive texts.

The modes through which the boycott spread – anonymous letters, mutual surveillance, and disciplinary violence – fostered a politics that was not easily reducible to a single cause, constituency, or central authority. Buganda’s political discourse, anchored around support for royal institutions and the Kabaka, accommodated diverse ideas about how legitimate authority should be exercised. During the boycott, ministers such as Basudde and Sempa supported the UNM, and the Kabaka maintained a tactical silence that led British intelligence officers, and many Baganda, to believe that he privately approved of it.¹⁴² After the banning of the UNM in May 1959, however, the boycott lacked public leadership that could direct its enforcement, promote a political agenda, and police boundaries between leaders and followers. Anonymous and pseudonymous documents offered one means of filling that vacuum. The letter that James Sekagya presented to a police officer not only put Sekagya in the centre of Uganda’s political action; it also implicated two prominent boycott leaders, Godfrey Binaisa and Eriabu Lwebuga, in an assassination plot against Buganda Kingdom ministers and a prominent chief. Kingdom ministers, chiefs, and wealthy African businessmen courted contempt and even violence for colluding with a multi-racial elite, in spite of funding the UNM and other boycott activity.

Even the Kabaka became alarmed by the general hostility to central authority that the boycott provoked. After he relented to the Governor’s pressure and issued a mild public condemnation of violence associated with the boycott, boycott supporters questioned the authority of his instructions. In October, when a matooke dealer tried to make a purchase at Katwe market, a crowd assembled and prevented the transaction. When someone interjected that the Kabaka had said people were free to shop where they pleased, “some of the crowd ... inquired the bystander’s name and address and

threatened him.”¹⁴³ The Kabaka noted that the African areas of Kampala-Kibuga were becoming increasingly threatening to authority in general – both from the Protectorate and the Buganda Kingdom. Governor Crawford met the Kabaka, who “said that he himself had ‘freedom’ shouted at him, but often with a laugh. He did agree, however, that there was a hostile feeling towards Government and authority in Kampala, and that something should be done to ‘clear up’ the Kibuga.”¹⁴⁴ As violence spread in early 1960, his Government co-operated with Protectorate police to tackle crime in Kampala.¹⁴⁵ The use of surveillance and anonymous letters to enforce moral behaviour and consumer habits had opened means of establishing authority and asserting belonging that were not controlled by Protectorate or Kingdom officials, even as followers continued to invoke loyalty to the King.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated how anonymous letters and relentless surveillance operated alongside newspapers and public rallies, facilitating social mobilization and reshaping authority relations in late colonial Uganda. The boycott worked to consolidate racial thinking in a context of highly competitive urban commerce. It compelled Africans to regulate behaviour that connected them in exploitative ways with global capitalist networks namely through Asian traders, Government officials, and Kingdom elites. Such activism has remained largely invisible in a scholarship that operates through the categories of nationalist historiography or through subsequent iterations of ethnic patriotism. The boycott focused attention on Africans’ moral discipline in their relationships with Asians. If the scholarly lens is turned solely toward violent rupture, toward moments such as dictator Idi Amin’s expulsion of all Asians in 1972, it risks overlooking how ordinary people use urban infrastructure to reshape economic, political, and social hierarchy.

¹ In 1943, several years after a similar initiative in Kenya, Asian political leaders in

² “Boycotters set fire to woman’s house in holiday incidents,” *Uganda Argus* 14 October 1959: 5; “Threat to African teacher,” *Uganda Argus* 10 October 1959: 7; “Slashed Crops at Mpigi,” *Uganda Argus* 27 August 1959: 3; “New spate of crop slashings and threats,” *Uganda Argus* 22 September 1959: 1; “Bugerere gombolola places under curfew after two shootings,” *Uganda Argus* 12 September 1959: 1.

³ Ghai, “The Bugandan Trade Boycott: A Study in Tribal, Political, and Economic Nationalism”; Kiwanuka, “The Uganda National Movement and the Trade Boycott of 1959/60”; Nsibambi, “Populism in Uganda, 1959-1961.”

⁴ Mamdani, *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda*, 215–216. See also Jørgensen, “Structural Dependence and Economic Nationalism,” 311.

⁵ Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda*, 167; Sathyamurthy, *The Political Development of Uganda*, 382.

⁶ Summers, “All The Kabaka’s Wives”; Earle, “Political Theologies in Late Colonial Buganda,” 143–145.

⁷ On bicycles in the semiotics of colonial life, see Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon*, 15–17 & chap. 4. On bicycles and the expansion of African public spheres in East Africa, see Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival*, chap. 2.

⁸ Individuals enumerated in the official census as “Asians” increased from 33,767 to 69,103, while the total population of Kampala, for example, went from 62,264 to 107,058 during this period. Uganda Protectorate, *Report on the Census of the Non-Native Population of Uganda Protectorate Taken on the Night of the 25th February, 1948*, (Printed by Authority, 1951), 58, 60-61; Uganda Protectorate, *Uganda Census 1959: Non-African Population*, (East African Statistical Department, 1960), 47; Parkin, *Neighbors and Nationals*, 4.

⁹ Summers, “Radical Rudeness.”

¹⁰ “Ebibuga 9 temukyali bayindi,” *Uganda Empya* 31 March 1959: 1.

¹¹ “Mr Musazi’s meeting swamped by rival U.N.C. hecklers,” *Uganda Argus* 9 February 1959: 1; CO 822/1353 Intelligence Report, February 1959.

¹² “Party leaders speak on a single platform,” *Uganda Argus* 16 February 1959: 5.

¹³ “UCP to Fight Schools Bill,” *Uganda Argus* 4 February 1959: 5. Minister of Education and Labour Mr G.B. Cartland confirmed this paternalist policy by stating the government’s position that “the expansion of primary education should be slowed down” so that government could “protect parents and their children from educational exploitation.” “New Education Policy Announced,” *Uganda Argus* 6 February 1959: 1, 5; W.L. Bell, “Ministry Replies to Criticism of Education Bill,” *Uganda Argus* February 14, 1959: 2.

¹⁴ “Inter-Party Group Announces Boycott Plans,” *Uganda Argus* March 2, 1959: 3.

¹⁵ Other accounts have referred to Kamyia as a cobbler, a house painter, and a taxi driver. Karugire, *Roots of Instability in Uganda*, 43; CO 822/1846 “Trade Boycott in Buganda” Uganda National Movement and Trade Boycott in Buganda, n.d. [June 1959].

¹⁶ UNAC 15/S9436.5: “A Brief Doctrine to Enlighten All People”, n.d. [October 1959?]. In 1961, Kamyia would inaugurate another group with a similar mission known as “Amabega gwa Namulondo” or “People Behind the Throne.” See Hancock, “Patriotism and Neo-Traditionalism in Buganda,” 427 fn 27.

¹⁷ UNAC 44/C8886: Special Branch Report. 10 May 1958.

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- ¹⁸ Kabaka of Buganda, *The Desecration of My Kingdom*, 154; CO 822/2064: Intelligence Report, August 1960.
- ¹⁹ For a brief description of Kamyá's political career based in part on interviews with Ignatius Musazi, see Campbell, "The Political Struggles of Africans to Enter the Market Place in Uganda 1900-1970," 243.
- ²⁰ Interview with Christine Nkata, London, 5 August 2013.
- ²¹ Interview by Daniel Sills with Godfrey Binaisa, 6 September 2001.
- ²² Interview with Christine Nkata, London, 5 August 2013.
- ²³ Murphy, *Luganda-English Dictionary*, 210.
- ²⁴ Iliffe, *Honour in African History*, 168.
- ²⁵ "U.N.M. Leaders Declare Non-African Shops Boycott," *Uganda Argus* 9 March 1959: 1; "Inter-Party Group Announces Boycott Plans," *Uganda Argus* 2 March 1959: 3.
- ²⁶ Interview with Hajji Mohammed Kasirye, Kawempe, 3 April 2013.
- ²⁷ Murphy, *Luganda-English Dictionary*, 65.
- ²⁸ Karlström, "Imagining Democracy," 486.
- ²⁹ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, chap. 7.
- ³⁰ "U.N.M. Leaders Declare Non-African Shops Boycott," *Uganda Argus* 5 March 1959: 1, 3.
- ³¹ "Inter-Party Group Announces Boycott Plans," *Uganda Argus* 2 March 1959: 1, 3.
- ³² "U.N.M. Leaders Declare Non-African Shops Boycott," *Uganda Argus* 5 March 1959: 1, 3; "Inter-Party Group Announces Boycott Plans," *Uganda Argus* 2 March 1959: 1, 3.
- ³³ CO 822/1846: Sir Ronald Bennett, 7 July 1959.
- ³⁴ "Traders Clash With U.N.M. Delegate," *Uganda Argus* 16 March 1959: 3; "Police Called to Katwe," *Uganda Argus* 20 May 1959: 1.
- ³⁵ CO 822/1845: Governor to Secretary of State, 19 May 1959; "Crowds Urged to Beat the Boycott: Unemployed hold meeting at Naguru," *Uganda Argus* 18 May 1959: 1; "Ignore boycott say unemployed workers – 'not for our good'," *Uganda Argus* 8 May 1959; Unemployed, "Boycott Has Gone Awry Somewhere," *Uganda Argus* 28 April 1959.
- ³⁶ Rallies outside of Buganda failed to ignite support, and it found little support in the disputed Lost Counties with a majority population of Banyoro. FCO 141/6640: Cartland, 28 October 1959; UNAC 15/S9436.2: Provincial Commissioner's Conference October 1959.
- ³⁷ "Inter-Party Group Announces Boycott Plans," *Uganda Argus* 2 March 1959: 1, 3.
- ³⁸ Interview with Christine Nkata, London, 5 August 2013.
- ³⁹ CO 922/1357: Hartwell to Mathieson 8 July 1957; CO 822/1847: trial transcript, 24 June 1959.
- ⁴⁰ For police accounts of the incident, see CO 822/1845: Governor to Secretary of State, 5 June 1959; CO 822/1845: Langley to PS Security, 6 June 1959.
- ⁴¹ CO 822/1846: Judge LEG Lewis High Court Miscellaneous Cause [*sic*] No. 67; FCO 141/6640: Governor to Sec of State, 30 May 1959.
- ⁴² Personal conflicts also developed among deportees. In one of the more salacious scandals, Yosia Sekabanja took his colleague ERKS Mawagi to court for seducing his wife while they were exiled together in Arua. "Detainee brings action against another detainee," *Uganda Argus* 13 May 1960: 7.
- ⁴³ UNAC 15/S9436.2: Governor to Resident, 11 August 1959: 9A.
- ⁴⁴ CO 822/1437: Crawford to Turnbull, 25 July 1959.
- ⁴⁵ "Ani Aliko Obuvu nanyizibwa wa Boycott Kati? Okuddamu: Gavana," *Uganda Empya* 5 May 1959: 1.

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- ⁴⁶ “Movement yalangirira bisatu byokka,” *Uganda Eyogera* 7 April 1959: 4. Prohibitions against plaited hair were enforced during the Kabaka Crisis of 1953 to 1955, as it was considered to be against the spirit of mourning for the exiled Kabaka. The alleged use of this practice in 1959 suggests that ordinary people appropriated boycott policies in ways that reworked the symbolism that leaders intended for them.
- ⁴⁷ “Obutaguza batali Baganda,” *Uganda Empya* 4 April 1959: 1.
- ⁴⁸ Editor, “Gavumenti kyesazeewo tekijja kugaana bantu butagula,” *Uganda Eyogera* 11 April 1959: 3.
- ⁴⁹ “Omuyindi yasiibye asomba mazzi: UNM yebizade.” *Uganda Empya* 9 April 1959: 1.
- ⁵⁰ “E Mityana Abayindi besombera amazzi: Bagenyi Okubaguza Amata,” *Uganda Empya* 6 April 1959: 1.
- ⁵¹ “Abayindi batandise n’okuwa amabugo,” *Uganda Empya* 7 April 1959: 1.
- ⁵² “UNM Yatandike University,” *Uganda Empya* 8 May 1959: 2.
- ⁵³ Newell, *The Power to Name*.
- ⁵⁴ Interview with Nick Ssali, Kampala, 20 July 2013.
- ⁵⁵ “Sedition Case Opens Against Minister and Ex-Editor,” *Uganda Argus* 4 June 1959: 1, 3.
- ⁵⁶ Interview with Nick Ssali, Kampala, May 2013.
- ⁵⁷ UNAC 15/S9436.2.
- ⁵⁸ CO 822/2925: Trade Boycott Report, 25 October 1960.
- ⁵⁹ “Ekibuga Mityana kiwambiddwa abaddugavu: Kati Mugiswa Ye Meya Wakyoy,” *Uganda Empya* 3 April 1959: 4.
- ⁶⁰ Interview with George William Luboyera, Kalisiizo, 25 April 2013.
- ⁶¹ Governor Crawford had been Deputy Governor of Kenya during the Mau Mau emergency. CO 822/1845: Governor to Secretary of State, 19 May 1959; FCO 141/6640: Cartland, 30 May 1959; CO 822/1846: Lewis Report to the Governor, 2 July 1959.
- ⁶² CO 822/1845: Intelligence Committee Report on UNC, 11 April 1959.
- ⁶³ CO 822/1847: list, 17 June 1959.
- ⁶⁴ “Jailed for boycott threat to woman,” *Uganda Argus* 17 August 1959: 3.
- ⁶⁵ “Crowd shouts at women in Katwe,” *Uganda Argus* 14 August 1959: 7.
- ⁶⁶ Guha, “Discipline and Mobilize: Hegemony and Elite Control in Nationalist Campaigns.”
- ⁶⁷ Gotch pretended to be a census officer. UNAC 15/S9436.2: J.D. Gotch Tour of Gomba County, 4 September 1959: 68.
- ⁶⁸ Interview with George William Luboyera, Kalisiizo, 25 April 2013. Shopkeepers often employed tailors to work on their shop verandahs sewing materials for customers who had bought cloth inside.
- ⁶⁹ Kabaka of Buganda, *The Desecration of My Kingdom*, 154.
- ⁷⁰ S.K. Mukasa, “Abababaliga balifaanana nga akawundo,” *Uganda Empya* 3 April 1959: 2.
- ⁷¹ CO 822/1847: trial transcript, 24 June 1959.
- ⁷² Interview with Hajji N, Masaka, 25 April 2013.
- ⁷³ For example, “4 Jailed, Order to Pay 1,000/-,” *Uganda Argus* 15 August 1959: 1; “Gunshot Wound Man,” *Uganda Argus* 19 August 1959: 1. The men who allegedly threatened him were already in prison at the time of the shooting.
- ⁷⁴ FCO 141/6640: Cartland, 28 October 1959.
- ⁷⁵ “Boycott ‘camera man’ jailed,” *Uganda Argus* 7 August 1959: 7; CO 822/1847: list (15), 17 June 1959.

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- ⁷⁶ CO 822/1847: list (4), 17 June 1959.
- ⁷⁷ CO 822/1847: list (11), 17 June 1959.
- ⁷⁸ "Boycotters stone two students," *Uganda Argus* 17 December 1959: 7.
- ⁷⁹ Such elite arenas were the target of protest in 1949 by Bataka Union supporters. Summers, "Radical Rudeness."
- ⁸⁰ Kabaka of Buganda, *The Desecration of My Kingdom*, 154; Interview by Sills with Lubowa, 3 September 2001.
- ⁸¹ Interview by Sills with Binaisa, 6 September 2001. Makerere University students publically condemned the boycott. "Policy of UNM Under Attack," *Uganda Argus* 9 April 1959: 3.
- ⁸² "Ebigambo By'Obutagula Byakomyawo Tadooba Mu Maka Gange," *Uganda Eyogera* 3 April 1959: 2.
- ⁸³ "Omulumu gwa UNM ku Ggwanga," *Uganda Empya* 3 April 1959: 1; "U.N.M. Meeting Approves List of African Wholesalers," *Uganda Argus* 23 March 1959: 1.
- ⁸⁴ Nakanyike Musisi has demonstrated that the construction of Buganda identity in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries involved the silencing of contestations over gender relations. However, struggles over women's political voice and position in royal hierarchies were never fully suppressed. Musisi, "Morality as Identity"; Musisi, "A Personal Journey into Custom, Identity, Power, and Politics."
- ⁸⁵ Summers, "All The Kabaka's Wives."
- ⁸⁶ Interview with Christine Nkata, London, 5 August 2013.
- ⁸⁷ "Omungereza Atya Bakyala," *Uganda Eyogera* 1 April 1959: 3.
- ⁸⁸ A.S. Katugga, "UNM erangirire olwekwefuga," *Uganda Eyogera* 4 April 1959: 4.
- ⁸⁹ Gutkind, "Town Life in Uganda," 44; Kyomuhendo and McIntosh, *Women, Work & Domestic Virtue*, 99–101.
- ⁹⁰ Interview with George William Luboyera, Kalisiizo, 25 April 2013.
- ⁹¹ Interview with Hajji N, Masaka, 25 April 2013.
- ⁹² "Boycotters rob man with beer," *Uganda Argus* 26 November 1959: 5.
- ⁹³ "Bus park fight over purchase from Asian," *Uganda Argus* 24 October 1959: 7.
- ⁹⁴ Kyomuhendo and McIntosh, *Women, Work & Domestic Virtue*.
- ⁹⁵ Southall and Gutkind, *Townsmen in the Making*, 135.
- ⁹⁶ Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones*, chap. 6.
- ⁹⁷ CO 822/1794: Crawford to Secretary of State, 21 August 1959; "Kasawo Tax Patrol," *Uganda Argus* 14 September 1959: 3.
- ⁹⁸ "Crowd of 100 Set on Me, Servant Says," *Uganda Argus* 10 September 1959: 3.
- ⁹⁹ In total, the crowd placed 63 people, "mostly of Northern Province tribes," in the Chief's lockup.
- ¹⁰⁰ "Mbu Abatali Baganda Tebakyaguzibwa," *Uganda Eyogera* 2 April 1959: 1.
- ¹⁰¹ CO 822/ 1793: Governor to Secretary of State, 1 August 1959.
- ¹⁰² Several years earlier, a cotton gin manager in Lukoma remarked that Alur were "hard workers ... but ... won't work for other people." LSE Richards 7/16: Survey Busiro, Attitude to immigrants, 6 February 1951. On Alur in Buganda, see Southall, "Alur Migrants."
- ¹⁰³ CO 822/ 1793: Governor to Secretary of State, 1 August 1959.
- ¹⁰⁴ "Mbu Abatali Baganda Tebakyaguzibwa," *Uganda Eyogera* 2 April 1959: 1.
- ¹⁰⁵ Willis, *Potent Brews*, 183.
- ¹⁰⁶ "4 jailed for hindering police in pirate taxi check," *Uganda Argus* 10 August 1959: 3.
- ¹⁰⁷ "Three years jail for threats," *Uganda Argus* 2 September 1959: 5.

- ¹⁰⁸ FCO 141/6640: Cartland, 15 April 1959.
- ¹⁰⁹ "Ebyama bya Gavuymenti UNM ebiggya wa?" *Uganda Empya* 14 April 1959: 1.
- ¹¹⁰ UNAC 78/S9436.12: Inf Dept, 16 September 1959.
- ¹¹¹ For example, see arrest records in CO 822/1847: list, 17 June 1959; CO 822/1846: RD Hook, 27 July 1959.
- ¹¹² "Letter threatened death by shooting," *Uganda Argus* 12 December 1959: 1.
- ¹¹³ "Threat to murder chief," *Uganda Argus* 27 June 1959.
- ¹¹⁴ Eleven Cattle Slashed," *Uganda Argus* 15 September 1959: 1.
- ¹¹⁵ Thompson, "The Crime of Anonymity," 255.
- ¹¹⁶ CO 822/1847: list (6), 17 June 1959.
- ¹¹⁷ "Governor bans three Uganda societies," *Uganda Argus* 9 October 1959: 1.
- ¹¹⁸ UNAC 78/S9436.12: LegCo Proceedings, 26 February 1960.
- ¹¹⁹ In other contexts, the word muzinge may derive from the verb okuzinga, meaning to wrap or fold. Murphy, *Luganda-English Dictionary*, 396, 647.
- ¹²⁰ Obbo, "Healing Cultural Fundamentalism and Syncretism in Buganda," 195; Kyeyune, *Shaping the Society Christianity and Culture*, 143.
- ¹²¹ Quoted in Twaddle, "Z.K. Sentongo and the Indian Question in East Africa," 313. Sekanyolya and Muzinge were also the names of defunct newspapers, the latter of which was edited by Kakembo Walusimbi, who was in England studying law by the time that the boycott began and Muzinge letters appeared. "Obutagula Kasita Bunakalambira: Gavumenti Eyinza Okugambukukuka," *Uganda Eyogera* 1 April 1959: 1; Uganda Protectorate, "Report of the year 1956," 126.
- ¹²² Mugambi, "From Radio to Video"; Mubiru, *Muzinge the Bird*.
- ¹²³ "Farmers Deny Starting Ban on Kampala Matoke Sales," *Uganda Argus* 21 September 1959: 1, 3; "Muzinge and son' send threat," *Uganda Argus* 7 January 1960: 3; "Arson bid foiled in Masaka," *Uganda Argus* 22 February 1960: 4; "More threats and damage by boycotters," *Uganda Argus* 2 March 1959: 5.
- ¹²⁴ "Underground Movement Formed," *Uganda Argus* 25 July 1959: 5; UNAC 15/S9436.2: Muzinge, n.d. (early September).
- ¹²⁵ "Boycott troubles eases in Maskaka," *Uganda Argus* 3 November 1959: 1; "Driver Jailed for Sedition," *Uganda Argus* 10 December 1959: 5.
- ¹²⁶ "B.Sc. (Namuzisa University, Rusia) (Mutabani wa Muzinge)" CoU 204/1145: Plan No. 10 Muzinge, n.d. [December 1959]; "Driver Jailed for Sedition," *Uganda Argus* 10 December 1959: 5. While Protectorate Officials worried about politicians obtaining education and funding from the Soviet bloc, they did not fear communist influence behind the boycott or Muzinge. The royalist and Christian nationalist leaders of the UNM occasionally denounced their opponents as communists. From exile in northern Uganda, Busungu, Musazi, and Mulira wrote to the British Prime Minister to condemn "the Government use of men who are known to be in the Communist pay [*sic*] to fight against us, a Nationalist Movement." CO 822/1846: Busungu, Musazi and Mulira to Macmillan, 1 August 1959. See also CoU 204/1145: Rebecca Mulira to Bishop of Uganda, 15 June 1959.
- ¹²⁷ ZMB Bisaya and FR Cokeson, "Letter to the editor," *Uganda Argus* 14 May 1960: 2.
- ¹²⁸ CoU I 204/1146 Muzinge's Song to Governor, 15 April 1960.
- ¹²⁹ UNAC 26/S8348 I: Security Meeting, March 4, 1960.
- ¹³⁰ "Muzinge and son' send threat," *Uganda Argus* 7 January 1960: 3.
- ¹³¹ Interview with George William Luboyera, Kalisiizo, 25 April 2013.
- ¹³² UNAC 78/S9436.12: LegCo Proceedings, 26 February 1960.

¹³³ UNAC 26/S8348 I: Security Meeting, 4 March 1960.

¹³⁴ "Plot to kill Ministers alleged," *Uganda Argus* 10 November 1959; "Court Hears More Evidence of 'Plot'," *Uganda Argus* 11 November 1959; "Youth freed on 'plot' charges," *Uganda Argus* 17 November 1959.

¹³⁵ Ashe James Sekagya, "History of the Uganda National Movement [U.N.M.] That Led Uganda to Independence on 9th October 1962," manuscript, n.d. [2012].

¹³⁶ "Underground Movement Formed," *Uganda Argus* 25 July 1959: 5.

¹³⁷ UNAC 15/S9436.2: Anonymous Notice, Muzinge n.d. [before September 14, 1959].

¹³⁸ UNAC 15/S9436.2: Deputy Resident meeting with Ag Katikkiro Musoke, 16 September 16, 1959.

¹³⁹ "Farmers Deny Starting Ban on Kampala Matoke Sales," *Uganda Argus* 21 September 1959: 1, 3; "Saza Chiefs Summoned to Mengo: Bid to halt food supplies denounced," *Uganda Argus* 19 September 1959: 1; "Buganda sends two lorries of matoke," *Uganda Argus* 23 September 1959: 1; "Rush for matoke as government lorry arrives," *Uganda Argus* 25 September 1959: 1; "More lorries sent for matoke," *Uganda Argus* 26 September 1959: 5.

¹⁴⁰ "Follow official instructions only – U.N.M.," *Uganda Argus* 8 May 1959: 1.

¹⁴¹ "Leaflets dropped over Buganda," *Uganda Argus* 29 April 1960: 1; "Police plane drops more leaflets," *Uganda Argus* 7 May 1960: 1.

¹⁴² This was British officials' primary concern in attempting to get the Kabaka and Katikiro to publicly condemn the boycott. See UNAC 15/S9436.2.

¹⁴³ "Two years' jail for threatening violence," *Uganda Argus* 6 October 1959: 3.

¹⁴⁴ UNAC 15/9436.2: Governor to Resident, 11 August 1959.

¹⁴⁵ UNAC 26/S8348 I: Meeting Regarding Law and Order, n.d. [March 1960]; UNAC 26/S8348 I: What I said at a meeting..., 23 March 1960; UNAC 26/S8348 I: Resident Buganda, 11 April 1960.

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FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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UNAC	Uganda National Archives, Confidential Collection
UNAST	Uganda National Archives, Secretariat Topical Collection

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