

RENOVATING BUGANDA:
THE POLITICAL AND CULTURAL CAREER OF APOLO KAGWA (C.1879-1905)

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

at

Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
April 2013

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DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY
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Dated: April 3, 2013

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DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

DATE: April 3, 2013

AUTHOR: Samantha Stevens-Hall

TITLE: RENOVATING BUGANDA: THE POLITICAL AND CULTURAL
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DEPARTMENT OR SCHOOL: Department of History

DEGREE: MA CONVOCATION: October YEAR: 2013

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Dedication

I dedicate this to my Mom, for all the words of encouragement and for always being my biggest cheerleader. To my Dad for perpetually putting my life in perspective, and knowing when I needed a little tough love. Finally, this is for Michael, thank you for picking up for life so I could pursue my dream, believing in me when I didn't believe in myself and standing by my side every day.

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Abstract

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries the kingdom of Buganda in East Africa endured rapid changes which threatened its autonomy and power, including repeated civil wars, conversion Christianity, and the gradual transition to British colonial rule under the Uganda Protectorate. Apolo Kagwa (1864-1927) played important roles throughout, serving as prime minister and then as regent to two Bugandan kings, while also being knighted by the British. Kagwa needs to be recognized for his creative work in adapting politics and culture to protect and preserve the integrity and future of Buganda; this new biography informed by recent historical scholarship advances this. Pursuing his own interests, but also those of the kingdom, he mediated political and cultural change with the intent of renovating Buganda, heeding local politics while adeptly anticipating and manipulating British interests in the region, to help prepare and secure Buganda for the colonial period.

Glossary

Ankole: kingdom neighboring Buganda to the east in the region north of Lake Victoria.

Baganda: people of Buganda.

bakungu: chiefs whose authority came entirely from the kabaka.

bataka: the heads of clans.

Batongole (or ebitongole): chiefs who controlled government departments.

Buganda: kingdom north of Lake Victoria.

Bunyoro: kingdom neighboring Buganda to the north Busoga: kingdom neighboring Buganda to the west butaka: clan estate on which important ancestors were buried.

Entebbe: seat of the Protectorate government.

Ganda: the larger population group in the region just north of Lake Victoria, including Bunyoro and Buganda.

kabaka: king.

katikiro: prime minister.

kiganda: spiritual practices of the Baganda.

kimbugwe: keeper of the king's twin figure; one of the kingdom's principal chiefs.

lubare/lubale: deities with a greater than local influence; later, the national gods or spirits of Buganda.

Luganda: the language spoken by Ganda; a Bantu root language.

lukiko: gathering of chiefs to discuss affairs in the courtyard of the king; later, the parliament.

mailo: land controlled as private property, allotted in square miles.

Mengo: capital of Buganda in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

ssaza: province in Buganda.

Toro: kingdom neighboring Buganda to the northeast in the region north of Lake Victoria.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my supervisor Dr. Philip Zachernuk, for your patience and invaluable insight.

Chapter One:

Introduction

The kingdom of Buganda is located along the northern shore of Lake Victoria in central East Africa. Its long history stretches back to the 15th century CE. Relatively isolated from the outside world, the kingdom reached the height of its development and regional dominance in the 19th century, on the eve of European arrival in the area; although the kingdom still exists within the state of Uganda and continues to be force in Ugandan politics. Its history has been described by historians as “continuous” and having “very substantial depth,” due to the centralized nature of the kingdom’s leadership, which took the form of a monarchical bureaucracy, and the cosmopolitan nature of its capital.¹ At the centre of the kingdom was the kabaka, who ruled over a kingdom organized much like the constitutional monarchy of England, although a direct comparison denies the complexity of the kingdom. Buganda’s centralized political structure, and dominance over its neighbors in the east African region, drew the attention of Arab traders in the mid-19th century and European explorers several decades later; the latter spawning visits by missionaries from England and France.

The focus of this thesis is Apolo Kagwa, a central political figure in the kingdom of Buganda in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Born to a fairly prominent family in 1869, he began his career as a page at the royal court in 1879. His arrival at court coincided with that of the British Church Missionary Society (CMS) and French Catholic missionaries. Like many of the young pages Kagwa was attracted to the foreigners and attentive to their teachings, and he officially converted to Protestantism in the early

¹D. A. Low, *The Mind of Buganda: Documents of the Modern History of an African Kingdom*. (London: Heinemann Educational, 1971): xiii.

1880s.² The 1880s were characterized by several waves of civil war. Kabaka Mwanga, who had ascended to the throne early in the decade, had a reputation for rash and violent behavior and as a result had lost the confidence of many of his people. As they rejected his authority, factions developed based on religion, with division between the Muslims and Christians, and then between the Catholics and Protestants. Rising through the ranks during this period of religious and political turmoil and upheaval as a leader of the Protestants, Kagwa eventually achieved the post of katikiro (prime minister), second in command to the kabaka (king).³

As the central locus of power was in crisis during Mwanga's reign, there was a need to fill the vacuum at the centre of the kingdom. Kagwa became an important figure. As the Protestant party emerged as the winner of the civil wars, Kagwa engaged in relationships with Frederick Lugard and the British forces which asserted themselves in Buganda in the 1890s. Kagwa was a key player in the negotiations that established British colonial rule in the form of the Uganda Protectorate in 1900. He continued to enjoy power and prominence in the first decades of colonial rule, during which he became a mediator of culture, as well as a political leader. Acting as a conduit for British culture, he engaged in the creation of colonial culture in Buganda and developed his skills as a writer and historian, penning several seminal texts on the history and customs of the kingdom.

Despite his obvious central role in politics and society during his life Kagwa's place in history has been overshadowed by portrayals of kabaka Mwanga or British

² Christopher Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa: Katikiro of Buganda." in *Leadership in 19th Century Africa*, ed. Obaro Ikime. (London: published for the Historical Society of Nigeria by Longman, 1974): 116.

³ Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa," 117.

colonial officer Frederick Lugard. This thesis intends to reintroduce Kagwa into the narrative of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, characterized by the civil wars and transition to colonial rule, as a figure worth interrogation. Kagwa has not been given adequate attention in the historiography considering his central role in both the Bugandan conflicts and the developing relationship between Buganda and Britain. By revisiting Kagwa's biography in light of new social history, this thesis will assess the astute politics he engaged and suggest an interpretation that sees his role as integral to the kingdom and his motives as complex. Kagwa has been easily depicted as a "collaborator" because of the power and land he gained from the British as they established colonial rule. However, as Christopher Wrigley argues in his biography of Kagwa, "it would be unjust to condemn him in the light of ideas alien to his generation."⁴ As European presence grew in the region, Kagwa and other elites utilized the power they represented for personal gain and to bring lasting stability in the kingdom. Kagwa's interests often converged with the British.

He was especially equipped to deal with the changing landscape, and filled the void left by an ineffectual kabaka. He was taking on a new job, that required him to problem solve on the fly, and adjust and improve the functioning of the kingdom. Throughout his career Kagwa was able to do this by negotiating old and new ideas, in terms of religion, politics and culture, without a significant rupture to Baganda practices or customs. He was not preserving or converting politics and culture, but "renovating" them to suit changing needs.⁵ In the process of adaptation he was always mindful that

⁴ Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa," 126.

⁵ The term "renovating" is borrowed from Neil Kodesh's article "Renovating Tradition: The Discourse of Succession in Colonial Buganda." *International Journal of African Historical Studies*. 34, no. 3 (2001): 511-541.

changes were only viable if they could be easily accepted by both elites and the larger population.

The first chapter of this thesis gives a general history of the kingdom from the 1880s to early 1900s, to establish the setting for the more in depth discussion of Kagwa's place in this history in the following chapters. Chapter Two is historiographical, surveying the secondary literature on this period. Kagwa has been suspiciously left out of this narrative by many historians, or only given cursory consideration where his actions deserve more attention and analysis. By assessing where and how Kagwa has been included in the historiography this chapter will set the stage for the discussion of his importance and centrality in the kingdom throughout the civil wars and transition to colonial rule. Chapter Three discusses Kagwa's evolving role as a politician through the period of conflict and subsequent transition. While the narrative of this period has been well fleshed out by historians, Kagwa's functioning within it has not; the purpose of this chapter is to begin to remedy that. Chapter Four reflects on Kagwa's role in developing the culture of Buganda through the period of transition to colonial rule. He recreated cultural practices by incorporating British material culture and customs in a way that was still relevant to Baganda. Kagwa understood the colonial relationship as equally a political and cultural endeavour, which will be made clear in these two chapters.

Chapter Two:

Locating an East African Kingdom

The kingdom of Buganda in East Africa has a rich and complex history that dates back to the 15th century. By the 19th century, it had developed a dynamic political tradition and centrally organized bureaucracy that won it the title “the pearl of Africa” from Henry Stanley. Apolo Kagwa was one of the most prominent political and religious figures in the kingdom of Buganda in the 19th century. Well known for his early conversion to Christianity and exploits as a youth at court, Kagwa became a leading politician during the civil wars of the late 19th century. He adeptly navigated the complex political landscape during a period of great uncertainty. He did so to his personal benefit, as well as that of the kingdom overall, and helped to bring stability in the 1890s after over a decade of civil war and conflict. However, Kagwa has been suspiciously absent from the narrative being produced by contemporary historians.

This chapter sets the stage for Kagwa’s career by mapping the history of the kingdom, from its inception to the late 19th century, and serves to re-inject Kagwa into the narrative. It is not a general history but is intended to sketch the history of the kingdom to give context to the discussion of Kagwa as an important and adaptable figure in a complex period of internal turmoil and foreign influence. As an agent of both continuity and change, and a product of the ongoing political development of the kingdom that dated back centuries, Kagwa played a significant role in the making of modern Buganda.

Despite a healthy historical debate surrounding the events of the mid-19th century, including the arrival of Arabs and Europeans to Buganda and its consequences, there is a

general consensus over the main events in the history of the kingdom in the 19th century through to the early years of colonial rule.¹ This chapter does provide some new conclusions, but primarily attempts to synthesize these sources in a sketch of the broad background of the history of the kingdom to the end of the 19th century. The consequence and meaning of the events of the second half of the 19th century are somewhat contested, but a general timeline is included here based on a number of primary documents that have been key resources for historians. The disputes over the complex nature of politics in this period will be discussed in the following historiographical chapter, and pinned to Kagwa's role in specific events in a later chapter.²

In the 15th century, around the time of arrival of Nilotic peoples from the north in the interlacustrine region, groups began to collect around the north shore of Lake Victoria, and Buganda, at least in the modern sense, emerged. During the first 200 years of its existence, the state was small and insignificant in the region, particularly in comparison to its much larger and stronger neighbor Bunyoro. Buganda was forced to defend itself against Bunyoro, which began to encroach on its borders in its attempt to expand, and so began Buganda's engagement with the outside world. In the 17th century, Buganda began to centralize its politics and develop a "powerful military ethos and

¹ Richard Reid provides a good, brief overview in *Political Power in Pre-Colonial Buganda: Economy, Society and Warfare in the Nineteenth Century* (James Currey/Fountain Publishers/Ohio University Press, 1970). For further readings see Christopher Wrigley, *Kingship and State: The Buganda Dynasty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); D.A. Low, *Buganda in Modern History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Low, *Fabrication of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); M. S. M. Kiwanuka, *A History of Buganda: From the Foundation of the Kingdom to 1900* (New York: Africana, 1972); Michael Wright, *Buganda in the Heroic Age* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971); Michael Twaddle, "Ganda Receptivity to Change," *The Journal of African History* 15, 2(1974): 303-315; and Holly Hanson, *Landed Obligation: The Practice of Power in Buganda* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003).

² The diverging views on the impact of the British will be discussed in the following chapter.

organization.”³ As its military grew in strength and number, attention turned to territorial expansion.⁴ Bunyoro was conveniently experiencing internal turmoil, which Buganda capitalized on in its own expansion efforts. Notable acquisitions in the 18th century included Kyagwe and Buddu, attractive because of their resources and strategic location. The kingdom’s growth continued steadily into the 19th century.

In its early days, Buganda was a collection of clans joined together, but by the 19th century, the over fifty clans were governed by a central figure, the *kabaka*, who was the “head of the clans” and the highest political authority.⁵ The state was organized around twin systems of power: political and spiritual. Society was organized around clan membership, which was passed down through the maternal bloodline; the clans were collectively known as the *bataka*. Each clan had its own territory, which included spiritual grounds, as well as land on which its members could live. However, there was no personal land ownership in Buganda. The clans were governed by a system of chiefs who exercised the right to collect tribute. The *kabaka* was the symbolic head of the *bataka*, the centre of a complex system of tribute, and commander of the military but he had little authority in the spiritual realm, as he was not a god and played no significant role in sacred rituals. The traditional religion, known as *kiganda*, was guarded by the *lubare*, a collection of priests and mediums, affiliated with the *bataka* but not under their control. The *lubare* extended their influence in the kingdom over the course of the 17th and 18th centuries both through the *bataka* and independently. Thus, the *bataka* had both political authority, through its system of chiefs, and spiritual authority, through its control

³ Reid, *Political Power*, 3.

⁴ Reid, *Political Power*, 3.

⁵ Low, *Fabrication of Empire*, 59.

of sacred clan lands and strong connection with the *lubare*, while the *kabaka* was merely a political figure.

The most notable theme in the political development of the kingdom in the centuries leading up to the 19th was the gradual shift of “political and territorial power”⁶ from the clan heads to the *kabaka*. Political positions were associated with territorial areas, which were the hereditary lands of each clan. The system of authority was a latticework of provincial governors, known as *ssaza* chiefs, appointed by the clan leadership.⁷ At the center of the kingdom was the capital (Mengo), where the *kabaka* resided in the midst of vibrant court life.⁸ By slowly eating into the territorial estates of the clans, the *kabaka* controlled more land, and thus had the power to make political appointments himself where they had previously been made by the *bataka*. The chiefs appointed by the *kabaka* became known as the *bakungu*.⁹ Through this process, the *kabaka* consolidated more authority in the throne at the expense of the *bataka*. By the end of the 18th century, the *kabaka* controlled the appointment of many of the high-ranking governorships in the kingdom.¹⁰

The *kabaka* had also begun to appoint a group of non-territorial chiefs as a sort of quasi-cabinet, known as the *batongole*. These men became the agents of central government at court, further marginalizing the *bataka* in the political process. The key positions in this group were the *katikiro* and *kimbugwe*.¹¹ These men generally resided in

⁶ Reid, *Political Power*, 3.

⁷ Wrigley, “Christian Revolution,” 33.

⁸ Christopher Wrigley. “Apolo Kagwa: Katikiro of Buganda,” in *Leadership in 19th Century Africa: Essays from Tarikh*, ed. Obaro Ikime (London: published for the Historical Society of Nigeria by Longman, 1974), 119.

⁹ Wrigley, “Christian Revolution,” 33.

¹⁰ Low, *Fabrication of Empire*, 59.

¹¹ Reid, *Political Power*, 3.

the capital and were fixtures in court as the kabaka's chief council. They also exercised significant influence over the youth at court-- the sons, nephews and grandsons of chiefs with a high enough rank to allow their being sent to Mengo to serve as pages to the kabaka.¹²

All land not controlled by the clans or lubare was "in the gift of the kabaka" including the tracts that he had recently acquired from the bataka and newly conquered territory, meaning it could not be inherited.¹³ Therefore, the kingdom was marked by intense competition among ambitious chiefs trying to gain the favour of the kabaka in hopes of being granted land or a political post.¹⁴ Court culture was characterized by often "dangerous [and] fatal intrigue."¹⁵ The "unconditional loyalty" shown by chiefs, and the "constant displays of affection demanded by his ministers" were evidence of the kabaka's growing authority.¹⁶ By the mid-19th century, the kabaka appeared to dominate most aspects of life in Buganda -- political, social and economic-- with the exception of the spiritual realm.

Relatively sheltered from the kabaka's expansion, the lubare remained independent even though the bataka lost some of its power. Comprised both of mediums and priests who "were the spokesmen of the gods," as well as officers who conducted traditional rituals, doctors and magicians, the lubare was more diverse than just religious clerics performing ceremonies.¹⁷ They maintained their influence in the kingdom and

¹² Reid, *Political Power*, 3.

¹³ Reid, *Political Power*, 3.

¹⁴ Rowe, "The Western Impact and the African Reaction: Buganda 1880-1900," *Journal of Developing Areas* 1 no. 1 (1966): 56.

¹⁵ Reid, *Political Power*, 3.

¹⁶ Reid, *Political Power*, 4.

¹⁷ Kiwanuka, *History of Buganda*, 177.

authority over the spiritual realm as the kabaka's power grew. Further, most of the members of this religious class had great personal wealth and as a group they controlled property and estates, in which the kabaka had little interest. As a believer in the kiganda faith, which was the only religion in the kingdom, the kabaka sent the lubare gifts to keep them happy. He often consulted the mediums on a range of issues, rarely ignoring their advice.¹⁸ As the kabaka's authority grew, and the court's influence in the kingdom expanded, the lubare had little concern for their position—as their power existed in a different realm. Thus, the kingdom was governed by a twin-system of power, political and religious, into the 19th century.

By the 19th century, Buganda's population had grown to over half a million.

In its history, Buganda had remained relatively isolated from the greater outside world, encountering only its immediate neighbors, with whom it conducted trade and engaged in competition for territory and dominance. The first Arab traders travelled from the East Coast of Africa and made inroads into the kingdom of Buganda during the reign of Suna II (1830-1857). Motivated by their desire to find new markets, the traders brought with them ivory, slaves and other material goods for consumption, as well as the teachings of Islam.¹⁹ Suna II had little interest in becoming a Muslim, but made some effort to read the first few chapters of the Koran towards the end of his life.²⁰

Mutesa I, upon succeeding his father in 1856, saw Islam in different terms. It represented a unique opportunity to take power away from the lubare if presented to Baganda as an alternative faith, one that would be under his control and influence, thus

¹⁸ Kiwanuka, *History of Buganda*, 177.

¹⁹ Reid, *Political Power*, 5.

²⁰ Low, *Fabrication of Empire*, 61.

disabling the greatest challenge to his authority. Politically, Mutesa I also used Islam to solidify his own political power, but in this case at the expense of the *bataka* leaders. He did so by incorporating Muslim customs, like circumcision and butchering methods, into Ganda practices and demanded that all those present at court adhere to them, with resistance highly punishable. However, Mutesa's conversion was never whole-hearted and in many ways was likely more motivated by politics rather than spirituality, so when other foreigners began to arrive during his reign, bringing with them their religions, they found him curious and amenable to their teachings.²¹

By the 1860s, Mutesa was taking his study of Islam seriously, learning Arabic and reading the Koran regularly. He began to encourage and then outright demand that his chiefs at court join him in his study and eventually made Islam the state-sponsored religion -- a move intended to take control of religion away from the *lubare*.²² There was also an element of genuine curiosity that motivated his study -- part of a tradition in the kingdom that saw all Baganda participating in a larger quest for enlightenment and knowledge.²³ He began to integrate Islam into the daily functioning of the kingdom; he commissioned a mosque to be built in his capital, adopted the Islamic calendar, and insisted that chiefs at his court only consume meat slaughtered by a circumcised Muslim. Although he refused to be circumcised himself, necessary for conversion, he encouraged many others at court to do so. The dual motive for his interest in Islam became glaringly apparent when in 1874 he executed a number of the spirit guardians of Mukasa, the god of the lake, an action felt deeply by the *lubare*. The following year a large number of

²¹ Low, *Fabrication of Empire*, 61.

²² Low, *Fabrication of Empire*, 61.

²³ Low, "Introduction," *The Mind of Buganda: Documents of the Modern History of an African Kingdom* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1971): xxvi.

non-converts were executed at court, sending a strong message about the kabaka's new role in religion.

When Henry Stanley's expedition arrived in Buganda in April 1875, as part of the new extension of European presence to the interior of the African continent, Mutesa I greeted them with friendly curiosity and mild suspicion. The kabaka had a healthy interest in the outside world, but was still wary of the intentions of any foreign visitors. The kabaka was worried about Egypt moving into the region, which would present a threat to Buganda's imperial power, so he considered the possibility these foreign visitors could help guard against this threat. Mutesa saw Stanley, and his foreign culture, as valuable for the military, political and material power they represented, and thus his initial reception was cautiously warm.²⁴ Mutesa's curiosity caused Stanley to call for Christian missionaries to travel to the kingdom, believing the kabaka had an interest in converting to Christianity. However, Stanley had misread Mutesa's interest and when the CMS emissaries arrived in 1877 they were greeted with a much less receptive audience than they had expected.

Mutesa, preoccupied with the military concerns of the kingdom, saw the Europeans solely for the possibilities they represented, but did not seriously consider Christianity as a viable alternative to Islam. When he agreed to Stanley's suggestion to bring missionaries from Britain to the kingdom, he expected military and weapons experts that could aid Buganda against possible invaders from the north.²⁵ Thus, when the first missionaries arrived, bringing nothing with them but the teachings of Christianity, the kabaka was confused and displeased. He eventually warmed to the

²⁴ Kiwanuka, *History of Buganda*, 169.

²⁵ Kiwanuka, *History of Buganda*, 169.

missionaries, after a series of mishaps and misunderstandings, and allowed them to stay as guests at his court. The kabaka kept the missionaries in close proximity, for his personal entertainment, but also with the intention of controlling their movements and associations.²⁶ Mukasa, Mutesa's katikiro, was a staunch traditionalist who still supported the kiganda religion despite the kabaka's drift away from it. At court, the missionaries were able to garner interest in Christianity from the chiefs and pages at court, but were still subject to the whims of the kabaka and his batongole, and thus occupied a rather precarious position.²⁷

This was the situation in the capital when Apolo Kagwa arrived as a young page in 1879. Kagwa's father had enjoyed enough prestige in the kingdom to warrant sending him to the royal court to learn the ways of the kingdom and receive military training. As the missionaries established their presence at court, the young pages, eager and ripe to learn, were especially intrigued by their teachings. Many used their spare time, outside of running errands for chiefs and military obligations, to listen to various religious teachings. While some pages were drawn to the already established Islamic teachings, many sought information from the Protestant and Catholic missionaries stationed there.²⁸ Mutesa had banned all missionaries from offering their teaching outside of his court, in an effort to keep the foreign religions under his jurisdiction and watchful eye, but he did allow them to teach reading and writing within the palace walls, as well as deliver regular sermons to a fairly large audience of chiefs and pages, when he was present.²⁹ In this way, Mutesa solidified the link between the foreign religions and politics as he cultivated

²⁶ Rowe, "Western Impact," 56.

²⁷ Rowe, "Western Impact," 56.

²⁸ Rowe, "Western Impact," 59.

²⁹ Rowe, "Western Impact," 59.

a new generation of young chiefs eager to convert in their efforts to impress him. These young pages, Kagwa among them, were acutely aware of the kabaka's power over their political career and worked feverishly to garner his attention from the outset of their time at court.

Although Mutesa had claimed conversion to Islam in the 1870s, by the 1880s his interest in it had waned as he took issue with some of its practices. Subsequently he expressed interest in converting to Christianity. He questioned both Protestant and Catholic missionaries about the practices of their religion and baptism as the official act of conversion.³⁰ The kabaka's interest sparked interest from other men at court who were eager to garner his favour. The Christian missionaries found their most receptive audience among two different classes of people at the kabaka's court. The first was comprised of professional craftsman, great chiefs and other important and influential men in the service of the king. These men were a mixture of former converts to Islam, generally intrigued by new ideas, and supporters of the kiganda religion. The palace pages and young men in military service were the second group; the men who were destined to become the next generation of ssaza chiefs and leaders in the lukiko. Their conversion was a great victory in the quest to secure a place for the Christianity in the future of the kingdom, vis-a-vis the traditional kiganda religion.³¹

It was not uncommon to hear pages debating amongst themselves after listening to the teachings of one of the missionaries.³² Aside from being inspired by their teachings, the young men seemed impressed by the missionaries themselves because of

³⁰ Kiwanuka, *A History of Buganda*, 175.

³¹ Wrigley, "The Christian Revolution in Buganda," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2, no. 1 (1959): 42.

³² Low, *Buganda in Modern History*, 25.

their kindness, confidence and mechanical skills; this was in direct opposition to the large body of strictly conservative leading chiefs headed by katikiro Mukasa.³³ Although there were some chiefs who showed interest in the missionaries' teachings, it was often only out of allegiance to the king. A large group of the most powerful men were suspicious, or even aggressively against the presence of the Christian missionaries at court. Many had already converted to Islam, or were reluctant to turn away from the kiganda gods they had worshipped all their lives, and thus were not interested in a new religion.

During the reign of Mutesa I firearms were introduced to the kingdom by Arab traders. The kabaka welcomed the importation of guns, seeing their value for both internal politics and external warfare. The control of the more advanced and sophisticated weapons solidified the kabaka's power, protected the peace in the kingdom by discouraging any rebellious chiefs from challenging him and maintained the kingdom's supremacy in the region. Unfortunately, he was not successful in stopping the trade in weapons with his regional rivals, most importantly Bunyoro.³⁴

The acquisition of firearms necessitated the development of a new military class trained in their use and repair. This new professional force was incorporated into the batongole, keeping them in close proximity to the kabaka. This group was primarily made up of pages, and only required gun possession to be eligible for membership.³⁵ The batongole military forces were comprised of three military companies: the "guards," "those who enforce obedience," and the "storekeepers," who were guardians of the

³³ Low, *Buganda in Modern History*, 26.

³⁴ Low, *Buganda in Modern History*, 26.

³⁵ Wright, *Buganda in the Heroic Age*, 26.

armoury.³⁶ These new military groups took a central role in military operations and were more closely affiliated with the kabaka than any previous military force and were staffed with his favorites among the young pages and chiefs at court.³⁷

Mutesa died in 1884, and after the competition and jostling among the clans for their princely candidate to be chosen for succession, one of his sons, Mwanga, ascended to the throne. Kabaka Mwanga came to power at a very difficult time in the kingdom as schisms were already developing between the older generation of chiefs and the young men on the rise. This division was further entrenched by their religious differences, as the many of the youth had converted to one of the new religions, while the old guard were staunch supporters of the kiganda religion. Religion was quickly becoming a source of instability in the kingdom again as divisions emerged between the Muslims, Catholics and Protestants.³⁸ Mwanga was ill-equipped to deal with this sticky situation and was rendered even more incompetent by his explosive and domineering personality and approach to rule.³⁹

The batongole quickly became problematic for Mwanga; although initially “the instruments of his rule and boon companions,”⁴⁰ cracks in their relationship with the kabaka quickly appeared, due to his violent and unpredictable personality, and they became a significant threat to his royal power. Many were converts to Christianity, who hoped that when Mwanga came to power he would support them in their new religion. They were sorely mistaken. They controlled the guns, many had close relationships with

³⁶ Wrigley, “Christian Revolution,” 40.

³⁷ Wrigley, “Christian Revolution,” 40.

³⁸ Kiwanuka, *History of Buganda*, 193.

³⁹ Kiwanuka, *History of Buganda*, 193

⁴⁰ Wrigley, “Christian Revolution,” 42.

their religious instructors, both Arab and European, who Mwanga feared would encroach on his authority.⁴¹ Mwanga did not respond well to this perceived threat and although the batongole were ostensibly under state control, he never received their full loyalty due to his aggressive nature and stance against their religions. Further, he did not have the support of the older generations of men at court either; both generations' allegiance wavered. Mwanga's power was checked by the top ministers of the batongole, and he never enjoyed the extent of authority his father had.⁴² The young men of the batongole, Kagwa among them, were afraid of Mwanga's rash and unpredictable nature. Aware of Mwanga's precarious position, they saw how their influence in the military and access to weapons could present a viable opposition to royal authority.⁴³

It is likely that Mwanga's fear of the loss of his authority caused him to lash out against the Christians in 1885. Over forty Christians were persecuted in a brutal attempt to assert his power.⁴⁴ In the wake of the massacres, Christian converts bonded together around a core group of chiefs, and emerged with a strong sense of comradeship more committed to their faith than ever before.⁴⁵ The Christians began to turn their attention to politics as well as religion, in the hope of preventing another bloody event. Kagwa was spared in the massacres, although severely beaten, and managed to keep his position in the batongole while also becoming an important member in the now solidified Christian faction. He was restored to favour shortly after, testament to Mwanga's wavering

⁴¹ Wrigley, "Christian Revolution," 42.

⁴² Reid, *Political Power*, 4.

⁴³ Apolo Kagwa, "How Religion Came to Buganda," *Mengo Notes*, October 1903, 54.

⁴⁴ Kagwa, "How Religion Came to Buganda," 54.

⁴⁵ Apolo Kagwa. "The Reign of Mwanga II," *Ekitabo kya Basekabaka be Buganda*. trans. Simon Musoke (Kampala: n.p., 1953): 144. This thesis will draw heavily upon these earlier chapters of Kagwa's *Basekabaka*, which remain unpublished outside of a manuscript held at Cambridge University.

opinions and unpredictability. Kagwa was growing in popularity, surrounded by a cohort of young Protestant pages, and was given command of a regiment in the batongole, which he staffed with his supporters.⁴⁶

In 1888 the older chiefs, under duress from the perceived threat of the younger generation and their religions, persuaded the kabaka to remove the young men from their political positions. Mwangwa's hold on power was too precarious to carry out this plan, however, and it was ultimately unsuccessful. In response the Christians and Muslims united against the kabaka and turned on the palace. Mwangwa, out matched and overtaken, having lost the support of many his military leaders, was forced to flee across Lake Victoria.⁴⁷

Mwangwa's brother, Kalema, was installed as a puppet ruler by the Christians and Muslims, who were faced with the difficult task of negotiating the terms of peace and the administration of the kingdom. This was a difficult undertaking as the complex system of governance was structured around "allegiance to the monarch and that allegiance had been rudely broken."⁴⁸ Kalema was the Muslims' choice for kabaka, and as such did not enjoy the full support of the Christians, which complicated the situation. Almost immediately disagreements and fighting broke out between the Christians and Muslims, and the latter, being the far better-established and larger group, forced the Christians out of the kingdom. The Christians withdrew into Ankole where they began to plan their return to the kingdom.⁴⁹ They mounted a campaign and successfully re-entered the

⁴⁶ Wright, *Buganda in the Modern Age*, 26.

⁴⁷ Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa," 118.

⁴⁸ Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa," 118.

⁴⁹ Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa," 118.

capital in October 1889, and in a strange twist of events brought Mwanga back with them from exile to install on the throne as their puppet leader.

Division within the Christian faction needed to be addressed as well. Strain between the Protestants and Catholics had been visible in exile, the reasons for which are complicated and will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three. Mwanga had pleaded his case to the Catholics and pledged his allegiance to them, which secured his return to the throne. The Protestants were dismayed by this new alliance and were forced to scramble for their position in the capital. In the last notable incident of the conflict, the Catholics tightened their protection of the kabaka in response to a rumored Protestant assault and Kagwa bravely entered the palace with a small contingent to assert the goodwill of his faction.⁵⁰ This cemented Kagwa as a senior official, and, as the former leader of the Protestant faction had died in the fighting, he claimed leadership of the party. As leader of the Protestants, Kagwa won the office of katikiro, the second most powerful post in the kingdom.⁵¹ The remaining chiefships were divided between the two Christian parties and the scraps were given to the Muslims as a consolation. In February of the next year a treaty was signed guaranteeing that neither side would turn on each other again after a victory.⁵² This account of the conflict in the 1880s serves to illustrate the complicated and delicate state of affairs in the kingdom just as Kagwa was becoming a prominent figure. The issues and divisions that arose during this period would demand Kagwa's close attention and require his adept skills as a politician for the decade to come.

⁵⁰ Rowe, *Lugard at Kampala* (Kampala: Longmans of Uganda, 1969):3.

⁵¹ Rowe, *Lugard at Kampala*, 4.

⁵² Rowe, *Lugard at Kampala*, 4.

Both Christian parties were searching for outside help against a possible Muslim threat just at the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) arrived on the scene. The Anglo-German Agreement in June of 1890 had placed Buganda decidedly within the British sphere of influence and the IBEAC was dispatched quickly thereafter. The Protestant faction was losing ground as the majority of new converts to Christianity preferred to ally themselves with the kabaka rather than the katikiro. Kagwa sought support from the IBEAC aggressively and even made the IBEAC flag a symbol of the Protestant party. He also developed a strong personal relationship with Frederick Lugard when he arrived in Buganda as a representative of the company.⁵³

Lugard became entrenched in the kingdom and attempted to situate himself as a source of impartial mediation in the ongoing conflict between the Protestants and Catholics. After much turmoil he helped to resolve disputes between the factions over territory and political titles by proposing and facilitating a compromise in 1891, revising the 1890 compromise. Lugard was tasked with settling disputes which arose between the Catholics and Protestants following the first deal. The resulting terms demanded power sharing in the capital, achieved through a coalition of Catholics and Protestants. A council of three leading Protestant and Catholic officials surrounding the kabaka was created; chiefships were allocated on a religious basis.⁵⁴

The IBEAC withdrew from Buganda under the threat of bankruptcy and the British government formally stepped into the kingdom in 1893. The Protectorate established in 1894 firmly secured Britain's influence in the kingdom. Later that year the British and Baganda allied in a fight against Bunyoro and won, gaining more territory for

⁵³ Rowe, *Lugard at Kampala*, 5-6.

⁵⁴ Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa," 120.

Buganda and more influence in the region for the British.⁵⁵ Their alliance was tested in 1896 when Mwanga attempted to revolt against the powerful Christian chiefs. He was concerned about too much British influence in the capital and was afraid of losing control of the kingdom to them entirely. Baganda chiefs were forced to choose between supporting their kabaka in his bid against their British protectors or vice versa. Both options could lead to a disastrous outcome, particularly in terms of the survival of the kingship, “a vital symbol of autonomy...without which they would be mere agents of British rule.”⁵⁶ In the end they sided with the British and together they defeated Mwanga decisively. In coalition, the British and Baganda named one of his infant sons, Daudi Chwa, as his successor.⁵⁷

More conflict broke out in 1898 and 1899 due to troubles in the British colony of Sudan, and the Baganda fought alongside the British again. Kagwa in particular was praised for his accomplishments in battle.⁵⁸ Mwanga took the fighting as an opportunity to make one final, unsuccessful, bid for the throne. The result was his permanent exile from the kingdom. In the wake of this conflict, encouraged by the support of Kagwa and the Baganda military, the British sent Harry Johnston to the kingdom to establish a permanent Protectorate and formalize the details of the British-Buganda relationship. The resulting 1900 Agreement united Buganda and their neighbors Bunyoro, Ankole, and Toro under British rule, establishing the Uganda Protectorate.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Wrigley, “Apolo Kagwa,” 120.

⁵⁶ Wrigley, “Apolo Kagwa,” 120-121.

⁵⁷ The circumstance surrounding this decision will be discussed later in this chapter.

⁵⁸ Wrigley, “Apolo Kagwa,” 121.

⁵⁹ Wrigley, “Apolo Kagwa,” 121.

Kagwa was instrumental in the lengthy negotiations and drafting of the 1900 Agreement and some would argue became the savior of the kingdom. He understood that the nature of the kabaka's power might need to be altered, as it had been during the 1880s, to maintain some measure of autonomy for the kingdom. The agreement outlined how the Baganda would be taxed and the colony administered, and officially established the already existing Buganda *lukiko*⁶⁰ (parliament) as the governing body in the kingdom, with whom and through which the British would rule. It also redistributed land.⁶¹ The 1900 Agreement introduced freehold land tenure to a society that had no tradition of personal or permanent land ownership.⁶² The ruling chiefs of the *lukiko* were granted *mailo* estates, large tracts of land, to do with as they pleased. The biggest estate was granted to Kagwa, making him the largest land owner in the kingdom, even surpassing the *mailos* of the kabaka.⁶³

The *lukiko* had existed as an informal body in the precolonial era, a type of "African parliament" that counseled the kabaka on political issues and acted as "the supreme court in the native court system." The 1900 Agreement further extended its jurisdiction by establishing it "as a legislature to pass laws that applied to only to the Baganda" and it retained relative autonomy after 1900.⁶⁴ The *lukiko* continued to advise the kabaka, and now the British resident as well, on issues pertaining to the governing of Buganda. The majority of its members were senior chiefs and landowners. British officials consulted the *lukiko* on policy issues and relied upon their assistance to

⁶⁰ The modern spelling is *lukiiko*, but for the purpose of this paper the original spelling will be used. See John Rowe and Michael Tuck, "Phoenix from the Ashes: Rediscovery of the Lost *Lukiiko* Archives," *History in Africa* 32 (2005): 405.

⁶¹ Low, "1900 Agreement," *The Mind of Buganda*, 37-41.

⁶² Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 128.

⁶³ John Roscoe, *Twenty-five Years in East Africa* (Cambridge, 1921): 172.

⁶⁴ Rowe and Tuck, "Phoenix from the Ashes," 405.

implement them in Buganda and the larger Protectorate.⁶⁵ The lukiko did not have the power to appoint the position of katikiro, as it was not an elected position but one appointed by the kabaka. Kagwa, under the appointment of the infant kabaka Chwa, held it without contest for several decades.

Kabaka Daudi Chwa, being a minor in the first fifteen years of colonial rule, charged Kagwa and the other regents with the task of running the lukiko, and negotiating the rule of the kingdom with British officials. This meant the lukiko enjoyed more influence over the administration of the kingdom and “how colonial directives were carried out.”⁶⁶ On occasion the British resident tried to push through actions for his own personal agenda; sometimes these were successful but often the regents pushed back. In the legal sense, the British needed to give their consent to all laws, but in practice the process was more “give-and-take.”⁶⁷ The structure of the lukiko, and its autonomy, were evidence of the special relationship Buganda enjoyed in the new protectorate.

Kagwa came to power under the 1900 Agreement with an agenda about the need to resolve the crises the previous two kabaka’s had generated, which he now had the means to properly address. Mutesa had consolidated the power of the kabakaship but also destabilized the balance of power by weakening the power of the lubare, and playing the foreign religions against each other, sowing the seeds of turmoil. Mwanga’s political inefficiency, personality flaws and stance against Christianity had resulted in the loss of support from his people and severely limited the authority of the throne. This left the

⁶⁵ Rowe and Tuck, “Phoenix from the Ashes,” 405.

⁶⁶ Rowe and Tuck, “Phoenix from the Ashes,” 405.

⁶⁷ Rowe and Tuck, “Phoenix from the Ashes,” 410.

kingdom with a vacuum at its centre where the kabaka should be and multiple competing factions, old and new, vying for power.

Kagwa understood the importance of a strong locus of power to lasting peace in the kingdom, and its survival through the transition to colonial rule after decades of turmoil.⁶⁸ Charged with the task of recreating the kabakaship, he saw, as others did, the danger of another character like Mwangwa taking the throne. He had reinvigorated and inspired support from most Baganda, despite their religion or clan, because of his demonstrated political efficacy. Installing one of Mwangwa's infant sons on the throne allowed Kagwa and the other regents to oversee the child's education, mould and shape the man he would become, ensure his future support, and promote his success as a leader.⁶⁹ The British were all too keen to support this decision, which cast Kagwa as the interim leader of the kingdom, as they had witnessed the instability that could come from an unruly kabaka in Mwangwa, and likely wanted an ally in charge. Kagwa consolidated power in the post of katikiro, for the short-term, and governed Buganda while overseeing the education of the young kabaka, who would succeed to the throne after coming of age in 1914.

Kagwa's dealings with the British had sparked his interest in travelling to Britain, even before the 1900 Agreement.⁷⁰ His motivation for travel was developing the relationship between the kingdom and the larger world, and seeing how the kingdom might fit within the empire and benefit from a close relationship with the British.⁷¹ He

⁶⁸ Simon Gikandi, "African Subjects and the Colonial Project," in Mukasa, *Uganda's Katikiro in England*, 8-10.

⁶⁹ Gikandi, "African Subjects," 15.

⁷⁰ Low, *Fabrication of Empire*, 319.

⁷¹ Gikandi, "African Subjects," 4-5.

had already put aside savings to pay for the trip, and the CMS missionaries he consulted in 1899 suggested they could arrange for a chaperone and translator. Shortly after, realizing he may have more to gain from a government-sanctioned trip, Kagwa also put in a request to the acting British Commissioner to see if his “his visit could be ‘more under the auspices of the Government than the mission.’”⁷² His application was approved by the Foreign Office, who added that provisions should be made to contribute to his travel costs so he would be a guest of the Government, rather than associated with the CMS. The British officials were keenly aware of the trip being an opportunity to impress Kagwa, which could be beneficial to them during this period of negotiation and transition.⁷³

The negotiations for the 1900 Agreement, implementing the terms of the Protectorate, and collecting new taxes caused Kagwa’s visit to be postponed. Official arrangements were made for the trip by the Protectorate government in which Kagwa would be accompanied by a colonial official and received by Queen Victoria but unfortunately the queen died in January 1901, putting the whole empire in a state of upheaval.⁷⁴ Kagwa maintained that he was still very interested in travelling to Britain. After numerous postponements the expedition was set to commence in May 1902 with Kagwa slated to arrive in London after several weeks of travel to attend the coronation of Victoria’s successor, Edward VII, as a “guest of the nation.”⁷⁵

In 1902 Kagwa made the journey to England, with his entourage in tow, to tour the country and attend the coronation. Although the coronation was not Kagwa’s original

⁷² Communication between Kagwa and British official as cited in Low, *Fabrication of Empire*, 319.

⁷³ Low, *Fabrication of Empire*, 319.

⁷⁴ Low, *Fabrication of Empire*, 319.

⁷⁵ Low, *Fabrication of Empire*, 320.

motivation to travel to England, his invitation to it provided a reason to finally make the trip in 1902. Ham Mukasa accompanied him, acting as scribe and friend. The British CMS missionary, Reverend Ernest Millar, was chosen to be their tour guide and translator. Kagwa and Mukasa toured London and its surrounding areas, visiting historical landmarks, including the Tower of London, hallmarks of industry, and cultural sites. They visited political buildings, including the House of Commons, where they had the functioning of parliament explained to them. They were invited to the home of Sir H.M. Stanley, who showed them his collection of artifacts from Buganda, which included a painting of Kabaka Mutesa. Kagwa and Mukasa marveled and were humbled by his interest in the kingdom.⁷⁶ They were guided to cultural attractions, such as the British Museum. One of their most notable and impactful trips, to Cambridge University, was given special attention in Mukasa's travelogue, as they found a copy of Kagwa's *Basekabaka* in the library.⁷⁷ This was representative of the British Empire, and Buganda's place in it. Kagwa was knighted, the first East African to receive this honor, which gave him an opportunity to witness traditional British ceremonialism first hand.⁷⁸ Kagwa and Mukasa also experienced British custom, from the clothing they wore to the practice of taking afternoon tea. Unfortunately Kagwa and his party were unable to stay abroad long enough to attend the coronation, postponed due to Edward's illness, but they were still very pleased with the outcome of their trip.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Mukasa, *Uganda's Katikiro in England*, 81.

⁷⁷ Mukasa, *Uganda's Katikiro in England*, 116.

⁷⁸ John Roscoe, *Twenty-five Years in East Africa*, (Cambridge, 1921):172.

⁷⁹ Low, *Fabrication of Empire*, 320.

Upon their return Kagwa and Mukasa shared their experiences with the Europeans residing in Buganda and captive audiences of Baganda.⁸⁰ Kagwa picked up many of these distinctively British habits during his trip, and brought them back to Buganda with him. A seminal experience in Kagwa's career, the trip encouraged his interest in British culture and commitment to the development of a new hybridized culture in Buganda. Sir Apolo brought back with him knowledge of the inventions and machines of progress, and spent the following years endeavoring to introduce them to Buganda. Kagwa modernized his home, installing electric bells and furnishing it with the latest European furniture fashions. He also learned to ride a bicycle, which was quickly becoming the preferred mode of transportation in Buganda. One of his most notable acquisitions was a small printing press, which he used to continue to produce vernacular histories of the kings, clans, and customs of the Baganda.⁸¹

Kagwa enjoyed political power and prominence during the first decade of colonial rule, and ruled the kingdom with the other regents and Protectorate government with few notable instances of discord. He worked on building infrastructure in the kingdom by championing the construction of a hospital in Mengo, opened in July 1900, as well as the Industrial Mission, which taught carpentry and other mechanical skills and produced the supplies to build most of the homes in the capital. The Mission was also home to a printing press, which produced most of the books and pamphlets for the government.⁸² Reading and the sale of books were encouraged in the hopes of spreading literacy, even

⁸⁰ Mukasa, *Uganda's Katikiro in England*, 203.

⁸¹ Roscoe, *Twenty-five Years*, 172.

⁸² "Uganda Modernized," *Mengo Notes*, July 1900, 7, 11.

outside the more cosmopolitan capital city of Mengo (now known as Kampala to the colonial officials) and Entebbe, the base for Protectorate operations.⁸³

During first decade after the 1900 Agreement, in which he set to work developing Buganda, Kagwa enjoyed general popularity and little threat to his political position. However, cracks began to show as Chwa's coming of age approached. In 1912, Kagwa proposed the creation of a body to ensure that the primary landowning chiefs, those who had been granted large mailos in the 1900 Agreement, would not lose all their power or the right to express opinions "on matters relative to land and wealth of the country," to be called the "Council of Bataka."⁸⁴ This body would entrench the oligarchy established in 1900, and guarantee Kagwa and his cohort political power even after the kabaka came of age. This proposition was met with much resistance from the clans, who saw it as a subversion of their power.⁸⁵ The Protectorate government was no more supportive of the Council as they saw how it could encroach on their authority as well. This event can be seen as the beginning of Kagwa's downfall, as he began to lose popular support and was unable to keep up with the changing colonial dynamic. As a new class of colonial agents took up posts in the Protectorate government Kagwa lost close personal allies there to retirement.⁸⁶

Although the focus of this thesis is the earlier years of Kagwa's career, in which he enjoyed much prominence and success, the negative shift in his relationships with the young kabaka, the bataka, other Ganda chiefs and the Protectorate administration towards the end of his career should be noted. Tension with the bataka and controversy over the

⁸³ "Uganda Modernized," 12.

⁸⁴ "Entrenching the Oligarchy," *The Mind of Buganda*, 42.

⁸⁵ "Entrenching the Oligarchy," *The Mind of Buganda*, 42.

⁸⁶ Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa," 124.

lands he received in the 1900 Agreement, as well as his disregard of the voices of dissent in the lukiko, have colored histories written about Kagwa since the later years of his career.⁸⁷ In the 1910s and 1920s, Kagwa had become overly comfortable in his position and perhaps acted with less regard for Ganda interests than his own, resulting in a negative backlash, but the earlier years of his career should not be tainted with the later negative perception of his character. By the 1920s the colonial government had become much more entrenched in Buganda and eclipsed the power of the lukiko in many regards. These two factors meant that he was only really accountable to the governor in Entebbe for the security of his position, not to the members of the lukiko. This has been read by Kagwa's critics as evidence of his negligence of Ganda interests. His role in the 1900 negotiations had cast him in an unfavorable light among the bataka, arguably the only real losers as a result of it. As the bataka grew strong again their perception of Kagwa as selfishly motivated, due to the large tracts of clan lands he and his cohort received, began to spread outside their circles in the kingdom. The image of Kagwa as a collaborator for his involvement in bringing colonial rule to the kingdom started to become popular in the 1920s. Kagwa's relationship with the British was much less secure, as their interests were not as aligned as they had been two decades earlier. It was in this same period that his star waned among British colonial officials.⁸⁸ His decline in these two spheres is linked, as the British would likely have found him less useful as he lost power.

This chapter is not intended as a general history but as context for the study of Kagwa and the multitude of issues he contended with during his career. This history shows that Kagwa was a unique and important figure who became politically prominent

⁸⁷ Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa," 124-125.

⁸⁸ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 227.

through his conversion to Protestantism and membership in a new military class when the players and balance of power were changing in Bugandan politics. During a period of transition he used foreign ideas to his advantage and understood how they could be both helpful and harmful tools in Bugandan politics. In this sense Kagwa can be labeled as a mediator, who worked to consolidate the various interests in the kingdom both British and Baganda. From his early conversion to Christianity as it was becoming a viable alternative to kiganda and Islam, to his association with the British when foreign intervention seemed the only practical option to end conflict in the region, Kagwa utilized foreign ideas and influence to entrench his position in Ganda politics. That being said, the history recounted here does not tackle the historical debate that makes the study of this period so interesting, and so the following chapter aims to discuss the historiography on this topic as it relates to the 19th century and transition to colonial rule, and Kagwa's role as a politically and culturally influential individual.

Chapter Three:

Historical Assessments of Apolo Kagwa

This history of Buganda in the 19th century is more complicated and intricate than has been depicted in the literature, at the very least in terms of the African actors involved. Histories have been bogged down with incremental details of the civil wars and colonial treaties, and in the process lost sight of the Baganda involved, their motives, and their interaction with foreign influences. In the attention to minute detail, the significance of culture, religion, and history, to the events and the actors themselves, has been left relatively unexplored by historians. Apolo Kagwa, despite being a very important and central figure in the period of the conflict and transition, has by and large received only cursory attention by historians. This chapter surveys the secondary literature on Buganda in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to assess what has been said about Kagwa directly, and what has been implied based on the models or assumptions about the civil wars, transition to colonial rule, and the relationship between the British and Baganda.

The themes pursued in this historiographical review are important building blocks for this thesis. Historians have explored the manner in which foreign ideas, most notably religious ideas, came to Buganda, brought there by several waves of visitors from abroad, how the Baganda received them, and how they were incorporated into their own culture. Historians often diverge on the extent to which the foreign ideas were incorporated and the crux of this process in the context of conflict and transition. Second, the relationship between Ganda and Europeans, particularly the kabaka and other elite Ganda like Kagwa but also the general public, have been characterized in different ways by historians. The

colonial project in Buganda was a religious, political and cultural endeavor, with the latter being a particular point of interest for the evaluation of Kagwa's role in the period of transition. This chapter will identify which historians of Buganda have written about colonial culture, and their perceptions of how it was created and who was involved, with specific reference to their inclusion and /or exclusion of Kagwa.

Central to the discussion here is the relative exclusion of Kagwa from much of the historical literature. The biographical nature of this thesis is intended to correct this glaring omission. It is clear from the primary documents that Kagwa was influential in this period, but many historians have not given him due attention. They mention him in their discussions, but do not address his influential role or decisions in important events during the civil wars, or in interactions with the Europeans. Kagwa's part in the creation of colonial culture and participation in the 1900 Agreement negotiations has been credited by historians, but still not to the extent the evidence warrants. The exception to this is Christopher Wrigley's fairly in-depth biographical chapter on Kagwa, but this source is now quite dated, having been written in 1959.¹ This thesis intends to pick up on Wrigley's biography and figure Kagwa into the work of more contemporary historians. However, this thesis does not intend to come to any new revelations about the broader history of the period, but rather addresses the treatment of the major themes listed above in the literature and draws together evidence from them that confirm Kagwa as a key figure in the developments of the period.

¹ Christopher Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa: Katikiro of Buganda" in *Leadership in 19th Century Africa* ed. Obaro Ikime. London: published for the Historical Society of Nigeria by Longman, 1974. See also Wrigley, "The Christian Revolution in Buganda," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2, no. 1 (1959).

The nature of the kingdom when the Arabs and Europeans arrived, and the reasons for Ganda receptivity to their presence, culture and teachings, is contested among historians. They position themselves in a debate about the continuity from the precolonial to the colonial period. Some argue the two periods are distinctly different, while others see continuity of practice. The role religion, Christianity specifically, played in the civil wars and the extent to which certain Baganda converted is disputed. The terms under which the British established influence, and then colonial rule, their degree of involvement in negotiations and the motivations of leading chiefs like Kagwa are also major sources of debate, both among historians and Kagwa's Baganda contemporaries. Finally, although Kagwa is represented as central to events, he is often ignored because the main focus of discussion is kabaka Mwanga; this leaves out a large component of the overall story, and leaves a gap in the historiography that this thesis intends to fill.

Secondary Literature

Historians picked up the study of 19th century Buganda in the 1950s. One of the first issues they decided to tackle was the introduction of foreign religions to the kingdom and the influence of the various missionary groups in Ganda politics. Early historians of East Africa, like Roland Oliver, drew attention to the curious nature of the relationship between the Africans and missionaries. More specifically, Oliver questioned why Ganda were attracted to the conflicts between the missionary groups, rather than using the tension as a reason for avoidance. He answers his query by pointing out the unusual social formation of the kingdom, arguing that many Baganda were

accustomed to looking outwards beyond the immediate circle of Bantu states which formed the cosmos of their

compatriots...some had developed a capacity for individual thought and a sense of individual responsibility which were fundamental to the Christian scheme of sin and redemption.²

Oliver's line of reasoning is picked up by subsequent historians such as John A. Rowe, Christopher Wrigley and D.A. Low.

John A. Rowe set up a centre for research in Kampala in the 1950s, where he had Baganda university students translate primary documents which were pertinent to his research into English, for the purpose of his historical project, but also as a means of education. In his work on the impact of the West on Buganda in the late 19th century Rowe analyzes the precolonial and colonial relationship between the Baganda and the Europeans, in terms of ideas and material goods. His central argument is that the decision of which ideas or goods were imported, and the manner in which they were adopted, rested with the Baganda themselves. They were in control of the level of influence the British were allowed and, in many ways, held the position of power, dictating the terms of their relationship.³ For Rowe, the European population in the kingdom was too small and insignificant to influence the Baganda in any real way. Instead, in a time of change and transition, most Baganda looked to their own leaders, Apolo Kagwa among them, for guidance in political and social matters. These leaders who were "fortified by their own background of self achievement and supported by habitual pride and confidence, exercised considerable independence in selecting the particular road they would follow toward westernized African society."⁴ Rowe's writings

² Roland Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa* (London: Longmans, 1965), 75.

³ John A. Rowe, "The Western Impact and the African Reaction: Buganda 1880-1900." *Journal of Developing Areas* 1 no. 1 (1966): 65.

⁴ Rowe, "Western Impact," 65

were widely read by his contemporaries and informed their study of the kingdom during this period.

Wrigley, following in Rowe's footsteps, wrote extensively on the history of Buganda during the civil wars, transition to colonial rule and the decades of the Uganda Protectorate. His most important and relevant work for this thesis is his article from 1959, "The Christian Revolution in Buganda." Although rather dated, particularly because it was written before the decolonization of Buganda, this article is still significant and applicable to current historical study of the kingdom in the last decades of the 19th century because Wrigley was one of the first historians to conduct in-depth analysis of the role of Christianity in the kingdom during the 19th century. He sees Buganda as the hub of colonial rule and the centre of Christianity in the region. He describes how both colonial politics and Christianity radiated from the kingdom and spread to the neighboring territories.⁵

The internal political and religious revolution of the 1880s, which granted elite status and power to Kagwa and the rest of the Protestant faction, made Baganda particularly equipped to cope with the great change and upheaval that accompanied the Europeans arrival in the 1890s. It is important to note here that Wrigley sees the genesis of the conflict as a reaction to external influences, like Christianity; however, he believes the civil wars are still inherently a Ganda conflict. This is explained by pointing to other places where there were the same European influences, but no conflicts erupted.⁶

For Wrigley this revolution was the result of several coinciding factors. There were significant developments in the military capabilities of Buganda, both in structure

⁵ Wrigley, "Christian Revolution," 33.

⁶ Wrigley, "Christian Revolution," 34.

and technological power, with the introduction of guns through trade with the Arabs from the East coast. Mutesa I had exercised significant control over the kingdom, but his successor Mwanga was a much more erratic and ruthless leader, and did not enjoy the same respect from his people. Simultaneously, a new class of military elite were created, due to military innovations, which were unamenable to the despotic rule of the new kabaka. Wrigley sees this new generation of military leaders as “ideologically antagonistic to the monarch.”⁷ Kagwa was among these men, having been appointed storekeeper of the armory by Mwanga in 1886.⁸ Wrigley sees Kagwa and his contemporaries as turning against Mwanga during the civil wars and 1890s, but he Kagwa and the other leaders in the oligarchy can also be perceived as wanting to work with and maintain the power of the monarchy, especially in a period of great change and external influence. Baganda politics in this period are much more complex and nuanced than the simple opposition between the kabaka and the powerful military chiefs he created.

For Wrigley Baganda “collaborated more actively” with the European “agents of western civilization,” in comparison to their neighbors.⁹ These Africans, Kagwa among them, were bringing “new forms of government, new systems of belief and new types of economic activity to the peoples of East Africa.”¹⁰ These Africans were mediators of the relationship with the Europeans and in reasonable control of the destiny of their kingdom, at least in the early years, and therefore actively chose the path to “civilization” rather

⁷ Wrigley, “Christian Revolution,” 48.

⁸ Wrigley, “Christian Revolution,” 44.

⁹ Wrigley, “Christian Revolution,” 33.

¹⁰ Wrigley, “Christian Revolution,” 33.

than having it forced on them.¹¹ While striving for “civilization” through their relationship with the British, Baganda were able to keep more autonomy in the kingdom and maintain more traditional institutions and culture, referred to by Wrigley as their “national self-consciousness,” than any other territory in the Uganda Protectorate. This “dual distinctiveness” is the crux of Wrigley’s analysis and explanation for change in the kingdom.¹² However, Ganda, particularly elites like Kagwa, were especially attracted to European culture and the period immediately following the civil wars is described by Wrigley as “the scene of an intellectual efflorescence” characterized by the rapid spread of literacy and desire for new knowledge.¹³

Wrigley identifies Kagwa as a key figure, situating him at the centre of an oligarchy which

had a distinctive doctrine and a distinctive ethic, and they were inspired by a dynamic which consisted of eager participation in all forms of European culture, from tea-drinking to cathedral-building.¹⁴

He clearly sees Kagwa as a central figure by his glowing description of his career.

Wrigley begins to hint at Kagwa’s character and the motives for his political actions, particularly as they pertained to the creation of the Protectorate.

Sir Apolo Kagwa, who had begun his career as the leader of a band of teen-age ruffians in the service of a barbarian king, grew into a highly respected Christian statesman, Regent of Buganda for seventeen years and “prime minister” (katikiro) for thirty-seven, recipient of an order of knighthood normally reserved for ambassadors and colonial governors. There is no need to suppose that his character had fundamentally altered,

¹¹ Wrigley, “Christian Revolution,” 33.

¹² Wrigley, “Christian Revolution,” 33, 37.

¹³ Wrigley, “Christian Revolution,” 45.

¹⁴ Wrigley, “Christian Revolution,” 45.

but his power-drives had found new and more constructive modes of operation.¹⁵

Wrigley goes on to a much more in-depth analysis of Kagwa in a second biographical study. Clearly he sees Kagwa as a central figure in Baganda politics, as the chapter was written for an edited collection of essays on the major leaders in Africa in the 19th century. This chapter is one of the few focused studies of Kagwa conducted by a historian, and thus will figure greatly in this thesis. Wrigley's overall perception of Kagwa is that he was a politician who adeptly used religion to fortify his position but was not necessarily a devoted convert, despite his musings in his own writing; for Kagwa "‘Catholic’ and ‘Protestant’ were little more than convenient labels in the struggle for power."¹⁶ Wrigley's works are an exceptionally useful source to mine data on the civil wars that are not otherwise easily available—particularly in terms of British Foreign Office communications.

Wrigley's portrayal of Kagwa provides a good preliminary sketch of his character that will be fleshed out further in this thesis. He makes reference to Kagwa's role in the conflict between the Catholics and Protestants in the early 1890s, his relationship with Lugard, as well as the negotiations which established the Protectorate. His treatment is useful for this thesis as it situates Kagwa as an important and central figure in the context of various events, providing much needed detail of his involvement. Kagwa's influential role in the creation of colonial culture is emphasized, as he decided which British culture and materials to adopt and import to Buganda. Wrigley's article asserts Kagwa's

¹⁵ Wrigley, "Christian Revolution," 45.

¹⁶ Christopher Wrigley "Apolo Kagwa: Katikiro of Buganda" in *Leadership in 19th Century Africa*, ed. Obaro Ikime. (London: published for the Historical Society of Nigeria by Longman, 1974): 118.

important function and begins to suggest the complexity of his actions and motives when dealing with the British, making his work foundational for this thesis and a starting point for subsequent histories.¹⁷

D.A. Low has been studying and writing about the history of Uganda since the 1970s. His works have naturally evolved overtime, influenced by the trends in historical study. From his earliest works, *Buganda in Modern History* and *The Mind of Buganda*, to the recent *Fabrication of Empire*, he has consistently offered a focused and nuanced study of the kingdom and its surrounding territories.¹⁸ Although his ideas have shifted slightly over time, he maintains a similar stance on the nature of the kingdom at the time of European arrival as well as on the terms on which colonial rule was established. Low's *Buganda in Modern History* is organized into seven essays on the period of transition and the years of colonial rule, between the 1880s and 1960s. This book acts as a commentary on the primary documents in *The Mind of Buganda*, offering further explanation and clarification.

In *Buganda in Modern History* Low draws attention to the African perception of the competition between imperial powers that was playing out on their soil, and the meaning of colonial rule. By attempting to look through the eyes of African actors, and juxtaposing this new lens against the older, more Europe-centred view adopted by an earlier generation of historians, Low makes an argument for a more intricate and complicated relationship between the Baganda and the British than previously suggested. However, British culture is still seen as invasive, and Low sees the Ganda as allowing the

¹⁷ Rowe, "Western Impact," 65.

¹⁸ Low's primary source analysis in *The Mind of Buganda* will be discussed later in this chapter.

British to establish political and cultural hegemony.¹⁹ African actors deserve more credit and attention than Low has given them here, which, in the case of Kagwa, this thesis intends to do. More can be revealed about their role in the negotiation of this relationship, in terms of politics but particularly in terms of culture, with closer examination of the primary sources. Without their consent, British efforts to establish control in the region would likely have been met with bloody opposition, especially considering the strength and skill of the Bugandan army in the 1880s and 1890s.

Although *The Fabrication of Empire* modifies the story of the British in Buganda Low tells in *Buganda in Modern History*, his depiction of Buganda's position and situation in the late 19th century as unique persists. It seems that Low does see some continuity from the precolonial to colonial period, but primarily categorizes them as two distinct periods, with a notable shift in culture and practice. In this work he gives more attention to local intellectuals than in his previous works. He shows how certain Buganda, Kagwa included, actively chose to ally the kingdom with Britain rather than be coerced into British rule. Low illustrates the alliance by focusing on the individual actors who participated in the negotiation of treaties, administered governments, and supervised military forces while bringing Uganda under British control.²⁰

Low emphasizes Baganda agents' statecraft, and although Kagwa's is included, he is not as central to the discussion as one might expect. Low focuses his attention on the kabakas as leaders, and as such Mwanga is given more attention than Kagwa during the years of transition at the end of the 19th century. This thesis intends to show that Kagwa is a very influential figure in this period, even more so than Mwanga in many

¹⁹ D. A. Low, *Buganda in Modern History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971): 87.

²⁰ D. A. Low, *Fabrication of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 210-212.

respects, and to argue that he deserves much more attention by historians. Low is still writing from the perspective of the British experience in setting up the Protectorate, rather than the African one. This thesis seeks to explore much of the same content as Low, but from the African viewpoint, most specifically Kagwa's.

Michael Twaddle analyzed and synthesized the early historical works of Low and Wrigley in the series of articles published in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Of particular relevance here is his article "Ganda Receptivity to Change" in which he identifies the contention, shared by most historians of the kingdom, that the Baganda are a "a highly distinctive people," and contends with the wide range of answers to explain their receptivity that have been offered by historians.²¹ Twaddle reviews Wrigley's argument, noting the emphasis he puts on "crucial structural changes taking place in Buganda immediately before the imposition of British control in a 'Christian revolution' whereby chiefly converts managed to transform the Ganda political system..."²² Unlike historians who have stressed the continuities between the precolonial kingdom and colonial Protectorate, Twaddle sees a distinct break. He criticizes Low's "modernizing ideology" for depending on a singular view of Ganda history in which various factions in the kingdom were determined to preserve their interpretation of culture while furthering their own careers. These minority groups included the Christian elite and the older generation of bataka leadership.²³

Rejecting any singular view of the kingdom, Twaddle suggests that many explanations are too narrow in scope, and, more seriously, ask the wrong question

²¹ Michael Twaddle, "Ganda Receptivity to Change." *The Journal of African History* 15, no. 2 (1974): 303-315.303.

²² Twaddle, "Ganda Receptivity," 303.

²³ Twaddle, "Ganda Receptivity," 307.

altogether.²⁴ He questions if the Baganda were indeed as different from their neighbors as historians have supposed, suggesting that their “’urge to excel’ may be more explicable as a consequence of modernization than as its principal cause.”²⁵ Seeing in the literature a search for encompassing explanations for modernization, he asserts that more attention needs to be paid to the details surrounding key events and circumstances.²⁶ There are a plethora of factors that influenced the development of Buganda in the 19th century, including the actions of individual leaders like Kagwa, who to some extent managed the influence of Europeans in the kingdom and moderated changes to politics and culture.

The last decade has seen a revival in the study of precolonial Buganda and the Uganda Protectorate by scholars like Holly Hanson and Neil Kodesh. This new generation of historians approaches the field differently from their predecessors, as the trend in historical study has shifted to social history, with attention to the real life experiences of everyday people living during the period of focus. Further, they do not privilege the European perspective but attempt to understand the actions of Africans based on their recorded experiences on the ground. Hanson’s *Landed Obligation* is a *tour de force* in the social history of the kingdom of Buganda during the latter half of the 19th century and the first years of colonial rule. Kodesh works primarily with the clan culture and healing practices of the *bataka* in his book *Beyond the Royal Gaze*, but has

²⁴ Twaddle, “Ganda Receptivity,” 304.

²⁵ Twaddle, “Ganda Receptivity,” 304.

²⁶ Twaddle, “Ganda Receptivity,” 311.

also written a seminal article on the culture of the Christian elite in the late 19th century and early 20th which explores the process by which colonial culture was created.²⁷

Kodesh and Hanson agree on many points, but diverge on issues pertaining to continuity from the precolonial to colonial in Buganda. Kodesh emphasizes the continuity of practices, in direct opposition to Hanson's claim that there were several significant events that fundamentally changed the political structure of the kingdom in the 19th century. Both of these historians have delved into specific aspects of Ganda society and produced their own interpretations of the same larger scale events and transitions that were the focus of the previous generation of historians. Neither historian focuses their attention on Kagwa or specific individual actors but rather group Ganda based on perceivable common interests. For example, the elite Christian oligarchy is the focus in the case of Kodesh.

Hanson's central focus in *Landed Obligation* is the introduction of trade in ivory and guns and the subsequent development of a mercantile economy in Buganda. Her analysis of the civil wars and introduction of colonial rule primarily looks at external relations and the division and re-definition of land ownership. She has provided an incredibly detailed account of the period, but her work does not deal intimately with Kagwa, addressing his central role in politics only as needed. That being said, she does have some things to say about the Katikiro and his fellow Christian chiefs. She argues against a simplified interpretation of the interaction between Ganda chiefs and British Protectorate officials, as she sees much more than "compliance and cooperation" on

²⁷ Neil Kodesh, "Renovating Tradition: The Discourse of Succession in Colonial Buganda," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 34, no. 3 (2001): 511-541 and Neil Kodesh, *Beyond the Royal Gaze: Clanship and Public Healing in Buganda* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010).

behalf of the chiefs. Although “chiefs made public displays of respect and submitted to overt assertions of authority... they also asked British officials to conform to Ganda notions of rank and abide by Ganda notions of social obligation.”²⁸

Hanson refers to Kagwa only briefly in her discussion and by her own admission does not provide a comprehensive analysis of his character. She points to economic development as the most important change in this period, and as Kagwa is more focused on religion, politics and culture, he does not figure into her analysis until the 1900 Agreement because through it he gains a large estate of economic significance. Although Kagwa does appreciate, consume and praise some commodities and goods that arrive in the kingdom, he is not directly involved in the new mercantile economy generated by them. Hanson gives the later decades of Kagwa’s life the most attention, when his public image is not very good due to a schism between him and the young kabaka, and tension with the bataka over land and power. She argues that Buganda did become more unified under colonial rule but is unsure if this is this because of Kagwa’s efforts to bring stability or simply the by-product of British presence and influence.²⁹ As such, Kagwa is not given the attention necessary to truly evaluate his character or understand his role in what she sees as rapid changes in the structure of the kingdom.

Hanson fundamentally disagrees with the argument for continuity. She sees social order as “ceasing to function” in the mid-19th century because of the introduction of slavery and firearms. Rather than look at the civil wars as an attempt by Baganda to “overthrow a pagan king in order to modernize through the influence of Christianity and

²⁸Holly Hanson, *Landed Obligation: The Practice of Power in Buganda* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003): 150.

²⁹ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 208.

Islam,” she argues that the war fully disrupted social order. She notes in particular the inability of weak kabakas to “quell competition among chiefs below them,” who were able to “strategize together to pressure and oppressive kabaka.”³⁰

Neil Kodesh responds to Hanson’s assertion for a rupture in political practice in this period with his argument about the continuity of the politics of succession, and neatly folds the events of the latter decades of the 19th century and the actions of the Christian elites into that story. Kodesh is at the forefront of historical research on precolonial and colonial Buganda. He characterizes the discursive nature of tradition as its most significant quality. He sees political practice in Buganda as continuous in the colonial period. Political practices are always re-imagined at times of succession, which are usually accompanied by a period of political chaos and upheaval. Kodesh sees the period of conflict and transition as easily compared to succession, and thus the changes that accompany the incorporation of Christianity into the political system, by Kagwa and others, are not explained by colonial rule in any significant way, but rather a continuous practice in the kingdom.³¹ They were attempting to “make Buganda modern by making Christianity traditional.”³² Like many of his predecessors, Kodesh also writes generally, making claims about a group but not contending with Kagwa directly. By keeping their discussion general, Kodesh and others avoid the difficult task of sketching Kagwa’s character and evaluating his motives.

Kodesh picks up on arguments made by Twaddle in the 1970s, and Gikandi in the 1990s, and pushes them further by giving specific examples of the culture being adopted

³⁰ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 94.

³¹ Succession is not hereditary in Buganda. The new kabaka (king) is selected from among thousands of princes of the drum from the various clans.

³² Kodesh, “Renovating Tradition,” 511.

and incorporated, using the account of Kagwa's trip to England written by Ham Mukasa, as well as excerpts from Kagwa's own writings. An analysis of religious and cultural change during the period of transition reveals that other historians are mistaken in defining tradition in terms of the spread of Christianity and the adoption of British material culture.³³ To deem these shifts as indicative of a "dramatic shift in worldview" is denying the true nature of tradition. Kodesh locates tradition "in the conceptual framework that motivates behavioral choices," therefore emphasizing its "historical depth and the ability to accommodate the cultural changes of the colonial period."³⁴

Simon Gikandi's focus is unique and offers both a more specific study of Kagwa's character and a more general commentary on British colonial culture in Africa and beyond. His research focuses on the culture of colonialism more broadly, and has resulted in two publications on the topic. He first, *Maps of Englishness*, is a study of the cultural institutions of the British Empire in which he attempts to "read Englishness as a cultural and literary phenomenon produced in the ambivalent space that separated, but also conjoined, metropole and colony."³⁵ His study turns to writers located within the colonial hierarchies, who are constructing narratives that exist simultaneously within and outside of the "doctrines of Englishness," and it is here that he encounters Apolo Kagwa.³⁶ Gikandi argues that Kagwa and others positioned themselves within colonial

³³ Kodesh, "Renovating Tradition," 511.

³⁴ Kodesh, "Renovating Tradition," 516.

³⁵ Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996): xii.

³⁶ Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*, xii.

English identity and strove to affiliate themselves with “the values at the centre of the colonial condition itself”: civilization, progress, literacy and civility.³⁷

Gikandi went on re-publish Ham Mukasa’s travelogue with his own introduction, in which he uses Kagwa’s trip to England as a perfect example to support the claims made in his earlier book. In his introduction he describes Kagwa as a “committed Christian and knight of the British empire” who played a central role in the incorporation of Buganda into the British Empire.³⁸ He also sees Kagwa a “kind of proto-nationalist” in the sense of his being a

strong advocate for the preservation of Baganda customs and traditions and an ethnographer of cultural practices that seemed to be under threat from Christianity and colonial modernity.³⁹

Gikandi suggests that Kagwa is somewhat of a paradoxical figure, asking “how could one be a devoted imperial subject and an African nationalist at the same time?”⁴⁰ This question is the basis of this thesis, as it argues that feasibly Kagwa can be both if he is represented of Kagwa as a complex individual with varied motives. Gikandi’s treatment at the very least establishes Kagwa as an important figure, and suggests that his interests were multi-faceted. Gikandi is one of the few academics to address Kagwa directly, and his work blazes the trail for the type of analysis of his career undertaken in this thesis.

The older generations of historians approach the history of Buganda with similar themes, but unfortunately do so from within a limited framework that is dated and insufficient in addressing its complexity. More recent historical studies, Hanson’s and Low’s in particular, do not really address men like Kagwa because they are writing

³⁷ Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*, xiv.

³⁸ Simon Gikandi, “African Subjects and the Colonial Project,” *Uganda’s Katikiro in England*, 39.

³⁹ Gikandi, “African Subjects,” 39.

⁴⁰ Gikandi, “African Subjects,” 39.

through the lens of social history, which does not like to focus on the elite or “big men.” By taking up the line of argument from these older works and situating it within the broader arguments of more recent sources this thesis will show how Kagwa was a central and integral part of the narrative of social and cultural change. This work has been started in some of the more current literature by Kodesh and Gikandi, as they shift the focus of the historiography to the culture of colonialism and its manifestations in Buganda. Kodesh’s brief article could only broach this topic in a fairly superficial manner. Gikandi begins to address Kagwa, but in a narrower sense than this thesis as his specific intent is to introduce Mukasa’s travelogue. There exists to this day no comprehensive character study of Kagwa since Wrigley’s chapter in *19th Century Leaders in Africa*.

Kagwa has not received adequate attention from historians considering his centrality in the events of the late 19th century in Buganda, and his undeniable influence in the transition to colonial rule. Kagwa’s was able to navigate through political change and turmoil, ensuring both his own position and the autonomy of the kingdom. Kagwa saw where his motives were aligned with the British, and saw how a relationship with them could be of mutual benefit, to himself, the British and Buganda. The notion of seeking autonomy through a colonial relationship may seem counter intuitive, but taking into account Kagwa’s apparent misunderstanding of the meaning of colonial rule, it seems less contradictory.⁴¹ The terms of the colonial relationship shifted over time, but at the outset in 1900, Kagwa negotiated what he likely saw as a particularly good deal, that would bring mutual benefit to both participating bodies. Further, for Kagwa, the creation

⁴¹ Wrigley, “Apolo Kagwa,” 125.

of the Protectorate was likely as much about retaining political influence in the region as it was about sharing culture and development through invention and industry. There is a significant amount of primary literature to mine, especially in terms of Kagwa's own writings, through which to (re)discover his character, bring him to the forefront of the discussion on the complex events of this period, and suggest a possible alternative depiction of him, his actions and motives.

Building upon the body of secondary literature, filling in the gaps where Kagwa has remained on the periphery, and examining key primary documents more closely, this thesis will present him as a much more complex and multi-layered figure than ever before. Kagwa was neither simple nor predictable; he made decisions on the fly, according to changing circumstances. An analysis of the primary sources available will show Kagwa's important role and suggest the multifaceted nature of his motivations.

Primary Documents

All of the primary documents used in this thesis have been used by historians in the past, generally to extract information to bolster their arguments; this has been done quite thoroughly as it pertains to historical events. This thesis is not unearthing anything new, or coming to any grand new conclusions, however, what it does intend to re-evaluate is how the sources have been used, by reading them here for more than just information. It attempts to understand Kagwa as a character through a re-reading of secondary literature and an analysis of primary sources, both those written by him and those written by people who met him at various points in his lifetime. Those written by Kagwa, or with his direct involvement, are particularly useful for introducing Kagwa's

character into the events of the period and mapping the development of his character across the complicated narrative of his lifetime in the kingdom of Buganda.

Kagwa wrote extensively about the history of Buganda, producing king lists, tracts on culture, and histories of events during his own lifetime. He also wrote articles for the missionary monthly publication *Mengo (Uganda) Notes*, many of which were related to or the first drafts of full length, independent publications. He wrote in Luganda, but most of his writing was translated into English, so as to be available for both Ganda and European audiences. His seminal work, *Basekabaka be Buganda* (The Kings of Buganda), published in 1898, was the culmination of many years of work and built upon a tract written about the civil wars.⁴² It will figure heavily in this thesis, particularly in Chapter Three, as one of the only primary sources that documents the events of the civil wars and the complicated transition to colonial rule from a Ganda perspective. Kagwa's *Basekabaka* is being read here with little contestation of the timeline of events he sketches or the nature of his narrative, which is relatively bland when compared to his contemporaries like Ham Mukasa. The precedent for approaching Kagwa's book in this way has been set by the historians surveyed in the above section. Many of Kagwa's articles show evidence of his persuasiveness and possible ulterior motives, as he uses them to give his own spin to events, but *Basekabaka* appears not to have this intention. Perhaps that is because Kagwa was attempting to demonstrate his ability to provide an accurate and unbiased account of events, while asserting the value of

⁴² Apolo Kagwa and M. S. M. Semakula Kiwanuka. *Basekabaka be Buganda* (Nairobi: East African Pub. House, 1971). This text was originally published in 1899, and has been published subsequently in a number of different versions. M.S.M Kiwanuka's translation has been cited here, however, it only includes the later chapters of original text. For the earlier chapters, see "The Reign of Mwanga II," *Ekitabo kya Basekabaka be Buganda*. trans. Simon Musoke (Kampala: n.p., 1953): 138-277.

the history of the kingdom. Kagwa also includes various treaties and agreements in this text, which outline discussions and the agreed upon terms between different groups at various stages of the conflict. Negotiations were ongoing as the conflict raged on for almost two decades in various forms. *The Customs of Buganda* recounts the traditions and practices of the kingdom from a historical standpoint, and serves the purpose here of comparison to changes happening in the 1890s and 1900s.⁴³ John Roscoe also wrote extensively on the kingdom in his large volume *The Baganda*, which is closely related to Kagwa's *Basekabaka* and *Customs* as they worked intimately together in their research and writing.

Although Kagwa's own writings include some interesting clues to his character and motives, his somewhat detached approach to his own life makes it difficult to paint a full picture of him without referring to other primary literature. Personal letters and public statements offer a better understanding of Kagwa than some of his own writings, and so Low's *The Mind of Buganda: Documents from a Modern African Kingdom*, a collection of primary documents from the late precolonial and colonial period, is an integral source for analysis in this thesis. Low's *Documents* is particularly effective in showing the tenuous relationship between Kagwa and Kabaka Mwanga, and the evolving relationship of the kingdom with the outside world, from Mutesa's reign to Kagwa's death and beyond. The collection includes important official documents, such as the full 1900 Agreement, correspondence between Kagwa, Mwanga and other leading Ganda with each other and the Europeans, and excerpts from contemporary histories. Low includes an insightful introduction in which he emphasizes the objective of the collection

⁴³ Apolo Kagwa, *The Customs of the Buganda*, trans. May M. Edel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934).

being to understand the “mind of Buganda,” meaning the kingdom as an entity rather than the people.⁴⁴

The travelogue written by Mukasa, *Uganda’s Katikiro in England*, was a product of the journals and notes recorded by Mukasa and Kagwa of their journey to and time in England.⁴⁵ This travelogue was written and published at a time when the majority of travelogues in the imperial library were written by Europeans about their adventures in Africa-- most notably for present purposes Henry Morton Stanley’s *Through the Dark Continent* and John Hanning Speke’s *The Discovery of the Source of the Nile*.⁴⁶ Although Mukasa is uninterested in natural history or topography, this text occupies and contests the same cultural space as these mainstream imperial texts and travel books.⁴⁷ Originally, the book was intended to be written in Luganda and published in Buganda for consumption within the kingdom. Reverend Ernest Millar, the translator who accompanied them on their journey, has claimed the book was originally written for solely Ganda consumption. But this is contestable because shortly after their arrival in England Mukasa was approached by several Englishmen with the request to read his account and suggested they could get the text published for very little cost.⁴⁸ Therefore, the audience for this text is not just the Baganda, but the English and the empire writ large as well.

⁴⁴ Low, “Introduction,” *The Mind of Buganda: Documents of the Modern History of an African Kingdom* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1971): xv.

⁴⁵ Ham Mukasa, *Uganda’s Katikiro in England*, ed. Simon Gikandi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998) (originally published in 1902)

⁴⁶ Henry M. Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent* (Toronto: John B. Magurn, 1878); John Hanning Speke, *Journal of the discovery of the source of the Nile* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1863).

⁴⁷ Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*, 41.

⁴⁸ Mukasa, *Uganda’s Katikiro in England*, 79.

The text was created through dialogue with various Englishmen who accompanied them on the trip as well as those they met on the way, especially officials in the British Colonial Office and members of the Church Missionary Society. For this thesis, Mukasa's text is an invaluable resource, as Kagwa is featured as a main character and it is written from a Ganda perspective. Kagwa's reaction to British industry and culture is thoroughly documented and Mukasa provides a view into his personal world not available anywhere else in print.

Aside from texts produced by Africans in the period, a number of primary sources written by Europeans also shed light on the culture and political climate of the kingdom during this period. The first generation of British political emissaries to East Africa were adventurers and scouts sent to survey the land and people, and assess the viability of the region for colonization. Kagwa's contemporaries, both those who met him in Africa and on his trip to England, saw him as a most noteworthy African, the likes of which they had never seen. The published memoirs of several of these men will be used to map opinions of Kagwa in the last decades of the 19th century. Lugard's memoir, *The Story of the Uganda Protectorate*, is illustrative of his close relationship with Kagwa.⁴⁹ He writes extensively of Kagwa's honour in battle and devout faith in glowing terms. He also included a section on Buganda in his famous diaries and *The Rise of our East African Empire*.⁵⁰ Well-known for his role in the establishment of a number of the largest colonies in Africa, including Nigeria, Lugard provides a unique perspective on events on the ground, but his broad experiences mean his writing lacks the personal quality of some

⁴⁹ Sir F. R. Lugard. *The Story of the Uganda Protectorate* (London: Marshall & Son, n.d.).

⁵⁰ F. D. Lugard. *The Rise of our East African Empire* (London: Frank Cass & Company Ltd., 1968).

of the other Europeans who dedicated their time in Africa solely to Uganda. Further, he does not include much detailed information about the Africans he encounters and deals with, for example, there is little to no mention of Kagwa in his diary, but only of the king and other leaders. This is likely due to the intended audience of his diary being mostly European, but for contemporary historical study, which has shifted its focus to analyze both European and African perspectives on empire, it is missing important details.

John Roscoe, in Buganda during the early years of the Protectorate, wrote *Twenty Five Years in East Africa*, his memoirs on his time the region.⁵¹ He praises Kagwa as a leader of his people and draws a connection between the British admiration of the Baganda and the many great qualities of Apolo Kagwa. He says, “Sir Apolo deservedly stands at the head of his nation... he has been a wise guide and faithful leader in everything that would lead to progressive development. He has ever been ready to take an active share even in menial work that would be for the good of the country.”⁵²

The writings of missionaries, like the journal of Alfred Robert Tucker, the Bishop of Uganda from 1897 to 1911, and Charles W. Hattersley’s 1908 *The Baganda at Home*, have contributed significantly to our understanding of the day to day functioning of the kingdom in terms of religious and cultural practices. Tucker chronicled his time in Buganda with specific reference to religion and culture, while Hattersley provides arguably one of the most comprehensive texts detailing the culture of the kingdom in the early years of the Protectorate. His book has proven incredibly useful for historians working on British colonial culture and its translation on the ground in Africa. Being written by a missionary about African culture it has an obvious bias, primarily in his

⁵¹ John Roscoe, *Twenty-Five Years in East Africa*, (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969).

⁵² Roscoe, *Twenty-Five Years*, 172-173.

choice of subject matter, and the tone of his descriptions. That being said, for this thesis Hattersley's book is a core text, which fleshes out Gikandi's claims about culture. It is used extensively in Chapter Four.

The missionary publication *Mengo Notes*, renamed *Uganda Notes* once the Protectorate was established, was produced by the Church Missionary Society in Uganda and included short updates on current events, as well as longer pieces on specific topics written by European missionaries and officials, as well as Africans.⁵³ As previously discussed, Kagwa wrote several pieces for this paper, including historical tracts on the civil wars and the coming of religion to Buganda, as well as a lengthy recounting of the coronation and birthday of the infant kabaka Daudi Chwa. His piece on the coronation in particular is central to the discussion of culture in Chapter Four.

There is wealth of primary documents from Buganda from the mid-19th century on, and much of what is cited above has been explored by historians to a great extent. That being said, their readings have not been motivated by a desire to understand Kagwa as a central figure in the period, or read between the lines of his writings in particular to understand his actions and motives, and the terms with which he describes them. This is the work that this thesis begins, but by no means can complete. The following chapter assesses Kagwa's political career and attempts to re-inject him into the historical narrative of the civil wars of the 1880s and transition to colonial rule in the 1890s. The final chapter suggests the possibility of Kagwa's diverse motives for engaging in the negotiation and establishment of the Protectorate by addressing his understanding of

⁵³ "Mengo Notes," *The Uganda Journal*. (Kampala: Uganda Society, 1934).

colonialism as not only a political, but also cultural endeavour and discussing the various projects he undertook.

Chapter Four:

Apolo Kagwa and Colonial Engagement

Well known for his early conversion to Christianity and exploits as a youth at court, Apolo Kagwa became a leading politician during the civil wars of the late 19th century. Kagwa adeptly navigated the complex political landscape during a period of great uncertainty and did his best to fix the political disarray in the wake of the civil wars. Kagwa was especially well suited to this task, as he was capable of mediating between the various stakeholders. He did so to his personal benefit, as well as that of the kingdom overall, and helped to bring stability in the 1890s after over a decade of civil war and conflict. Kagwa has most often been portrayed in a binary fashion by historians and Ganda, as either proto-nationalist or a colleague of the British aiding in the implementation of colonial rule. Kagwa is often portrayed as either selfishly motivated, or a hero working on behalf of his people, leaving little space for anything in between. This perception of Kagwa is a grave oversimplification and does little justice to the reality of his character; it seems apparent that he was not only an important actor but also a flexible, adept, intelligent and clever politician, whose personal interests were often complimentary to the British mission and resulted in a situation that was beneficial for the stability of the kingdom.

Kagwa learned from his time at court as a young boy the importance of religion in the politics of the kingdom, and he cleverly chose the Protestant faith as his vehicle in the 1880s. Kagwa was attracted to Christianity, and Protestantism more specifically, for a number of reasons. Kagwa's curiosity in the teachings of the missionaries in his youth is clear, but it seems that it was not until the 1880s that he realized the power of Christianity

as tool to gain political power and prestige. The persecution of the Christian converts in 1886 was a seminal moment for Kagwa which affirmed his conviction and is testament to his faith.

Throughout his career Kagwa used Protestantism to various ends: for personal power and political prestige, to gain regional dominance through the extension of the kingdom, and to foster relationships with European visitors. He protected the kingdom from threats inherent in the colonial relationship, and empowered it through any means possible, including establishing the Protectorate. Many times in his career, Kagwa had the opportunity to usurp power, or make fundamental changes to secure his own position, but on the whole he resisted. This can be read as evidence of his understanding of how to use religion and relationships with the Europeans to gain personal power, but also to maintain the authority of the kabaka and the general political structure of the kingdom to ensure continued self-government for his people.

Kagwa is a complicated and multilayered figure whose actions have been subject to conflicting interpretations. Within his own lifetime Bataka critics, jostling for a return of clan lands and political power, saw Kagwa as the source of their perceived injustice.¹ In Bugandan nationalist literature from the 1940s onwards, Kagwa has been heralded as the father of the modern kingdom and is revered as an important historical figure. Historians of Buganda have often been less than kind to Kagwa and offered a fairly one-dimensional discussion of his career and character focused on his role in the 1900

¹ Holly Hanson, *Landed Obligation: The Practice of Power in Buganda* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003): 227.

Agreements and the subsequent consolidation of his power and distribution of lands to himself and other leading chiefs, at the expense of the *bataka*.²

Kagwa's specific motivations for converting to the Protestant faith in the 1880s may not be the same as those that drove him to build allegiances with British agents in the 1890s or to participate in the negotiations that established the Uganda Protectorate at the turn of the century. However, in essence all his actions were efforts to accumulate and sustain political power, but not always to a selfish end. Kagwa appeared to be acutely concerned with maintaining the relative sovereignty of the kingdom. He was undeniably interested in a special relationship with the British, even if that meant official colonial rule, but his actions suggest that he wanted to be directly involved in defining its terms. Many of his actions garnered him significant political, cultural and social power, but could also be read as efforts to foster and maintain peace in the kingdom, necessary to maintain his position and protect the kingdom from possible external threats. When his interests or those of the kingdom did not align with the British he did not shy away from the challenge but worked creatively to mediate the situation for the best possible outcome. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to interrogate Apolo Kagwa's conversion and political career leading up to the establishment of official colonial overrule in 1900 to show how he used religion and cultivated relationships with Europeans as means to gaining power vis-a-vis his adversaries both within and outside of

² See Hanson's *Landed Obligation* for the most recent in-depth discussion of the consequences of the system of mailo land (re)distribution. Others who had commented on the issue of land and Kagwa's reputation include D. A. Low, *Buganda in Modern History* (University of California Press, 1971); Christopher Wrigley, "The Christian Revolution in Buganda." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2, no. 1 (1959): 42; Christopher Wrigley, *Kingship and State: The Buganda Dynasty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa: Katikiro of Buganda," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2, no. 1 (1959) and Michael Twaddle. "The Bakungu Chiefs of Buganda under British Colonial Rule, 1900-1930," *Journal of African History* 10 no. 2 (1969).

the kingdom, and used his position to bring stability to the kingdom and secure it the best possible future in the changing political landscape of East Africa.

Kagwa's story begins in the late 1870s, as foreign missionaries were arriving in the kingdom from Europe. The Baganda and their kabaka were uniquely amenable to their arrival and historians have offered several explanations for the receptivity of Baganda to Islam and Christianity in the 19th century. D.A. Low has contended that the social structure of the kingdom in the mid-19th century made it especially amenable to new ideas and religions. This is explained in terms of the decline of the bataka, whose leaders were responsible for communicating with the numerous Kiganda gods and acting as mediums for the people.³ The power of the bataka was diminished by the expansion of the royally-appointed chieftainships, and usurped by the kabaka himself. However, kabakas in the 19th century were not credible religious figures as they had never served that function before. Therefore, as the kabakaship become increasingly powerful, the Kiganda religion declined. Where Kiganda religion had once represented a valid opposition to royal authority, now there was a void.

Christopher Wrigley and others have extended this line of argument and pointed to this void as the reason for the success of foreign religions in the latter half of the century. Therefore, when the missionaries arrived at the court of Mutesa, they were adopted into the political system as pseudo-chiefs, and lived similarly to those appointed by the kabaka, while simultaneously filling the religious void left by the decline of the

³ D. A. Low, *Buganda in Modern History* (University of California Press, 1971): 83.

bataka and the Kiganda gods.⁴ Wrigley also argues that there was likely a “special psychological factor” that contributed to the success of the missionaries in finding converts. He points to the prevalence of homosexual practices at the courts of both Mutesa I and Mwanga II; it had become commonplace and in some instances even mandatory for boys and men of all ages to engage in homosexual activities. Wrigley attributes this to the influence of Arab traders, who had maintained a presence at the royal court for several decades. He argues that this behaviour was in opposition to Ganda moral norms and the root cause of much of the generational and hierarchical tension at court. This crisis of morality made many young Ganda particularly receptive to Christian teachings regarding sin, and in his estimation likely won the missionaries more converts.⁵ This analysis is problematic as it is difficult to determine to what extent homosexual practices were common and no evidence exists to suggest the practice was imported from Arab culture.

Wrigley also explains the receptivity to new ideas and faiths in terms of an ongoing quest for knowledge within Ganda culture. He argues that Ganda, especially in the 19th century, were particularly open to new and unfamiliar peoples and ideas. This is however a difficult point to prove as it was not until the 19th century that there any significant contact with the world beyond the Great Lakes region. Wrigley’s argument may be revised to note that receptivity to new ideas was a product of increased contact, beginning with Arab traders, in the 19th century. The specific teachings of the foreign religions offered something that the Kiganda gods did not -- the promise of life after

⁴ Christopher Wrigley, “The Christian Revolution in Buganda.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2, no. 1 (1959): 42; Christopher Wrigley, *Kingship and State: The Buganda Dynasty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 250.

⁵ Wrigley, “Christian Revolution,” 42.

death. The content of the missionary teachings was attractive as it filled a spiritual void in Buganda that was breeding social instability.

Holly Hanson agrees with both Wrigley and Low that Buganda was in a state of ideological crisis at the moment the European missionaries arrived, but believes that study of conversion has overshadowed other, ostensibly more important, developments during the period. The scope of her study is primarily economic, and she points to the development of trade networks with the coast dealing in the exchange of ivory, cloth, slaves and firearms as fundamentally altering Ganda society. Hanson explains the adoption of new faiths as the result of these socio-economic changes.

Hanson goes on to argue that the prevalence of young people among the converts has been attributed to their willingness to explore new faiths because they had less to lose at the bottom of the hierarchy than did the leading chiefs.⁶ Furthermore, as the new religions preached monogamy and polygamy was common practice in Buganda, younger men who were not yet married or had only one wife would likely have found conversion easier than older men who had multiple wives.⁷ Young pages, like Kagwa, who were in the midst of their political education and coming of age journey in the 1870s, just as foreign missionaries settled in the kingdom, were exceptionally receptive to the teachings of Christianity. Hanson asserts that whether these young men saw the foreign religions as a possible source of power, or were simply attracted to the explanations they provided for life, death and the world around them, is a difficult question to answer. However, for her it is apparent that Kagwa and others were being swayed from the influence of the

⁶ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 105.

⁷ Wrigley, "Christian Revolution," 42.

chiefs of the old guard, katikiro Mukasa primarily, and the hierarchy of the kiganda religion.⁸

The most important fact for Hanson is that the people who converted did not stop being Baganda, especially intellectually, despite it being a period of great social change and strong external influence. She argues that the converts used new sets of ideas to create social institutions that served functions similar to existing organizations in Buganda. Under Mwanga, the locus of power shifted from the kabaka to the batongole and adherence to one of the foreign religions was an important element of the authority and identity of those chiefs. She contends that “the new religions not only became spiritually effective practices and forms of identity, but also provided ways to organize economic activity and to wield political power.”⁹ Hanson’s multi-dimensional explanation for conversion draws on political, socioeconomic and cultural motives and thus offers a thorough framework through which to analyse Kagwa’s conversion and early political career.

Simon Gikandi, in his introduction to Ham Mukasa’s travelogue *Uganda’s Katikiro in England*, has argued that Kagwa’s conversion was “as much an act of faith as it was the acquisition of what we may call the authority of modernity.”¹⁰ He stresses the need to understand the identities and ambitions of men like Kagwa in the culture of colonial modernity; through this lens, it is possible to see why they were willing to fight civil wars in the name of their new religions. Gikandi again points to the continuous quest for “the truth” or “true understanding” but emphasizes the imperial aspirations of

⁸ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 105.

⁹ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 98.

¹⁰ Gikandi, “African Subjects and Colonial Projects,” *Uganda’s Katikiro in England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998): 17.

the kingdom in the 19th century as shaping their desire to convert. He argues that Christianity, along with Islam, represented a source of instruction and knowledge that could be used to help achieve dominance over rival groups in East Africa. The fact that the majority of converts were young men from the elite classes, and therefore destined to be the next leaders of the kingdom, cannot be overlooked. Therefore, for Gikandi, their political futures are an important factor in understanding their conversion.

Kagwa experimented with religion during his early days at the kabaka's court. He wrote, "I, Apolo Katikiro, began to read in earnest...[when I] was about 13 years of age, and I left my father and went to become one of the king's boys.... But when I began to read I found that I was unable to succeed owing to the Swahili alphabet being used."¹¹ He then joined the pupils studying in Luganda and learning English at the home of the missionary Mackay. Kagwa did not begin writing in earnest in the 1890s, but he addressed the topics of his conversion in his youth and the events of the civil war in *Basekabaka* and short articles written for *Mengo Notes*. In his writing he appeared very dedicated to his faith.

By the time Kagwa was writing in the 1890s, the British were entrenched in the kingdom and Protestantism played an important role in colonial politics, which Kagwa understood, so he wisely played up his faith in his writing. He described the events surrounding his own conversion and baptism in a piece entitled "How Religion came to Uganda?"[sic] printed in the CMS monthly publication *Mengo Notes*. It is difficult to know the extent to which Kagwa fully adopted Christian values internally at the time of his conversion in 1884 as he wrote this piece for a primarily Protestant missionary

¹¹ Apolo Kagwa, "How Religion Came to Uganda," *Mengo Notes*, (January 1903): 6.

audience in the early 1900s. He described how shortly after the death of Mutesa I, he came to live in Mengo to study the bible and his baptism by the Protestant missionaries there.¹² To understand Kagwa as a politician his career must be mapped from his early days as a page to his rise to power through the civil wars and subsequent three decade reign as katikiro.

Mutesa I was kabaka when Kagwa arrived in Mengo as a boy, and when he died several years later his son Mwanga took the throne. The accession of Mwanga II in 1884 was celebrated by all the Christian “readers” because they thought that he would give them more freedom to learn and practice their religion.¹³ They were greatly disappointed when in 1886 Mwanga sent a man to apprehend the students of the CMS missionary Mackay at his home. Three boys were arrested and burnt to death, which drove many converts into seclusion. Mwanga’s persecution of the Christians served to draw them closer together rather than decrease the number of converts as he had hoped.

After the violent martyrdom, many boys were drawn back to MacKay’s house as a safe haven in which to learn and practice their religion, as well as learn to read and write. Unlike some of the young men there, like Ham Mukasa, later famous for his writings on the history of the kingdom, Kagwa did not build close personal relationships with the missionaries, but focused on learning to read and write, and his budding political career. The martyrdoms of 1886 united the young converts against the kabaka, and henceforth Christianity played an important role in politics. Regardless of the extent to

¹² Sir Apolo Kagwa and Reverend Henry Wright Duta, “How Religion Came to Uganda,” *Mengo Notes* (October 1903): 54.

¹³ A term used to describe Protestant converts. They call themselves “readers” because Protestantism emphasizes the individuals’ relationship with God and ability to read and interpret scripture themselves.

which Kagwa truly converted, he outwardly gave the impression of steadfast devotion as he understood the value of religion and used it as a means to gain political power during the civil wars. As religion became the organizing factor for political parties, it also became a major feature and cause for the division between Kagwa and Mwanga.¹⁴

Where Kagwa had committed himself to Protestantism, Mwanga constantly changed his mind about which religion he favored, which destabilized his position as kabaka during the civil wars and conflict of the late 1880s and 1890s as Kagwa was becoming more popular and gaining support. However, despite his identity as a Protestant Kagwa never solely focused his attention on religion, as did many young converts who had turned to the church for their career. Although Christianity was a major influence in his life, Kagwa adhered to its tenets to varying degrees, at times only as needed to bolster his political career.

Although Mwanga spared Kagwa's life during the massacres, he never forgot the severe beating he received. Kagwa described his arrest and beating:

[H]e arrested me, Apolo Kagwa, but he did not spear me, but took his spear and hit me on the head, striking me thrice, and then seized me and I was beaten with thirty stripes perhaps. I don't very well remember. Because after he had beaten me he commanded three men to kick me after they had tied my hands, whilst I lay on the ground, and they took all the skin off me and I was all but dead, and only came round after they had untied me.¹⁵

This experience became an important badge of honour for Kagwa and contributed to his credibility as a leader during the following years of conflict and civil war. His arrest can be seen as a turning point in his religious and political life, as he emerged stronger and

¹⁴ Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa," 118.

¹⁵ Kagwa, "How Religion Came to Uganda," 54.

more self-assured, and began to portray himself as a symbol of Christian survival in the kingdom. The massacres served to unify the young Christian converts, who began to establish themselves as a strong political opposition to the kabaka. By sparing Kagwa and others, Mwanga had unwittingly allowed his strongest opposition in the kingdom to survive. In an effort by Mwanga to regain the support of the Christians, Kagwa was awarded the prestigious post of Storekeeper less than a year after the purges, testament to the kabaka's unpredictable character, and evidence that their relationship was not irreparably damaged.¹⁶

Mwanga drifted away from the Christians again in 1888 and under the persuasion of the older generation chiefs threatened to arrest and execute all those who followed the foreign religions. The plan was unsuccessful, but added to popular alienation and the growing opposition to the kabaka. The Christians and Muslims united against the tyrannical kabaka and forced Mwanga to flee across Lake Victoria.¹⁷ The Muslims had originally proposed to place one of Mwanga's brothers --Kiwewa -- on the throne, but when they brought the more supportive of his brothers, Kalema, this bred distrust between the Christians and Muslims.¹⁸

Shortly after the new government was formed fighting broke out between the Muslims and Christians, in October 1888, and the Christians were forced out of the kingdom into Ankole. The new kabaka betrayed the Muslims for the "old" chiefs who had originally supported Mwanga in his campaign against the converts, but he was

¹⁶ Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa," 118.

¹⁷ Kagwa, "The Reign of Mwanga II," *Ekitabo kya Basekabaka be Buganda*, trans. Simon Musoke (Kampala: n.p., 1953): 144.

¹⁸ Wrigley, "Christian Revolution," 43; Kagwa, "Reign of Mwanga II," 145.

defeated by the Muslims.¹⁹ These events led to several years of conflict in Buganda, in which the various political factions fought under the banners of religion as they vied for power. The conflict was more about political dominance and control of the kingdom than religion. Upon Mwanga's return in October 1889, he appointed Apolo Kagwa the katikiro of the kingdom.²⁰

Once they had expelled the Muslims from the kingdom in 1889, the Catholics and Protestants set to work establishing a system of power sharing. Mwanga had been reinstalled on the throne as a figurehead after the Christians defeated the Muslims, but he was undeniably a supporter of the Catholics. The Catholics had wooed him into forming an alliance that they both desperately needed to form a strong opposition the growing power of the Protestant faction. This was a marriage of convenience, albeit a temporary and tenuous one. The kabaka's alliance with the Catholics meant the top post of katikiro was awarded to Kagwa as one of the Protestant leaders, in the system of power sharing. The use of this system was a concerted attempt to establish a balanced power structure at the centre of the kingdom in hopes of bringing lasting peace.²¹

Christopher Wrigley points to the fact that the motivation behind the rebellion has been painted as religious, in reaction to the persecutions of the Christians, but that the situation was more complicated than that. He believes contemporaries saw the conflict in terms of opposition to Mwanga's tyranny, a line of argument picked up by Holly Hanson.²² She rejects the older explanation that the Baganda were fighting over religion, but argues they were fighting *with* it. They were using their religious affiliations as

¹⁹ Kagwa, "Reign of Mwanga II," 148.

²⁰ Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa," 118.

²¹ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 116-117.

²² Wrigley, "Christian Revolution," 43.

organizing principles that legitimized their actions in the war.²³ Hanson is therefore questioning the extent to which Ganda truly converted to foreign religions, suggesting that perhaps some chiefs converted to simply to obtain political power. It seems Kagwa was motivated both by true faith, as seen in his willingness to face Mwanga during the Christian massacres, but also, with other chiefs, by the desire to utilize his Christian identities to garner support and power in a period of conflict and change.

Competition for power during periods of disorder and transition had been a feature at the royal court of the kingdom for over a century.²⁴ During Mwanga's reign the kingdom was perpetually in this state as chiefs challenged his authority. He never received the full support of his people, which eventually led to his removal from the throne by force. As times of succession, or in the case of Mwanga, deposition, were traditionally accompanied by competition among elites for power, the struggle that manifested in civil war in the late 1880s was typical of a longstanding political practice. Hanson argues "the new religious communities became arenas for competition over status in the same way that Ganda chiefs had competed with each other over relative status in other circumstances."²⁵ Kagwa adeptly saw Protestantism as a means to gain political power and quickly ascended to leadership of the faction. He understood the importance of his faith in gaining support from and facilitating beneficial relationships with the ever-growing base of British missionaries and agents in the region. As Kagwa became a rising star during the civil wars, Mwanga's star waned. Understanding how his religion could be used as a possible tool to gain power Kagwa adeptly capitalized on the

²³ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 106.

²⁴ Neil Kodesh, "Renovating Tradition: The Discourse of Succession in Colonial Buganda," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 34, no. 3 (2001): 519.

²⁵ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 107.

cache of his Protestantism to gain power over Mwanga and both the Catholic and Muslim factions by forging strong relationships early on with the British.

The foreign religions, literacy, slavery, firearms and the collapse of royal authority were all recent imports to Ganda society, but the competition for power among chiefs and elites was a common practice in politics.²⁶ Men like Kagwa simply utilized new ideas to legitimize and consolidate his power vis-à-vis other factions. In his writings Kagwa spoke to his identity as both a Protestant and a politician, and skillfully acknowledged both his audiences. He must have recognized the importance of sharing a religion with the powerful foreign men who might help his faction in the civil wars. Ganda Christians and Muslims alike were challenged to integrate the new religions into their government and society, which at times proved to be an extremely difficult, if not impossible task.

Where Low and Hanson have reduced Kagwa's motives to a single-minded interest in personal power, they neglect the possibility of converging interests serving more complex motives. Kagwa's actions both brought him personal power and as a result guaranteed the overall political well-being of the kingdom. A closer reading of Kagwa's *Basekabaka* and primary documents from Low's collection show his focus on bringing stability to the kingdom through his own prominence and also explains why he forged relationships with British colonial agents when and where he thought they were most beneficial to his cause.

During the civil war, Kagwa proposed negotiations to bring an end to the fighting with both the Muslims and the Catholics, which he noted in *Basekabaka*. In late 1890 he

²⁶ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 107.

wrote to the Muslims, currently fighting on the outskirts of the kingdom, “[i]n case you no longer want to fight, return to Buganda.”²⁷ The Muslims’ refusal was interpreted by Kagwa as an objection to their “peace plan.”²⁸ Kagwa also writes of the Catholic desire to continue fighting in early 1892, against Protestant protestations, and blames the ensuing conflict between the two groups on the former.²⁹ These instances can be read as evidence of Kagwa’s desire for a return to political stability in the kingdom, even at the possible expense of the Protestant position; however Kagwa and his cohorts still believed the best chance the kingdom had at lasting peace was if the Protestant faction achieved and maintained “chief power.”³⁰

By the late 1880s Buganda had become involved in the Scramble for Africa, and the first colonial officers arrived in the country. Kagwa and other Protestant leaders looked to the new British visitors for support, to strengthen their position against the Catholics, who turned to both the French and Germans for aid. In the spring of 1890 Mr. Jackson arrived in Buganda and informed the Baganda leadership, that the “country [now] fell in the British sphere of influence.”³¹ Quick to insert and assert himself in the situation, Kagwa wrote to the British Counsel General stationed in Zanzibar as acting katikiro in April to explain the state of affairs in Buganda. He made clear their shared religion, stating all “the people of Mwanga in Uganda, are called Christians.”³² The purpose of his letter was to explain the division of the people of Buganda into two parties, the Catholics and Protestants, who had “no common counsel,” and make clear to

²⁷ Kagwa, “Reign of Mwanga II,” 157.

²⁸ Kagwa, “Reign of Mwanga II,” 157.

²⁹ Kagwa, “Reign of Mwanga II,” 157.

³⁰ Low, “The Protestant Victory, 1892,” *The Mind of Buganda*, 27.

³¹ Kagwa, “Reign on Mwanga II,” 155.

³² Low, “The Company’s Occupation of Buganda, 1890,” *The Mind of Buganda*, 25.

him Protestant support for having the kingdom “put under English protection” while the Catholics were reluctant to do so, causing the division.³³ In June it appeared the Protestants had chosen their allies wisely as the Anglo-German Agreement was signed, unequivocally confirming the British position in East Africa.³⁴

Concerned with his own precarious position, Mwanga responded with skepticism to the increasing British presence, especially in light of his unsuccessful attempts to gain support from them for his campaign to regain the throne while in exile the previous year. However, Mwanga had also written a letter to the British explaining his position in April, as Kagwa had. He asserted that his people did not support an exclusive alliance with the British, but instead invited “all Europeans of all nations to come to Uganda, to build and trade as they like.”³⁵ Low has argued that Mwanga’s letter was evidence of his “determination to secure the autonomy of the kingdom.”³⁶ He then describes Kagwa’s letter in drastically different terms, emphasizing his desire to have the kingdom come under “English protection” almost solely as a means to gain ground for the Protestant faction in the conflict.³⁷ Low’s assertion that the two men were writing with “radically different agendas” seems questionable here. Kagwa’s desire for protection can also be read as an attempt to bring an end to the conflict, by recreating a strong locus of power in the kingdom, whereas Mwanga’s calls for “Europeans of all nations to come to Uganda”

³³ Low, “The Company’s Occupation of Buganda, 1890,” *The Mind of Buganda*, 25.

³⁴ Wrigley, “Apolo Kagwa,” 119.

³⁵ Low, “The Company’s Occupation of Buganda, 1890,” *The Mind of Buganda*, 26

³⁶ Low, *Fabrication of Empire*, 135.

³⁷ Low, *Fabrication of Empire*, 135.

would open the kingdom up to more competition among Europeans and offered no resolution for the ongoing internal conflict.³⁸

At this point the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) dispatched young Captain Frederick Lugard from its Mombasa base to Buganda to facilitate the relationship.³⁹ Lugard delivered the British promise of help in their campaign against the Muslims, which made Kagwa and the rest of his faction all the more amenable to Jackson's request to sign a treaty of protection.⁴⁰ The treaty was signed in December of 1890 and shortly after Lugard and Kagwa departed together to fight the Muslim forces in the north. They successfully drove them out of the kingdom, one of Kagwa's few significant military victories. While Kagwa was a capable warrior he was seen as an inferior tactician by the troops, particularly in comparison to a great warrior like Kakungulu, and was much more successful off the battlefield. As Wrigley notes, "it was [in] politics rather than war that his talents found their most effective expression."⁴¹ Therefore, Lugard was able to offer much needed help to the Protestants in their military battle against the Muslims.

However, the capabilities of Lugard's military force should not be overstated, as Wrigley emphasizes that although strong, his "force was far too small and poorly armed to have confronted the united army of Buganda." They were only able to establish themselves through their association with the Protestants. By capitalizing on the kingdom's "internal divisions" Lugard was able to "insert the wedge of imperial

³⁸ Low, *Fabrication of Empire*, 135.

³⁹ Low, "The Company's Occupation of Buganda, 1890," *The Mind of Buganda*, 25-26

⁴⁰ Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa," 119.

⁴¹ Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa," 119.

power.”⁴² Thus, although the British were let in to the kingdom by Kagwa and others, it must be noted that they did not conquer the Baganda. Lugard, and subsequent British agents, used the Baganda leaders in a reciprocal relationship. The Protestant Baganda needed the British to strengthen their position as the “emerging chiefly hegemony” and the British used Kagwa and his peers to extend their influence across the rest of Buganda.⁴³

Holly Hanson has argued that Kagwa and the Protestant faction granted Lugard “kabaka-like powers” in the 1890s because the central locus of Ganda authority had been damaged over the previous two decades by “the destabilizing cycle of long-distance trade in cloth, guns, ivory and people and then by the civil war.”⁴⁴ Kagwa and others propped Lugard up as the “Kampala European” (or “European kabaka” as he was called by the other factions) in an attempt to “re-create legitimate authority” in the kingdom with the hope of brokering lasting peace.⁴⁵ Mwanga could not offer the strong centre that was required to bring the conflict to an end, and had lost the confidence of most of the leading chiefs.

Almost bankrupt by 1891, the IBEAC had become reliant on the support of Kagwa and his faction for continued presence in the region.⁴⁶ Kagwa continued to rely on the IBEAC, due to Lugard’s central role in settling the conflict between the three warring factions. The Protestants were victorious over the Catholics in 1892, after which they held most of the land in the central part of the kingdom and all of the islands, as well

⁴² Wrigley, “Apolo Kagwa,” 119.

⁴³ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 117.

⁴⁴ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 116.

⁴⁵ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 116.

⁴⁶ Wrigley, “Apolo Kagwa,” 120.

as relative political control in Mengo through Kagwa as katikiro. Also, Mwanga's association with the Catholics left him in a weak position. Mwanga had proposed making a "formal statement" of his wish to become Protestant, but the Protestant leaders told him to "[r]emain for a time in the Catholic Religion,' as he was, because he was not yet a true or sincere believer."⁴⁷ Regardless of his religion Mwanga flew the British flag in front of his house.

The Protestant victory did not ensure lasting peace in the kingdom, as the threat of fighting loomed as long as one of the parties felt disenfranchised or misrepresented. A compromise between the two Christian parties needed to be reached. James Miti, in his history of Buganda, wrote that the Catholics had asked Lugard to grant them a province for their people, which he refused on the grounds of his being "a white man...a stranger in their country," and without the power to settle the matter of territorial dispute.⁴⁸ Interestingly Kagwa wrote a different version of events in *Basekabaka*, claiming that the new map had been drawn primarily by Lugard in consultation with the Baganda, and his is the version that has been used by most historians.⁴⁹ Lugard asserted, later in his life, that the Baganda had settled the dispute themselves, and that there was never any "Lugard Settlement."⁵⁰ True or not, Kagwa's version of events suggests some interesting things about the Protestant perception of the British and vice versa. He clearly wanted to convey that Lugard was central to the decision-making process, perhaps to downplay the Protestant involvement, while Lugard and Miti wanted to downplay the role of the

⁴⁷ Low, "The Protestant Victory, 1892" *The Mind of Buganda*, 27.

⁴⁸ James Miti, *A Short History of Buganda, Bunyoro Busoga, Toro and Ankole*. Kampala (Uganda: Makerere University College Library, Photographic Dept, n.d.): 391-392.

⁴⁹ Kagwa, "The Reign of Mwanga II," 162.

⁵⁰ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 117.

“Kampala European.”⁵¹ The result is a “blueprint” for the organization of the kingdom that was mutually beneficial for the Protestants and British and established a system of power sharing that hoped to bring an end to the conflict, and whose authorship is unclear, perhaps purposefully.

At this time there was talk of Kagwa becoming kabaka himself in the revised political system, but he refused on the grounds that he was a commoner and thus not an eligible candidate. This would not be the last time that this was discussed as a possibility, as will be seen later in this chapter.⁵² Instead Kagwa continued to develop his relationship with Lugard as they “each acted to legitimize the other’s power.”⁵³ Kagwa saw where their interests converged, and likely saw no reason to alter significantly alter Ganda politics by taking the post of kabaka. Thus, although some of the government posts changed, no major overhaul of the system took place. Under the modified system chiefships were allocated on the basis of religion. Kagwa secured his position as katikiro, and two new posts were created: Omulamuzi (Chief Justice) and Omuwanika (Treasurer). The former was awarded to a Catholic and the latter to a Protestant, in an attempt at power-sharing.⁵⁴

In *Basekabaka*, Kagwa downplays the Protestant victory and focuses on his efforts to end the conflict through negotiations. He writes of the diplomacy and concessions given to the other factions to bring them together in the new regime, despite

⁵¹Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 117.

⁵² Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 117.

⁵³ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 117.

⁵⁴ Wrigley, “Apolo Kagwa,” 120.

the highest power being reserved for those closest to the British, the Protestants.⁵⁵ The desire to support the Protestant faction in the civil war was a major motivation for the intervention of the British.⁵⁶ In the vacuum left by the exit of the IBEAC, the British government stepped in and assumed responsibility for Buganda in 1893 and in 1894 proclaimed a Protectorate.

The terms of British protection were interpreted differently by the two parties involved, and would be a source of constant debate and negotiation until the signing of the 1900 Agreement. Kagwa and his colleagues appeared to think little would change under the new British Protectorate, and assumed they would continue to rule over the kingdom as they had, except with enhanced British support.⁵⁷ Conversely, the British wanted more of a hand in the administration of the kingdom and expected to exert their control as they had done elsewhere in Africa. They quickly learned, and came to accept based on the organization and ability of the kingdom's government, that this would not be the case in Buganda.

In his work historian Neil Kodesh focuses on the discursive nature of Baganda political practice, and the ways in which Christian chiefs incorporated their religion into their daily lives and the functions of the kingdom, but in the process misses many of the important events in Ganda politics during the period. His argument that the new culture spreading during this period was at its root Christian rather than British ignores many of the important events and relationships that developed during this period, that of Kagwa

⁵⁵ Kagwa, "Reign of Mwangi II," 158-164; Low, "The Protestant Victory, 1892," *The Mind of Buganda*, 27; Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa," 120.

⁵⁶ Wrigley, "Christian Revolution," 44.

⁵⁷ Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa," 120.

and Lugard chief among them.⁵⁸ Further, he does not push this line of thinking far enough, or flesh it out with specific examples. Closer analysis of Kagwa, like that which is being undertaken by this thesis, would reveal that these men were concerned with far more than their own positions when they integrated Christianity into the politics of the kingdom.

Kodesh argues that Kagwa was searching for a way to retain the kingdom's authority while maintaining his position of influence,

Kagwa and his Protestant cohort initiated a campaign aimed at tailoring Buganda's political practices to meet [the] institutions that emerged out of this process[;] rather than serving as a departure from previous practices,[this] represented the creative renovation of Ganda tradition.⁵⁹

Kodesh has referred to this process, in which Lugard and Kagwa were central, as the "Christianization" of the kingdom. His contention that Kagwa attempted to "make Buganda modern by making Christianity tradition" emphasizes the creative nature of Baganda politics.⁶⁰ He sees the relationship between politics and religion as fluid. Christianity was used as a means to power and integrated into the political structure of kingdom. Where other historians have emphasized the fact that Christianity was new in the kingdom in the 19th century, and that it changed political practices, Kodesh would disagree. His assertion that the "Christianization" of the kingdom can be read as continuous is strong, but by connecting to the practice of succession as evidence he ignores a much stronger example: the use of religion in politics, which was not a new practice at all. As seen earlier in this chapter, Baganda were using religion as a means to

⁵⁸ Kodesh, "Renovating Tradition," 512.

⁵⁹ Kodesh, "Renovating Tradition," 519.

⁶⁰ Kodesh, "Renovating Tradition," 520.

power well before the arrival of the Europeans, and certainly in the early years of missionary presence. Kodesh's focus is the period of transition around the turn of the century, just as the Protectorate was being established; however, this thesis argues that integrating Christianity as the new religion into the structure of the kingdom was just as continuous from the pre-colonial period as the practice of succession.

Not solely focused on gaining power within the kingdom, Kagwa and other leading Protestant and Catholic chiefs also desired dominance over their regional neighbors. Kagwa saw the way that their Protestant faith and alliance with the British could give Buganda the upper hand in foreign relations and make the kingdom a regional imperial power. In the introduction to his collection of primary documents from Buganda, Low argues that most important characteristic of the kingdom in the precolonial period is its evolution in relation to its neighbors. After being overshadowed by Bunyoro it had surpassed it in "size and substance" by the 19th century.⁶¹ This growth was partially due to Baganda's belief that the "golden age" of the kingdom was yet to come, while their neighbors looked to their histories for greatness.⁶² Baganda "had their eyes fixed on the future," which motivated them to constantly work towards a betterment of kingdom, utilizing their relationship with the British to do so, and Kagwa was spearheading this process.⁶³

The kingdom had begun to assert itself in earnest as an imperial power by the early 19th century. With more than a million subjects, the kabaka "was one of the most

⁶¹ Low, "Introduction," *The Mind of Buganda*, xiii- xiv.

⁶² Low, *Buganda in Modern History*, 21.

⁶³ Low, *Buganda in Modern History*, 21.

powerful rulers in the east African interior.”⁶⁴ The practice of pillaging villages and taking slaves in conquered territory established Buganda as a regional imperial power.⁶⁵ Through the civil wars of the 1880s and 1890s, Buganda lost some of its regional supremacy, as its own political system was in crisis and its borders were under threat. It is under these circumstances that Kagwa met the first European colonial agents and saw them for the possibility they represented to re-establish the kingdom’s dominance. Just as Buganda expanded in the interlacustrine region, Europeans arrived and the kingdom became an arena in which their imperial rivalries played out. As the Europeans vied for influence, they were being used by Baganda like Kagwa in the kingdom’s struggle for dominance vis-a-vis its neighbors.⁶⁶

Kagwa adeptly understood that treaty cooperation came with benefits, which he wanted to reserve for Buganda alone. He saw the future of the kingdom as dependent on external assistance, most easily gained through a strong partnership with Britain.⁶⁷ The authority of the kabakaship had been severely damaged under Mwanga and through the civil wars, leaving a power vacuum at the centre of the kingdom. The kingdom’s political functioning was reliant on a strong authoritarian figure, and without one fighting could start up again at any moment. Kagwa was aware of how delicate each peace declaration was, and saw how alliance with the British could bolster the authority of his party, put an end to fighting and perhaps bring lasting stability.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Twaddle, “Ganda Historiography,” 85.

⁶⁵ Gikandi, “African Subjects,” 12.

⁶⁶ Gikandi, “African Subjects,” 8, 12.

⁶⁷ G.A. Gollock, *Sons of Africa* (New York: Friendship Press, 1928), 112; Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 116.

⁶⁸ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 116.

Further, Kagwa and other elites saw relations with the British as an opportunity to assert Buganda's dominance over its rivals. Bunyoro had been Buganda's rival in the region for over a century, and was only eclipsed in the mid-19th century with the influx of trade and growth of Ganda military power. The Europeans had made also inroads there shortly after their arrival in Buganda, bringing with them Christianity, and Kagwa and other leading Ganda seemed to fear Bunyoro's challenge to Buganda's supremacy in the region.⁶⁹ Conflict and conquest were common in the region and Kagwa realized the value of having the British in his corner, particularly in addressing the threat of Bunyoro encroaching on the borders of the kingdom.⁷⁰ In 1894, the British and Baganda allied against Bunyoro, and Kagwa and Lugard marched out together and defeated the forces there, gaining territory and securing regional prominence for both the British and Buganda.⁷¹

Kagwa acted under the assumption that if he and his colleagues did not ally with the British, and allow them to establish their base in Buganda, they would go elsewhere and possibly ally with their enemies.⁷² Internally, there were deep fractures and divisions left from the civil wars. The Protestant faction had experienced strong support from the British, which in many ways had led to their survival and eventual dominance, a position Kagwa was eager to maintain. Adapting to changing circumstances during a period of political turmoil, Kagwa established the alliance to ensure the kingdom's continued dominance and the survival of his political party. Therefore, Kagwa set to work to keep the attention of the British on Buganda, rather than on their neighbors.

⁶⁹Low, "Introduction," *The Mind of Buganda*, xiv; Low, "The Inquiring Mind, 1875," *The Mind of Buganda*, 2.

⁷⁰Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 119.

⁷¹Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa," 120.

⁷²Low, "Association with Early British Administrators," *The Mind of Buganda*, 31.

Holly Hanson supports the contention that association with the British was in many ways motivated by a desire for conquest over neighboring polities. In the resolution of civil war, the kingdom was partitioned and neighboring regions were subsumed in the new holdings of the various Baganda factions. In the 1890s, Kagwa saw the Baganda as “hosts of the British presence in the region.”⁷³ He wrote in a letter to Captain Lugard in 1896, “all the important Europeans who work here in Buganda are very good[,] we have made friends with them and get along with them.”⁷⁴

Buganda sought to exercise authority over their neighbors through their partnership with the British, as each sought more power in the region. However, Baganda still retained their autonomy from the British in the 1890s, despite their growing presence. This is because Ganda understood political power in terms of land.⁷⁵ Drawing upon personal communications between the British on the ground, Hanson shows how the Baganda used land to assert their authority over the British. One Commissioner wrote: “we have a square mile at Kampala and a smaller bit at Port Alice and are much cramped... You would be surprised at the way we have hitherto been jammed up.”⁷⁶ The Baganda only offered small plots of the land as a means to asserting their authority despite growing British presence.

They then made up for this arguably harsh treatment by allowing the British to collect taxes from Busoga, as Kagwa notes in *Basekabaka*.⁷⁷ Taxes had traditionally been collected by Buganda in a system in which tribute flowed from the extremities of

⁷³ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 119.

⁷⁴ Low, “Association with Early British Administrators,” *The Mind of Buganda*, 31.

⁷⁵ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 119.

⁷⁶ Ternan to Hill, PRO FO 2/202, 216, as cited in Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 119.

⁷⁷ Kagwa, “Reign of Mwangwa II,” 172.

the kingdom, and its neighbors, to the centre; therefore allowing the British to fund their operations in this was familiar practice. Here we can see the ways in which the Baganda, with Kagwa at their helm, delicately negotiated their relationship with the British so as to keep them placated without giving them too much power. Despite their efforts, the British were not able to introduce numerous new taxes until after 1900, an example in which Kagwa and the Baganda set the terms for their relationship with the British and sent the message that they wanted to be friendly but would not cower to their demands.⁷⁸

Mwanga sensed his power eroding as the religious factions became more powerful and the European presence in the kingdom grew and protested, although to little avail. He had a quarrel with Kagwa and the Protestants in March 1894. He blamed all Christian converts for allowing the damaging European presence into his kingdom, but quickly changed his tune, and reasserted his displeasure with the Protestants alone, taking every opportunity to criticize their religion.⁷⁹ His disdain for the Protestants motivated him to convert to Roman Catholicism in July 1894 -- as they were eager to have him on their side and he felt they were they were more likely to preserve the power of the kabakaship than the Protestants.⁸⁰ Misunderstanding the strong connection between Protestantism and the British, he began to seek association with the British officials in the kingdom, trying to garner their support for his bid to regain his authority as kabaka. Mwanga was not against using conversion as a tool to gain the political support in his fight against Kagwa and thought his conversion to Catholicism would help regain the

⁷⁸ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 169-170.

⁷⁹ Kagwa, "Reign of Mwanga II," 174.

⁸⁰ Wrigley, 'Apolo Kagwa,' 120.

throne.⁸¹ It appears that although Mwanga was skeptical about British intentions in the kingdom, his real quibble was with Kagwa and the Protestant faction, as they represented the most imminent threat to his power, and therefore he was willing to consider the possible value the British could offer his cause. Vacillating in his attitude towards the Europeans, Mwanga changed his opinion from one day to the next, which concerned the Europeans, making them cautious to associate with him. Meanwhile Kagwa presented himself as a strong and level-headed leader, seeing how they could be used to mediate the conflict and help bring stability to the kingdom.

In a letter addressed to Lugard in July 1896 Kagwa thanked him, saying “I have not forgotten you. I remember all the good that you did for us. Nowadays in our country all is peace and quiet.”⁸² A close reading of *Basekabaka* shows that he did not blindly meet every demand made by Europeans, but thoughtfully judged each encounter. In the 1890s he definitely saw the kingdom as autonomous, despite the development of a British colonial power structure and the presence of commissioners, subcommissioners, fort commanders and other British officials. For Kagwa, the British had very little real power, because in Buganda power is equated with land and they were granted very small, poor quality scraps on which to conduct their affairs.⁸³

Mwanga saw the presence of the British as a possible threat to his power and so he only associated with them when he thought they could help his position. Kagwa on the other hand saw their presence as an opportunity to solidify his personal position of power, that of the Protestants in the kingdom, and of the kingdom in the region.

⁸¹ Kagwa, “Reign of Mwanga II,” 176.

⁸² Low “Association with Early British Administrators,” *The Mind of Buganda*, 31.

⁸³ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 119.

However, Kagwa's increasingly close association with the British likely made him more threatening in Mwanga's eyes. Kagwa had also propped up Lugard at the expense of Mwanga's power, which further ruptured their relationship. Kagwa had enjoyed more popularity among the Baganda since the early days of the civil wars, as Mwanga's persecution of the Christians was not easily forgotten. However, Mwanga's fear that the British would depose him was unfounded, as they had no intention of doing so in the mid-1890s. They were more concerned with solidifying their position in East Africa than engaging in any measures that could destabilize Buganda and re-ignite conflict.⁸⁴ Likely they were attracted to Kagwa because he was a much less rash individual compared to Mwanga, and thus a better contact and his interests seemed most closely allied with their own. However, they still conducted their official business and treaty writing with the kabaka, with Kagwa ever present in the background.

In August 1894 the British Acting Commissioner for Uganda signed a treaty with Kabaka Mwanga, and Kagwa, establishing an imperial Protectorate.⁸⁵ Considering Mwanga's dubious past interactions with the British, it is unclear what motivated him to sign the treaty; perhaps he simply felt it was the only way to maintain his extremely precarious position on the throne. Regardless, it is undeniable that Kagwa was involved and present during the signing, as his signature appears as a witness.⁸⁶ Despite Mwanga's fears, it seemed that in the mid-1890s the British were respectful of the kabakaship and its position at the centre of the kingdom, which was just as well to Kagwa

⁸⁴ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 119.

⁸⁵ Low "Company's to Imperial Protectorate," *The Mind of Buganda*, 29.

⁸⁶ Low "Company's to Imperial Protectorate," *The Mind of Buganda*, 29.

who was concerned over the internal political consequences of a further collapse of royal authority.

This was proven the following year when a British officer called a meeting with Kagwa, Mwanga and all the top chiefs and addressed them as follows: “Continue to give all due respect to your subjects, so that the country may continue to be submissive as it was long ago.”⁸⁷ Further, Kagwa noted how the British supported Mwanga’s attempts to invade a neighboring region in early 1895. Later that same year the British proposed “The Laws of Buganda,” consisting of eighteen laws intended to centralize, secularize and reinforce the power of the existing Ganda government. These laws were not imposed but negotiated between the British and Baganda, with Kagwa playing a central role, so that the resulting document was a reflection of their overlapping interests. Protestantism continued to be an important belief and value system shared between the British and men like Kagwa, as well as a marker of civilization, but they wanted to establish a system of governance that operated outside of religious practice, as they had in other colonies and at home in England. The laws attempted to create a balance of power and extend the authority of the kabaka beyond the traditional boundaries of the kingdom.⁸⁸ The laws outlined the creation of a separate colonial government but did not encroach on the jurisdiction of the kabaka or lukiko in any real way.

Kagwa fundamentally saw the relationship as between different but equal parties, engaging in negotiations to develop and establish a body of laws that would meet both sets of interests but above all maintain Ganda control over their kingdom. Not all their interests were aligned at all times, but in the case of the continuity of Buganda’s political

⁸⁷ Kagwa, “Reign of Mwanga II,” 178.

⁸⁸ Kagwa, “Reign of Mwanga II,” 186.

structure they both agreed. The expressions of the British, such as in the clauses of these laws, made clear their desire to maintain the power of the throne. Kagwa and his cohort also clearly wanted to maintain the basic political structure of the kingdom, including the kabakaship and lukiko. This overlapping of intentions is at the root of Kagwa's understanding of the terms of the colonial relationship as equal. It dictated the way in which he engaged the British, attempting to impress them, but also keeping a safe distance, as a means to preserving the authority of the Ganda government, as well as his own superior position.

The informal relationship with the British developed over the latter half of the 1890s, as the terms of their presence were negotiated while conflicts between Mwanga and the Protestant chiefs, and between the Baganda and their neighbors, raged on. Harry Johnston arrived following the final civil war of 1898-1899 to establish the larger Uganda Protectorate and formalize the details of the British-Buganda relationship. The 1900 Agreement negotiations were conducted between the three regents as well as Harry Johnston and his crew of colonial officials; Mwanga was conspicuously absent, have been officially deposed and then exiled the previous year.⁸⁹

Kagwa engaged in the negotiations that established colonial rule under the assumption that the outcome would be of mutual benefit. He saw himself and the other top chiefs as equal partners with Johnston and the British in the creation of the Protectorate, and therefore did not understand the establishment of colonial rule in terms of cultural or political domination. Gikandi has termed this as the myth of "free agency,"

⁸⁹ Low, "1900 Agreement," *The Mind of Buganda*, 41.

and referred to it to explain why Kagwa so readily engaged in the process or transition.⁹⁰ Historians have fairly uniformly agreed upon the agency exercised by Kagwa and the Baganda in the drafting of the Agreement, evidenced by the fact that Johnston was forced to entrench the land rights of Kagwa and top Ganda chiefs. Therefore, their alliance was based on a two-way process in which elites “gain[ed] a position of entrenched power and privilege established by law” while the British brought the region into their imperial fold.⁹¹

The agreement established British overrule, outlined how the Baganda could be taxed and the colony administered, officially established the lukiko as the primary governmental body and redistributed land. In Buganda land and political power continued to be inextricably linked. The 1900 Agreement introduced freehold land tenure to a society that had no tradition of permanent personal land ownership. Granted the biggest estate, Kagwa became the largest private land owner in the kingdom, surpassing even the kabaka.⁹² The issue of land was the root of most ill will among Baganda towards Kagwa, and the reason they later portrayed him as a traitor and collaborator with the British. Kagwa, on the other hand, saw a significant overlap of British and Bugandan interests in the invention and creation of the colonial entity of Uganda, and was happy to accept the large tracts of the land that would further entrench his position.

It would have been relatively easy for Kagwa to alter political practice to further his own career. On several occasions throughout the 1890s and in 1900, he was

⁹⁰ Gikandi, “African Subjects and the Colonial Project,” 13.

⁹¹ Ranger, “African Reaction,” 78.

⁹² Low, “1900 Agreement,” *The Mind of Buganda*, 37-41.

presented with the possibility of becoming kabaka himself, but did not remotely consider it. Many Baganda believed that Kagwa secretly harboured a grudge against the deposed kabaka, from the beatings during his youth, and as a result was resolute in his position against him. Kagwa's biggest opponents in the 1890s thought that he was after the throne for himself, while moderates thought that at the very least he wanted a monopoly over power in the kingdom.⁹³ However, it would have been unprecedented for someone outside of the accepted pool of heirs, known as the princes of the drum, to succeed to the throne, and therefore would have fundamentally altered the practice of succession in the kingdom.⁹⁴ Kagwa was of common birth, a fact that his critics used in their argument that he was hungry for power. In fact, Kagwa's origins were the very reason that he would not disrupt power and consider the post. Kagwa adamantly and repeatedly refused the post.⁹⁵

Kagwa and the other senior chiefs were "aware their power and authority was not entirely legitimate in the eyes of their people...they also saw that the presence of a king made Buganda more dignified and autonomous in relations with the British."⁹⁶ Kagwa's commitment to the kingdom and desire to maintain the sanctity of the throne was partly motivated by self-preservation, as his position as katikiro guaranteed him power without rocking the boat, whereas taking on the kabakaship would make his position much more vulnerable. He chose to keep his position as katikiro despite the lack of a viable adult candidate for the throne. Historically, the extent of the influence and authority the katikiro exercised in the processes of government depended on his personal support from

⁹³ Kiwanuka, *A History of Buganda*, 256.

⁹⁴ Kodesh, "Renovating Tradition," 518.

⁹⁵ Wright, "Apolo Kagwa," 119; Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 117.

⁹⁶ Wrigley, "Christian Revolution," 42.

other chiefs. In this regard, Kagwa held more power than some of his predecessors due to the weakness and vacancy of the post of kabaka, but he still needed to heed local politics to maintain power and stability.⁹⁷ He was not interested in fundamentally altering political practice in the kingdom, but was also not a conservative preservationist; his political engagement was founded upon the renovation of practices in the kingdom so that they continued to function as the landscape changed, and were acceptable to both the Baganda and British stakeholders in the kingdom. The terms of the establishment of the Protectorate were exemplary of this renovation.⁹⁸

Continuity of practice, at least in the most basic sense, was a key element in maintaining peace and autonomy, which is another reason why Kagwa insisted on the maintenance of the kabakaship. In the period of crisis after Mwanga was expelled for the final time, Kagwa was vigilant in his support for the chosen successor, the infant Daudi Chwa. After Chwa's coronation, Kagwa assumed the role of regent, along with the two other katikiros from the other factions. These three men became the regents who ran the kingdom until the kabaka came of age. Kagwa was top regent, and the guardian of the kabaka and so was personally responsible for the well-being and education of young Chwa. Although it is clear that directives coming from the kabaka were in fact coming from Kagwa, he still made great efforts not to take personal credit or responsibility for them. For example, in *Basekabaka* Kagwa notes that in 1899 several men read a letter from Daudi Chwa in the lukiko; it is interesting that the orders were presented as coming from the kabaka when he was only two years old at the time and obviously not capable of

⁹⁷ Kodesh, "Renovating Tradition," 518.

⁹⁸ Wright, "Apolo Kagwa," 119; Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 117.

reading and writing.⁹⁹ Kagwa made every effort to maintain continuity in the administration of the kingdom into the colonial period, and revived the authority of the kabakaship through the use of ceremonialism, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

If Kagwa appeared to be usurping power, it would have been met with opposition by some groups in the lukiko and caused political instability. In the histories he wrote, directives always came from the kabaka and he made sure Chwa was present for all major ceremonies and events, despite being a small child, as a symbolic gesture.¹⁰⁰ The kabakaship could have very easily been abolished with the 1900 Agreement, as there was no strong, adult, candidate at the time to oppose it, but Kagwa, as he had done with Lugard in 1892, remained adamant that the authority of the throne be unaltered and maintained. The British were also supportive of keeping the kabakaship intact, but only if an amenable candidate were proposed by the lukiko. Therefore, Kagwa and the British supported the candidacy of one of Mwanga's infant sons, Daudi Chwa, and pledged his unwavering loyalty to him. Even with Mwanga gone, the throne continued to be used for "political legitimacy," and to uphold the structure of the kingdom in this complicated time of transition.¹⁰¹

As discussed above, it can be argued that Kagwa approached the negotiations in 1900 as a discussion between equals and understood the outcome as the beginning of a relationship of mutual benefit and respect.¹⁰² However, the Uganda Agreement did

⁹⁹ Apolo Kagwa and M. S. M. Semakula Kiwanuka. *Basekabaka be Buganda* (Nairobi: East African Pub. House, 1971): 26.

¹⁰⁰ Specific examples are included in the discussion of ceremonies in the following chapter.

¹⁰¹ Kodesh, "Renovating Tradition," 521.

¹⁰² Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 116.

indeed impose British rule over Buganda, and as a consequence, Kagwa was and has been blamed for the loss of autonomy due to his central role in the negotiations. Further, the Agreement granted Kagwa a significant amount of personal political power, more than a prime minister of the kingdom had ever previously enjoyed. Solidifying his post as ruling regent and chief katikiro, he was now the highest authority in the kingdom, acting on behalf of the infant kabaka.

It is undeniable that Kagwa played an important role in the drafting of the 1900 Agreement, and this is one area where almost all historians of the period give him due credit. However, most oversimplify his motivations. In many cases Kagwa has been reduced to a British collaborator, or at the very least a selfish politician, based on his personal gains. However, if the imposition of British colonial rule is accepted as inevitable, which at this stage it was, Kagwa should also be praised for his role in securing the best deal possible for Buganda. He clearly saw where and how he could both benefit himself and the kingdom through the negotiations with the British without ruffling their feathers or making them feel as if they were making significant concessions. This would have been a difficult task, and required a skillful mediator, a role Kagwa was uniquely suited for. He was able to navigate through a complicated situation when no one else knew how to do it, especially not the exiled Mwanga. Although it is impossible to understand his motives fully, it seems fitting to see him as Wrigley does, as a “realist” and creative thinker.¹⁰³ Kagwa likely understood that resistance to the British could result in a long protracted conflict, as it had elsewhere in East Africa.¹⁰⁴ The Baganda were invited to participate in the negotiations in an unprecedented capacity, and through

¹⁰³ Wrigley, “Apolo Kagwa,” 125.

¹⁰⁴ Wrigley, “Apolo Kagwa,” 125.

cooperation and collaboration, Kagwa secured relative autonomy in the Protectorate for Buganda.¹⁰⁵ Due to his adept negotiation skills, the Agreement granted Buganda more autonomy than the British likely intended it to have.¹⁰⁶ Further, Kagwa likely saw the Agreement as a solution to the ongoing internal conflict and political instability.

Hanson comments on the stability and unification of the kingdom after the 1900 Agreement, but she is unsure whether it was due to Kagwa's efforts, or "simply the bi-product of British colonial rule."¹⁰⁷ The basis of her uncertainty is problematic, as she looks forward ten years to Chwa's official coronation upon his seventeenth birthday, ignoring the state of the kingdom in the early years of transition.¹⁰⁸ It seems that Kagwa would have been most influential in maintaining the stability of the kingdom during those early years while the British were still getting settled and were preoccupied with the more difficult administration of other polities within the Protectorate.

Kagwa's perception of equal footing between the Baganda and the British also influenced his willingness to participate in the negotiations. He saw alliance with the British as a means to position Buganda at the centre of the Protectorate and thus maintain its dominance in the region. His participation in the establishment of the Protectorate and support for the development of colonial infrastructure, along with most of his subsequent actions as katikiro, were predicated on this assumption.¹⁰⁹

Kagwa understood the establishment of colonial rule as more than just a political agreement; he also saw it as the development of a relationship with the British through which British culture and "progress" could be brought to Buganda and incorporated with

¹⁰⁵ Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa," 122.

¹⁰⁶ Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa," 122.

¹⁰⁷ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 208.

¹⁰⁸ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 208.

¹⁰⁹ Gikandi, "African Subjects," 8.

existing customs there. This perception complicates Kagwa's motives significantly. The following chapter will discuss the cultural projects spearheaded by Kagwa in the 1890s and early years of the Protectorate, like the construction of stone Namirembe Cathedral, the incorporation of British ceremony and the importation of material culture to the kingdom, to show Kagwa as a conduit for culture in addition to being a political mediator in the kingdom during this complex transitional period.

Chapter Five:

Kagwa and the Creation of Colonial Culture in Buganda

In the first decade of the 20th century, Apolo Kagwa was at the height of his career. He had secured himself a central position in politics as the most senior regent and was the largest land holder in the kingdom due to the 1900 Agreement. He had earned the respect of the British missionaries and colonial officers, having been appointed a K.C.M.G. (Knight Commander of Saint Michael and Saint George).¹ Kagwa was undoubtedly an important political figure in the kingdom from the late 1880s onwards and in the larger Protectorate after 1900, but notably, he was also becoming a mediator of cultural change. Colonial culture and the British values of “progress” and “civility” were not imported wholesale to Buganda. Culture was adapted, renovated and recreated relevant to local politics and social structure. African elites, like Kagwa, were engaged in the process of adapting culture for a variety of reasons. His motives could have included consolidating and maintaining his own power and autonomy, as had previously been done with religion as seen in Chapter Three.

Part of Kagwa’s attraction to the British was his interest in their culture. The benefits of importing and incorporating British practices and material culture in Buganda must have been clear to Kagwa, which fuelled his desire to put Buganda on the path to progress, the ultimate goal of development. It can also be inferred that Kagwa saw colonial culture in similar terms as transitional politics: as a means to maintain Buganda’s superiority in the region by keeping the attention of the British—by being the first to

¹ Christopher Wrigley “Apolo Kagwa: Katikiro of Buganda” in *Leadership in 19th Century Africa*, ed. Obaro Ikime (London: published for the Historical Society of Nigeria by Longman, 1974): 124.

build new buildings, import inventions, wear imperial fashions, etc. Buganda's cultural affluence was in large part due to the capital of the Protectorate, Entebbe, being set up within the borders of the kingdom.² Kampala, or Mengo, the capital of the kingdom of Buganda, was located only a few miles from Entebbe, and as such they were quite similar in their cultural characteristics, at least in comparison to the other major centres within the Protectorate.³ This chapter will examine architecture, customs, dress, and inventions in the first decades of the 20th century to understand the complexity of colonial culture and the Africans, like Kagwa, who actively participated in its creation.

Kagwa was always respectful to the British, but he still acted on his own accord, carrying out his own political plans and the wishes of the lukiko; he was never a "white sergeant."⁴ He was keenly interested in British culture and the benefits of imperial membership, which could support the overall well-being of the kingdom, continued sovereignty within the Protectorate, and regional dominance. His loyalty to the kingdom never waned during his career, despite his close ties with European agents and love for British culture. The transition to colonial rule, and first years of the Uganda Protectorate, are an important period for understanding Kagwa and his motives.

Missionaries played a central role in the cultural aspect of the colonial project in Buganda and they continued to be a strong force in the kingdom well into the colonial period. CMS missionaries took great pleasure in seeing Ganda in the capital dressed in European garb, holding tea parties and going to Protestant services at the newly built brick Namirembe cathedral. The incorporation of British culture was read by the

² D. A. Low, *Fabrication of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 125-126.

³ Low, *Fabrication of Empire*, 124-125.

⁴ Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa," 125.

missionaries as evidence of “the mental capabilities of the Baganda.”⁵ Although much of the cultural development was in keeping with the overall missionary agenda in the kingdom, Ganda agency needs to be emphasized. Kagwa and other elites were actively engaged in the renovation of Ganda “traditions” to create relevant political and cultural practices emblematic of the blended interests in the kingdom.⁶

Through interactions with the British in the early years of colonial rule Kagwa and other Baganda elites created culture by adapting and incorporating custom and material culture. As such, all his endeavors, dating back to the seeds of his political career during the civil wars, must be framed within his acute misunderstanding of the terms of the colonial relationship as establishing the Baganda and British as equals. It seems apparent that Kagwa was concerned with solidifying his own political power and protecting his position as regent, and saw the importation of British culture as a means to do so. However, this process, which built a stronger relationship with the British, was also key to assuring the continued dominance of the kingdom over its neighbors in the interlacustrine region and bringing stability to a political system ravaged by over a decade of conflict, while simultaneously setting Buganda on the path to “progress” by adopting British and imperial ideals.

The Creation of Colonial Culture in Africa

In their important and extensive two volume work on the Tswana in Southern Africa, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Jean and John Comaroff study the interaction

⁵ Neil Kodesh, “Renovating Tradition The Discourse of Succession in Colonial Buganda,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 34, no. 3 (2001): 511.

⁶ Kodesh, “Renovating Tradition,” 511.

between British evangelists and the Tswana to emphasize the cultural aspect of British imperialism. They define colonialism as “simultaneously, equally, and inseparably a process in political economy and culture.”⁷ They emphasize the importance of culture in making imperialism work on the ground because the political control of the British was always incomplete and therefore the most marked changes in African societies were a product of the influence of unofficial agents of empire such as missionaries, businessmen, settlers, and soldiers, rather than of the “formal apparatus of empire.”⁸ They argue that the colonial state was heavily reliant on “techniques of representation, often highly ritualized, to assert and amplify their presence.”⁹

The Comaroffs’ focus is the “complexities of cultural exchange across colonial frontiers and ...the process of hybridization.”¹⁰ Forms were refashioned by Africans and in the process new hybrid practices emerged; this is how the culture of colonialism was created. For the colonizer and the colonized, colonialism was both a political and cultural project. Thus, it is impossible to discuss one without also addressing the other. They also show the inextricable link between politics and culture in the colonial experience. In the case of Buganda, this link is undeniable. The developments during the period of transition at the turn of the century, as they pertained to colonialism, capitalism and modernity, were amalgamations of political economy and culture.¹¹ Although the Comaroffs’ study is not focused on Buganda, many parallels can be drawn with Buganda,

⁷ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution Vol. 1: Christianity, colonialism, and consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991): 19.

⁸ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 21.

⁹ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 21.

¹⁰ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 59.

¹¹ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 18.

particularly in terms of the creation of colonial culture as Baganda were equally amenable to this process.

D. A. Low has contended that the social structure of the kingdom was uniquely favorable to the reception of new ideas and teachings. This can be applied not only to religion, as in Chapter Three, but also to culture. Just as the missionaries integrated into the socio-political system and gathered followers in the 1870s, British colonial officials made inroads using culture as their enticement in the 1890s. As adopting the religion of the “invaders” fit well with “adventurous proclivities of the Baganda,” so did adapting European culture and ideals in the later period.¹² The Ganda notion that the “golden age” was in the future helps to explain why they were so open to new ideas and practices.¹³ Low explains this receptivity in terms of a “modernizing ideology” which “revolved around a dual concern to preserve one’s own cultural and political integrity while seeking to ensure that the advantages which could be gained from contact with the wider world were secured as well.”¹⁴ For Low, Baganda were highly receptive to new ideas, as has been seen in Chapter Three. However, Kagwa was important because of his first hand experience with British imperial culture gained during his trip to England, and his ability to determine which foreign influences were the most viable or worthwhile to incorporate to existing Ganda practices.

John A. Rowe has contended that despite their “westernization,” Baganda held on to a strong Ganda identity throughout this period of transition. In the case of Kagwa, and the other leading chiefs, “the roots of this identity lay deep in their own past, and were

¹² Low, *Buganda in Modern History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971): 21.

¹³ Low, *Buganda in Modern History*, 21.

¹⁴ Low, *Buganda in Modern History*, 230.

strengthened and sustained by their background of training at the kabaka's court, a training which emphasized competition, self-reliance, and pride of achievement."¹⁵

Rowe sees Kagwa as an extremely astute individual who viewed the Europeans with a critical eye. He did not adopt European ideals at the expense of Ganda practices, but rather evaluated foreign culture and principles on a case by case basis, and adapted them to fit in with the Ganda way of life. Rowe asserts that "Baganda judged and selected carefully from among the offerings of Western civilization," and provides the specific examples of dress and marriage, which will be discussed further below.¹⁶

Rowe combats the image of the omnipresent European in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, claiming that the Europeans were actually too few in number to affect much change at all, despite the fact that most of them had the respect of the high ranking chiefs. Commoners still looked to the chiefs for direction, who acted from a position "fortified by their background of self achievement and supported by habitual pride and confidence, [and] exercised considerable independence in selecting the particular road they would follow to a Westernized African society."¹⁷ Kagwa is the most notable example of this group of chiefs.

Neil Kodesh attempts to explain how European religion and culture spread so quickly in Buganda. He argues that the spread of Christianity extended beyond religious belief; it included culture as well in the form of dress, food, material goods, architecture and ceremony. Leading chiefs engaged in the process of incorporating culture into

¹⁵ John A. Rowe, "The Western Impact and the African Reaction: Buganda 1880-1900." *Journal of Developing Areas* 1 no. 1 (1966): 64.

¹⁶ Rowe, "Western Impact," 65.

¹⁷ Rowe, "Western Impact," 65.

existing practices in the colonial period in a process he refers to as “renovation.”¹⁸ Christian chiefs, who were leading the kingdom by the 19th century, were “mak[ing] Buganda modern by making Christianity traditional.”¹⁹ Key to this explanation is Kodesh’s definition of tradition, which differs from other historians’.

Kodesh sees the most noteworthy characteristic of tradition as its “discursive nature.”²⁰ Understanding the rapid spread of Christianity and colonial culture is dependent on seeing tradition as fluid and adaptable. Tradition is inherently adaptable and capable of accommodating new culture without damaging or destroying itself. In Buganda, political tradition is inherently flexible, as seen during periods of succession in the earlier 19th century when the kabaka and high ranking chiefs “reimagined political practices.”²¹ He sees continuity in practice into the colonial period, with European culture as simply another element to contend with in the reimagining process. For Kodesh, when engaged in the adaptation and incorporation of colonial culture, Kagwa is not an agent of change but of continuity.

Simon Gikandi has written extensively on the “Englishness” of the British Empire, which he sees as a product of colonial culture. He focuses his study on local writers within the empire who were “produc[ing] narratives that seemed to exist both inside and outside the central doctrines of Englishness.”²² Men like Mukasa and Kagwa were positioning themselves within the realm of colonial culture and associating themselves with the system of values and identities that defined it: “civilization, progress,

¹⁸ Kodesh, “Renovating Tradition,” 511.

¹⁹ Kodesh, “Renovating Tradition,” 511.

²⁰ Kodesh, “Renovating Tradition,” 516.

²¹ Kodesh, “Renovating Tradition,” 516.

²² Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996): xiii.

literacy and civility.”²³ However, Gikandi does not see Kagwa as simply motivated by selfish desire and his admiration of British culture. Although partly responsible for bringing Buganda into the fold of the British Empire, Kagwa also strongly supported the “preservation of Baganda customs and traditions...[and] cultural practices.”²⁴ He describes Kagwa as a “proto-nationalist,” which complicates the picture and suggests he is a complex person, serving varied motives.

Engaged in the process of incorporating Englishness into existing Ganda culture, Kagwa was not a sellout, but an able, inventive and aware individual. He saw the value of British imperial culture and pursued it to its most useful end in Buganda. Gikandi advocates that Kagwa was serving two distinct audiences, in his writing and in his actions as a cultural figure. Kagwa understood colonial rule as the only way to guarantee Buganda’s power and dominance in the region, and approached all interactions with the British, political, cultural or otherwise, with this in mind. Confronted with the complicated task of preserving the autonomy of the kingdom while “coming to terms with the political and moral economy of colonialism,” Kagwa adeptly managed this paradox and steered Buganda towards his own version of progress, while constructing himself as the father of modern Buganda.²⁵

The purpose of this chapter is to first argue that despite marked changes in culture and customs and the ever-increasing popularity of European material culture in Buganda there was continuity in the practice of politics and power relations. British material culture was adapted and adopted into pre-existing traditional power discourse in a process

²³ Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness*, xiv.

²⁴ Gikandi, “African Subjects and the Colonial Project,” *Uganda’s Katikiro in England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998): 39.

²⁵ Gikandi, “African Subjects,” 10.

of negotiation and interplay, not transformation or invention. The second assertion is that Kagwa was important in this process. This chapter will apply Kodesh's argument for continuity and the expanding of the role of elites in this process of adaptation to Kagwa specifically. This will show that, despite seeming like great changes at first glance, the cultural projects he undertook were in fact representative of continuity from the precolonial period. Ganda elites were actively engaged in the adaptation of colonial culture to Ganda custom in an effort to improve Buganda. Alterations to culture and custom were primarily African processes, driven by the desire to engage in progress and build a modern Buganda through their relationship with the British.²⁶ This thesis attempts to frame arguments about the creation of colonial culture in Buganda within the receptivity of Ganda to modern institutions and the renovation of certain customs by elites like Kagwa, who were engaged in the adaptation of custom and political practice to changing circumstances.²⁷

Colonial Culture in Buganda

Through the civil wars of the 1880s and 1890s, Buganda lost some of its power and dominance, as its own political system was in crisis, and its borders were under threat. Under these circumstances Kagwa met the first European colonial agents. The British arrived just as Buganda was expanding in the region and the kingdom became the arena in which European rivalries played out. As the Europeans were vying for

²⁶ Kodesh, "Renovating Tradition," 511.

²⁷ Kodesh, "Renovating Tradition," 511.

influence, their influence, equated with support, was used by Africans in their struggle for dominance; Kagwa was a major player in this theatre.²⁸

Kagwa and other elites saw association that with the British presented a number of possibilities, including reinforcing their political position within the kingdom and the opportunity to assert Buganda's dominance over their rivals, notably Bunyoro, Toro, and Ankole.²⁹ They were afraid that the British would set up their base elsewhere in the region if he and his colleagues did not impress them, both personally and with the kingdom's amenability. During the civil wars the Protestant faction had received strong support from the British, and owed their survival to them in more ways than one.³⁰ Kagwa also had the British to thank for his personal power, as strong relationships with them had solidified his position as katikiro. By adapting to changing circumstances during a period of political turmoil, Kagwa had established an alliance with the British, and seen its benefits for him and the kingdom. Therefore, he continued to work at keeping the attention of the British on Buganda, rather than on their neighbors.

An important aspect of his attempts to impress them was by demonstrating a willingness and desire to adopt British ideals and culture in the kingdom. By showing Bugandan receptivity, he hoped the British and other Europeans would deem their kingdom more worthy of attention and investment than its neighbors. In this way, Kagwa presented Buganda as the ideal conduit for British colonial rule in the region, and the British responded by making it the hub of all colonial operations in the Protectorate.

²⁸ Gikandi, "African Subjects," 8, 12.

²⁹ Hanson, *Landed Obligation: The Practice of Power in Buganda* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003): 116.

³⁰ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 116.

Despite understanding the benefits of a close relationship with the British, Kagwa could not focus all his attention outward. As a leading politician, he needed to speak to internal politics. After several decades of conflict and political uncertainty, Kagwa, and other like-minded elites, were acutely interested in bringing peace and stability to the kingdom and saw the ways that the cultivation of a close relationship with the British could help. However, they also understood that too much change, too quickly, could lead to more conflict as it had during the civil wars and thus, were aware of the need for continuity in political practice.³¹ Political practice in Buganda was not static, but rather adapted to changing circumstances. Kodesh argues that although “Buganda witnessed a transformation in both the authority and representation of royal power, the *process* [of] Ganda political practice... remained remarkably consistent from the mid-eighteenth to the early twentieth century.”³² Throughout the 1880s and 1890s the legitimacy of Mwanga was continuously challenged, thus creating an ongoing political crisis, similar to that seen in a period of succession. Through this transitional period Kagwa and other elites sought to re-establish a strong political center in the kingdom without corrupting the institution of the kabakaship.

For Kagwa, it would have been relatively easy to alter political practice to further his own career. He was presented with the possibility of becoming kabaka in 1893 and again in 1900, but he did not consider it as it would subvert political practice for someone other than one of the kabaka’s sons to succeed to the throne. Kagwa stood for continuity of political practice in this instance and chose to keep his position as top katikiro instead, despite the uncertainty surrounding Mwanga’s authority. Historically, the katikiro’s

³¹ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 116-117.

³² Kodesh, “Renovating Tradition,” 512.

ability to play a significant role in the administration of the kingdom depended on his personal political support from other chiefs.³³ No different, Kagwa heeded local politics to maintain power, and thus, stability. Key to maintaining peace and autonomy in the kingdom, continuity motivated Kagwa's insistence on the continued authority of the kabaka. Vigilant in his support for the chosen successor, the infant Daudi Chwa, Kagwa renewed his support for the throne after the unruly Mwanga was expelled for the final time.

When Chwa officially took the throne, Kagwa assumed the role of regent, along with two fellow regents from the other religious factions. Kagwa oversaw the education of the young kabaka, and took on all the political responsibilities associated with the kabakaship. Kagwa's desire to ensure that the institution of the kabakaship remained unharmed during a period of transition meant that the ceremonialism surrounding the throne needed to be emphasized as British customs were becoming more prevalent in the kingdom. Chwa was always present for all major ceremonies and events, despite being a small child.

From his new position, as regent, at the centre of the kingdom, Kagwa appealed to several different audiences and served multiple interests, including his own. He wanted to impress the British by demonstrating to missionaries and colonial agents on the ground his desire and ability to be a good partner through cultural performances. However, in order to maintain political stability, he had to be mindful of internal politics when suggesting new customs and culture to adopt. Kagwa acted as a mediator by showing the

³³ Kodesh, "Renovating Tradition," 518.

kabaka, and himself, as powerful -- this was done by the adaptation of longstanding Baganda customs, and the importation of material culture.

The Comaroffs' theory on the dialogue between Europeans and Africans can be usefully applied to this process. They see this dialogue as "based in part on misrecognition, in part on shared interests, in part on alliances across the very lines that divided them."³⁴ In this sense, Kagwa and the British acted as mirrors for each other as they both struggled to develop a "hybrid language."³⁵ This language was most easily and tangibly expressed through culture, particularly material culture and ceremonial practices. In his position as mediator, Kagwa served dual audiences in his performances, juggling multiple sets of interests, with a fairly successful outcome.

The 1900 Agreement has been deemed primarily a political document, but it had obvious cultural ramifications as well. Its reallocation of land by confiscating tracts from the bataka and granting them to the new elites, Kagwa chief among them, had consequences in both the political and cultural realms. Kagwa used his land to build a two-storey house with all the modern amenities available in Buganda at the time, including electric bells, making his the largest and most elaborate home in the kingdom.³⁶ The land granted in the Agreement, in conjunction with the gift of cattle, has been described as a "token for bargaining freely conducted and ending in good-will."³⁷ Kagwa's use of the land to build his house, an expression of progress in the kingdom, is evidence of how cultural transformations were also products of the Agreement. The

³⁴ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 6.

³⁵ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 7.

³⁶ Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa," 122.

³⁷ Wrigley, "Apolo Kagwa," 122.

Agreement also encouraged the building of large scale projects in the capital, including a new school and the Industrial Mission, and the re-building of Namirembe Cathedral.

Kagwa spearheaded many of these major cultural projects in Buganda, particularly the rebuilding of Namirembe Cathedral, first built in 1890, with subsequent structures built in 1892 and 1895. The fourth incarnation of the church was constructed between 1900 and 1904 from brick to shield it from the elements.³⁸ The modern brick building was constructed on one of the main hills in central Mengo, subsequently referred to as Namirembe Hill. The first large scale infrastructure undertaking using European materials in which Baganda participated en masse, the building was 210 feet in length and featured seventy windows, eighteen columns and three spires; it had a seating capacity of 4000 (see figures 4.1 and 4.2).³⁹ Beyond its large physical stature, the cathedral had cultural and religious significance.

³⁸ Tucker, *Eighteen Years*, 298.

³⁹ Tucker, *Eighteen Years*, 298.

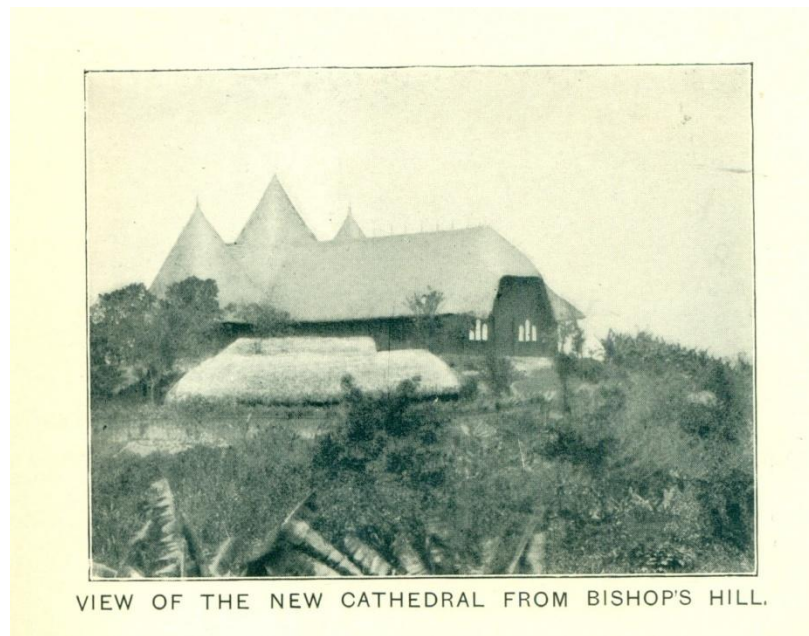


Figure 4.1. View of Namirembe Cathedral. *Source: Mullins, The Wonderful Story of Uganda, n.p.*



Figure 4.2. Interior of Namirembe Cathedral. *Source: Hattersley, The Mind of Buganda, 202-203.*

The building of Namirembe, especially in a central location in Mengo, reinforced Protestantism as an influential force in the kingdom. All Baganda understood Kagwa

was central to the organization of the project, and thus he acquired cultural, political and religious caché through association with the church. The construction project blended traditional custom and new practices, with Kagwa at the centre of it all--beginning the physical transformation of Buganda. Kagwa engaged all Baganda to participate by using the labour tribute typically paid to the kabaka to build the church.⁴⁰ In this way, Ganda were both continuing a traditional custom, while engaging in a new project. Bishop Tucker describes the site,

It was an inspiring sight to see long strings of men going to the swamps every day to dig clay, and then to see them wending their way up the steep hill-side of Namirembe, heavy loads of clay upon their heads...heading the procession was often the Katikiro himself...carrying a heavier load than any of the others.⁴¹

Tucker's description makes clear Kagwa's involvement and centrality to the project as it has been presented by Kodesh and other sources.⁴² Kodesh argues that Kagwa's participation was a "public display of virtue;" his participation was actually outside of the norm for elites, and caused a spectacle. While Kodesh only discusses his contribution as for the European audience, there could have been other motives at work.⁴³ Was Kagwa simply trying to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the British Protestant audience? Or was he also trying to shore up support among Baganda? The project can be read as an attempt to make express links between the building of the cathedral, a primarily Ganda project,

⁴⁰ Kodesh, "Renovating Tradition," 522-523.

⁴¹ Alfred Tucker, *Eighteen Years in Uganda & East Africa*. (Westport, Conn: Negro Universities Press, 1970): 298.

⁴² Kodesh, "Renovating Tradition," 522.

⁴³ Kodesh, "Renovating Tradition," 523-524.

and the value of Protestantism in the transitional kingdom. It seems that he was carefully balancing the interests and attentions of multiple groups here.

The building itself took over two years to complete. During construction, it became a central meeting place in Mengo, and upon completion became the main site for all ceremonies, religious and otherwise (see figure 4.3). Bishop Tucker noted how the project called out “perseverance and patience” and gave “new ideas as to labour...deepen[ed] love, strengthen[ed] faith, and impart[ed] lessons of humility and self-abasement, as well as self-sacrifice and self-denial.”⁴⁴ Like the construction project, the completed new building had cultural and religious significance, as well as being a physical symbol of transformation in the kingdom. The building was constructed out of bricks at Kagwa’s insistence.⁴⁵

Kodesh notes that Baganda used the cathedral as a “public forum for the enactment of social change,” as attendance “both affirmed a person’s place in the political order recognized by colonial officials and validated the changes that had occurred over the last decade,” in which Kagwa had been a central force. Interestingly, as more people attended services, Ganda began to neglect prayer in their own home, reserving all their “devotional practices...for within the confines of church,” much to the chagrin of the missionaries.⁴⁶ This was an instance in which a project was used under different terms than the Europeans had intended. The cathedral further solidified Protestant dominion, and as a consequence reinforced Kagwa’s position, as he was the leading Protestant chief in the kingdom.

⁴⁴ Tucker, *Eighteen Years*, 298.

⁴⁵ Wrigley, “Apolo Kagwa,” 22.

⁴⁶ Kodesh, “Renovating Tradition,” 524.



Figure 4.3. First congregation in the new brick Namirembe *Source: Mullins, The Wonderful Story of Uganda, n.p.*

Kagwa was becoming an increasingly important figure in the kingdom, beyond his political post, as can be seen in his regular writing for the publication *Mengo Notes*, and his frequent appearance in images from the period.⁴⁷ By being the first to try new things, wear new clothing, build a modern house, Kagwa was becoming representative of the evolving colonial culture in the kingdom. He attentively cultivated and nurtured a positive relationship with the British as a means to bettering the kingdom and setting Buganda on a path to “progress.” Although he did enjoy great personal power as a result of his position within British favour, he was still concerned with maintaining regional

⁴⁷ See Hattersley, *The Mind of Buganda and Mengo Notes*.

dominance and stability in the kingdom, which meant some measure of continuity in political and cultural practice needed to be maintained.

Kagwa was becoming incredibly adept at balancing internal politics and external cultural influences. He tried to increase the ceremonialism surrounding the throne as a way of promoting royal authority to both Ganda and British audiences, while simultaneously incorporating the British tradition of ceremonialism into Ganda practices. An excellent example of this came in 1900 when Kagwa sent personal invitations to all Europeans residing in Buganda to attend a reception and luncheon, in celebration of the kabaka's birthday. On August 8th a formal ceremony celebrating Daudi Chwa's birthday was held at Namirembe Cathedral.⁴⁸ Although the kabaka's birthday had been celebrated annually since 1897, the site and nature of the celebration and feast were new in 1900. On the day, the young kabaka, queen mother and his sisters were carried into the ceremony on the shoulders of royal servants, as was the royal custom, but with an addendum; Daudi Chwa and his sister carried umbrellas over their heads and wore a mixture of traditional and European dress, indicative of the use of European material culture as a status marker (see figure 4.4).⁴⁹ Apolo Kagwa entered on horseback, which was a symbol of his status, as horses do not fare well in the hot, equatorial region and were difficult to obtain.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Kodesh, "Renovating Tradition," 526.

⁴⁹ Umbrellas had become an increasingly popular way to shade oneself from the rain and sun in Buganda.

⁵⁰ Kodesh, "Renovating Tradition," 526.



Figure 4.4. Royal progress of Daudi Chwa. *Source: Hattersley, *The Baganda at Home*, 50.*

Before 1900, British officials and missionaries residing at Mengo had been invited to meet with chiefs and deliver birthday salutations to the kabaka in the lukiko where he “sat in state, on a magnificent chair of crimson plush and gilt, presented to Mwanga by the East African Company.”⁵¹ After saluting him, they departed as they were not invited to the reception that followed, a traditional Ganda feast of plantains and banana beer at the kabaka’s residence. In 1900, the special service moved to Namirembe Cathedral. A procession to the lubiri, the royal enclosure, for a public reception followed; they celebrated the kabaka’s birthday in the same manner annually thereafter.⁵² The scene depicted in the image below (figure 4.5) is in part due to Kagwa’s efforts. Although the throne was gifted during Mwanga’s reign, and Kagwa had little to do with

⁵¹ “The King’s Birthday,” *Mengo Notes* (August 1900): 15.

⁵² “The King’s Birthday,” *Mengo Notes*, 15.

its acquisition, he was doing more to orchestrate the royal ceremony and incorporate a mixture of British and Ganda symbols in the ceremonial space.



Figure 4.5. Daudi Chwa on his inherited throne; holding a reception. *Source:* Hattersley, *The Baganda at Home*, 4.

In his book *The Baganda at Home* Mr. C. W. Hattersley, a British missionary residing in Buganda at the time, included a description of the public reception held in 1906:

The streets through which he passes are decorated with plantains stuck in the ground at intervals. Bunting and mottoes are profusely displayed, bearing such inscriptions as "Long life to the King," "God save the King," "God is my strength," and so on. Messages are read from His majesty the King of England, congratulations from the Governor of Uganda, and sometimes from the Governor of East Africa, and congratulatory speeches are made.⁵³

After the reception, escorted by the Sub-Commissioner, acting as a representative of the British crown, the kabaka inspected the honour guard of Indian troops (see figure 4.5).

Nine guns were fired in salute and a heliograph message was sent from the fort at

⁵³ Hattersley, *The Baganda at Home*, 9.

Parliament Hill to the kabaka's residence. A formal lunch followed, attended by high-ranking chiefs and European officials.⁵⁴



Figure 4.6. Heliographing on the kabaka Daudi Chwa's birthday. *Source: Hattersley, The Baganda at Home, 1.*

As discussed above, Kagwa took care of most of the preparations for the day, which including coordinating the décor and hosting the luncheon. Lush palms and flowers decorated the lunch room, set with two tables set in the European fashion with a chair provided for each guest. The tables were covered with red and white checkered table clothes and set with plates, knives, forks and serviettes.⁵⁵ Each table had a host at its head -- Kagwa at one and his fellow Protestant regent at the other. Grace was said in Luganda before lunch, which was served by well-dressed waiters. An assortment of

⁵⁴ Hattersley, *The Baganda at Home*, 10.

⁵⁵ "The King's Birthday," *Mengo Notes*, 15.

European delicacies and Ganda food staples were provided, including fish, soup, omelets, plantains, peas, fowl, potatoes, curried rice, tinned fruits, jam, biscuits, sago pudding, cheese, tea, and lime juice.⁵⁶ Much effort was made to incorporate European style foodstuffs, much to the delight of the missionaries in attendance, leaving them with the impression that Kagwa and others were “anxious to adopt English methods.”⁵⁷

Having the ceremony at Namirembe Cathedral had dual cultural significance in Buganda. By holding royal ceremonies at the most important Anglican site in the kingdom Kagwa and other Protestant chiefs reinforced their position of power in relation to the Catholic and Muslim factions, which is of special importance considering the religious factions so prominent during the civil wars.⁵⁸ Namirembe was also culturally significant in the eyes of the British colonial officials and missionaries, as a symbol of modernity, morality and progress in Buganda. Baganda used the church for social as well as religious functions, which they did without missionary influence. Kagwa planned the kabaka’s birthday luncheon with very little help from the missionaries; he created the guest list, sent out invitations, and hosted the various events, including the celebrations for the kabaka’s birthday.⁵⁹ Kodesh suggests that the ceremonies, feasts, and events reinforced the “link between Daudi Chwa's legitimacy, the right of Kagwa and his fellow Christian chiefs to their positions of power, and the spread of Christianity and European material culture.”⁶⁰

⁵⁶ “The King’s Birthday,” *Mengo Notes*, 15.

⁵⁷ “The King’s Birthday,” *Mengo Notes*, 15.

⁵⁸ Kodesh, “Renovating Tradition,” 527.

⁵⁹ Kodesh, “Renovating Tradition,” 527; “The King’s Brithday,” *Mengo Notes*, 17.

⁶⁰ Kodesh, “Renovating Tradition,” 527

The lunch fostered a strong link between the kabaka's royal authority, Kagwa's power as a leading Christian chief, and the spread of European material culture.⁶¹ CMS missionaries were extremely impressed with the new proceedings and made note of this in *Mengo Notes*:

The whole thing was kept very quiet and came as a pleasant surprise, and it speaks volumes for the intelligence of the Baganda that they are able to carry out such a scheme so well; and the head chiefs to conduct themselves in such good style as they did in this, their first attempt at giving a reception and lunch in real English style.⁶²

This glowing report is evidence of Kagwa's adept incorporation of European style and material culture in a customary Ganda celebration and of success in his endeavor to impress the British. The missionaries were generally pleased with the initiative taken by Kagwa and other elites, which is evident in how they wrote about his projects in the CMS publication *Mengo Notes*, praising the "cultural innovation" being initiated by the Ganda chiefs.⁶³ This was particularly notable for the missionaries in comparison to the "progress" of the kingdom's neighbors.⁶⁴ By orchestrating events that appealed to Ganda elites and British missionaries and colonial agents alike, Kagwa further solidified authority and legitimacy as regent in the changing political structure.

In 1902, Kagwa travelled to England for the coronation of Edward VII with the scribe Ham Mukasa and their CMS translator. Kagwa was exposed to various cultures and customs, from their journey through the Suez to the excursions in the Mediterranean, and in the metropole was confronted with the broad scope of the British Empire.

⁶¹ Kodesh, "Renovating Tradition," 527.

⁶² "The King's Birthday," *Mengo Notes*, 15.

⁶³ "The King's Brithday," *Mengo Notes*, 17.

⁶⁴ Kodesh, "Renovating Tradition," 530.

Although this trip was Kagwa's idea initially, British officials saw the trip as an opportunity to "impress" Kagwa, by exposing him to the culture and development of England, and through superior treatment.⁶⁵ They took advantage of it as an opportunity to display their industrial and military capacity, and to introduce him to British high society. Kagwa left impressed and excited about the future of Buganda. In Low's words, "hegemony tempered by honor[,] left awe greatly reinforced."⁶⁶ Conversely, through analysis of Mukasa's travelogue, to which Kagwa contributed significantly, it can be surmised that the katikiro hoped to impress the British on his trip.

Kagwa and Mukasa saw and experienced a great many new things on their journey. As a consequence of their experience they returned to Buganda with a new perspective on the Empire, and the kingdom's place within it. On his trip, Kagwa was exposed to British "progress" as manifested in the Industrial Revolution and their cultural values and sensibilities, most notably civility, honour and class. As Gikandi argues, "culture emerged out of the fiction of free agency," which was reinforced when Kagwa and Mukasa left England with little awareness of their inferiority in the colonial relationship; more remarkably "that it was under the mask of protection that they embarked on a unique cultural project-- the invention of Buganda as a modern polis."⁶⁷

Upon his return to Buganda Kagwa diligently and industriously got to the work of "modernizing" Buganda. Hattersley noted the change in Kagwa since returning from his trip:

So far from being unduly elated by it, the Katikiro appears to have greatly profited by his trip to England,

⁶⁵ Low, *Fabrication of Empire*, 320.

⁶⁶ Low, *Fabrication of Empire*, 322.

⁶⁷ Gikandi, "African Subjects," 15.

and to have returned not with a sense of his own importance in having appeared before King Edward VII, but, as it was hoped he would, with an idea, not of how much the Baganda have done, but of how much remains to be done.⁶⁸

Kagwa's invitation to the coronation has been pinpointed by Gikandi as a "turning point" in the colonial relationship, or the beginning of a new era, characterized by Kagwa's devotion to the creation of colonial culture in Buganda. Thus, the process of cultural integration accelerated after Kagwa's trip. Acting as translator, he presented British culture to the Baganda in tangible, meaningful and manageable terms.

In his introduction to Mukasa's travelogue Gikandi frames the colonial relationship between the British and Baganda in terms of the "fiction of free agency" shared by Kagwa and others who had facilitated colonization, and argues that it influenced their engagement in cultural projects. Enchanted by the fruits of the industrial revolution in Europe, Kagwa's first initiative was to develop further the infrastructure of Buganda, both in terms of physical space and institutions. Additionally, he endeavored to bring the ideals of "civility" and "progress" to Buganda, through new, or renovated practices, and material culture.⁶⁹ The cultural project began several years before the trip to England, but the process accelerated after Kagwa and Mukasa returned, heads filled with notions of "civility," "empire" and "progress," and set to work in earnest (re)creating the "greatness" of Britain in Buganda. Although he bought into the rhetoric of progress, Kagwa did not seek to replicate British culture, but rather to adapt and incorporate it into existing custom and practice in the kingdom. The end goal was a

⁶⁸ Hattersley, *The Baganda at Home*, 96.

⁶⁹ Gikandi, "African Subjects," 16.

developed Bugandan nation, unique from the British and true to its own history and identity.⁷⁰

On their trip, they also gained a new understanding of the British Empire, and their place within it. Most impressed by the British colony of India, the “crown jewel” of the Empire, based on the representations of its culture in the metropole and the unique parameters of its relationship with the British, Kagwa saw its unique blend of culture as the perfect blueprint for his project in Buganda.⁷¹ In July 1900, CMS missionaries had remarked that Uganda was becoming more and more “modernized” every day.⁷² Kagwa had encouraged the opening of more schools, including the day school for younger children held in Namirembe Cathedral and Mengo High School that offered higher education for children in the capital. He also supported the construction of a new hospital, to be equipped with the instruments of modern medicine.⁷³

Progress was most evident in Buganda in the changing physical landscape. A number of new public buildings and private homes were erected in Buganda, and the influence of European architecture was obvious. Kagwa supported the construction of many of the new public buildings, and it was his own modern home that was the inspiration for others who could afford the same.⁷⁴ Mengo was increasingly being urbanized, boasting a post office, several stores, the Industrial Mission, hospital, government buildings, along with the new Namirembe Cathedral (see figure 4.7). The

⁷⁰ Gikandi, “African Subjects,” 15-16.

⁷¹ Mukasa, *Uganda's Katikiro in England*, 103-110.

⁷² “Uganda Modernized,” *Mengo Notes* (July 1900): 12.

⁷³ Hattersley, *The Baganda at Home*, 161-164; “Opening of the New Hospital, Mengo,” *Mengo Notes* (July 1900): 11.

⁷⁴ Hattersley, *The Baganda at Home*, 95-96.

cathedral, as previously discussed, was the largest and most important physical structure in the kingdom, and symbolic of the marriage between religion and “progress.”

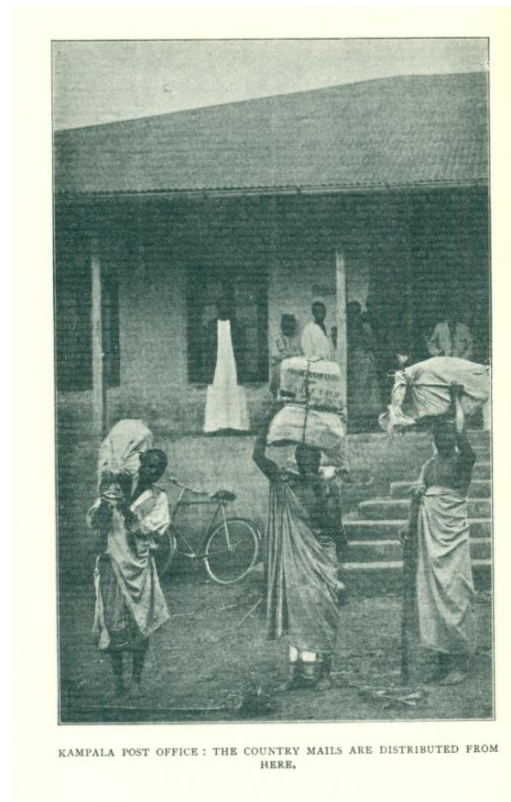


Figure 4.7 Kampala Post Office. *Source: Hattersley, The Baganda at Home, 45.*

On May 31, 1900, the new CMS hospital was opened in Mengo. The facility was outfitted with the most modern amenities available in Buganda, including new bedsteads and blankets, and fireplaces in many of the rooms.⁷⁵ Staffed with European nurses and doctors, at the request of Kagwa, the hospital was evidence of a proliferation of social services in the kingdom (see figure 4.8). Bishop Tucker made a speech marking the official opening in both English and Luganda, along with opening prayers, printed in both

⁷⁵ “New Hospital,” *Mengo Notes*, 13.

languages at the Mission Press.⁷⁶ The hospital was one of the first social services to be developed in Buganda.



Figure 4.8. Doctors and Nurses of the CMS Hospital, Namirembe. *Source:* Hattersley, *The Baganda at Home*, 206.

Kagwa had visited a major hospital during his time in London and examined all the modern technology and amenities used and provided there. He and Mukasa were most intrigued by the rudimentary x-ray machine, described as “working by electricity – that is, its light—[it] passes, and shows you everything that is in your body; but it’s hard to understand it-- one can only marvel at it.”⁷⁷ Kagwa noted how well-trained the nurses were, and expressed his desire to have some of them travel to Buganda and share their knowledge with the hospital staff in Mengo; he said, “I beg that you nurses will come to our country and help in our hospitals; because the nurses are few, and the sick many.”⁷⁸ This is strong evidence of Kagwa’s wish to import knowledge developed in England to the kingdom, for the benefit of the people.

⁷⁶ “New Hospital,” *Mengo Notes*, 20.

⁷⁷ Mukasa, *Uganda’s Katikiro in England*, 99.

⁷⁸ Mukasa, *Uganda’s Katikiro in Engalnd*, 99.

Besides Namirembe and the hospital, a number of major infrastructure projects commenced in 1900, including the construction of the Industrial Mission in central Mengo. Located less than a mile from Namirembe Hill on Bulange hill, the mission was comprised of two long parallel buildings containing workshops, dormitories and classrooms for the apprentices, as well as two large carpenter's shops. Most of the woodworking was done by the apprentices there, including the materials used for the building of the homes of the Bishop, Kagwa and the kabaka, as well as the new hospital.⁷⁹ One of the buildings housed a printing office with four hand presses, a cutting machine, and a machine for sewing books with wire.⁸⁰ Bishop Tucker noted that the Industrial Mission was "doing good service in the direction of aiding in the great work of fitting the Baganda for the demands which would be placed upon them as they came in contact with the outside world."⁸¹

The modern public buildings were echoed in the construction of a number of modern homes. The trend towards building modern homes began with Kagwa and the kabaka and quickly spread across the capital. Kagwa's home was by far the largest at the time of its construction, even in comparison to those of Europeans, totalling more than twenty rooms. Although the initial plan was drawn up by a European architect, Kagwa was the project manager and the labour was done by Baganda at his insistence. He used labour given by the tenants living on his land instead of rent. Therefore, Kagwa used the

⁷⁹ "The Industrial Mission, Bulange, Mengo," *Mengo Notes* (June 1900): 7.

⁸⁰ "The Industrial Mission," *Mengo Notes*, 7.

⁸¹ Tucker, *Eighteen Years*, 289.

building of his house as an opportunity to educate Ganda about modern construction skills and processes.⁸²

Kagwa's home also encouraged wealthy Ganda began to build homes of the same caliber (see figure 4.9). By 1906, Hattersley noted the great change in housing style, from rudimentary reed thatched enclosures to more substantial, modern structures

[H]uts of a more substantial nature, with mud walls, are becoming the fashion for even the peasantry. The chiefs...are, wherever possible, building themselves substantial brickhouses, some few even going to the extent of paying as much as £400 or £500 for a good brick house with corrugated iron roof.⁸³

Modern homes required modern furnishings, and the average newly built home contained a table and chairs, some bedsteads, a carpet or two and several lamps. Hattersley linked the need for lamps with the rise in literacy, as they were needed for reading and writing.⁸⁴

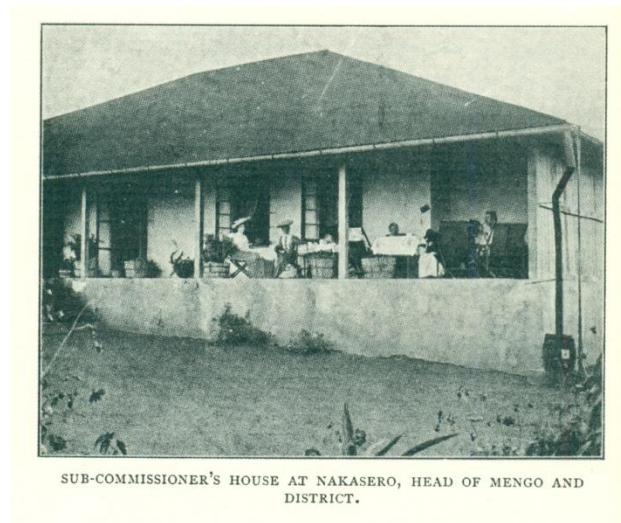


Figure 4.9. Subcommissioner's house. *Source:* Hattersley, *The Baganda at Home*, 71.

⁸² Hattersley, *The Baganda at Home*, 96.

⁸³ Hattersley, *The Baganda at Home*, 95.

⁸⁴ Hattersley, *The Baganda at Home*, 97.

In the 1890s, Kagwa was one of the first Baganda to build himself a modern home, albeit a modest structure compared to those of Europeans living in the region. After his return from England, he set to work building the largest home in the kingdom, boasting more than twenty rooms, a larger house than any European possessed. The project was an expensive undertaking, and aside from using some tribute labour from his tenants in the construction process, Kagwa paid for it himself. Although the plan was drawn by a European, the house itself was built entirely by Baganda, supervised by Kagwa and skilled men from the Industrial Mission.⁸⁵ The use of an entirely Ganda workforce in the building of a landmark of Protestantism in the kingdom can be read as evidence of his intent to promote modernity to his people and encourage their commitment to Protestantism.⁸⁶

It was important to project the image of status through development from the centre of the kingdom, to encourage modernization elsewhere, and thus Kagwa pushed for the construction of a modern house for the young kabaka as well. Traditionally the home of the kabaka was constructed from mud, grass and reeds, and Chwa was the first kabaka to have a home built with modern materials; his was a large brick structure with an iron roof, which was an architectural statement of both utility and wealth.⁸⁷ The interior was laid out in the European style, with a comfortable sitting room for receiving guests, furnished and decorated with “carpets, curtains, English lamps and pictures, conspicuous amongst the latter being handsome portraits of King Edward VII and [the]

⁸⁵ Hattersley, *The Baganda at Home*, 96.

⁸⁶ Kodesh, “Renovating Tradition,” 522-523.

⁸⁷ Hattersley, *The Baganda at Home*, 7.

Queen.”⁸⁸ The walls displayed Baganda symbols alongside the portraits, including the “Insignia of Royalty,” a wood and basket work shield and two spears, which were customarily carried in front of the kabaka during royal processions (see figure 4.10).⁸⁹

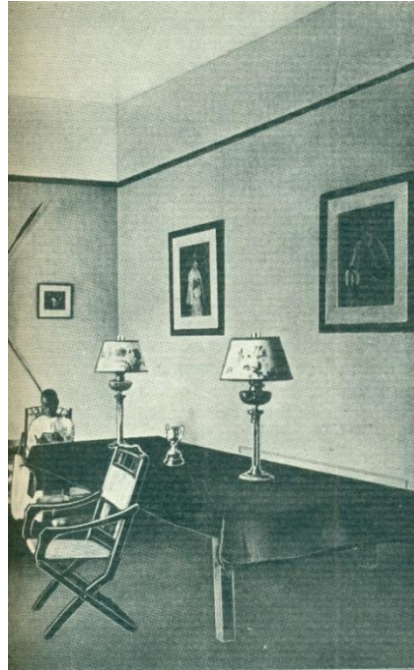


Figure 4.10. Kabaka's sitting room. *Source: Hattersley, The Baganda at Home, 8.*

European goods were imported to Buganda en masse in the early years of colonial rule, resulting in a uniquely hybrid material culture. Baganda carefully evaluated goods and practices before deciding what to adopt from “the offerings of Western civilization.”⁹⁰ Popular items included umbrellas, books and cloth or articles of clothing. Kagwa was the first to own or use many of these products and as he was a public figure, other elites picked through the British offerings and decided which they liked best. Their choices then influenced what became popular among Baganda in the capital.

⁸⁸ Hattersley, *The Baganda at Home*, 7.

⁸⁹ Hattersley, *The Baganda at Home*, 7.

⁹⁰ Rowe, “Western Impact,” 56.

This process of selection is perhaps best illustrated in the story of Kagwa and the rickshaw (see figure 4.11). After becoming aware of a rickshaw for sale, Kagwa expressed interest in purchasing it, but first wanted to try it out. Rowe has recounted the story.

They clambered in, and pushed and pulled by a crowd of retainers, headed for the open gate of the government fort. As the fort, for military reasons, was situated atop a rather steep hill, they had already attained considerable speed by the time the gate was reached, and the British administrator began to feel anxious as he saw them shoot over the brow of the hill. Some time later a man appeared at the gate carrying a piece of broken wheel, and then another with a bit of axle, followed by still more with bits and pieces until the whole rickshaw was accounted for.⁹¹

After the whole ordeal Kagwa announced that he was not interested in purchasing the cart after all, as it was “not quite what [he] wanted.”⁹² This is clear evidence of Baganda, and Kagwa more specifically, determining what they wanted to import from the Europeans, in a process Rowe has referred to as “winnowing and sifting.”⁹³ There were never enough British on the ground to truly influence the importation of material culture, and so most Baganda looked primarily to influential public figures like Kagwa, who “exercised considerable independence in selecting the particular road they would follow to a Westernized African society.”⁹⁴

⁹¹ Rowe, “Western Impact,” 65.

⁹² Rowe, “Western Impact,” 65.

⁹³ Rowe, “Western Impact,” 65.

⁹⁴ Rowe, “Western Impact,” 65.

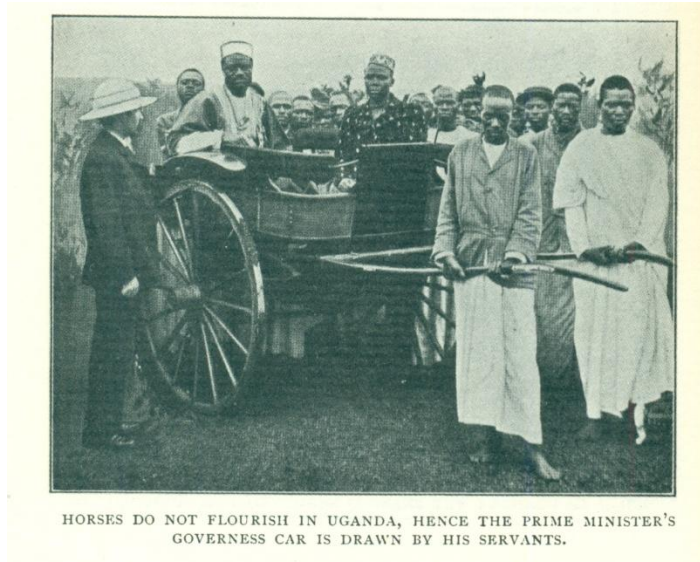


Figure 4.11. Apolo Kagwa's push cart. *Source: Hattersley, The Baganda at Home, 198.*

Fashion in particular was influenced by British styles. Dress had performed specific functions in the kingdom since precolonial times, in terms of social rank, ceremony and personal expression. For example, members of the royal court had enjoyed certain privileges in decorating their bodies, including filing their nails to a point and adorning themselves with brass and copper anklets. Women of status wore a dark belt of bark cloth around their robe, while men closely associated with the kabaka wore special animal pelts, made from the best looking hides with the hair rubbed off, around their waists to signify their rank. Commoners wore animal pelts as well, but made from ordinary cowhide and the hair on.⁹⁵ This is evidence of how dress was used at court to delineate status.

After their arrival, European styles were used in the same practice of marking status, but also offered new options for Baganda. The kingdom's history of manufacturing bark cloth, and turning it into clothing, meant that importing cotton and

⁹⁵Kagwa, *The Customs*, 135; Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 201.

using it to make European style garments was not a far stretch.⁹⁶ Kodesh sees the adoption of foreign clothing styles not as a loss of tradition but as the “outcome of a continuation in Ganda political and cultural thought.”⁹⁷ One again he points to the conceptual framework as continuous from the precolonial period as the reason for the adoption of European clothing, rather than solely the attractiveness of its style. A healthy Arab trade in cloth had begun in the mid-19th century, which had sparked the use of cotton in the place of bark cloth among some wealthier Baganda; therefore the adoption of European fabrics was predicated on this earlier shift. It must be added here that British dress does have some meaning in terms of the quest for modernity, especially for Kagwa, particularly after his trip to England. By adopting these new styles of clothing, Baganda elite were marking their status not only vis-a-vis the commoners in the kingdom, but also for the British colonial audience.

Church services at the newly constructed Namirembe Cathedral presented an opportunity for men and women to dress up. Conversely, they also established their right to attend through their clothing, as everyone at the services was impeccably dressed in fine imported fabrics.⁹⁸ Typically, women wore Victorian style dresses and men donned “white kanzus,” which were long robes that had been introduced by the Arab’s decades earlier, under their suits (see figure 4.12). Feasts, ceremonies and other important occasions presented more opportunities for people in the capital to express their status to each other, and Europeans in the capital, through dress.

⁹⁶ Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 235; Kodesh, “Renovating Tradition,” 525.

⁹⁷ Kodesh, “Renovating Tradition,” 525.

⁹⁸ Kodesh, “Renovating Tradition,” 525.

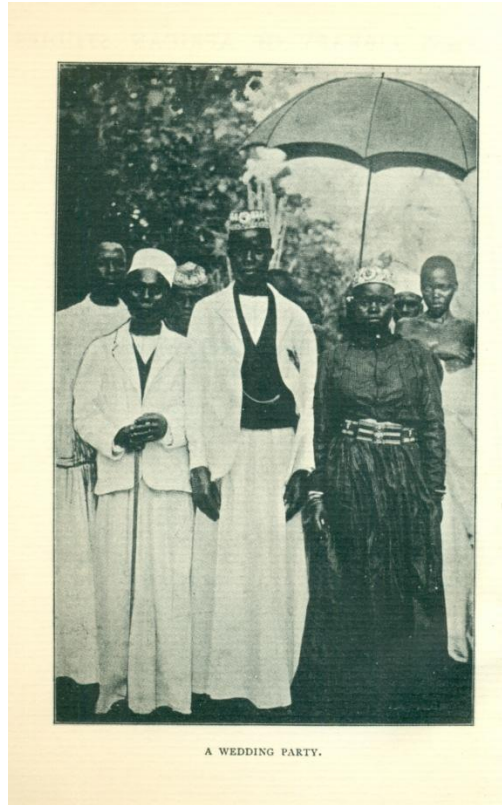


Figure 4.12. Wedding party in the new style of dress. *Source: Hattersley, The Baganda at Home, 92.*

Kagwa's trip to England further encouraged Baganda to adopt new modes dress as he recounted the styles he had seen on the streets of London to a captive audience upon his return.⁹⁹ Kagwa shared other experiences and observations from his trip with Baganda and British alike upon his return, including:

how the ladies dressed, and how they greeted one another, and how they gave feasts to us, and what the houses and roads were like, and what vast numbers of people there were, and how the men dressed very well, and how kind they were and how kind the King was, and what his palace was like; what the trains and the carriages were like, and what the waves were like, and

⁹⁹Mukasa, *Uganda's Katikiro in England*, 201-204.

how large the English cities were, and many other things...¹⁰⁰

Kagwa shared his experiences with Baganda and British officials in the kingdom alike, both of whom marvelled at his stories; the Ganda because they were exotic and the British because they were pleased to hear him speak so passionately and eloquently about their culture.

Enthralled with tales from the metropole and worldly appearance many Baganda wanted to emulate his changing style. This included the incorporation of new fabrics and articles of clothing to the common Ganda wardrobe; for men, more structured pieces like jackets, and for women more conservative and highly constructed dresses. They also used dress to assert their importance in the kingdom, in relation to Kagwa, which was part of the continuous process of using dress as a marker of status.¹⁰¹ Although Western attire became popular, it did not necessarily mean that Baganda would put it together the way Europeans had intended it. The Comaroffs note that among the Tswana some adopted dress in a “recognizably orthodox style while other rejected it entirely,” donning outfits that used articles of clothing in ways they had never been intended and often bordered on the ridiculous.¹⁰² This case was not so extreme in Buganda, but there were many instances in which Baganda put things together according to their own style, irrespective of the manner in which Europeans around them were attired.

The CMS missionary Hattersley noted the interesting style combinations he observed in the capital. He saw men combine clothing items from a number of different sources, layering Arab style robes over their suit of a vest and trousers, and topping their

¹⁰⁰ Mukasa, *Uganda's Katikiro in England*, 203.

¹⁰¹ Kodesh, “Renovating Tradition,” 525-526.

¹⁰² Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 240.

heads with a fez.¹⁰³ Women would often have garments made in a European style, but instead of using the darker and muted colours in fashion in the metropole, they “prefer colours and glaring contrasts [;]....a bodice in vivid green [and] under may be a skirt of a very loud magenta.”¹⁰⁴ They also continued the precolonial practice of marking status with a belt and finished their look with a strap of striped cloth with a buckle fitted around their waist. All Baganda shaved their heads every few months, due to the tropical heat, and so to cover their bald heads women wrapped them with colourful scarves or wore “a small velvet cap with spangles of silver and gold, manufactured by Indians.”¹⁰⁵

The landscape of the capital was changing in many ways as well as European modes of dress were adopted, new “modern” buildings constructed and imported forms of transport were utilized. Many of these could be seen as markers of status in the kingdom, as they displayed wealth and access to material goods. These importations were also result of the process of creating colonial culture in Buganda, in which colonial officials, missionaries and elite Baganda like Kagwa were all engaged. Subsequent to his trip, Hattersley noted that Kagwa had “ever since, as indeed he has for many years past, taken a most lively interest in urging the people to take up new works, and to expend their energies in new directions.”¹⁰⁶

Much of the work of this chapter has been the expansion and application of the works of Kodesh, Gikandi and the Comaroffs to the creation of colonial culture in Buganda. Where these historians have not focused on Kagwa specifically this chapter has attempted to introduce Kagwa and highlight his role in this process by mapping

¹⁰³ Hattersley, *The Baganda at Home*, 93.

¹⁰⁴ Hattersley, *The Baganda at Home*, 93.

¹⁰⁵ Hattersley, *The Baganda at Home*, 94.

¹⁰⁶Hattersley, *The Baganda at Home*, 95.

notable instances and examples of colonial culture. When coupled with the previous chapter it becomes apparent that Kagwa's cultural endeavours can be read as predicated on his understanding of the colonial relationship as one of equals, and his understanding of the value of British culture to "modernizing" Buganda.¹⁰⁷ Further, this incorporation of new ideas and material goods in the kingdom, or the "renovation of traditions" as Kodesh labels it, is evidence of the continuity of practices, both political and social, from the precolonial period. Although Kagwa was the pioneer of colonial culture in Buganda, he always made sure to account for Baganda practices and customs and negotiated the amalgamation of old and new during this complicated and tumultuous period of transition.

¹⁰⁷ Gikandi, "African Subjects," 15.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

The kingdom of Buganda was unique in the Great Lakes region of East Africa in the 19th century because of its centralized bureaucracy and imperial aspirations. Upon first contact with the kingdom, John Hannington Speke could not help but remark on the order and organization of Ganda society. However, when British colonial officials arrived in the region in the early 1890s they found a people divided by religion and embroiled in violent civil war. Baganda had been ripe converts for Christian missionaries in the late 1870s, and both Catholic and Protestant factions had significant success in gaining followers. Following the civil war of 1898-1899, the British sent Sir Harry Johnston to Buganda to establish a permanent protectorate and formalize the details of the British-Buganda relationship. Among the regent chiefs, friendship with the British was seen as a relationship of mutual benefit, and it was under these terms that the Protestant katikiro Apolo Kagwa engaged in the negotiations that established colonial rule. He saw himself and the other top chiefs as equal partners with Sir Harry Johnston and the British in the creation of the Protectorate, and therefore did not understand the establishment of colonial rule in terms of cultural and political domination.

Kagwa has been strangely absent from much of the historical study of Buganda, where he is only infrequently referred to in the chain of events, and rarely addressed as an individual. Where his character has been assessed, the images drawn have generally cast him in an unfavourable light, concluding that the motivations for his interactions with the British, particularly in the establishment of colonial rule, were primarily selfish, particularly in reference to the large tract of land he was granted through the 1900

Agreement.¹ This thesis has revived the discussion of Kagwa, in light of more recent historiography, and recast his life and career in new, more favorable terms.

As discussed in the body of this thesis, Kagwa's was a strong influence in the politics and culture of the Buganda throughout this period. Where historians in the past have left him out of their narrative, or treated his character in reductionist terms, this thesis attempts to show him as a smart man engaged in adept politics. Aware of changing circumstances in Buganda, in many cases Kagwa was able to anticipate and manipulate them to his benefit, as well as that of the kingdom. Beginning with his conversion to Christianity in the 1880s, more specifically Protestantism, Kagwa utilized foreign ideas to establish and legitimize his elite position. He was an incredibly adept politician, who was able to cater to multiple audiences simultaneously, which was a necessity in the complex landscape of Buganda in the 1890s, in the wake of the civil wars and the growing presence of British imperialism.

By seeing where his interests were aligned with the British, and building strong personal relationships with key British actors like Lugard, Kagwa used his unique abilities to drive towards the special position Buganda received in the 1900 colonial Agreement. Kagwa benefitted greatly from the 1900 Agreement, as he received vast wealth in the form of land and reinforced his political post as the leading katikiro, but he also guaranteed a unique form of autonomy for the kingdom within the new Protectorate. The Baganda continued to administer the government of the kingdom, and Kagwa was at the helm as top regent for the young kabaka. From this position he was able to steer

¹ In *Landed Obligation* Holly Hanson points to his theft of land from several of the clans through the 1900 Agreement. In his introduction to *Basekabaka* Kiwanuka credits Kagwa's industry and ability but still frames him as a collaborator with the British in the making of the Protectorate.

politics in the direction of his choosing, so long as the lukiko came to a consensus on key issues, and lead multiple cultural projects in the kingdom, a task he was most passionate about.

This thesis begins to suggest the impetus for his actions in terms of a more complex set of motivations; this is particularly evident in the discussion of his pioneering of colonial culture in Buganda. His intense efforts to import British material culture and customs, combined with his encouragement of the “progress” of the kingdom, led to personal wealth and the development of the kingdom, as well as reinforced its privileged position at the centre of the Uganda Protectorate. Beginning in the late 1890s, Kagwa organized the construction of several major public structures and works. Namirembe Cathedral was a symbol of Protestantism in the kingdom. The Industrial Mission and Mengo Hospital were both sites where new technology was implemented. Kagwa went on to build his own house in the modern style, out of bricks and mortar, setting the standard for elite Ganda to follow, and to which commoners could aspire. These physical expressions of imperialism, combined with the growing importation of European material culture in the kingdom, were evidence of Buganda’s progress and place in the British Empire. Kagwa was deeply committed to this project.

There is still much work to be done as the confines of this thesis can only scratch the surface. Research for this project was constricted, particularly in the case of access to primary resources, by what can be obtained in Canada. The British Foreign Office files hold records of many important and interesting communications between Kagwa and British officials, and between colonial officials on issues pertaining to Kagwa and

Buganda, but unfortunately they are only accessible by paper copy in London, England.² Further, some of Kagwa's writings, as well as his cohorts, have not been translated into English from Luganda. It is impossible to get a complete picture of his life without readings these accounts and biographies.³ Future work on Kagwa might explore his writings in more depth and assess his role as one of the first vernacular historians in the kingdom.

Derek Peterson and Giacomina Macola's edited collection *Recasting the Past: History Writing and Political Work in Modern Africa* explores the world of vernacular historians in colonial Africa. They identify Africans writing their own histories, from within their own unique local contexts, as "homespun historians," and recognize them as a group worthy of study. By re-reading their histories from a new perspective that analyzes the authorship, with all its biases and motives, they suggest that these works need to be read more deeply and used as more than simple mines for primary evidence. Kagwa is notably absent from this collection, but would fit well with the others included in it. Although this thesis was unable to address Kagwa as a historian, it has laid the groundwork for a study of his writing from the perspective of this new trend in African history; this is the project I plan to undertake in the next phase of my graduate work.

This thesis has not made a decisive claim about Kagwa's motives, as most of the arguments are inferred rather than conclusively proven through direct evidence.

However it has established his importance and centrality in the politics and culture of the

² For the purpose of this thesis the excerpts and citations lifted by other historians for their work have been used.

³ The biography of Ham Mukasa is one that has not yet been translated, but would be of much interest for this study as he and Kagwa spent much time together, particularly during their trip to England.

kingdom during this period of upheaval and transition. Indebted to new historiography that sees stronger continuities between the precolonial and colonial than previously accounted for by historians, this thesis addresses the transitional period in Buganda. It shows how an alternative or more in-depth reading of the primary sources, correspondence, treaties, and writings by missionaries and Kagwa himself, can lead to a different perception of Kagwa's career and character, one that sees him working creatively and efficiently to solve the problems of the period and secure primacy for himself and the kingdom in the changing landscape of East Africa at the turn of the century.

John Roscoe, who worked with Kagwa in the writing of *Basekabaka* and lived in Buganda during the years of Kagwa's accomplishments, had this to say about the katikiro:

he stands out as a leader not only in religious matters, but also in civil and political life; he has been a wise guide and faithful leader in everything that would lead to progressive development. He has ever been ready to take an active share even in menial work that would be for the good of the country; after hours spent in court with the consideration of complicated questions of government, he would be found writing the minutes of meetings with the results of their discussions, or fashioning windows and doors. He was also able to fit his house with electric bells, he learned to ride a bicycle, and he introduced habits of progress and comfort into the small matters of daily life, while during business hours in court he was introducing enlightened and has issued various booklets, giving the history of the country, with many valuable details concerning former kings and clans with their peculiarities, together with other useful information. In addition to these booklets, he has published official pamphlets and papers for the guidance of chiefs and other persons in authority who in the heart of the country may be cut off from the help and guidance of

British officials...Yet in spite of all these labours he has ever been studying new ideas for his personal improvement, has collected information about his own people and his ancestors, and has found leisure to show attentions to travelers and friends, and not least to attend a family worship, bible study, and religious services.⁴

This is the multi-faceted, talented and committed man this thesis has attempted to reveal.

The ground has been laid for further work, with more complete access to key sources, which will reveal Kagwa's complexities even further.

⁴ John Roscoe, *Twenty-Five Years in East Africa*, 165-166.

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