

CASUALTY *of* EMPRE

Britain's unpaid
debt to an
African
kingdom



Cedric Pulford

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ITURI

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[NB One mile = 1.6 kms]

About the author

Cedric Pulford is a British journalist and author with more than 25 years' experience of Anglophone Africa, working on training projects across the continent. He has had a long association with the Guardian newspaper in London. For ten years until 2005 he was the UK correspondent of Ecumenical News International news agency, an associate of the World Council of Churches. He has an MA degree in philosophy, politics and economics from Oxford University and an MA in political science from Case Western Reserve University in the USA, where he did research into East African business elites

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NAMES AND PLACES

The spelling of names and places in Uganda can be most confusing, particularly with differences between Victorian and modern texts. The following is a modest guide through the forest:

I have kept the original spelling of names and places in direct quotes, with a bracketed explanation if needed, but otherwise use the modern forms.

Many names include "r" in their older forms and "l" in their current forms: Kabalega is now preferred to Kabarega, for example.

The kmgdom of Bunyoro in older texts is described as Unyoro, while Uganda originally referred to the kingdom of Buganda, not the entire colony created by the British.

The people of Bunyoro are the Banyoro. An individual man, woman or child is a Munyoro. The language is Runyoro. The preferred adjectival form is Nyoro -eg Nyoro culture.

Similarly, the people of Buganda are the Baganda. An individual man, woman or child is a Muganda. The language is Luganda. The preferred adjectival form is Ganda - eg Ganda culture.

In older texts "w" may be used instead of "b" - eg the Wanyoro, the people of Bunyoro; the Waganda, the people of Buganda. This is the Swahili style, which was familiar to travellers before they experienced the Runyoro and Luganda languages.

In the interests of the book's wider appeal, I have kept non-English words to an absolute minimum. I generally use English translations rather than original

terms: eg, *county* instead of *saza*. Where an original word is used, like *barusura* (Kabalega's elite troops), I immediately explain it. A very few original words appear repeatedly and are not explained each time.

Thus it is worth remembering that mukama (plural bakama) and kabaka are words for king, in Bunyoro and Buganda respectively. Katikiro means chief minister and saza (which creeps in from time to time) means county.

CP

Principal characters

Cwa II Kabalega: king of Bunyoro, the focus of this book; his long guerrilla war against the incoming British has proved inspirational

Amara: Nyoro chief who fought for the British

Florence Baker: partner and later wife of Sir Samuel Baker (qv); bought by him at a slave auction

Sir Samuel Baker: explorer and colonial administrator; unsuccessfully claimed Bunyoro for Egypt

Byabacwezi: leading Nyoro chief; fighter for Kabalega and later an early Christian convert

Gaetano Casati: Egyptian envoy to Bunyoro, long-time resident in the country

Sir Andrew Cohen: governor of Uganda in the run-up to independence (1962); his deportation of the king of Buganda fractured Uganda politics

Colonel Henry Colvile: British commissioner in Uganda, commanded the 1893-95 invasion of Bunyoro

Daudi Chwa: king of Buganda; Mwangi's son, he succeeded his deposed father as a child

Andereya Duhaga: king of Bunyoro and a committed Christian; Kabalega's son, he was instrumental in ending **his father's exile**

Emin Pasha: German-born governor of Equatoria; his evacuation by H.M. Stanley (qv) left a power vacuum in the region

Colonel Evatt: his troops captured Kabalega

Ruth Fisher: missionary who with her husband, Arthur, served in Bunyoro for many years; her book *Twilight Tales* encouraged interest in Nyoro history

Forster: colonial administrator who resigned his post over land allocations in Bunyoro's Lost Counties as did Pulteney (qv)

General Charles Gordon: governor of Equatoria; met his death in Khartoum (1885) at the hands of the Mahdi (qv)

- Solomon Iguru I: king of Bunyoro, Kabalega's grandson; in 2004 he announced a lawsuit against Britain seeking reparations for the 1893-95 invasion
- Ireyta: doughty Nyoro general, fought for Kabalega to the end
- Jasi Nyakimoso: son of Kabalega and fighter for his father; his actions disproved the Nyoro saying that brave fathers do not have brave children
- Sir Harry Johnston: colonial administrator and author; architect of the seminal Uganda Agreement (1900) for land holdings, which also entrenched Buganda's control of Bunyoro's Lost Counties
- Apolo Kagga: Ganda Protestant leader and author; chief minister of Buganda for more than three decades
- Semei Kakungulu: Ganda Protestant leader; led Ganda army in 1893-95 invasion of Bunyoro by Colvile (qv)
- Kalema, brother of Mwanga (qv): briefly king of Buganda during the year of three kings (1888)
- Kamurasi: king of Bunyoro, Kabalega's father
- Daudi Kasagama: king of Toro
- Kikukule: Ganda-born chief who fought for Kabalega
- Yosiya Kitahimbwa: succeeded his deposed father, Kabalega, as king of Bunyoro
- General Herbert Kitchener: his victory at Omdurman (1898) destroyed the Mahdist state and cemented Britain's control of the region
- Kiwewa, brother of Mwanga (qv): briefly king of Buganda during the year of three kings (1888)
- Captain Frederick Lugard: chief architect of Britain's takeover of Buganda (from 1890); his experiences there contributed to his theory of "indirect rule" for the British Empire
- Major James Macdonald: British officer criticised for intransigence during the Sudanese Mutiny (1897); his reply was suppressed by the British government

- Alexander Mackay: the leading Protestant missionary of his time in Buganda
- Mahdi, the: see Muhammad Ahmad
- Mbogo: leader of the Muslim Baganda
- Muhammad Ahmad, known as the Mahdi: the impact of his conquest of Sudan was felt in Bunyoro
- Mutesa I: king of Buganda
- Mutesa II (Sir Edward Mutesa): king of Buganda before and after Uganda independence (1962); deported by the British and returned a hero to his people
- Mwanga: king of Buganda, son of Mutesa I (qv) ; shared exile with Kabalega
- Dr David Livingstone: missionary and explorer; his dream of Christianity and commerce in Africa inspired the British **missionaries in Buganda**
- William Pulteney: British army officer who resigned his post over land allocations in Bunyoro's Lost Counties as did Forster (qv)
- Ruyonga: kinsman of Kabalega; maintained a long-running rebellion in northern Bunyoro
- Rwabadongo: leading Nyoro chief and fighter with Kabalega
- Selim Bey: commander of Sudanese troops left behind after the evacuation of Equatoria; the troops were put at the service of Lugard (qv) in Buganda
- Henry Morton Stanley: explorer who set off British contacts with Buganda; later evacuated Emin Pasha (qv) from Equatoria
- Major A.B. Thruston: took part in the 1893-95 British invasion of Bunyoro, later in charge of the country; his account of the invasion has been used a century later to press claims for **reparations**
- Captain W.H. Williams: associate of Captain Lugard (qv); his role at the Battle of Mengo (1892) has been much disputed
- Tito Winyi IV: king of Bunyoro, Kabalega's son



Map 1: East African political boundaries, present day.

Foreword

THIS book does not address the pluses and minuses of the British Empire, except to say that it was neither wholly benign nor wholly wicked.

The first view - painting the map of the world red in the cause of civilisation - prevailed in Britain for generations. Since the 1960s its polar opposite - that the empire was a conspiracy to degrade subject peoples and plunder their resources - has been almost universally believed, especially in universities and schools. That is the version of history that has been taught to most Britons alive today.

Yet any "unassailable truth" invites a few hardy souls to challenge it. We seem to be seeing renewed interest in that once unmentionable subject, the British Empire, with (except for holdouts in academia) a more nuanced view emerging.

This is typified by the Empire and Commonwealth Museum, a private venture - what else? - located in Isambard Kingdom Brunel's old train shed in Bristol. When surveyed, a big majority of visitors, who presumably represented many races and all shades of opinion, declared that the exhibition was fair and balanced in its presentations - a remarkable achievement with so sensitive a subject.

Whatever the truth about the empire as a whole, Bunyoro, a small kingdom in east Africa, drew a short straw. In Bunyoro, British officials over decades fell short of the standards of their caste. This book explains how and why.



Map 2: The kingdom of Bunyoro and its neighbours after the British Conquest.

1 Bunyoro as it was

"OUR next two marches lay through a very fertile, picturesque, and hilly country, with broad valleys, in which were the pleasant plantations of the Wunyoro, smiling with banana groves, patches of sweet potatoes, Indian corn [maize] and sesame."

In these words Major A.B. Thruston described the bountiful countryside of Bunyoro through which he marched in the 1890s as part of an invading army.

"Early on the third morning, on breasting a low hill, we saw before us the ruins of a large town of grass huts, all black and smouldering," he continued. "This was all that was left of Mapala [Mparo], the capital of Unyoro, and the residence of Kabarega." (*African Incidents*)

The fighting king, Kabarega, now more commonly known as Kabalega, had destroyed it himself ahead of the enemy advance.

Earlier European visitors also were struck by the variety of crops grown by the Banyoro, the people of Bunyoro. The country lies just north of the equator, but the tropical climate is moderated by the upland setting – mostly a plateau 3,500 feet and more above sea level.

Colonel Henry Colvile, who headed the invading army, found that the Banyoro did not rely on bananas as the people of neighbouring Buganda did, but planted beans and sweet potatoes.

Frederick Lugard, another actor prominent in our story, reported that the Banyoro grew millet, maize

and wimbi [finger millet], not just the "interminable" bananas and roots of the Baganda.

The Italian, Gaetano Casati, lived for several years in Kabalega's kingdom in the 1880s as the Egyptian envoy. The climate, Casati found, was healthy and temperate with abundant rain. Vegetables grew easily, and termites were eaten as a source of protein.

Bushmeat from chimpanzees was taboo. With an insight matching Darwin's, the Banyoro recognised that ages ago chimps had formed part of the human race. They could not be hunted without royal permission. Protecting chimps like this, the Banyoro may claim to have been ahead of modern westerners, who do not scruple to use the animals for medical research.

Curiously for one who lived so long in the country, Casati appears to be wrong in suggesting that plantains were the Nyoro staple food. Into modern times finger millet has been the main staple, with plantains grown mainly for the production of beer.* Plantains were the favourite of the Baganda, who frequently caused offence by sneering at other foods.

Beer was a chief attraction for Banyoro menfolk, Casati reported. They loved to feast and dance, celebrating the new moon each month by drinking to excess. Women ran the houses and also attended to the fields.

For wives at the royal court gorging on food was the way to the king's favour. Obese women were desired: some became so fat that they could only move on all fours.

Meanwhile, Kabalega lived on a repetitious diet of veal boiled with bananas, telabun [millet] porridge and banana beer.

The varied crop-based diet was eaten only by the common people; for the nobles their food came from cattle products.

* John Beattie, *The Nyoro State*

A glimpse of this lifestyle, surviving into modern times, is provided by the childhood memories of Yoweri Museveni, later the president of Uganda. He was born about 1944 into a family of Banyankore Hima nomads. The Banyankore of Ankole are a related people of the Banyoro.

Museveni explains in his book, *Sowing the Mustard Seed*, that his exact date of birth is not known because his parents were illiterate and dated events by reference to external happenings. He was born between the death of a mugabe [king] of Ankole and the installation of his successor.

The family ate almost exclusively cattle products, particularly milk.

"The main staple of our diet was various types of milk – fresh milk, soured milk, and, once in a while, a kind of thick cream called 'eshabwe' which we would eat with steamed bananas. We also ate cattle blood – we would bleed the cattle and bake the blood into a type of cake ... We would also eat veal once in a while, especially if the cows produced male calves. The eating of male calves was in effect a method of breeding control as only the best males would be preserved for breeding purposes. Adult cows would only be killed for a big ceremony, never for regular food."

The diet changed dramatically when the family converted to Anglicanism soon after Museveni was born. They started eating beans, sweet potatoes and groundnuts. But his father continued to refuse fish and chicken, and, Christianity or not, the father later took a second wife, with whom he had eight children.

Food taboos among the nobles produced the curious situation that they were less well nourished than the peasants. Their contempt for vegetable foods meant they were subject to vitamin and calorie deficiencies.*

* "Poverty and wealth in traditional African societies: considerations regarding wealth, well-being, and nutrition in the Ganda and Nyoro societies, c 1800 to 1875", *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 9 (1) (2000)

The common people were not restricted by the same taboos. "They could consume both the cattle produce occasionally available to them, and the vegetable foods they were used to [Kuhanen writes]. Their diet was more diverse, which contributed to their better physical health."

James Augustus Grant, who travelled with John Hanning Speke in the 1860s, was told by a Nyoro chief that many of his children died. The chief said if one of his wives placed a child with a servant the child usually lived, but any of his own would quickly die. The explanation, Kuhanen adds, must be nutrition.

These dietary differences reflected a deep cleavage in Nyoro society. The Bito royal clan and the Hima nobles were cattle-owning pastoralists. Cattle, like sheep in early modern England, were the wealth of the kingdom. The third group – the mass of the population – were peasant cultivators, the Iru.

The distinction remains politically potent to this day in nearby Rwanda and Burundi, where the Hima are known as Tutsi and the Iru as Hutu.

.Gaetano Casati said Kabalega had more than 150,000 cattle -and seemed more interested in the cattle than in running the kingdom.

As well as the lifestyle difference – later lost in Bunyoro as the vast herds of cattle disappeared, victims of disease and warfare – there was a marked difference in physical appearance. The Hima were taller, lighter-skinned and Caucasoid; the Iru were of the typically African appearance known as Bantu.

To the early western travellers, it meant that the Hima were migrants from the north and ultimately from the Middle East. This "Hamitic hypothesis" has been challenged, seen as a form of racism by Europeans, who did not care to accept that "primitive

Africans" could produce such refined physical types.

"The Hima and Tutsi groups, whose pastoralism is emphasized, were subjected to intense ideological projection, which must be discarded if the region's historical realities are to be found," writes Jean-Pierre Chretien in *The Great Lakes of Africa*.

"The whites wanted to find in the chiefs with whom they aligned themselves lost brothers or at least descendants of pharaohs or Prester John [the legendary ruler of a Christian nation surrounded by savages]," he adds.

The issue is complicated by the fact that the region straddles two zones of human settlement. The Bantu zone includes Bunyoro but just beyond in modern Uganda lies the zone of Nilo-Hamitic and other northern languages.

Chretien acknowledges that the theory of an invasion from the north remains a possible explanation for the Hima and the Iru. Alternatively, the differences may be wholly internal – with pastoralism and agriculturalism reflecting a socio-economic divide. The Hima and the Iru may simply be different classes of the same racial stock.

Nor does it appear to be in question that the Bito royal clan were originally migrants from the north.

Doubts about the migration theory of the Hima have long been felt. In 1937 Albert Gille, a Belgian in Burundi, said: "Physical differences: yes, they exist, but they are not general or constant enough to allow us to conclude that there is a neat and always real racial differentiation."*

Merrick Posnansky, a British archaeologist, declared plainly in 1966: "One may however think of the strongly marked physical differences between the Bairu and the Bahima as due to nutritional and social

* Quoted by Chretien

factors rather than necessarily inferring a folk movement from the Horn of Africa."*

What is certain in this ethnographically most complex part of the world is that no-one knows for certain.

Colonel Colvile was able to move his army along well maintained roads and across carefully bridged streams. He found the roads in better condition than those of Buganda. John Roscoe, a missionary, also picked up on Bunyoro's network of roads.

The roads were actually broad paths because the country had no wheeled transport. The wheel was not used in sub-Saharan Africa until introduced by Arabs and Europeans. This is less surprising than it seems. While the ease of moving a log by rolling it must have been noted, a wheel is only useful if joined to an axle and socket – a far from obvious connection.

This wheel-axle combination evolved quite late in the human story. It was in Mesopotamia in the fifth millennium BCE,^t or some 150 millennia after the emergence of modern humans.[†]

Another limiting factor was the lack of effective motive power needed to pull wheeled transport. Horses could not be used in places like Bunyoro because African horse sickness has a mortality rate close to 100 per cent (mules 50 per cent, donkeys 10 per cent).

The zebra, a member of the horse family indigenous to central and southern Africa, rarely displays clinical symptoms of African horse sickness,[§] but has not proved a suitable alternative to the horse.

It has not been domesticated as a species. The zebra is a notably fractious animal. Attempts to put it between the shafts of a cart have usually not succeeded, or at least the rider has not succeeded in stay-

* Quoted by Chretien

^t Before Common Era, also known as BC

[†] www.wikipedia.org

[§] Ibid

ing in the cart to the end of the journey.

The villages of Bunyoro consisted of conical huts of bushes and grass, built in the banana woods. The houses were divided into compartments.

The biggest settlement, the royal capital, was an impermanent affair. A new capital was built at the start of each reign, and might be moved during the reign. Kabalega moved his capital several times under the pressures of war.

Sir Samuel Baker, who visited Bunyoro in the 1860s and 1870s and whose negative views about the country and its people coloured the perceptions of generations of colonial administrators, described the royal enclosure of Masindi as lacking "any arrangement or plan" and "exceedingly neglected". It was substantial, however, with about a thousand large, beehive-shaped straw huts. John Hanning Speke found the place dirty and farmyard-like.

Baker and Speke misled themselves with the capital's lack of European character, and failed to grasp its significance. Masindi was far removed from a village or a war camp. It was at the head of an extensive state, carrying out the functions that this implied.

These included the organisation of trade. The Banyoro were noted for the quality of their ironwork. They also had major saltworks, including Kibiro on Lake Albert. Even while Bunyoro and Buganda were struggling for supremacy in the nineteenth century, trade continued. Bunyoro exported iron hoes and salt to Buganda in exchange for bark cloth and matoke [plantains].*

Before the importation of merikani [calico] and other fabrics from the mid- nineteenth century, bark cloth was the dress of kings and peasants alike. Peasants

* Jan .Jelmert Jorgensen, *Uganda, a Modern History*

were still to be seen wearing it in the early twentieth century.

In the old days of Bunyoro-Kitara, according to John Roscoe in *The Bakitara*, the king wrapped himself in enormous squares of bark cloth measuring roughly ten feet in each dimension, knotted on the shoulder. The cloths were white, black and various shades of brown. Some were decorated with the blood of favourite wives or princesses.

Bunyoro's ivory found ready markets, being taken out by Arab traders even as the outside world was awakening to the chaos caused by elephant hunting. The explorer Henry Morton Stanley wrote in *In Darkest Africa* (1890), although not specifically about Bunyoro: "Every tusk, piece and scrap in the possession of an Arab trader has been steeped and dyed in blood. Every pound weight has cost the life of a man, woman or child, for every five pounds [2.3kg] a hut has been burned, for every two tusks a whole village has been destroyed, every twenty tusks have been obtained at the price of a district with all its people, villages and plantations. It is simply incredible that, because ivory is required for ornaments or billiard games, the rich heart of Africa should be laid waste at this late year of the nineteenth century..."

Kabalega's capital at Mparo, near modern Hoima, was a substantial place, measured in square kilometres rather than hectares and with a population of thousands, according to Cato Lund.*

Bunyoro's situation beyond the European pale means that nineteenth century accounts of its capitals are limited. Lund had to look to Mengo, the last capital of pre-colonial Buganda, for a parallel.

Each Ganda chief occupied his own area at the cap-

* "The royal capitals of the interlacustrine kingdoms: an urban legacy for Uganda", *Uganda Journal*, vol 45 (1999)

ital, with part of each site left as cultivable land to be used by his peasants when they were required to work in town. With abundant plant life, vegetable gardens, reed fences and thatched houses, Mengo had a "garden city" feel that was much remarked on by early Europeans.

This same garden feel, albeit for different reasons, is sensed today by visitors to many African capitals. Town and country, concrete and grass, are not rigorously separated as they are in Europe and North America.

Mengo's core was the royal enclosure, or lubiri, on a hilltop. This covered 200-250 acres with about five hundred houses. The total area of the capital was around seven square miles (4,400 acres), putting the population in many thousands. Mparo was comparable in size, says Lund.

From the remains of Kabalega's karuzika [palace] a huge tree was to be seen in the distance. This was said to be his mother's walking stick, which took root when she rammed it into the ground at the edge of the royal enclosure.

A word picture of another Ganda capital was painted by Wilhelm Junker in *Travels in Africa During the Years 1882-86*. Rubaga, he said, was neither a village nor a town. It was an isolated hilly tract* many miles in circumference, dotted with enclosures and groups of dwellings. The royal residence crowned a hill. The market place, Arab quarters and English and French missions were close by.

John Roscoe, an early Anglican missionary, looking back from the standpoint of the 1920s, described a typical royal enclosure in his book, *The Bakitara*. He did not identify a particular place but explained that the

* Now part of Kampala

† Roscoe used the term "royal enclosure" differently from Lund. For Lund it is part of the town; from the size of Roscoe's royal enclosure we must infer that he means the whole town

description was based on the current mukama's memories of the court of his father, Kabalega.

The royal enclosure had a circumference of about two miles and was surrounded by a six-foot fence of elephant grass. The court house was the main building in the enclosure and contained within it the throne room, which had a diameter of 120 feet and was eighty feet high at the apex.

The many buildings in the enclosure ranged from such grandeur to slave huts with a diameter of eight feet and height of six or seven feet.

The anthropologist clergyman Roscoe described in some detail the arrangements of the royal palace. Eight drums stood in a row in the throne room. A ninth drum, called Nyalebe, stood beside the throne. All the drums were sacred to the king and only he might beat them.

Two women slept on either side of the throne for it must never be left unattended. They were nominally wives of the king but actually were virgins. Each was on duty for four days at a time. If one was menstruating or ill, another must take her place.

Outside the throne room was the kraal where the sacred herd of cows [nkorogi] were gathered twice daily for milking. Curiously, they trafficked through the queen's reception room to reach the kraal. This room included a pole from which offending princes and princesses were hanged on the king's orders.

The king did not eat any meat except beef. Goats, sheep and fowls were raised for offerings to the spirits or to take auguries. Dogs were kept for hunting.

Roscoe reported the elaborate rituals that surrounded the preparation of the king's meat. Cooks held office for a month at a time. They must live apart from their wives for the month. They were on duty for four

consecutive days, two of which were spent in purification and two working. On the two days of service face, arms, hands and chest were smeared with white clay to signify that the person had been purified.

Any meat left over from the king's meal must be eaten by the chief cook, who had to abstain from other meat for 24 hours afterwards. A similar rite is found in the modern Christian world where Roman Catholic and Anglican priests must consume any wine left over at the end of the eucharist.

For all that life before the British came was unhurried and sweet in some respects, Bunyoro was no prelapsarian paradise.

For much of the nineteenth century, the country was unsettled by Baganda and Arab slaving raids. Slaves were kept by their captors, African or Arab, or exported from Africa. Towards the end of the century Britain, moving out from its original base in Buganda, staged an invasion which was strongly resisted.

The warlike Kabalega set about restoring his country to its former extent and power. His most important weapon was the barusura, a standing army recruited by the king and answerable to him. Thus, unlike traditional forces, the barusura owed no debt of allegiance to the territorial chiefs.

Picked for their strength, the barusura deployed this against the civilian population as well as the enemy. They were supposed to maintain themselves with the goods of criminals. In practice, many people whom they seized were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time: Gaetano Casati called the barusura a "corps of brigands".

Life in Bunyoro was permeated with ritual. This included sacrifice up to and including human sacrifice. This fell at random for both nobles and peasants.

Casati, in his book *Ten Years in Equatoria and the Return with Emin Pasha*, vividly described the mpango [axe] ceremony, designed to appease the spirits, especially that of Kabalega's late father, Kamurasi.

A great bass drum boomed out over Kabalega's capital, Casati reported. Numerous villagers were seized and their throats cut. "But the great sacrifice was not to be completed until the morning of the next day ... The King made a sign with his hand; the nobles rose and bowing in sign of reverence approached him; he touched the shoulder of one of them with the point of his spear; the chief advanced and extended his neck; the axe descended and the blood was caught in the cup. The King then sprinkled some of the blood on his own forehead and cheeks, then on those of the nobles; then the remainder was poured over the drum and the chair ... At a sign from the King, the sorrowing parents took away the body of Kisa, late chief of the District of Muenghe. The drums called to a feast; oxen were killed and jars of beer brought and the drunken people danced upon the ground bathed with the blood of the late victim."

As described by Casati, human sacrifice was frequent and systematic. It occurred every new moon (monthly) and when members of the royal family were ill. Bulls were sacrificed first, then humans.

Kabalega immolated a boy of twelve with his own hands as a propitiation of his father's spirit, Casati claimed.

The ordinary people of Bunyoro did not like human sacrifice, unsurprisingly since they could find themselves the victims. Casati implied that they too performed ceremonies, although only in imitation of the royal family.

The blood-letting spared no social classes. The victims of the mpango ceremony included dignitaries

holding the order of Condo, who were on the same level as the king's relations.

Casati realised that Kabalega was merely following tradition as he found it. "This custom had been practised from a distant epoch," Casati wrote.

One of the fullest pictures of Bunyoro and its people was given by the Reverend C.T. Wilson and R.W. Felkin in *Uganda and the Egyptian Soudan* (1882). Wilson was one of the first two missionaries in Buganda; Felkin, his fellow member of the (Anglican) Church Missionary Society, arrived two years later.

The book, in a section written by Felkin, drew a striking contrast between the cleanliness of the Banyoro in their persons and the squalor of their dwellings: "The Wanyoro are not so fine a race as the Waganda, nor are their intellectual powers so fully developed. There are many very light-coloured people among them, their ordinary colour being a dark reddish brown. They are very cleanly in their persons, frequently bathing, and always washing their hands before and after eating. Their huts are dome-shaped; but are not clean, and swarm with vermin. The people are great thieves, and rather treacherous."

The early CMS missionaries were on their own, and Felkin thought this was a handicap in a society where polygamy was universal. Amfina, a cousin of Kabalega, had ten wives. One of them pulled Wilson's long hair to see if it was genuine. "(I)t is a great disadvantage to be unmarried in Africa," wrote Felkin; "bachelors at once lose caste with the natives, who cannot understand it."

The Banyoro had only a limited incest taboo, Wilson and Felkin found. Brothers might marry sisters, and fathers might marry daughters. However, a son did not marry his mother. Adultery, on the other hand, was not very common.

Perhaps this was not so surprising since penalties were severe in the pre-colonial state. For an unfaithful wife death was the punishment, said J.F. Cunningham in *Uganda and Its Peoples* (1905). The "co-respondent" faced a heavy fine. There is no mention of a penalty for an unfaithful husband.

Adultery with a royal princess meant death, and misconduct with one of the king's wives meant maiming: loss of a hand, or the lips, or an ear, or an eye. "Judging from the number of maimed men formerly met with in Unyoro, I am afraid it must be admitted that considerable suspicion attached to the royal ladies," Cunningham commented drily.

It is clear from Roscoe's *The Bakitara* that belief in the supernatural was widespread. He placed these beliefs in three groups: superstitions; taboos and omens; fetishes and amulets.

A common superstition was not to hand another anything with the left hand – hardly more fearsome than the modern western reluctance to walk under ladders.

More limiting was when one might cross the Kafu and Muzizi rivers, which were believed to be the abode of sacred snakes. If a man who had had sexual intercourse the night before tried to cross the Muzizi, he risked disaster from the snakes; so did a woman who was menstruating.

Pythons were sacred, and wells contained water spirits.

Sickness was thought always to be caused by ghosts or magic. The ghosts of previous occupants of a house were specially menacing. They must be appeased with shrines and offerings of milk.

.....rtTaboos and omens existed for the important event

of life like marriage, births, work and travelling. It was taboo, for example, for a man to go to work if when setting out he met a woman before another man; he must return to the house for work that day would not succeed. He should also postpone his work if rain fell the previous night, or the fire went out, or a child was born in his kraal, or any relatives died, or a dog had puppies, or a hen hatched chickens, or biting ants entered the house, or an alarm was raised for fire or wild animals.

... Fetishes were made of hollowed-out horns or claws, into which was placed powder or other substances dedicated to particular gods. There were large fetishes to protect the house and smaller fetishes for individuals.

Amulets to protect against evil were of all sorts including bits of tree roots, herbs, sticks, horns with powder, and shells.

- Roscoe's work gains authenticity by his use of non-English-speaking interpreters. Where interpretation was needed, he used a local person with whom he shared a third language. "Yet even in these cases [Roscoe wrote] all the information came to me through a native medium, uninfluenced by contact with the western mind."

Writing in the 1920s, Roscoe said he wrote about these customs in the past tense but it should not be assumed that all had necessarily passed away. Indeed, in 2005 a paper from an international research institute observed: "Contemporary Ugandan communities have been heavily influenced by Christianity, Islam, and foreign cultures to an extent that observance of the traditional taboos and superstitions has weakened, but not died."*

Colonel Colville, inevitably, succeeded in conquering

* International Food Policy Research Institute, "Who knows, who cares?", CAPRI Working Paper, no 41

Bunyoro. It became part of Uganda, a country that straddles the Equator and borders the great inland sea of Lake Victoria.

For years Bunyoro had been locked in warfare with its neighbour, Buganda. The ultimate triumph of Buganda is proclaimed in the name of the whole country, chosen by the British. "Uganda" is merely the Swahili version of "Buganda";

– The Banyoro, under their king, Kabalega, put up a determined resistance to the incoming British. In this they differed from the Baganda, who welcomed the incomers in the – misplaced – belief that they were receiving allies and equals. Other communities in what became Uganda also made treaties with the colonialists.

Because of its armed resistance, Bunyoro was seen by the British as a conquered territory not a treaty partner. It suffered decades of discrimination; the effects are still felt. It became the Uganda whipping boy. One of the modern meanings of "whipping boy" is a frequent recipient of pain or punishment.* That, sadly, is the Bunyoro story.

The treatment of Bunyoro represents one of the greatest failures of imagination in the whole empire experience. The Banyoro suffered because generations of British officials allowed themselves to be stuck in tramlines of a limited vision. The failure was more acute in the twentieth century when old wrongs might have been righted.

The failure is also perplexing because most Britons who worked in Africa loved the place, remembering it fondly decades later. Mavis Stone is typical. She was born in Uganda, the daughter of a provincial commissioner. She returned to live there for 14 years up to

* www.wikipedia.org

1962 as the wife of Richard Stone, another child of empire as the son of a provincial commissioner in Kenya.

The Uganda of Mavis Stone's memories included "... long khaki-coloured plains with the flat-topped thorn trees and scrub bushes ... the rather attractive little villages with woven fences ... chicken houses made up like little mud huts with thatched roofs and stuck up on stilts ... the children that were half-grown, all legs and smiles ... the women always graceful, always carrying loads on their heads – even a matchbox I've seen them carrying on their heads – never anything in their hands ... (the camp fire) was usually lit at sunset which we would sit and watch and there was supposed to be a blue flash which you did just see as the sun disappeared ... you had to swat at the mosquitoes while you were having your bath ... then you got into your trousers and mosquito boots and a long-sleeved shirt and you went and sat by the camp fire and had your drink." (Quoted by Charles Allen in *Tales from the Dark Continent*)

Idealised certainly, but one of the many facets of Africa.

The scarcity of recent academic books about Uganda is striking. This no doubt reflects the difficulties of access and expression in the troubled years of Idi Amin and of Milton Obote's second period.* Later, disillusionment set in that in Uganda as elsewhere on the continent the "African renaissance" so expected in the heady independence days of the 1960s had not happened.

Uganda today for most westerners means one person: Idi Amin, the self-styled "conqueror of the British Empire in Africa". Yet no country, least of all Uganda,

* 1971 -1 985. Milton Obote was the first leader of independent Uganda. He returned to power after Amin Was overthrown, hut was himself overthrown for a second time

can or should be reduced to one man. Uganda's history and its geographical location on a boundary where ethnicities meet have produced a particularly complex mosaic. That pattern cannot be understood without understanding Bunyoro.

In 2004 the kingdom of Bunyoro announced that it was to sue Britain for abuses during the colonial period. The candid memoirs of Major Thruston, who began this chapter, were seen as key testimony. Bunyoro joined a queue of claimants wanting redress from somebody for historic injustices ranging from the Crusades to slavery. Perhaps it had little chance of seeing its billions, variously reported from £3 billion to £3,000 billion. But the case has highlighted one of the greatest downsides of Britain's imperial adventures.

2 Baker's legacy

IN the late nineteenth century Bunyoro, in the Great Lakes region of eastern Africa, was 4,700 square miles in area. That is about one third the size of Holland and more than half that of Wales. This was the remnant of the far larger country of Kitara, hence the Bunyoro call their country Bunyoro-Kitara.

The ancient kingdom included the later states of Ankole and Toro to the west. It reached into Rwanda and Congo. To the east its influence extended to Teso, Busoga, Lango, Acholi, Madi and West Nile.

As the nineteenth century progressed, land was lost to secession and to conquest by Buganda in the south; in the north territory was nibbled at by the Egyptian empire; more land was taken away by the British, and before the century was out the whole country was ruled by the colonial masters.

The traditional enmity between Bunyoro and Buganda reflected two very different societies: Bunyoro where the cattle of the elite ran the avannas, and Uganda whose swamps, hills and abundant fertility were more suited to agricultural cultivation.

The explorer John Hanning Speke reached Bunyoro in the early 1860s during the expedition that established Lake Victoria as the source of the Nile. He formed a poor opinion of the mukama [king], Kamurasi, complaining of his alleged deviousness and childishness. The snobbish Speke particularly disliked being mistaken for a trader, although this was an

understandable mistake. Kamurasi had encountered many Arab traders, and Speke with his travelling companion, James Augustus Grant, brought many goods (intended as presents for the rulers whose territories they passed through).

Kamurasi's palace, on a tongue of land where the Kafu river runs into the Nile, pleased no more than the ruler. It was "a dumpy, large hut, surrounded by a host of smaller ones, and the worst royal residence we had seen since leaving Uzinza". (*Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*)

Kamurasi returned the compliment. Speke and Grant were tracing the river that flowed out of Lake Victoria to confirm that it was the Nile, beginning its four-thousand-mile journey to the sea. The mukama's hostility forced them to travel overland.

Rejoining the Nile, they reached Gondokoro – near modern Juba, in Sudan. There they met other explorers, Samuel White Baker, and his partner, Florence, who were travelling along the Nile in the opposite direction

What the travellers told Baker fired him with enthusiasm for the prospect of a major discovery. To the north-west of Lake Victoria there was known to be another great lake. This Baker was to reach and name Lake Albert.

Doubtless, Speke also passed on to the Bakers* his negative views of Kamurasi. Baker added many of his own, and these were to prove a damaging legacy for Bunyoro down the years.

To reach the mysterious lake meant entering Kamurasi's kingdom, which the Bakers did in 1864. They found the Banyoro far more developed than the tribes to the north. Baker was struck by their skill at

* This is shorthand: they married later, in 1865

pottery. In contrast to the nakedness of northern tribes, the men wore gowns of bark cloth, a product stripped from trees and pounded skilfully to extreme thinness, and the women, bare-breasted, wore short double petticoats.

Kamurasi was eager for Baker's gifts. They were not, though, thought to be enough. The king set out 24 pieces of straw to signify what Speke had brought, and complained that Baker offered only ten. Kamurasi also persistently demanded his watch. Baker called the king "this miserable, grasping, lying coward".

Baker's mood was not improved when Kamurasi expressed interest in Florence. Baker pulled a gun on him, but the king replied emolliently: "Don't be angry!" He explained that it was customary to give visitors pretty girls as wives and he thought Baker might like to exchange.

Kamurasi provided the Bakers with an escort on their journey to the lake. The journey, although successful, was hazardous. Food was often short. The pair were constantly ill. They had run out of quinine to treat their malaria.

On their return from the lake, according to Baker's book, *The Albert Nyanza, Great Basin of the Nile*, they had a huge surprise. They met Kamurasi again and found he was really M'Gambi, a younger brother who was impersonating the king for security reasons.

The real Kamurasi, whom Sam and Florence now met, was no better in Baker's eyes. He was described as "cowardly". He demanded Baker's watch, compass, double Fletcher rifle and Highland costume.

Bunyoro was under attack from a slave-raiding army from the north. Baker's guns helped to see off the attack. It was many months before he and Florence could get away and back to Gondokoro.

Seven years later, in 1872, the pair were back in Bunyoro. This time Baker came not as an explorer but a would-be colonial administrator. He was at the head of a column of troops and intended to stay. He had been appointed governor of Equatoria by the khedive of Egypt, whose country was nominally part of the Turkish empire but was under strong British influence. Equatoria was the most distant of the khedive's provinces, with a boundary abutting Bunyoro. It was now intended to add Bunyoro to the province.

The declared reason for this push south was the suppression of the slave trade, which was flourishing at this time. Arab traders exported slaves as well as ivory, while slaves were taken as prizes in inter-tribal warfare.

Slavery must have had a special resonance for Florence because she had been a slave intended for a Turkish harem. Baker bought her at an auction in the Balkans when she was 17 and he was twice her age. Although they later married, the relationship scandalised Queen Victoria. The monarch refused to receive Florence because she had lived in sin.

Florence was from Transylvania, at that time ruled by Turkey. She survived the massacre of her family in the year of revolutions, 1848, only to fall into the hands of slave masters. Richard Hall, in *Lovers on the Nile*, explains that although Turkey made a show of forbidding slavery the practice remained widespread. Wealthy Turks liked the cachet of having white girls in their harems.

Baker no doubt was moved by more than pity when he made the winning bid for Florence. She was slim and small, her hair loosely braided at the back of her head.

"The gulf in years between Florence and himself

[writes Hall], the complete disparity of their backgrounds, the sheer inability to talk to one another except in German (which Sam had rarely used since he was twenty) – all this leaves little room for doubt as to the mainspring of their liaison.

"Florence could have been, at first, only the servant to his repressed instincts. However, events would soon prove her more self-assertive than that. As she would reveal again and again in Africa, she was not by nature timid. She would also be able to display, even in the tightest corners, a sense of humour that matched his own."

In Bunyoro, the Bakers found that Kamurasi had died and his son ruled as Mukama Cwa II Kabalega. He had been his father's choice for king because, according to the later Nyoro historian and politician, John Nyakatura, even as a child he had been full of "self-will and high spirits".*

These were felt to be valuable qualities for safeguarding the kingdom. Others disagreed, and Kabalega had to fight Kabigumire, his elder half-brother with a gentler temperament, for the throne.

Baker had no higher view of Kabalega than he had of Kamurasi. In *Ismailia: a narrative of the expedition to Central Africa for the suppression of the slave trade* he described the new muka ma as "a gauche, awkward, undignified lout of twenty years of age, who thought himself a great monarch. He was cowardly, cruel, cunning, and treacherous to the last degree."

He was, however, physically striking. He was about 5ft 10in tall with a light complexion. Baker found the ruler well clad in beautifully made bark cloth striped with black, but every virtue became a vice in Baker's eyes: Kabalega's teeth were "exceedingly white" while

* *Aspects of Bunyoro Customs and Tradition*

his large eyes "projected disagreeably"; he was "excessively neat".

A more sympathetic portrayal came from Florence. She said of the king: "He is a very clean-looking young man of about 18 or 19 years old, he keeps the nails of his feet and hands beautifully clean and wears a very nice bark cloth of a light brown colour, and a neck-lace of pretty small different coloured beads. His skin is dark brown, his eyes are large, but they always have a frightened look." [Richard Hall, *Lovers on the Nile*]

Kabalega's light complexion proclaimed his Nilotic ancestry, the Nyoro royal family tracing its origins to an invasion probably in the sixteenth century by the Lwo people. The Bito royal clan replaced the Bachwezi, who in turn, in the land of myth and legend, were said to have replaced the Batembuzi.

To modern sensibilities it may seem weird that someone should march into a country and announce he had taken it over. That is what Baker did in the name of the anti-slavery movement, with a trading sub-text.

Yet not a lot has changed in more than a century: in 2003 George W. Bush and Tony Blair, the leaders of the United States and Britain respectively, marched into Iraq and took it over in the name of democracy, with a trading sub-text.

The difference was that with the march of progress those two principals did not need to be there in person.

Baker told Kabalega that Bunyoro was now a dependency of Egypt, and would share in the benefits of trade. He drove home the point with an array of cutlery, crockery, watches and cloth as well as spinning tops, tambourines and whistles.

Richard Hall's *Lovers on the Nile* tells how the Bakers built a house designed to impress the king. When he saw "a great number of Kabba Regas" in look-

ing glasses at opposite ends of the room, he pronounced it magic. He made all his entourage try the electric shock machine, but did not have a go himself.

A portrait of the Princess of Wales, Queen Victoria's daughter-in-law, was shown three-quarter face. Visitors asked why she had only one ear. While this may have seemed proof of the primitive savage to Baker's readers at the time, all it shows is a problem with the perception of European art by someone with no experience of it.

There was a strong element of distorting mirrors in Baker's proposition that from now on Bunyoro would enjoy the benefits of trade. Where were these goods to come from? Gondokoro, which was itself an outstation, was a long and difficult journey of about four hundred miles, with cataracts in the Nile offering a formidable barrier. The route to the east coast of Africa had not been established, while a river route from the west coast was unimaginable.

The Banyoro were not persuaded. Baker, with a hundred men armed mainly with primitive rifles, had overreached himself. The party found itself under siege in Masindi as Kabalega's regiments camped all around. Two threats were thwarted, the first by striking up the band and distracting the warriors, the second by torching the grass huts of the town.

Lovers on the Nile describes the bizarre musical bluff by which Baker bought himself a week's grace to fortify his camp:

"Baker and his officers were looking for some way out of the trap, knowing that if fighting did begin, they would be destroyed by the weight of numbers; the soldiers carried only muzzle-loading muskets for drilling and after one volley would have no time to reload. At that moment, Baker spotted several senior chiefs of

Bunyoro among the warriors, with an interpreter. He strolled casually over and called out: 'Well done! Let us all have a dance!' When this was translated, the chiefs looked momentarily bewildered, and Baker seized his chance. He told the band to strike up a lively tune, and announced that his men would perform a dance of their own. He asked for the crowd to stand away, then told his men to advance on every side with their bayonets. Baffled by these manoeuvres, the warriors fell back from the parade ground, and to Baker's relief one of the chiefs told them to sit. The band played on and the troops re-formed their square."

The attack a week later was beaten off, aided by setting the town on fire, but the position was unsustainable. Baker's party made a fighting retreat from Masindi, under constant harassment, to beyond Bunyoro and safety.

Thwarted, Baker gave his support to Ruyonga, a cousin of Kabalega and claimant to the throne, who was in rebellion in the north of the country. To Kabalega this was a betrayal, an act of "apostasy", which "determined Bunyoro's hostility towards Baker and his successors in a number of encounters that followed". (D.A. Low in Oliver and Mathew's *History of East Africa*, vol 1)

"This hostility was fully reciprocated [Low writes], and until the end of the century, Bunyoro, in European circles, was invariably reckoned to be implacably hostile. For this there was little warrant, but, later on, the consequences for Bunyoro were to be disastrous."

Baker's view of Kabalega is of critical importance because it pervaded the thinking of later British administrators in Uganda and hence colonial policy towards Bunyoro. Here is the source of many of that country's troubles.

Sir Samuel Baker's aggressive approach to Bunyoro was not maintained by his successors in Equatoria. General Charles Gordon, who followed Baker as governor, established a military post in the Nyoro heartland, near Masindi, but this was soon abandoned.

In 1877, Kabalega received a peaceable visit from one of the most curious characters on the African scene. This was a myopic German doctor and naturalist, Eduard Schnitzer. He had joined the medical service of the Turkish Empire and taken the name of Emin. By this time he was on Gordon's staff.

Emin formed a far better opinion of Kabalega than Baker had: "He gives one an exceedingly favourable impression, is lively, laughs much, often shaking with mirth, is very talkative, and appears to submit to ceremonial with a certain amount of constraint, greatly differing in this respect from the self-conscious ruler of Uganda [Buganda]."

Like Baker, Emin noted that Kabalega had an exceptionally light complexion. Signs of Hima blood, he thought, were very marked. None of the king's entourage, or the king himself, could read or write. Kabalega understood Arabic and a quick intelligence was hinted at by the affair of the scented soap.

Among a variety of fancy gifts, including a Turkish dress embroidered with gold, a velvet cushion trimmed with gold braid, Trebizond linen and yellow glass beads, Kabalega seemed to be chiefly interested in a few pieces of scented soap, Emin recorded. These "he repeatedly smelt and inspected. He understood at once that they were intended for the face and hands."*

Emin found much less ceremonial at the Bunyoro court than he had at the king of Buganda's. The mukama's nobles disposed themselves quite casually:

* Georg Schweitzer, *Emin Pasha: His Life and Work*, vol 1

they either squatted or stretched full length on the ground supported by an elbow.

Emin's letters were collected and published by veorg Schweitzer, his relative. Seeking to cancel out his kinsan's favourable view of the king, Schweitzer added his own comment: "It appears that towards Emin, Kabalega laid aside the despotic dmeanour which has otherwise been attributed to him. However, the rich presents sent by Gordon may have gone a Jong way to convincing the King as to the power of the Government whose ambassador Emin was, while on the oter and Emin's comprehensive knowledge could not fail to impress him."

It was one of a swell of comments from Europeans tat meant Kabalega could do no right in their eyes. Either he was behaving badly, or he was behaving well as a mask for being bad!

Any long-term threat to Bunyoro from Equatoria was removed from 1881 when Egypt became preoccupied in fighting off a rehglously msp1red movement. In that year ,!Yfhammad Ahmad, the son of a boat builder, proclaimed himself the Mahdi, meaning the Expected One or the Redeemer.

The Mhdi soon had much of the Sudan in his grip. A_n Egyptian army of ten thousand was sent against him under Colonel William Hicks (Hicks Pasha). In November 1883 this large force was ambushed and massacred at El Obeid in Kordofan. The zeal of the Dervishes, as the Mahdi's troops were known to the Europeans, was shown again fourteen months later at the Battle of Abu Klea, where they nearly managed another massacre by prising open the British defensive square.

Rudyard Kipling produced one of his best known poems about the battle. The final lines, in which a

Cockney soldier pays tribute to his opponents, are:

So 'ere's to you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, at your 'ome in the Soudan;
 You're a poor benighted 'eathen but a first-class fightin' man;
 An 'ere's to you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, with your 'ayrick 'ead of 'air -
 You big black boundin' beggar - for you broke a British square!

After El Obeid the British government in the name of the khedive decided to withdraw from the Sudan. General Gordon returned to the country to supervise the withdrawal of the Egyptian garrisons. He reached Khartoum in February 1884, but became trapped by the advancing Mahdists.

A belated British relief expedition arrived just too late to save Gordon, who died in the fall of Khartoum. It was the news of the approaching relief force that drove the Mahdi to risk storming the city on January 26, 1885.

All that remained of Egyptian rule in the Sudan was the southernmost province of Equatoria. Emin by now was the governor. This province, too, was under extreme pressure from the Mahdists. One by one Emin had to give up his settlements along the Nile, retreating southwards.

Part of northern Bunyoro was already occupied by his troops, providing the Egyptians with lebensraum. It is impossible to say how far the process would have gone because fate in the shape of the explorer, Henry Morton Stanley, intervened.

A letter from Emin, written on the last day of 1885, caused a sensation when it was published in the *Times* of London months later. It was to Charles Allen of the

Anti-Slavery Society. "Forgotten, and abandoned by the [Egyptian] Government, we have been compelled to make a virtue of necessity," Emin wrote. "Since the occupation of the Bahr-Ghazal [another Sudanese province] we have been vigorously attacked, and I do not know how to describe to you the admirable devotion of my black troops throughout a long war, which for them at least, has no advantage. Deprived of the most necessary things for a long time without any pay, my men fought valiantly, and when at last hunger weakened them, when, after nineteen days of incredible privation and sufferings, their strength was exhausted, and when the last torn leather of the last boot had been eaten, then they cut a way through the midst of their enemies and succeeded in saving themselves.'

Also in the *Times*, a correspondent observed pithily: "Having betrayed the master [Gordon], we might well exert ourselves a little to deliver his man."

A relief expedition was formed in London under Stanley's leadership. At that time he was working for King Leopold of Belgium in the Congo. He chose to approach Lake Albert from the west coast of Africa, using the Congo river and its tributary, the Aruwimi.

From there it was little more than three hundred miles to the lake, but they were among the hardest miles on earth. Ahead lay the fearsome Ituri forest, which Frank Hird, Stanley's official biographer, described as a "continuous, unbroken primeval forest" with "conditions which equalled some of the horrors in Dante's *Inferno*". (*H.M. Stanley: The Authorized Life*)

The Ituri forest almost broke even such a determined character as Stanley. He reached Lake Albert with only 169 men out of the 389 with whom he had started from Yambuya. The rest had died, deserted or

been abandoned along the route. He also left behind with a rear party most of the supplies intended for Emin's relief.

It was this depleted group that met Emin at Kavalli's on the lake on April 29, 1888. As Stanley told it: "At eight o'clock, amid great rejoicing, and after repeated salutes from rifles, Emin Pasha himself walked into camp, accompanied by Captain Casati and Mr. Jephson,* and one of the Pasha's officers. I shook hands with all, and asked which was Emin Pasha? Then one rather small, slight figure, wearing glasses, arrested my attention by saying in excellent English, 'I owe you a thousand thanks, Mr. Stanley; I really do not know how to express my thanks to you'.

"'Ah, you are Emin Pasha. Do not mention thanks, but come in and sit down. It is so dark out here we cannot see one another'." (*In Darkest Africa*)

Emin wore a clean suit of snowy cotton drill, "well-ironed and of perfect fit", as Stanley noted. He also wore a well kept fez. As for his face, there was "not a trace on it of ill-health or anxiety; it rather indicated good condition of body and peace of mind".

Stanley had brought a pair of trousers for Emin. Based on a traveller's account of the heroic pasha, they were made for a man of 6ft lin. It was necessary to cut off six inches.

Stanley's instructions were to offer Emin a choice: for Emin and his people to come out, and receive their arrears of pay and allowances, or to stay on without further Egyptian responsibility. Emin was looking for relief, not rescue, but under the pressure of Stanley's forceful personality and continued advances by the Mahdists it became an evacuation.

The Sudanese garrisons proved highly resistant to

* A.J. Mounteney-Jephson was a member of the relief expedition who had gone ahead to find Emin

any move. The soldiers had put down roots; many had families with local women. In particular, they opposed a scheme of Emin's to relocate his people in Kavirondo (at the north-east end of Lake Victoria) under British protection, fearing that the governor intended to trick them into slavery. At one point Emin and Jephson were taken prisoner as they toured the stations to sound opinion.

So Emin found himself doing what he had always insisted he did not want to do – leave. The evacuation of Equatoria began from Kavalli's in April 1889, taking a route through Ankole and reaching the African east coast at Bagamoyo, now in Tanzania, in December that year.

The expedition that set off from Kavalli's was a ragbag crowd of about 1,500. Emin's people numbered 570 men, women and children, but the men were administrators and clerks, not troops.

The Emin Pasha Relief Expedition was relieving the pasha himself, but it was leaving behind far more of Equatoria's expatriate population than it was bringing out. Emin's withdrawal created a volatile situation with the soldiers left behind and a replenished supply of arms buried by Stanley and not reclaimed.

The Sudanese, or Nubians after the Nile region of Nubia in upper Sudan, were to play an important part in the affairs of Bunyoro and Buganda. They became a permanent element in Uganda's ethnic mix, and in Idi Amin produced a leader whose name was known around the world.

The Mahdists had replaced Equatoria as the threat on Kabalega's northern border. G.N. Uzoigwe, in *Britain and the Conquest of Africa*, has reflected how different it might have been if the Khalifa, the Mahdist leader, had had "the sense and shrewdness" to form a united front with Kabalega instead of threatening him. After all, both leaders were fighting to maintain independence.

3 In the name of religion

WE must now track back to – around the time Kabalega chased Baker out of Bunyoro – to look at events in the neighbouring country to the south, Buganda. The two great kingdoms of the Great Lakes region had been fighting for much of the nineteenth century as the burgeoning power of Buganda squared off to the eclipsing power of Bunyoro-Kitara.

Christianity came first to Buganda. Bunyoro was caught up in the collapse of stable government that the missionary intervention, unintentionally, set in train.

The complicated sequence of events began when the explorer, Henry Morton Stanley, visited Mutesa, the kabaka [king] of Buganda. Fresh from his triumph of finding Dr Livingstone four years earlier, Stanley was on a mission to establish the shape and proportions of the great inland sea of the Victoria Nyanza [Lake].

Mutesa's scouts found Stanley aboard his big rowing boat, the *Lady Alice*, named after one of his unsuccessful loves, so that when the expedition was ready to land in Buganda the kabaka and his nobles were waiting in full ceremonial order beside the lake at Usavara. As Stanley estimated it, two hundred to three hundred guns were fired in welcome with much drumming and shouting.

Out of this meeting, and those that followed, Stanley became convinced that the intelligent and agreeable Mutesa was the ideal person to fulfil David Livingstone's dream of planting Christianity and commerce in Africa. The explorer wrote in his diary: "In

this man I see the possible fruition of Livingstone's hopes." So too was the advanced nation of Buganda the ideal setting for missionary work.

Mutesa, as well as some of his chiefs, could read and write Arabic. The king had learnt well from a visiting Muslim na med Muley bin Salim. He understood Swahili, the coastal lingua franca, as well as the indigenous Luganda language. (Luganda had yet to be produced in written form.)

Yet Stanley was seen on! one side of Mutesa's chame eon persona ity. The benign and literate prm c'5,, who eajoyed intellectuar debates, w s also a bloody tyrant who on several occasions engaged in. mass execut10ns.

The Ganda author, Apolo Kagawa , - who was katikiro [chief minister] of Buganda both before and after the coming of the British - in *Jasekabaka Q!*, *Puganda* (The Kings of Buganda) lists Mutesa's enormities.

He began his reign by executing many chiefs and princes (his brothers) on the grounds that they disputed his succession. In the Nnalongo massacre about seven hundred commoners, 216 slaves, five hundred royal wives and about 35 chiefs died.

"It was a terrible and most dreadful thing to execute so many people," commented Kagawa.

On another occasion Mutesa executed about a hundred pages and royal wives, on the grounds that they had been seeing each other. Court politics led about ten of his mother's chiefs to the executioner.

In 1875, around the time of Stanley's visit, there were mass arrests and executions of non-Muslims, Mutesa having converted to Islam.

Kagawa's editor* adds that Mutesa's capital of

* 1971 edition

Kabojja was nicknamed "Ndabiraako ddala" (see me for the last time) because when two men met they never knew whether they would see each other again.

The cruelties of Kabalega in Bunyoro were a constant theme of European commentators, used as a justification for acting against him. However, Mutesa's record, and that of his son and successor, Mwanga, who "imbrued* his hands with innocent blood ... until he had filled the cup of his crimes to overflowing",† suggest that Kabalega was not exceptional.

The result of the encounter with Mutesa was Stanley's famous appeal for missionaries in a letter to the sponsors of his expedition, the *New York Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* of London. This was carried out of Buganda by a visiting official from Equatoria, Colonel Linant de Bellefonds. He was ambushed and killed on the journey back. The letter was found concealed in one of his boots. Seven months after Stanley wrote it, the letter reached England, where its publication in November 1875 caused a sensation.

"What a field and harvest ripe for the sickle of civilization! [Stanley wrote]. Mutesa would give [the missionary] anything he desired - houses, lands, cattle, ivory, &c.; he might call a province his own in one day. It is not the mere preacher, however, that is wanted here. The bishops of Great Britain collected, with all the classic youth of Oxford and Cambridge, would effect nothing by mere talk with the intelligent people of Uganda. It is the practical Christian tutor, who can teach people how to become Christians, cure their diseases, construct dwellings, understand and exemplify agriculture, and turn his hand to anything, like a sailor - this is the man who is wanted. Such an one, if he can be found, would become the saviour of Africa.

* ie, stained or turated

† Robert P. Ashe, *Two Kings of Uganda*

He must be tied to no church or sect, but profess God and His Son and the moral law ...

"I speak to the Universities Mission at Zanzibar and to the Free Methodists at Mombasa, to the leading philanthropists, and the pious people of England. 'Here, gentlemen, is your opportunity – embrace it!' The people on the shores of the Nyanza call upon you. Obey your own generous instincts, and listen to them ..."

Listen they did. The Church Missionary Society, an evangelical Anglican organisation, found volunteers. About a year and a half later, in 1877, after a six-hundred-mile trek from the East African coast, the first missionaries, Lieutenant Shergold Smith and the Reverend C.T. Wilson, reached Buganda.

This was an event of huge importance for the country and those surrounding it, particularly Bunyoro. It meant that a permanent European presence in the region – although hanging on the kabaka's whim – was established first in Buganda. The aggressively minded Baganda people thought they could lever this situation to further their expansionary aims – although in the event they levered themselves into colonialism.

The process has striking similarities with, Hernan Cortes's conquest of the Aztec Empire in South America. In both cases, a small band of adventurers came to overthrow well defended regimes by co-opting local allies. That and superior weaponry – in the Spaniards' case, horses; with the British, machine guns – did the rest.

The White Fathers, a Roman Catholic, French-speaking order, arrived in 1879. The two missionary groups wasted no time in exporting the ancient doctrinal feuds of Europe into the heart of Africa. With a sea of souls to save, they turned their fire on each other, hurling insults from their hilltop stations of Rubaga

and Namirembe, both now part of Kampala, and rowing in the presence of the kabaka.

The division between Protestantism and Catholicism remains a fact of life in Uganda today. Through the efforts of the CMS it has the third largest Anglican population in the world after England and Nigeria. The White Fathers, too, remain active in the country.

In 2005, evangelism flowed in the reverse direction, from Africa to Britain. A Ugandan, Bishop John Tucker Mugabi Sentamu, was consecrated Archbishop of York, second only to the Archbishop of Canterbury in the Anglican hierarchy in England – a unique achievement in modern times for a foreign-born church man.

Sentamu stoutly proclaimed the faith in a way that mainstream church leaders in Britain had forgotten about for years. His outspokenness recalled the holy firebrands of old.

In late 2006, for example, he warned how draconian terror laws threatened British citizens' freedoms. He found time to berate a city council, Plymouth, for a decision to end free parking for church attenders. The council had argued it should not discriminate in favour of one religion.

Muslim women who wore the veil were not conforming to "norms of decency" in a British context, said Sentamu.

He described as a "nonsense" based on "flawed reasoning" a decision by British Airways to stop an employee wearing a small cross. It emerged that the airline permitted Muslims and Sikhs to wear headscarves and turbans respectively. Sentamu gave voice to wide public anger at the cross affair, leaving the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, suppos-

edly the nation's chief spiritual leader, trailing in his wake.

This vigorous evangelism would have won the approval of the early missionaries. Kabaka Mutesa did not impede their work, although he restricted it mainly to the court. Yet exposing the leaders to the Christian message had the effect of speeding the evangelisation of the Baganda.

Mutesa committed himself to neither group, although he debated theology and ordered Sunday services. Perhaps it was intellectual curiosity, but he also had good political reasons to balance the factions forming around the two Christian groups as well as the Muslims (formed after contact with Arab traders) and traditional animists.

The Baganda nobles wanted to use the Europeans' wealth, expertise and linkages for their respective factions. The incomers thus found themselves at the heart of the Ganda state. Politics and religion became entangled in Buganda to the extent that rival factions were known as ba-Ingleza and ba-Fransa (England and France) because of their associations with the respective missionary groups.

These factions looked for practical benefits from association with the Europeans but differed over which group to get these from. The British and French missionaries for their part naturally looked to their own countries for support and inspiration.

The situation was envenomed because the political contest between Britain and France was matched by the centuries-old contest between Protestantism (Britain) and Catholicism (France).

Mutesa died in 1884 and was followed by one of his sons, Mwanga, a boy of 18. The CMS missionaries soon had reason to doubt that the new kabaka would be well

disposed towards Christianity. He received them wearing Arab dress. He was under the influence of the Muslims and the traditionalists, headed by the katikiro.

Mwanga was less politically adept than his father. Robert P. Ashe, a Church Missionary Society pioneer, described him as "wayward and flighty". Unlike his literate father, he was unable to get hold of his letters. (*Two Kings of Uganda*)

The new kabaka was wise enough, however, to know that the Christian and Muslim factions were dangerous because they were "disintegrating his country", in the words of a later major actor in the Uganda drama, Captain Frederick Lugard. Mwanga's way of handling the problem was disastrous, however. Bunyoro became involved in the chaos into which Buganda now descended.

4 New model army

KABALEGA'S reign, like Napoleon's, was defined by his military exploits. He set out to restore the glories of the centuries-old empire of Bunyoro-Kitara. In the first part of the reign he largely succeeded.

He stabilised the country, halted its decline and countered threats from Equatoria to the north and Buganda to the south. He expanded into Acholi in the east and reconquered Toro in the west. This long-standing part of Bunyoro-Kitara had been a separate kingdom since 1830, when a son of the mukama rebelled and established his own kingdom. Kabalega conquered Toro for the second time in the 1890s after British protection was temporarily withdrawn.

One reason for Bunyoro's decline was that bakama [kings] were drawn from the ruling Bito clan, kaavi other clans without a direct stake in the kingship. In Buganda, by contrast, the kings married into many clans, each of which were eligible to provide the next kabaka.

Nyoro social organisation was traditionally looser than that of the Baganda. S.R. Karugire sees in this another reason for Bunyoro's nineteenth century decline. (*Political History of Uganda*) It lacked adequate central machinery of government.

Some surrounding states looked to Bunyoro for protection, a role she was happy to accept. Yet these extra-territorial responsibilities required administrative and military centralisation. "There was thus an inherent contradiction in Bunyoro's governmental system and

her ambitions [writes Karugire]."

The mukama lacked the direct control of his Buganda counterpart over regional chiefs, and hence their forces. Kabalega's answer was the barusura, which he transformed from a palace guard into a new model army.

The traditional Nyoro army was drawn mainly from the peasantry mobilised by the chiefs, but the barusura answered directly to the mukama and were stationed throughout the kingdom. They were the first experiment with a standing army in the region.*

They were also on the whole the last sort of people one would want to take tea with. It was no wonder they frightened the civilian population as much as the enemy. The barusura "were recruited from the deserters of the Egyptian troops, from runaway slaves, and riotous youths from the bordering States ... Waganda, Bari, Shooli, Walegga, Lang_o, i and Bongo men".^t

---the barusura formed the effective core of Kabalega's armies. They numbered three to five thousand, consisting of spearmen, archers, musketeers and riflemen. But their weapons were inferior to those of the British-led forces they faced in the 1890s and ammunition for the muskets was always scarce, according to Kabalega's son, Mukama Tito Winyi. IVJ Kabalega usually refused to fight pitched battles with the British: he was wisely recognising this superiority in weapons. In addition, the enemy had the Maxim gun (see below, Chapter 6).

Kabalega is said to have picked the barusura personally. At every new moon potential recruits gathered at Semwema cave near the present Kakumiro town in

Kibale district. The mukama slaughtered cows and served each man with meat. The weak were separated from the strong by the amount of meat they ate. Only those with big appetites were recruited.*

A visiting reporter well brought out the sense of awe that the Semwema cave inspires. "The cave cuts its way through a gigantic rock mountain via very narrow entrances. In order to explore its interior, you must have a torch. In addition, you must have a long string, which you tie at the entrance and let it unfold as you move through the meandering interior. Short of that, you get lost. As you move through a chain of inter-connected chambers you sometimes have to climb up and go down into zigzagging narrow connections ... Local people say stone chairs and animal skin sandals adorn one of the rooms. It was here that Kabalega over the years built a very strong army."^t

The barusura appear to have become a law to themselves. Gaetano Casati, in *Ten Years in Equisatoria and the Return with Em in Pasha*, said they received no pay but supported themselves by seizing the goods of wrongdoers – real or imaginary.

Casati claimed that Bunyoro under Kabalega had become a military state, replacing the old ways when the country was governed by district chiefs [magnoro] with sub-divisions ruled by lesser chiefs [matungoli] under them. The magnoro supplied so many to the mg and also paid tribute of ivory, animals, iron and food.

The barusura were crucial to Bunyoro's expansionary plans, but for Casati, a hostile witness, the price was too high: "And as if mad, he [Kabalega] deviated farther still from the ancient mode of governing, ruling by oppression and treachery, rather than by reason."

* Michael Twaddle, *Kakungulu and the Creation of Uganda 1868-1928*

^t Ibid

^j: Quoted by A.R. Dunbar, *A History of Bunyoro-Kitara*

* Sunday Vision, Uganda, June 18, 2006

^t Ibid

If this analysis is even half right, opposition to Kabalega must have speeded the submission of Nyoro chiefs in areas conquered by the British.

Casati, by the time he wrote his book, had a poor opinion of Kabalega. Yet at first he had been favourably impressed with the muka ma. "Ready of speech, correct in gesture, Chua [Kabalega] awoke a sentiment of sympathy in whoever saw him for the first time."

This was replaced by a harsher verdict: "Chua is a negro, cowardly, suspicious, a procrastinator, and of an irresolute spirit; narrow-minded, false in speech, and ever yielding to evil influences – a real compound of malice and cowardice."

There could hardly be a greater misreading. On his record, the last quality Kabalega could be accused of is cowardice.

Casati thus numbers himself among the many Europeans who spoke ill of Kabalega. Even Emin, the mukama's early champion, later complained of his "dodges and subterfuge". Casati, he said, was "too candid with the King ... though they are kings they are 'blacks' ". Negroes, Emin commented on another occasion, are "simply grown-up children".

It is a pity that the contemporary accounts are all from the European side. Modern scholars have been kinder to Kabalega, tending to accept his claim that he fought the British because he had to.

When Emin's troops occupied Kibiro on the Bunyoro (east) side of Lake Albert, Casati's status changed from guest to prisoner. With his personal servant, an Egyptian soldier and a Zanzibari named Moham med Biri, he found himself under arrest.

At a signal from the royal vizier an "unbridled crowd pounced upon us; we were seized and bar-

barously tied to the large trees close to the great magician [a reference to the high priest]. I was stripped of my tarboosh and my pockets were rifled; my neck, arms, wrists, knees and ankles were bound to a tree with such atrocious force that I was unable to make the least movement. The rope round my neck was so tight that my respiration was hindered and one of my arms was twisted and tied in a painful position."

The vizier addressed the crowd about the captives: "'This man,' he said pointing me out, 'together with that other, Biri, brought the Waganda to our country; he was the cause of your children and wives being ravished, your goods stolen and your crops destroyed. For these crimes the King has struck them with his justice and entrusted his vengeance to my arm!'"

It is easy to see how Casati came to be suspected of duplicity. Bunyoro and Buganda at this time were at war. Casati, as the Equatoria envoy, wanted to open a route to the coast through Buganda, to replace the northern route blocked by the Mahdists, in the course of which he dealt with the Buganda-based CMS missionary, Alexander Mackay. In the modern West people have been interned for less.

Improbably, Casati, his servant and the Egyptian soldier (Biri was left behind, and later died) managed to escape from their place of execution, only to be seized within sight of the lake and safety by the barusura. Yet they escaped again. One of Emin's steamers appeared on the lake. This threw their captors into a panic and they fled. Casati and his party were safe.

During a late stage in Kabalega's resistance, his call for a general rising among the chiefs received little response. This was at a time when Uganda might have been prised from the grip of the British (see Sudanese Mutiny, below).

Nor did the population at large show signs of rallying to the king. For the modern scholar, Edward I. Steinhart, it was the failure to answer "the challenge of occupation" with support from the commoners, as well as the defection, submission and eventual collaboration of important chiefs, that doomed Nyoro resistance. (*Conflict and Collaboration- The Kingdoms.2f Western Uganda 1890-190ZJ*)

A mass insurrection or people's war might have been unsuccessful against Britain's military and organisational strength, says Steinhart, "but such tactics were never really attempted".

"Instead Kabarega chose to rely on tried and proven instruments of royal power: his chiefly hierarchy, his barusura military units, and his traditional allies and diplomatic supports. This reflects the habits of rule of a well-established monarch of a well-organized state. Although Kabarega has been portrayed and is remembered as a man of the people, he remained a monarch, remote from his people and reluctant to call upon them to mobilize and participate in a new kind of war, which was necessary (if not sufficient) to save his kingdom."

Yet Kabalega could hardly be a Mao Zedong or a Che Guevara: as Steinhart acknowledges, the world did not see this kind of guerrilla war until the twentieth century.

Many of the first Christians in Bunyoro were barusura or sons of barusura, according to M. Louise Pirouet in *Black Evangelists*. This noteworthy circumstance she attributes to barusura being "adventurers, more willing than most people to try out something new".

5 Turmoil to the south

WHEN Mwanga had been on the throne of Buganda for less than three months, three young Protestant boys at court were burned to death on the king's instructions. These readers, as those learning Christianity were called, had refused to be sodomised by the kabaka.

From the missionaries the boys – Kakumba, Seruwanga and Lugulama – had learned that it was wrong. Lugulama had a terror of being mutilated before death, and piteously asked (without success) not to have his arms cut off but to be "just thrown onto the fire". The boys went to their deaths singing the hymn, Daily, Daily, Sing the Praises.

This stirring hymn, then quite new, was the work of the prolific English hymn writer and novelist, Sabine Baring-Gould. Its opening lines are beautifully clear and confident:

Daily, daily, sing the praises
Of the city God hath made;
In the beauteous fields of Eden
Its foundation stones are laid.

The martyrs were referred to by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, addressing the Church of Ireland in 2004. He told the story of how the night after their deaths a young man made his way in secret to the devastated and grieving CMS evangelist, Alexander Mackay. The young man asked for baptism

because he wanted to know how to die like that.

Mwanga next invited the Roman Catholic missionaries to return (they had temporarily withdrawn from the country) in a bid to counter the Protestant influence.

The first Anglican bishop of East Africa, James Hannington, never reached his mission post. He was killed on Mwanga's orders in October 1885 while in Busoga, on the doorstep of Buganda.

Mackay had warned Hannington. It was taboo for strangers to enter Buganda by this route: the conqueror of the country was expected to come this way. The headstrong bishop ignored the advice. He was seized by people he took to be robbers.

Only at the last minute did Hannington realise that he had been brought to a place of execution. His last words were: "Tell the king that I die for Buganda. I have bought this road with my life." Then a horde fell on the bishop and his party, spearing and hacking them to death. Hannington is now a common Christian name in Uganda.

These events were outdone in horror the next year, 1886, when about two hundred Christians – Roman Catholics and Protestants – were killed for the faith. Anyone attending a Christian meeting or receiving religious instruction risked betrayal and death. Yet the number of converts grew including some of the senior chiefs surrounding Mwanga. The martyrs' willingness to die for a faith so recently learned made the profoundest impression in both Buganda and Europe. The kabaka could not understand why young men and women went to their deaths praying joyfully instead of voicing the customary mournful wails.

The terror reached a climax when 32 were burned on a single pyre at the Namugongo execution ground.

Lists of the Uganda martyrs show the ways in which they died: dismembered and burned, burned to death, speared, speared and hacked to pieces, speared and beheaded, speared and savaged by dogs, castrated, clubbed and burned, hacked to pieces, dismembered and left to die, beheaded, beheaded and hacked to pieces, beheaded and thrown into a swamp.

The Roman Catholic Church canonised 22 of its converts who died in the great persecution, including Charles Lwanga, the Catholic leader.

It will be no surprise that the martyrdoms strengthened rather than destroyed Christianity. Today Na mugongo is a national shrine. The terror also accentuated the political fragmentation of Buganda. The persecution had the opposite effect to that intended: it forged the two Christian groups into "parties", opposed to the Muslims and traditionalists.*

Kabalega later supported the Ganda Muslims, not through religious convictions – he had been at pains to reduce the influence of Muslim traders at his court – but as a political calculation.

Mwanga accelerated Buganda's raids into Bunyoro, and these turned into full-scale war in 1886. At one point Kabalega found himself on the run. Gaetano Casati, who was with Kabalega, described how the mukama's fighting career might have ended there.

"If I had chosen to put an end to the tyrant's existence, a word or gesture would have been sufficient; but although my life had been continuously plotted against, I would not act otherwise than as a loyal guest," he wrote in *Ten Years in Equatoria and the Return with Emin Pasha*.

At the time of the Ganda invasion Kabalega had more than one thousand guns, Casati reported. Many

* H.P. Gale, *Uganda and the Mill Hill Fathers*

were Remingtons; a few were Sniders. There were also percussion muskets, breech loaders and muzzle loaders.

At the Battle of Rwengabi, Kabalega is said to have personally shot and killed the opposing general, the Kangao.

African wars were aimed not at conquest but at quick victories and the seizure of booty including goods and slaves -children as servants and women as wives.

A second Ganda invasion followed in 1887. It was

then that Kabalega had Casati arrested, suspected of being a spy.

Buganda and Bunyoro were fighting almost continuously for three years. But the war did nothing to resolve the instability in Buganda. Three kings including Mwanga came and went in 1888.

The persecution of Christians had continued since the great slaughter at Namugongo, although at a lower level. Now Mwanga tried to rid his country of all the foreign factions, not only the Protestants and the Catholics but also the Muslims.

His plan to lure the factions onto an island and leave them to starve leaked out, and he was forced into exile. His eldest brother, Kiwewa, reigned briefly in Mwanga's place, allowing freedom of worship for all the religious groups.

This state of affairs was too good to last. The Muslims, although the smallest of the factions, mounted a successful coup. They installed another brother, Kalema, as kabaka. He too was unable to consolidate his power as the two Christian groups united behind the exiled Mwanga, the man who recently had tried to destroy them.

After months of fluctuating fortunes, the Muslims were driven out of the Ganda capital, Mengo, by

Christian forces under the Protestant Apolo Kaggwa in October 1889. Next month, reinforced by Kabalega's troops, they were back. In February 1890 the Christians, now led by the Catholic Gabriel Kintu, drove the Muslims out again, this time for good.

The Muslims were to remain a factor in the Uganda equation for many years. Robert Walker, of the Church Missionary Society, wrote at the time: "The Mohammedans were for the moment overpowered, but neither was their strength nor their spirit broken."

John S. Galbraith noted: "Bunyoro's backing of the Muslims after Mwanga had shifted to the Christian party had nothing to do with doctrine, much with the ambitions of its ruler, Kabarega, to restore his kingdom to its earlier greatness by capitalizing on the internal weaknesses of rival Buganda." (*Irish in East Africa 1878-1895*)

The incoming Europeans, however, held Kabalega's support for the Muslims against him. It cemented Bunyoro in opposition to the main forces in the Buganda state.

6 Enter the British

IN 1890 the affairs of Bunyoro and Buganda took a decisive turn with the arrival in Mengo, the Ganda capital, of Captain Frederick Lugard. He was the representative of the Imperial British East Africa Company, which had been awarded the region under an Anglo-German agreement earlier in the year. This followed the 1885 Treaty of Berlin among the European powers, which triggered the "Scramble for Africa".

Lugard arrived with bags of self-confidence and a tiny force of three other Europeans, an interpreter, fifty Sudanese and Somali soldiers, three hundred porters and a Maxim gun. He planted himself on Kampala hill, opposite Mengo. Soon a second Maxim gun arrived brought by Captain W.H. Williams.

The IBEA Company force was one of the first users of this legendary gun, which had been adopted by the British army only the year before. Sir Hiram Maxim's ingenious design produced the world's first self-powered machine gun. It used the force of the recoil to eject the spent cartridge and insert the next one, generating a rate of fire of at least three hundred rounds a minute.*

The superior weaponry struck terror into the enemy. It was especially lethal in open spaces when it raked hundreds at a time. The writer Hilaire Belloc quipped of Britain's colonial debt to the Maxim:

* www.wikipedia.org etc

Whatever happens, we have got
The Maxim gun, and they have not.

Such was the excellence of the design that the Maxim gun and its successor, the closely related Vickers gun, were used in the British army until 1968.

Finding Buganda in turmoil, Lugard allied himself with the ba-Ingleza political faction. With its support he quickly made himself master of the country. Even so, conscious of his military weakness, he wanted to link up with the Sudanese troops left behind in the former Equatoria and bring them into service. Some of these were supposed to be based at Kavalli's, from where Emin had left on his evacuation march. To get there Lugard had to clear a way through the Muslim Baganda and Kabalega's army.

A vast army of Protestant and Catholic fighters, which Lugard estimated at twenty-five thousand, left Mengo in April 1891. Lugard described the subsequent campaigns in *The Rise of Our East African Empire*.

The Muslim Baganda with a stiffening of Kabalega's rifles were engaged next month just inside the Bunyoro border at the Kanangalo river.

The Christian force had no significant edge in firepower and the Maxim guns could not be used because of the dense grass. Victory was achieved by turning the enemy so they fled rather than wearing them down with heavy casualties: deaths on the Christian side were about thirty while the Muslims lost three hundred to four hundred killed, many of them butchered after capture.

The Ganda style of war was to raid and withdraw. Lugard could not persuade the Baganda to march with him on Kabalega's capital. The army broke up, with Lugard's section continuing on a march to the west.

In August the expedition had the second of three encounters with Kabalega's troops. Lugard, with only about forty soldiers, had got ahead of the main party and at that moment ran into a large force of Banyoro by the Mokia river. The enemy delayed their attack, allowing some sixty more soldiers to join Lugard's band. With night approaching, he ordered an attack on both enemy flanks and sprayed Maxim fire on a knoll 950 yards off. This triggered a rout. Later they heard that the score or so of rounds from the Maxim had killed twenty to thirty Banyoro.

Three weeks later Lugard's party of three hundred overturned an army of many thousands without firing a shot. The enemy was thought to contain a large portion of Kabalega's main army. Lugard described what happened next: "We steadily came on, while the enemy kept up a tremendous firing. The bullets, however, came nowhere near us. We advanced without replying, and the Wanyoro fell back as we came on. The result was that, scared by the reports of our terrible shooting at incredible ranges, and at our stolid and orderly advance, they did not dare to await us at close quarters, and we actually defeated this great army without firing one single cartridge, and without the loss of one single life!"

The way was now clear to make for the Semliki river and the Kavalli plateau, their destination. Some of the Sudanese with Lugard were veterans of Equatoria, including the leader, Shukri Aga, which added to the joy when the party met officers from Kavalli's.

"There was great joy and kissing of my hand (which they touch with their foreheads), and hand-shaking with Shukri and my Sudanese [wrote Lugard]. Every one talked at the same time, and congratulated each other, and every one temporarily became a fool, and

smiled extremely, and talked incessantly, as is right and proper on such an occasion."

Selim Bey, the commander of Kavalli's, was the master of substantial settlements of around eight thousand. About a tenth of these were soldiers. Buried among the tribal villages and completely cut off from the world, the Sudanese made do with cotton clothes of their own weaving if they were fortunate, with ox-hides if they were not. Yet coinage circulated and clerks wrote out Selim's orders to his officers and the out-stations. "In short [wrote Lugard], among all the out-ward savagery of soldiers dressed in hides, of naked women and grass huts, there was a noticeable, - almost pathetic, - attempt to maintain the status they claimed as soldiers of a civilised Government."

Selim had set up at Kavalli's with just ninety men. Finding the ammunition left behind by Stanley was a great bonus. He soon lost fifty of his men in an attack by tribesmen in retaliation for an attack by Stanley, but was joined by hundreds more from Wadelai. The commander there, Fad! al-Mula, had treated with the Mahdists against the wishes of most of his soldiers, triggering the mass desertion.

Lugard made an agreement with Selim for the evacuation of the settlements, which began on October 5, 1891. Much of the time the host of people had to march single file along the narrow trails. The half of the expedition that Lugard was leading (i.e. about four thousand people) made a column seven miles long - "Thus the head of the caravan would be nearly arriving in camp, by the time that the last of the people were leaving the old one..."

Most of the Sudanese were settled in a chain of forts running north to south. These were intended to protect Toro from re-conquest by Bunyoro and to block traffic

in arms, slaves and ivory between German East Africa and Bunyoro. Yet the soldiers ravaged this part of Bunyoro with persistent raids, fuelling Kabalega's resistance to the new order.

Meanwhile, Selim Bey and "100 good fighting men" were among the reduced party that returned with Lugard to Kampala.

Early in 1892 Lugard's ba-Ingleza faction fought the ba-Fransa at the Battle of Mengo in a highly disputed action.

The showdown erupted when an Ingleza was killed by a Fransa sub-chief in an argument over a gun. Mwanga, who at this point belonged to the French faction, acquitted the killer on the basis that the other man had entered the Fransa compound. Yet as Lugard's trusted Somali aide Dualla put it, if a leopard seized a o t would ou not ursue it into its cave'?

The Catholic and Protestant orces ace eac other on opposing hills. The Catholic line extended from the king's compound to the White Fathers' Rubaga mission; the Protestant line was from Kampala fort to the CMS mission at Namirembe. The ba-Fransa's greatest strength was on Mengo hill facing Kampala, while the ba-Ingleza were strongest at Namirembe opposite Rubaga, which was defended more lightly.

Lugard later described the Fransa battle plan as "extremely well devised". They planned to draw the Ingleza on and create a wedge between them and the IBEA Company's troops at Kampala, allowing each to be dealt with separately.

The plan failed, however. The Protestants succeeded in rushing Rubaga and soon the great Roman Catholic church was in flames. Meanwhile, the Fransa charge from Mengo hill had been broken up by Lugard's Maxim gun. Captain Williams now led the company's

Sudanese and Zanzibaris into the battle, taking the king's compound to light opposition.

The defeated ba-Fransa rushed away to the lake and took shelter on *Ulbrigugwe islan*, just offshore. At least 85 were killed there in a *ba-Ingleza* attack, some of them by Williams's Maxim firing from the mainland. Allegations of a massacre at Bulingugwe caused a political storm in London.

Lugard's victory entrenched the Protestant domination of the emerging colonial state. It may even have ensured that Uganda came into being as a British colony. This was at a time when Britain had not accepted responsibility from the IBEA Company. Defeat of the *ba-Ingleza* might have led to a totally different history for Uganda.

In his book *The Rise of Our East African Empire* Lugard insisted it was "very far from being the case" that the *ba-Ingleza* victory was certain. His forces were outnumbered, and he had just two Maxim guns. One of these had, in fact, failed with a smashed rivet-pin almost at the first shot.

The Catholics, on the other hand, claimed the Protestants had provoked the showdown when they were at their strongest. The Catholic Union of Great Britain, in its *Notes on Uganda*, pointed out that Lugard had brought crack Sudanese troops to the capital. The Catholics, the argument went on, would not have picked a fight just when reinforcements had arrived.

Now barely more than a year after he entered Buganda – uninvited by the ruler or the population – Lugard could point to the preliminary settlement of Buganda and a series of other achievements: successful restraining battles with the Muslims, who later reached an accord with him under their leader, Mbogo;

)treaty relations established with all the country west of Buganda to the Congo State borders; a king of Toro (Kasagama) installed; routes for the trade of arms and ammunition to Bunyoro more or less closed; seven forts built; the Salt Lake (source of essential salt supplies) closed and the Sudanese relocated under their officers with their power at the disposal of Buganda.

Excluded from this roll-call of achievement was one principal party – Kabalega and Bunyoro. In *The Rise of Our East African Empire*, Lugard was frank about not wishing to come to terms with Kabalega, whom he did not trust to keep any engagement:

"(H)e outraged and insulted Major Casati when a guest at his court, and bound him naked to a tree. He fought against Stanley without cause. He gratuitously assist the Mahommedan party when we had fought against them the previous year. He continuously fought against me in my expedition to Kavalli's. Recently he had sent an army against my Sudan forts...

"His cruelties to his people were the theme of all **tongues.**"

Read more than a century later, the passage suggests that Kabalega was doing nothing more than conducting a militant foreign policy as best he saw it while, to Lugard's chagrin, not behaving like a European gentleman!

For Kabalega those forts protecting Toro were cutting him off from his ancestral territory. The Sudanese troops ravaged the country on the Nyoro side searching for food so Kabalega had reason to be aggrieved.

Lugard had proved himself to be the inheritor of Sir Samuel Baker's legacy. He never met Kabalega and never made any attempt to meet him. He wrote about the mukama: "With him alone I felt little inclination to



come to terms. For years he had exhibited a continued hostility to all Europeans, from the days of Baker and Gordon ... I knew his overtures to be insincere, and that, should opportunity offer, he would break all engagements, as he always had done." (*The Rise of Our East African Empire*)

Hence when Bunyoro envoys came treating for peace Lugard called their approaches insincere and said they were probably spies. Here was an unprovable negative: Kabalega could never prove that he would *NOT* break all engagements. In any case, the opportunity was never offered.

Lugard's unwillingness to negotiate with the mukama has been criticised both at the time and since. The Reverend Robert Ashe, a CMS missionary of the period, said Lugard had offered no proof of the king's lack of sincerity. A.R. Dunbar* notes that Lugard rebuffed Kabalega twice, and suggested that "the Baganda chiefs, greedy for territory and spoil, probably threw difficulties in the way of Kabalega coming to terms with the British authorities".

Lugard later became governor of Nigeria, a peer of the realm in Britain and a public figure into the 1940s. He is famous for his ideas about "indirect rule" – the ruling principle of British imperial administration – which he developed from his experiences in Uganda and elsewhere.

In 1892 Lugard returned home to campaign vigorously for Buganda to become the responsibility of the British government. It had quickly been clear that administering the country was beyond the resources of the IBEA Company, but Britain was at first reluctant.

The issue blew up into the Uganda Question. The present author has written elsewhere, in *Eating Uganda*, about this drama, which gripped the public,

* See book list

or that section of it taken with foreign affairs, in the way that Majority World debt has done a century later.

The question was what to do with Uganda – to keep it or leave it. Public interest was driven by slavery. Britain, it was felt, was needed in Africa if this continuing scourge was to be ended.

A famous Punch cartoon of the time showed a foundling labelled Uganda on John Bull's doorstep.

D.A. Low explains: "The British public knew very little about Africa, but the preachings of Wilberforce, Buxton and Livingstone had sunk deep into the national mind, and any reverse in Africa instantly recalled the horror of slavery which was the one thing that most of them knew about Africa." (*Buganda in Modern History*)

William Wilberforce's parliamentary act of 1807 outlawed the slave trade in the British Empire and wherever the Royal Navy reached. Thomas Buxton, Wilberforce's successor as leader of the anti-slavery movement in the British House of Commons, headed the campaign that in 1833 finally saw slaves throughout the British Empire given their freedom. David Livingstone, one of the best-known African figures of the nineteenth century, was driven as a doctor and a missionary by the horrors of the slave trade.

Out of 174 submissions in the Foreign Office archives, Low found that 104 mentioned slavery. More than half the resolutions came from church sources. Commerce was mentioned in 75 resolutions. The Victorians did not see any conflict between religion and commerce. Far from it; they believed in the complementarity of the two activities.

The pressure paid off. After a period of informal administration, which saw an unsuccessful rising by the Muslim Baganda (June 1893), Britain in April

1894 declared a protectorate over Buganda. The colony became known as Uganda – the first form of Buganda.

Thus the Baganda, who less than four years earlier had co-operated with, even welcomed, Captain Lugard, signed away their independence. Low asked himself "who were the resisters and who were the collaborators. His answer was that they were often the same people.

The Ganda government enjoyed substantial autonomy formalised by treaty relations, and was willing to take on the colonial authorities when it needed to. In Low's view, Buganda was in this favourable position because the country "made a quite unusually positive response to the western impact when it came, which earned it a quite unusual reward". Apolo Kaggwa, for instance, was the katikiro of Buganda from 1889.. before the coming of the British, until 1926.

Part of that reward was a role as Britain's partner throughout the Uganda protectorate. Ganda armies fought under British leadership against Bunyoro and against rebel Sudanese; they served throughout the protectorate as tax collectors, clerks and administrators, of local populations by demanding the use of their language, Luganda. everywhere in the "British Empire it was never as simple as coloniser and colonised, it was a notable example of a sub-imperialism,

For Malumba S.M.S. Kiwanuka it was specifically the Ganda Protestant elite that co-operated with the British, for the purpose of entrenching the victory of their faction (*A History of Buganda*). He sees the bangleza chiefs as collaborators, no-one more so than Apolo Kaggwa.

Roland Oliver and Gervase Mathew, in Oxford University Press's *History of East Africa* (vol 1) under-

line how different was Bunyoro's response: "While the most powerful elements in Ganda society identified their interests with those of the European administration, the most powerful elements in Nyoro society did the opposite. Kabalega's hostility to Britain was the product of his long-standing fear of conquest, by the Egyptians, by the Ganda and, finally, by Buganda's British allies."

But for the moment Bunyoro remained free.

7 Keeping up the fight

WITH Buganda under control, the British were not to leave the defiant Kabalega unmolested. In the process, much of Bunyoro was laid waste by war, with crops destroyed and cattle driven away.

In late 1893 the Uganda commissioner, Colonel Herby Colvile, and his British officers invaded Bunyoro with upwards of fifteen thousand Ganda and Sudanese troops. The Ganda army was led by a prominent leader, Semel Kakungu.

The British found a country much like Buganda but flatter and with a smaller population. There were large forests and many swamps. The army marched first to the Kafu river. Kabalega's capital, Mparo, lay twenty miles beyond.

When the British reached Mparo they found it "all black and smouldering",* as related in Chapter One. Kabalega had torched the place and departed.

The mukama fought a series of rearguard actions, retreating to the Budongo forest and later to the far bank of the Nile. He was supported by the leading chiefs Rwabadongo, Ireya and Byabacwezi. Colvile 'told his own problems. He was handicapped by the unwillingness of his Ganda allies to follow him further into Bunyoro (the same problem that Lugard encountered). He complained that they wanted only to return home "the richer by a few goats or head of cattle".

The hard-pressed Banyoro had reason to be grateful for the storage properties of their staple food, millet.

* Major A.B. Thruston, *African Incidents*

During the British invasion, millet was hidden underground for long periods without spoiling. It was the same tactic they had used in the disturbed times of the 1860s and 1870s, when much of the country was plundered by the Baganda and Arab traders.

Kabalega had several brushes with death or capture. Kakungulu's Ganda troops caught him in the open. He ran from clump to clump, dropping his favourite rifle as he went. He would have been killed if anyone in the Ganda army could have shot straight, Colvile commented in his account of the campaign, *The Land of the Nile Springs, being chiefly an account of how we fought Kabarega*.

On one occasion the British came within 2,000 yards of Kabalega, although separated by a belt of forest. Major A.B. Thruston, one of Colvile's officers, was amazed that the king's camp consisted of "an elaborate and miniature town of grass huts". These, he learnt, could be put up in half an hour by a thousand workers; the procedure was repeated at each camp.

Kabalega also tried what today would be called "psy-ops". He laid the British under an interdict. A human skull was found with a live cormorant tied to it. A goat was killed and half-buried, and "quaint miniature bridges of grass" were put across the path as an ill omen for those who crossed them.

In May 1894, the British took the mountain fortress of Usaijamdkuru. This rises one thousand feet above the surrounding plain, and was considered impregnable by the Banyoro. The defenders fired high, however, and the assailants successfully stormed the mountain.

Thruston, in his book *African Incidents*, described the final stages of the assault in a passage that does not reflect well on either side:

"The Wunyoro [he wrote], who had apparently never imagined that the heights could be carried, were completely disorganised; they offered no resistance, but stood staring stupidly round them, and were shot down as quickly as the soldiers could reload their rifles.

"This slaughter lasted for about two minutes, when the remainder, suddenly awakening, turned, and with marvellous activity bounded down the sides of the hill. At its foot they afterwards suffered some further loss at the hands of the two sections and the irregulars, who were waiting for them. Among the killed was one of Kabarega's sons, who was second in command to Yabaswezi, the chief of the district. Yabaswezi himself was the first to run away, and he escaped."

In August, Kabalega's forces under the command of his son Jasi and Ireya mounted what Colvile described as "by far the most important fight we had had since we crossed the Unyoro frontier in January". The British-led forces included 150 Sudanese, and Banyoro led by a dissident chief, Amara.

Kabalega's army gathered at his old capital, Mparo, to attack the new British fort at Hoima. The enemy, in Colvile's words, made "a good stand for some time". Thruston combined a flanking movement with a frontal attack: even then the Banyoro "would not own themselves beaten".

Eventually they scattered. The price of defiance had been high. Colvile said two hundred riflemen and an unknown number of others had been killed, compared with eight wounded on the British side.

After this battle Kabalega sent a chief to a Whit& Fathers' mission in Bugangaizi to help him find ways of negotiating with the British. But this approach, like others before it, came to nothing,

Thruston nearly captured the mukama in November 1894, making a forced march in which he covered 35 miles in a day. He moved so fast that he overtook the scouts who were on their way to warn Kabalega in his capital, Mashudi. They were killed in their sleeping hut, Thruston acknowledging that the incident was "very near to mere assassination". He said the needs of speed and avoiding noise meant no prisoners could be taken. The sleeping inhabitants in another village were left unmolested.

The king, surprised by Thruston's troops, was in such a hurry that he left behind valuable ivory, and the royal regalia: two brass spears and a brass tripod. The weather was on his side. "Had it been a bright night, there can be little doubt but that we should have taken him alive," Thruston commented.

Standing in the abandoned capital, Thruston – on Colvile's instruction – left a message in Arabic on a stick inviting Kabalega to submit to Britain. Whether or not it reached him, the mukama sought terms. Thruston ranted a four-month truce, but was recalled from Bunyoro before anything more came of it. His successor, Captain Cunningham, continued the war.

In March 1895 Kabalega's forces had a success when British and Ganda forces attacked his position on the far (Lango) bank of the Victoria Nile near Masindi Port. The attack failed. Cunningham was shot in both hips, and another officer, Captain Dunning, died of his wounds.

A second British operation on the far bank next month led to the Banyoro withdrawing northwards. Kabalega's mother, his son Yosiya Kitahimbwa and a princess were captured, but the king, Scarlet Pimpernel-fashion, escaped again.

These events were playing out in northern Bunyoro and beyond because soon after the invasion Colvile had partitioned the country. In *The Land of the Nile Springs* he explained that he was unlikely finally to defeat Kabalega in an open fight (because a non-mechanised army would simply disperse and re-form) or, lacking cavalry or mounted infantry, run him down. His priority was to capture the king, but this he failed to do.

He decided instead to contain Kabalega in the northern part of his kingdom by building a line of forts from Kibiro on Lake Albert to Hoima. In the south of Bunyoro he formed a confederacy of friendly chiefs while the southernmost counties were allocated to Ganda chiefs, partly as a reward for help with the invasion. It was a so-called cost-free way of paying for the chiefs' services.

The land annexed to the Baganda became known as the Lost Counties – an issue that was to haunt Bunyoro for decades.

Another beneficiary was Kasagama, the ruler of Toro. He was restored to the throne from which Kabalega had driven him, and he was awarded chunks of Bunyoro territory.

D. Roberts, however, suggests* that rewarding the chiefs for containing Kabalega was a subsidiary reason for the annexation. The land in the hands of allies had strategic value for the British as they took control of more of Bunyoro.

With the county of Busoga in Ganda hands, Colvile had secure access to Lake Albert and the upper Nile was a British strategic objective.

For the near-contemporary commentator and African sympathiser, Professor J.W. Gregory, the jus-

* "The 'Lost Counties' of Bunyoro", *Uganda Journal*, vol 26 pt 2 (1962)

tice of the war against Bunyoro was "open to doubt". In his book, *The Foundation of British East Africa 1901*, he suggested a less worthy motive or military activism than those publicly declared. This was the search for glory, even if it was obtained with machine guns against spears.

"An adventurous policy has naturally been more popular in Uganda, for it has been better rewarded at home than attempts at the quiet development of the country [wrote Gregory]. The man, who made successfully one of those 'nigger hunts', which in Equatorial Africa are misnamed wars, has gained distinction and decoration, in preference to the man who kept his province in peace by sympathetic and patient administration. The Chinese system of paying a doctor most when he attends his patient least might well be adopted for rewarding soldiers who have civilian duties."

Colville while supervising the invasion found time to observe the country around him. The terrain around the Kafu river, he wrote in *The Land of the Nile Springs*, was like Singo, a province of Buganda. "Unoro, however, is far more thickly populated and highly cultivated than its sister mananga, and its inhabitants, instead of courting starvation by relying on that favourite food of locusts, the banana, plant large quantities of beans and sweet potatoes, and seem generally to have some idea of laying by for a rainy day."

He found that wood from the bark cloth tree had the unusual property of growing when stuck into the ground. This meant that stockades built from this wood did not rot as they aged but grew stronger.

Colville had some praise for Kabalega. "He seems to be an energetic old man" (he was about 40), who

always walked instead of being carried on shoulders – presumably a strikingly egalitarian, and soldierly, gesture for his followers.

Kabaka Mwanga of Buganda was praised in part: "His face is a weak one, with half-covered, fishlike eyes, a rather squat nose, and a drooping mouth, but it shows no very marked signs of cruelty or debauchery ... He is a wretchedly weak creature, utterly self-indulgent, a prey to timidity, and swayed by the opinion of the last comer; but after many opportunities of studying him carefully in all his many moods, I am inclined to think that he is not quite as black as he has been painted."

Colville here sensed that the demonising of African leaders by otherwise intelligent men is absurd.

Thruston's book, *African Incidents*, gives a vivid and readable account of the Bunyoro campaign. He found that Nyoro gunfire was not very effective. Muzzle loaders, he wrote, "are, in the hands of the natives, far often less dangerous weapons than the poisoned arrows and spears which they have in large measure superseded".

The point is interestingly echoed by Sir Winston Churchill in another setting. Churchill says of the American Indian tribes resisting the white advance in the later nineteenth century: "Their bows and arrows were much more effective than the muzzle-loading rifles with which the Federal troops were at first equipped.* The Indians' defeat came with the Winchester repeating rifle and the Colt revolver.

Published in 1900 three years after Thruston was killed, *African Incidents* has an engaging and honest feel – partly because it was set out to write an account of a young

* *The Great Republic* (Cassell, 2002, p232) —

and relatively junior man he carried little baggage. Its can be seen that a century later it was seized on as evidence by Banyoro seeking reparations from Britain (see below, Chapter 12).

Episodes like the slaughter at Musajamukuru, together with Colville's acknowledged seizure of civilian food supplies, provide plenty for 21 century lawyers to get their teeth into.

Thruston lamented that "fate had set me down at the very furthest point from all civilisation, as a captain of Bashi-bazouks, a raider and an ivory thief". To contemporary readers this must have seemed deliciously to the point: the Bashi-bazouks were Turkish irregular soldiers famous for their lack of discipline, and the British at the time were trying to seize Kabafega's hoard of

African Incidents left Thruston's readers in no doubt about the nature of treaty-making upon which British policy set such store. He carried a bundle of printed treaties, which he was supposed to make as many people sign as possible. The signing ceremony was "an amiable farce".

"The *modus operandi* is somewhat as follows: A ragged untidy European, who in any civilised country would be in danger of being taken up by the police as a vagrant, lands at a native village, the people run away; he shouts out after them to come back, holding out before them a shilling's worth of beads. Some one, braver than the rest, at last comes up; he is given a string of beads, and is told that if the chief comes he will get a great many more. Cupidity is, in the end, stronger than fear; the chief comes and receives his presents, the so-called interpreter pretends to explain the treaty to the chief. The chief does not understand a word of it, but he looks pleased, as he receives another present of

beads; a mark is made on a printed treaty by the chief, and another by the interpreter, the vagrant, who professes to be the representative of a great empire, signs his name. The chief takes the paper, but with some hesitation, as he regards the whole performance as a new and therefore dangerous piece of witchcraft. The boat sails away, and the new ally and *protege* of England or France immediately throws the treaty into the fire."

By such means did the British seek the legitimacy of their empire.

Thruston was not an over-compensator. He held the conventional view of Kabalega as a treacherous rogue, but he respected his enemy and he was aware of what the war was doing to the country.

He acknowledged that Kabalega was wise not to give battle but to keep up frequent guerrilla attacks. Some fellow officers obtusely blamed the mukama for not fighting pitched battles "like a man", but Thruston understood the rightness of these "Fabian tactics". He knew like Fabius, the Roman general who avoided battles with the Carthaginian Hannibal and secured victory in the Second Punic War, that there is no military Virtue in fighting battles to lose them. The officers who sneered at Kabalega might also have learnt from the Duke of Wellington, the conqueror of Napoleon, who was never afraid to refuse battle.

Thruston became "sick of the raids and bloodshed". He was amazed at the casualness with which his Ganda allies went about the business of killing the defeated enemy: "They were cheerful without being excited, and had the air of satisfaction which one would attribute to an honest Chicago workman when he had slaughtered the last ox of his daily task."

The soldiers often could not be prevented from executing captured enemy. A chief was shot behind him

against Thruston's expressed order, and he saw a man killed on the ground while he had his hands up. Thruston himself was no softie, however. He ordered the execution of a Nyoro guide on the forced march to Mashudi. The man had broken down and started raving. He could not be set free and to leave him tied to a tree would expose him to a painful death from predator animals rather than the quick death of a bullet.

Thruston was unwell as well as weary. He asked to be relieved and to return to England. There, however, proved no better: "The climate was vile, the natives were yahoos, dirty in their persons, and rude in their manners; their restrictions I found tedious, their conventionalities artificial and insufferable." It was a feeling familiar to generations of returning expatriates to the present day. Before long he was back in Bunyoro, taking civil and military charge of the country.

The formal war between Britain and Bunyoro was over in 1895. Thereafter, as Edward I. Steinhart explains, "Kabalega's resistance began to dwindle from a national war to a minor rebellion and finally to the personal struggle of a deposed monarch and his entourage in exile". (*Conflict and Collaboration: The Kingdoms of Western Uganda 1890-1907*)

Several of Kabalega's leading chiefs now surrendered to the British: Rwabadongo, Byabacwezi and Kikukule. The last was a Muganda by birth who was originally appointed to guard Bunyoro's approaches in what became the Lost Counties. After his release, he became a fighter for Kabalega again.

In Jul 1896 the Uganda protectorate was extended to Bunyoro, to the other historic kingdoms of Toro and Ankole, and to the territory of Busoga. Kabalega, meanwhile, continued to offer guerrilla resistance from the far side of the Nile, first in Acholi and then in Lango.

8 Fall of the kings

KABAKA Mwanga of Buganda could not reconcile himself to the new state of affairs. His client status was underlined when he was fined for exporting ivory without British permission. In 1897 he slipped away from Mengo and went to Buiyu, a Catholic province. There he declared a rebellion.

He was defeated in two battles – Kabuwoko and Nyendo – before linking up with Kabalega – his old enemy – in Lango.

For the Uganda authorities a more serious security issue arose that year when three of the Sudanese companies which Lugard had brought out of Equatoria mutinied.

They had been ordered to join the Juba Expedition commanded by Major James Macdonald, which was to explore the headwaters of the Nile. The secret objective was to forestall France's advance from West Africa to the river.* The mutiny delayed the plan.

It fell to General Kitchener, after his victory at Omdurman (see below, this chapter), to face down the French at Fashoda, and so prevent them from achieving their strategic aim of a band of territory from west to east right across the continent.

The Sudanese mutineers were weary of constant soldiering away from their home bases, and unhappy over pay and conditions. They marched to join a sympathetic garrison at Luba's fort in Busoga, with Macdonald in pursuit.

* A.T. Mason's introduction to Macdonald's *Soldiering and Surveying in British East Africa 1891-1894*, edition published in 1973

With his Indian and Ganda forces, he laid siege to the fort where the rebels were holding captive the fort commander, Major Thruston, and others. The siege of Luba's saw the death of Thruston and three other Britons – one, Lieutenant Feilding, in a fire fight outside the fort and two executed by the mutineers.

An unsigned sequel section of Thruston's *African Incidents* depicts the executions as wholly avoidable, a combination of lethargy and intransigence by Macdonald as commander of the relieving force.

After the battle where Feilding died, groups of mutineers allegedly offered to release the prisoners if the rebels' lives were spared and an inquiry made into their grievances. Macdonald was said to have precipitated the tragedy by twice rejecting these unonerous terms, demanding unconditional surrender. His refusal was not mentioned in the official report of the events, the anonymous author pointed out.

Macdonald's answer to his critics remains unknown. So sensitive was this challenge to Britain's burgeoning East African empire that the Foreign Office refused him permission to publish a book covering this time in Uganda.*

- When Luba's was besieged, the rebels broke out and went north to Lake Kyoga. They hoped to raise other Sudanese in Bunyoro. The day was saved from the British point of view when the Mruli garrison stayed loyal. Kabalega joined in the attack on Mruli. His general, Ireya, was active in the fighting elsewhere.

In another part of the protectorate, Mwanga at the head of Muslim Baganda, tried to link up with the rebel Sudanese, but was repeatedly thwarted by loyal troops. The mutiny was eventually put down after more than a year.

* A.T. Matson's introduction to Macdonald's *Journal of a Journey into the Interior of East Africa 1891-1894*, edition published in 1973 ...

Overall, the Sudanese Mutiny cost 280 lives on the British side: 185 Baganda, 39 Basoga, 25 Swahili, 24 loyal Sudanese and seven Europeans.*

Yet the authorities' greatest fear had not been realised – that the mutineers would form a united front with the Muslim Baganda and the nationalists following Kabalega and Mwanga. A link-up like that would have imperilled the British hold on Uganda even more than the Battle of Mengo had in 1892.

Major H.H. Austin, who marched with Macdonald, put it succinctly. He said: "We all well understood that should such a junction be effected nothing could save Uganda from destruction." (*With Macdonald in Uganda*)

The mutiny was the first time that Indian troops – 220 Sikhs and two hundred Muslims – had been brought to Uganda in significant numbers. The British authorities questioned what they had taken for granted – the dependability of the Sudanese troops as a whole. The Indians stayed and were absorbed into the Uganda army, adding another element to Uganda's complicated ethnic mix.t

In 1898, a faraway battle finally rendered Uganda's northern borders secure. The followers of the Khalifa, successor to the Mahdi, were routed at the Battle of Omdurman, outside Khartoum, leading to the end of the Mahdist state.

It was a dramatic demonstration of how rifles and spears are no match for artillery and machine guns. General Herbert Kitchener's force of British, Egyptian and Sudanese troops decisively defeated an army twice its size, with 48 dead in the British-led army to ten thousand among the Mahdists.

Kabalega's long campaign of resistance came to an

* Amii Omara-Otunnu, *Politics and the Military in Uganda, 1890-1985*
t Ibid

end on April 9, 1899. He and Mwanga were captured in Lango by troops led by Colonel Evatt. By now the mukama's active following may have dwindled to just one hundred.*

The two kings were taken by surprise and driven into a swamp. Kabalega had refused Mwanga's suggestion to surrender and is supposed to have said (in the language of heroic embellishment): "Everything has its time appointed; a woman travails with child reaches the time of her deliverance; so also does a cow; the banana is planted and takes root; but when it arrives at maturity it must fall; and now we have reached the hour of our fate; and, if so be that our appointed time to die has come, let us not be faint-hearted!"

He fought bravely until he was shot and had to drop his gun. Kakungulu, the Ganda general who made the capture, with great difficulty prevented his men from killing Kabalega on the spot.

The mukama was defiant to the last. He asked one of his sons to remove the bandages: he preferred to bleed to death rather than live as a captive. Guards frustrated his wishes. His right arm was amputated and he survived.

Until his capture no European is supposed to have seen Kabalega close up since Gaetano Casati in the mid-1880s. Few had tried.

A surgeon who attended the king related an anecdote about Kabalega in hospital. The king was displeased that the patient in an opposite bed was being attended to rather than himself. While the surgeon, Haig, bent over his patient, Kabalega wriggled himself into a position to kick the surgeon on the backside. "I didn't mind," said Haig. "It is not everyone who can claim to have had his bottom kicked by a king."

* A.R. Dunbar. *A History of Bunyoro-Kitara*

† The account is given in Mrs A. Fisher's *Twilight Tales of the Black Baganda*

‡ A.R. Dunbar. *A History of Bunyoro-Kitara*

Kabalega's general, Ireyta, surrendered two months after his leader was taken. Kikukule, another staunch supporter, also surrendered after the capture of Kabalega had ended all effective Nyoro resistance.

The Nyoro historian, John Nyakatura, in his book, *Aspects of Bunyoro Customs and Traditions*, cited three heroes from this period apart from Kabalega himself. They were Rwabudongo, Ireyta and Kabalega's son, Prince Jasi Nyakimoso, who was said to be an exception to the Nyoro saying that a brave man does not have brave children.

Kabalega's spirit was admired by the colonial masters even as they subscribed to the narrative of his treachery and cruelties. Sir Frederick Jackson, who served in Uganda from 1894 and was governor of the protectorate 1911-17, said of the hospital incident: "It certainly showed a truculence and a spirit of reckless defiance, even after the 'game was up', that excited some feeling of respect, and compared more than favourably with the cringing, abject condition of Mwanga, at the moment of his downfall." (*Early Days in East Africa*)

Jackson met Kabalega's mother. Fat was admired at the Nyoro court: the lady was so fat that she got stuck in a chair and had to be pulled out. The skin of her upper arms hung down like a dewlap. Jackson noted the "horribly cruel and revengeful expression of her hazel-red eyes", commenting: "No wonder her son was what he was."

Like many other Europeans, Jackson admired Kabalega's keeping up the fight. "From the first moment of succeeding his father, Kamrasi, he acquired for himself a reputation for horrible cruelties, and cold-blooded butchery of his subjects, that almost rivalled

that of his near neighbour Mutesa, and, later on, Mwanga. From the former he may be distinguished as possessing all the bad qualities, with the addition of the basest treachery, but none of the better ones; and from the latter, by possessing courage, and hatred of us that was so irreconcilable that he never once sued for peace, even when hard pressed; and never grovelled when captured. *In fact he always kept his end up, and in some ways was at least a man.*" (Italics added)

This mixed verdict, from a man who was sympathetic to Africans, is far removed from modern Nyoro perceptions of Kabalega.

The Bunyoro-Kitara Cultural Trust, for instance, sees a sustained conspiracy against Bunyoro: "One may ask how a mighty empire, like Kitara, became whittled away to the present underpopulated and underdeveloped kingdom of Bunyoro-Kitara. This is the result of many years of orchestrated, intentional and malicious marginalization, dating back to the early colonial days.

"The people of Bunyoro, under the reign of the mighty king Cwa II Kabalega, resisted colonial domination. Kabalega, and his well trained army of 'Abarusuura', put his own life on the line by mounting a fierce, bloody resistance against the powers of colonialization. *pn* April 9th, 1899, Kabalega was captured by the invading colonial forces and was sent into exile on the eyeless Islands.

"With the capture of Kabalega, the Banyoro were left in a weakened military, social and economic state, from which they have never fully recovered."

The paradox of Kabalega's resistance is that it worsened Bunyoro's situation by laying waste to the country and by creating in generations of colonial adminis-

trators the mindset that Bunyoro was the bad guy among the nations of Uganda.

John Roscoe, the CMS missionary, in a near-contemporary account (*The Bakitara*, 1923) estimate!! that the guerrilla warfare reduced the Nyoro population to just one fourth. It caused pasturage to be neglected. Cattle were driven away with Kabalega's party, never to return.

One who did not share the typical colonial mindset was J.R.P. Postlethwaite, a former district commissioner for Mubende, part of area annexed to Buganda by the British. "like the Banyoro, and I do feel that their actions in opposing foreign control hardly merited the consequences which have followed it," he wrote in *I Look Back*

Kabalega in his long campaign of resistance had good luck on his side. At least three times he escaped death or imminent capture - in 1886 when Gaetano Casati could have betrayed him to the Baganda, in 1894 when Ifanda forces caught him in the open and missed a shot, and later in 1894 when the British reached the Nyoro capital with a forced march, and the king left so quickly that he had to abandon the royal regalia.

He expected to be executed by the British, and he asked Kakungulu to look after his children. As it was, he began his exile to the Seychelles with the humiliation of being paraded through Kampala. Mwanga was with him. Mwanga soon died there, but Kabalega lived on for many years.

In exile the king was converted to Christianity, and learnt to read and write.*

Kabalega was replaced by his son Kitahimbwa and later by another son, Andereya Duhaga. Mwanga was succeeded by a child, his son Daudi Chwa.

* A.R. Dunbar, *Omukama Chwa II Kabarega*

One of Kabalega's old associates, Abimileka, visited the ex-king at Duhaga's behest. According to the missionary Ruth Fisher, Kabalega at first showed "the same obstinacy that had characterised him in the old days".* Abimileka persisted, however, and after two years the ex-king "surrendered himself to Christ".

He took the Christian name of John, according to one account because John the Baptist had also been wrongly imprisoned.

Also exiled in the Seychelles over the same period was another African hero. This was Nana Prempeh I, the asantehene [king] of the Asante people in what is now Ghana. British colonial expansion on the west coast of Africa started far earlier than in the Great Lakes states. Throughout the nineteenth century the Asante put up resolute but ultimately unsuccessful resistance. In 1897 their ruler was sent into exile, where he, like Kabalega, was to spend more than two decades.

Prempeh returned in 1924 to Kumasi, the Asante capital, as a private citizen. He was reinstated two years later as the asantehene, this time under British oversight, and served until his death in 1931.

Banyoro, too, came face to face with the past. In 1923 it was announced that the former mukama, Kabalega, would return to the country, at the request of his son, Duhaga, the current mukama. The old man, now aged around 70, had spent more than two decades in exile, but had not been forgotten by the Banyoro.

"To all intents and purposes Kabalega remained the spiritual king of the Banyoro until his death," S.R. Karugire says in *A Political History of Uganda*.

* *Twilight Tales of the Black Baganda*

Kabalega reached Jinja, in Busoga, in February but got no farther, dying there two months later. The place where he died, Mpumudde Hill, is now an honoured historical site (Mpumudde is a Runyoro word for "resting".) The mukama's tomb is at Mparoo, outside Hoima. Mparoo is said to have been his favourite capital.

With Kabalega's death, Karugire says, the spirit of passive resistance in Bunyoro came to an end.

9 Missionaries move in

ON the heels of the British conquest of Bunyoro came Ganda Christian evangelists. Kabalega had had earlier brushes with Christianity but nothing came of them. He sheltered Christians fleeing Mwanga's persecution and from that invited the CMS missionary Alexander Mackay to visit his court. He wanted Mackay to "to come and teach him the white man's book, as he had tried the Arab book and could make nothing of it". Mackay, however, did not take up the offer.

The Uganda historian Sir John Gray observes that Kabalega wanted the practical benefits that Europeans brought, but adds that "he might well have allowed Mackay and other missionaries to sow the seeds amongst his subjects, which, as happened in Buganda, would in due season have yielded a bountiful **harvest**".*

As it was, Christianity had to wait for two decades after it reached Buganda. The (Anglican) CMS was established in Bunyoro in 1896 and the (Roman Catholic) White Fathers in 1900.^t The CMS developed the written form of Runyoro, publishing the bible in the Nyoro language in 1913. The White Fathers created orthographies for the related languages, Runyankore and Rukiga.^{:I:}

* "Kaharega and the CMS", *Uganda Journal*, vol 35 pt 1 (1971)

^t L. Pirouct, "The spread of Christianity in and around Uganda", *Uganda Journal*, vol 32 pt 1 (1968)

^{:t:} Jan Bernsten, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, vol 19, no 2 (1998)

Mika Fataki, who was baptised in July 1898, considered himself the first Nyoro convert to Christianity (although he was of Soga origin). The breakthrough came in 1900, when the leading chief, Byabacwezi, was baptised. After the death that year of his rival, Rwabadongo, Byabacwezi was the leading figure in Bunyoro alongside the mukama, Duhaga. The king was a keen Anglican – described by Louise Pirouet in *Black Evangelists* as the most deeply committed of all Uganda's traditional rulers of the time.

A strong attraction of the Christian churches was the literacy classes they ran – indeed insisted upon. It had become obvious that to prosper in the colonial state reading and writing were needed.

Ruth Fisher was a missionary and the wife of a missionary who spent several years in Bunyoro after her husband, Arthur, developed mission activities there. As Mrs A. Fisher she was the author of a book about Bunyoro, *Twilight Tales of the Black Baganda*. The author was furious about the title. With sublime disregard for accuracy, the publisher chose it because the Baganda were well known to readers and the Banyoro were not. In his view at least, one tribe was much the same as another.

Published in 1911, *Twilight Tales* is one of the earliest books in the region to give an African viewpoint, in this case of Bunyoro-Kitara's history. Fisher edited the accounts provided for her by Daudi Kasagama and Andereya Duhaga, the bakama of Toro and Bunyoro respectively. The kings, who as she explained "were only just learning to wield the pen", clearly took the task seriously.

"The work was a novel and laborious task to these two dusky potentates [wrote Fisher], who, day after day, sat in their crude studies, writing as rapidly as

they could, while the quaint, withered up, skin-clad ancients squatted on the floor, and related the legends that had been handed down by the generations of sages before them."

The tradition of royal authorship was maintained when years later another mukama of Bunyoro, Tito Winyi IV, wrote a series of articles about the history of the country for the *Uganda Journal*. They appeared under the initials KW, the K standing for the author's father, Kabalega.

The missionary enterprise was justified in the eyes of its practitioners by the belief that Africans, like all human beings, contained within them the divine spark but needed rescue from the forces of superstition and false religion. Mrs Fisher was appalled by what she called "fetishism" among the Banyoro and what she saw as their moral laxity.

"Possessing no moral law, no standard of righteousness or justice, no thought of retribution or punishment hereafter, there is nothing to check these people from giving full reign to their unbridled instincts [she wrote]. Present comfort and prosperity are the only considerations of their life. This has made the African a savage, and almost crushed in him any God-given instinct with which he must at one time have been endowed."

The view is very much of its time. Apart from reading like a description of Fisher's fellow Britons a century later, the passage is partly contradicted by the author's observations on the safety of travel in Africa. This implies a moral sense of not robbing or killing even when it could be done with impunity.

"Here let me say that firearms are not needed in Africa as a protection against the natives. We have journeyed and stayed among the wildest, and even

cannibal tribes, and have only met with friendly curiosity and crude courtesy. I will not say that one has always felt quite comfortable at heart, but that was the fault of our suspicions, and not of their behaviour."

Both before and after the long arm of British law enforcement – and up to the present day – western travellers have for the most part wandered through the African interior with perfect security. This suggests a peaceableness of character and the moral sense of doing no harm that westerners might envy.

For Ruth Fisher the Banyoro as a people compared poorly with the Baganda. This was partly because of the "disintegration" of Bunyoro (although it is not clear whether the author meant the recent British conquest or the earlier erosion of the kingdom to Buganda).

"The Baganda are undoubtedly the dominating tribe of Central Africa; patriotism and cohesion have characterised them as a race, whereas its (*sic*) neighbour nation of Bunyoro has become shattered by its spirit of disintegration. The Banyoro and Batoro* are suspicious and sensitive to a degree, and their racial pride will be the greatest hindrance to their progress. The Baganda are made of harder stuff; they are an aggressive people, and fearless to step out – almost impudent in the cool way they make themselves instantly master of any situation: possessing keen business instincts, a Muganda will turn his hand to anything that promises reward, whether it is calligraphy, languages, money, sums, building, tailoring, cotton growing – nothing comes amiss to him."

On this view the relative progress of the Baganda and the Banyoro has not come from colonial policy and investment favouring Buganda but from the character of the two peoples.

* The people of Toro, of the same racial stock

The evangelisation of Uganda by Ganda and European missionaries was to bear strange fruit among the Acholi. Kabalega's traditional allies found themselves supporting another rebellion against central authority almost a century later. This was the Holy Spirit Movement, which formed in 1986 around the prophetess, Alice Lakwena.

The movement sought to rid Acholiland, and the whole of Uganda, of witchcraft. The twenty "holy spirit safety precautions" included much to please the missionaries of old, including no charms, no adultery or fornication, no smoking and no drinking.

"The HSM, which carried on a discourse against the Catholic and Protestant Churches, must nonetheless be seen as a movement which ultimately and radically fulfilled the goals of the missionaries (though not necessarily in the way the missionaries might have wished)," comments Heike Behrend in *Alice Lakwena and the Holy Spirits*.

Many people, Behrend reports, deserted the established churches and gathered in yards [ritual centres] to hear the Holy Spirit preachers. They burned their magic charms and visited ajwaka [spirit mediums] and diviners less frequently. Alice declared that elaborate funeral rites were useless: since all the dead would be resurrected on Judgment Day there was no need to take particular care of the mortal remains.

Alice's time was short. Her army began a march on Kampala by a peripheral route. It gathered strength as it passed through Lango and Teso, but after crossing into Busoga its numbers dwindled from more than seven thousand to around 2,500.

The HSM warriors were defeated by President Museveni's troops at Jinja in October 1987, and Alice fled to Kenya. She died there in January 2007.

The movement subsequently degraded into the long-running rebellion of the Lord's Resistance Army, headed by Joseph Kony, which became notorious for child abductions and brutality.

"While Alice and her Holy Spirit Mobile Forces could still claim to be fighting for *labi*, a just cause, the successor movements were caught up in the logic of violence and counterviolence and became increasingly unjust [Behrend comments] ... Driven into isolation, they have degenerated into ever more brutal bands of brigands."

10 The 'Lost Counties'

THE land annexed to Buganda after Colville's invasion of 1893-95 comprised all of Bunyoro south and east of the Kafu and Nkusi rivers. The area, which included the counties of Buyaga, Bugangaizi and Buwekula, contained forty per cent of the Nyoro population.

These were the "Lost Counties" of Bunyoro – an issue that festered during more than six decades of colonial rule.

The area includes historic royal tombs near Mubende, in Buwekula. Nearby is Mubende Hill, an ancient ritual site soaring seven hundred feet above the surrounding plateau. This was the home until the early twentieth century of a line of priestesses each known as Nakaima.

The priestess was consulted for smallpox and infertility; the spirits were encouraged by sacrifices of cows, sheep and sometimes youths.*

Bunyoro's kings down to Kabalega were crowned on Mubende Hill. The coronation tree, which became known as the Witch Tree, by the 1960s towered fifty feet above the grove of the last priestess.

Not long before his capture in 1899 Kabalega is reputed to have returned to Mubende Hill.† If this is so it was a long, extraordinary journey from Lango in the east to Mubende in the west – a sign of the importance of the place and its ceremonies to him.

* E.C. Lanning, "Excavations at Mubende Hill", *Uganda Journal*, vol 30 pt 2 (1966)

† Ibid

Colvile on his own authority took the decision to annex the territory that became known as the Lost Counties. Much of this had, in fact, fallen to the Baganda years before the British invasion. Colvile did not report his action to the Foreign Office. London wished to limit itself to Buganda proper. The apportionment was confirmed by the British government, but it cannot have been pleased with the *fait accompli*.

In his book, *The Land of the Nile Springs*, Colvile fails to mention this single most controversial action of his time in Uganda. We may wonder whether this silence was because of the political sensitiveness of the case or a simple lack of concern about what the annexation meant to the Banyoro.

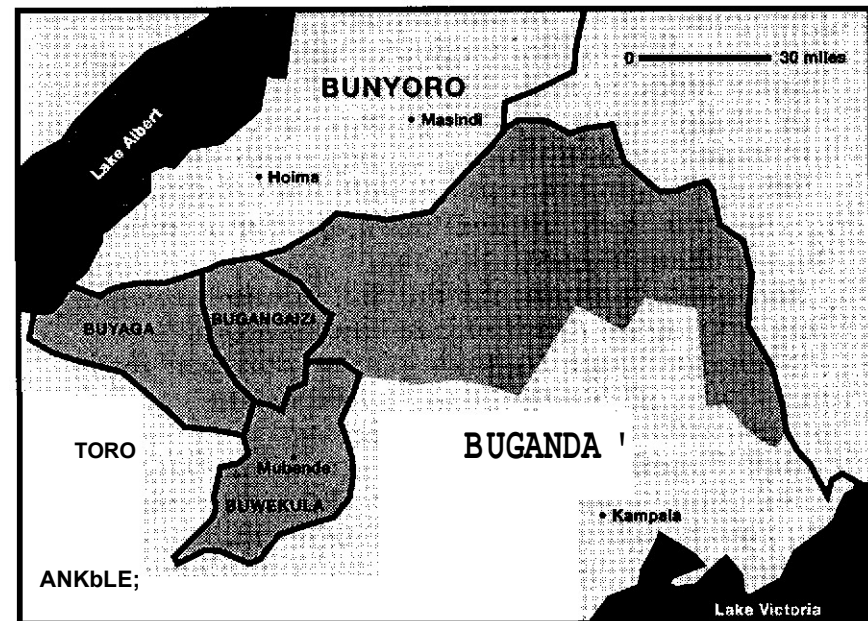
The annexed area was divided into Catholic and Protestant parts. Estates were handed over to Baganda so that many Banyoro found themselves landless in their own country.

Two courageous British officials tried to improve the condition of the Banyoro in the Catholic part of the Lost Counties. The land issue was acute there because of immigration: the Baganda Catholics were overcrowded in their own country, where the land settlement favoured the Protestants.

William Pulteney (who became a prominent general in the First World War) appointed Rwabadongo, the former leading chief with Kabalega, as senior chief. He was to be assisted by Makenda and Kikakure. All were Banyoro. The local people were also allowed to cultivate land again.

The moves brought protests from the Baganda. Colvile's successor as commissioner, Ernest Berkeley, rescinded Pulteney's policy, and Pulteney resigned.

Berkeley even had a plan to absorb the rest of Bunyoro, and Toro, into Buganda. He won Foreign



Map 3: Bunyoro's Lost Counties. Areas claimed by the mukama (shaded).

Source: Cmd 1717, HMSO 1962

Office approval but the plan was never proceeded with.

Pulteney's place was taken by an official named Forster, who also realised how unfair the annexation was to the Banyoro. Although Rwabadongo and his assistants had been replaced, Forster persuaded the local population to accept the supremacy of Baganda chiefs on the basis that their own property and persons would not be molested.

Berkeley's successor on the fast-moving conveyor belt that was the commissionership of Uganda, Trevor Ternan, authorised Baganda to take over some land and villages. This went plainly against Forster's settlement, and he asked to be transferred.

J.W. Gregory commented: "(H)e resigned his post, rather than be the instrument for the enslavement of the Wanyoro by their hereditary foes."

Ternan later had the grace to admit that southern Bunyoro had been annexed "contrary to the wishes of its owners".

Principled actions like Pulteney's and Forster's give the lie to the idea that colonial rule was simply about exploitation. They show that the Europeans took the natives (in the term of the period) seriously. So too in another context does an incident recounted by Colvile.

A Muganda fell into a dangerous river during an expedition. James Macdonald (whom we met earlier at the siege of Luba's) bravely jumped in after him. He was unable to find the body, and was fished out thoroughly exhausted.

A number of later British administrators were sympathetic to the Banyoro, but the Uganda Agreement of 1900 had set the land alienation in stone. To redraw the boundaries of Buganda without the consent of the Baganda would destroy the inviolability of Britain's word on a treaty.

A typical view of these Banyoro sympathisers was expressed by J.R.P. Postlethwaite, the district commissioner for Mubende in the 1920s.

"The inclusion of this area [the Lost Counties] in Buganda kingdom is considered by many to have been one of the greatest blunders we committed in the past [wrote Postlethwaite], but its correction, if it is to be corrected, could only come with the consent of the Kabaka and the native government of Buganda. I most emphatically opposed the idea of insisting upon a forcible alteration of the Uganda Agreement to right this wrong." (*I Look Back*)

After declining to act over the Lost Counties for decades, Britain in the twilight of its rule set up not one but two commissions, which reported on the issue.

A submission by the long-established Mubende Banyoro Committee* cited practical difficulties faced by Banyoro in the Lost Counties:

- Saza [county] chiefs Auguste Kibuka (Buyaga, 1933), Yonna Yakuza (Buyaga, 1940s) and S. Kiruruta (Bugangaizi, 1960) prohibited the use of the Runyoro language in all official and religious places.
- A woman was imprisoned and later fined (June 1960) for failing to speak Luganda in a court.
- Three Buyaga representatives were expelled from the Buganda lukiko (parliament] in 1956 for expressing Bunyoro's demands for the return of the Lost Counties.
- Several Banyoro were imprisoned for between six months and one year for demonstrating in support of the mukama of Bunyoro when he toured

* Reprinted by S.R. Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda*

Mubende district around 1960.

-A headmaster at Kikoma junior secondary school (Buwekula), Mr Sajjabi-Ssemouuze, was alleged to have destroyed application forms from his own pupils to block their way to secondary school or training college.

Both inquiries set up by Britain recommended that the counties of Buyaga and Bugangaizi should be returned to Bunyoro, in the case of the first commission subject to approval in referendums. These counties, in Mubende district, were the only parts of the territory claimed by Bunyoro where Banyoro were in a majority, according to a pre-independence census.

Buwekula, described by the Mubende Banyoro Committee as Bunyoro's "most important territory" because of its royal associations, was excluded from the proposals. At this time the Baganda outnumbered the Banyoro in Buwekula by four to one.

As with most long-running territorial disputes, the arguments were not all one way. Banyoro were in a minority over most of the area of the Lost Counties. Some of this, including Buwekula, had been overrun by the Baganda long before the British arrived, and they understandably saw it as the spoils of war.

Referendums in Buyaga and Bugangaizi were duly held after independence, despite fears in some quarters that the new government would not go ahead with them.

The man entrusted with running the referendums after independence in 1962 was Eric Norris. He was a British member of the Uganda administration who had previously organised a referendum for the pre-independence legislative council. Voting day was November 4, 1964.

Looking back after three decades, Norris reflects that "obduracy, not vacillation, had marked the British approach to the Lost Counties question".*

Because of the highly charged feelings surrounding the referendums, it was decided to use polling staff who were neither Baganda nor Banyoro. At the same time, the staff had to be intelligible to voters in their own languages. Norris found a sufficient number – 64 – from among civil servants and retired chiefs.

Some fourteen thousand leaflets and posters were produced in Runyoro, a similar number in Luganda and about five thousand in English – saturation coverage in territories with a total population of about sixty thousand.

The government had to see off an apparent attempt to boost the Ganda electorate in Buyaga with thousands of settlers at Ndaiga. The move was defeated in court when it was ruled that they had arrived too late to qualify as voters. From the Ganda point of view, however, the settlers were working land that was unused. The kabaka, Mutesa II, was personally associated with the scheme. The land, he wrote in his memoirs, *Desecration of My Kingdom*, was "empty and fertile"; the "resources should not be wasted".

The referendum campaign was largely peaceful although "it had its moments", Norris remembers.^t He gives credit to the Buganda authorities in the two counties for not trying to stop people voting although "they expected to lose".

There was civil unrest before the campaign and after the result, but during the campaign and the vote no lives were lost. Neither was the result or the conduct of the poll challenged by the losing side. Both were achievements for Norris and his staff.

* In *Looking Back at the Uganda Protectorate*, privately published in Australia by Douglas Brown, co-editor (1996)

^t Interview with author

"I believed in talking to both sides and keeping them informed. I tried not to tread on toes," he says. "There was also tight security for the ballot papers, and arrangements for observers from both sides."

Voting was by marking a cross on the ballot paper or by making a thumbprint – the latter producing a large number of spoilt papers because ink smudges often "rendered the voters' intentions unclear". Norris says no count was kept of how many used each method, which would have been a pointer to the extent of literacy.

Voters in each county had three choices: to stay with Buganda (symbol a shield), to rejoin Bunyoro (symbol a drum) or to become a separate district of Uganda (symbol a lamp).

The referendum result broadly reflected ethnic origins. In Buyaga 8,327 voted for Bunyoro against 1,289 for Buganda (87:13% in favour); in Bugangaizi 5,275 to 2,253 (70:30%). Support for a separate district failed to reach three figures in each case.

On January 1, 1965, Buyaga and Bugangaizi returned to Bunyoro.

Even so, more than half of the territory claimed by the mukama remained in Buganda. This included Mubende town and the royal tombs. In the first sunlight of independence, Bunyoro was poor and underdeveloped. It was progress of a kind, but it was not living happily ever after.

11 Colonial years

NOWHERE in Uganda was the coming of the colonialists felt more strongly than in Bunyoro, with its violent conquest and subsequent denigration of the old order.

Land-holding was one of the most fundamental changes introduced by colonialism. Again it was Buganda's turn first. The Uganda Agreement of 1900, despite its name, applied only to Buganda.

It was a revolution in land tenure, replacing the traditional African system of land held under the patronage of chiefs with tenure similar to English freeholds. Land allocations were measured in square miles, hence the term "mailo" land from the word "mile".

Of Buganda's 19,600 square miles, 10,500 square miles was to be held by the government and 8,958 square miles by the kabaka, chiefs and other land occupiers. The balance was made up of allocations to the three regents ruling Buganda on behalf of the child kabaka, Daudi Chwa (Mwanga's son), and the three religious missions. The Church Missionary Society received forty square miles, the White Fathers 35 square miles and the Mill Hill Fathers (who had been in the country only since 1895) 17 square miles.

The agreement, which was negotiated by the British commissioner, Sir Harry Johnston, and the regents, confirmed the Ganda occupancy of Bunyoro's Lost Counties. It stipulated that the northern Buganda boundary would continue to be the Kafu and Nkusi rivers. This together with the county of Kabula taken

from Ankole and the island of Buvuma from Busoga doubled the size of Buganda.

Johnston agreed this in exchange for the Ganda chiefs giving up traditional forms of primacy: they agreed to renounce tribute from other tribes, merge Buganda's revenue into protectorate revenue, enforce protectorate laws in Buganda and accept Buganda's equality of status within the protectorate. The last mentioned inevitably became the equality of the elephant and the mouse.

In the run-up to independence more than half a century later Buganda had 16 per cent of the Uganda population, 52 per cent of the country's gross national product, 54 per cent of secondary school enrolments and most of the students at Makerere university college.*

Similar agreements were made with two other traditional kingdoms, Ankole and Toro, but Bunyoro was excluded for many years. Johnston added to the European narrative of Kabalega by describing the king, like his father, as "evil-tempered".

This was a judgment made out of ignorance for Johnston apparently never saw fit to visit Bunyoro.t

The Baganda had much to thank Johnston for, and duly did so. After his death in 1927 his tombstone at Poling, Sussex, was inscribed with a tribute in Luganda from the kabaka and people of Buganda: "Amazimage ku Buganda galago nti Bungereza eyagala bona bekuma babere ne dembe" [His faithfulness to Buganda shows that England wishes all whom she protects to be free].

Johnston's Uganda Agreement entrenched the superiority of Buganda within the protectorate. As the new

* Jean-Pierre Chretien, *The Great Lakes of Africa*

† Roland Oliver, *Sir Harry Johnston and the Scramble for Africa*

century progressed, Bunyoro continued to be treated like occupied territory by a partnership of the British and the Baganda.

In 1901, Jemusi (James) Miti, a Muganda chief who became famous as an historian, reorganised the government of Bunyoro on the Buganda model. Of the ten saza chiefs only four were Banyoro, including Kabalega's former general, Byabacwezi.* Within a few years the total of Ganda chiefs had risen to about twenty at various levels of the administration.

The Baganda were all over Bunyoro, as teachers, tax collectors, clerks and senior administrators, adding fuel to the flames of resentment by insisting on the use of Luganda. They were prominent as missionaries. They ostentatiously proclaimed bananas as a superior food (these were eaten more widely in Buganda than in Bunyoro).

For Yoga Adhola, throughout the protectorate "perhaps the most determined resistance to the use of Ganda agents in administration came from Bunyoro". (www.upcparty.net)

By 1907 the Nyoro chiefs had had enough. They revolted under the banner of Nyangira Abaganda [I Refuse the Baganda]. The Baganda were driven out of the countryside and fled to Hoima. The revolt, which lasted several months, spilled over into Toro, Ankole and Busoga.

After a stand-off with the authorities 54 Nyoro chiefs were arrested. All were removed from Bunyoro, and 12 were deported from Uganda. The Ganda chiefs were reinstated, but were eventually retired. It was a long-term victory for the Banyoro: no new Ganda chiefs were ever appointed.t

* Edward I. Steinhart, *Conflict and Collaboration: The Kingdoms of Western Uganda 1890-1907*

† Ibid

Even so sympathetic a character as the missionary, Arthur Fisher, showed short-sightedness towards the Banyoro. He had entered Bunyoro in 1896, when the country was in disarray, and had worked there and in Toro ever since. He did not join in the general European denigration of Kabalega, stating: "I have never yet heard an old man speak unkindly of the old king and am now convinced he was not as bad as painted."*

But in 1907 Fisher was urging Luganda rather than Runyoro as the language for the Old Testament of the Bible to be used in Bunyoro, on the grounds that the use of the Ganda language had become common. Fortunately for generations of Nyoro Christians, the view did not prevail.

Johnston had dismissively called Kabalega "the so-called king of Bunyoro"; now another official, George Wilson, stated: "Bunyoro must clearly understand that it is a conquered country, and more than in any other the disposal of authority lies with His Majesty's Government." Remarkably, even in 1931 the authors of a report on land tenure were driven to say: "fW)e think the time is come when reference to Bunyoro and the Banyoro as a conquered country and people should cease."†

It was in an only slowly improving political environment that Mukama Tito Winyi IV reigned from 1924 to 1967. He was served for more than two decades (1917-1939) by Petero Bikunya as katikiro. In 1927 Bikunya published *Ky'Abakama ba Bunyoro*, the earliest account in Runyoro of the history and customs of Bunyoro.

Bunyoro finally got its political agreement with the

* Quoted by M. Louise Pirouet in *Black Evangelists*

† Ibid

‡ A.D. Roberts, "The 'Lost Counties' of Bunyoro", *Uganda Journal*, vol 26 pt 2 (1962)

Uganda Protectorate in 1933, more than three decades after not only Buganda but also the other traditional kingdoms of Toro and Ankole. It left Bunyoro's land area unchanged – that is, it did not address the issue of the Lost Counties.

The principal Nyoro signatory, Tito Winyi, made a public statement reiterating his claim to the counties. The agreement at least gave a guarantee against further land loss: Article 2 provided that "there shall be no contraction of the existing boundaries without the consent of the Mukama".

The mukama gained the right to appoint the katikiro and county and sub-county chiefs. This was subject to the governor's approval, but nevertheless it was a significant new power – or rather an old power retrieved from pre-colonial days.

All land in Bunyoro was to be held by the governor of the protectorate "for the occupation and use of the natives of the Obukama bwa Bunyoro-Kitara [the Nyoro people]". This provision, Article 25, contrasted sharply with that in the 1900 agreement with Buganda. There, barely more than half the land was held by the government with the rest owned by the kabaka, chiefs and religious missions.

For the Nyoro elite this was yet another sign of discrimination. However, as John Beattie makes clear in *The Nyoro State*, the colonial administration felt there was a better way to address land problems in Bunyoro than by recreating the Buganda mailo system.

Shane Doyle, in his 2006 study, *Crisis & Decline in Bunyoro*, acknowledges that by the 1930s estates of the mailo pattern had acquired "a thoroughly bad name". The success of peasant agriculture in eastern Uganda had demonstrated the advantages of a "peasant-focused land policy".

And that was what the Bunyoro's kibanja land reforms sought to provide. The problem was one of a non-productive landlord class and of tenants without security. In pre-colonial times office holders were traditionally landed magnates, supported by the produce of the estates and tribute of the tenants. Official (bwe-sengeze) estates continued in that role, although tribute had been commuted to cash payments. In the colonial period many private (kibanja) estates had arisen. These were formed by chopping parts off the bwesengeze estates to give retired chiefs an income in lieu of pensions.

The trouble was that this represented a massive transfer of funding away from the public sector, threatening the government's ability to support its officials. The 1933 agreement, drawing on a survey of two years earlier, abolished the official estates and turned the Nyoro territorial chiefs into salaried officials. Land was supposed to be opened up to small farmers with "certificates of occupancy", which were conditional on the holder cultivating the land or occupying it. The certificates could be bequeathed, but could not be sold. Despite the latter condition, a "brisk trade" in the certificates developed.*

Somehow the kibanja estates, with a bit of tactful adaptation, survived. Meanwhile, the territorial chiefs seethed at the loss of the bwesengeze estates, fuelling antagonism with the colonial authorities. Cultivators found that a certificate of occupancy was not good enough title to serve as collateral security for loans and equipment purchase.

For Doyle the land programme was "a total failure ... a disastrous, incompetent administrative reform".

Nor was Buganda's mailo system the failure it was held to be at the time. The huge landholdings at the start had given way through inheritance and purchase to thousands of smaller plots, many measured in tens of acres. The 3,700 landholdings in 1905 had become 20,000 in 1935 and 58,000 in 1953. Mailo as it worked out had encouraged peasant farming and was driving Buganda's economy.

The land reform episode is an example of how hostility over the years led the Banyoro to see mistreatment where none was intended. In this case the British had identified a problem and tried to solve it according to the beliefs at the time.

For all its shortcomings, the Bunyoro Agreement marked the country's transition from occupied territory to a state with defined relations with the protectorate government. Nevertheless, it reinforced the feeling among the Banyoro that they were still discriminated against because it was held to be less favourable than Buganda's agreement.

Shane Doyle's *Crisis and Decline in Bunyoro* provides a valuable close-up of environmental conditions during the colonial years. For him, British rule brought few advantages to set against the negatives. There were education and modern medicine; and the roots of Bunyoro's rapid population growth since the 1950s, after decades of damaging decline and stagnation, lay in colonial developments. But colonialism upset traditional social structures and environmental practices. Estates created at the expense of peasant farmers and tsetse fly infestation were two of the consequences.

Colonialism, Doyle argues, could be "at its most destructive" when it was the unwitting agent of pests and pestilence. These ecological effects of the conquest

* Jan Je[mert] Jorgensen, *Uganda, a Modern History*

were long lasting, and traditional practices well adapted to local disease environments were discarded.

Doyle appears to idealise the age of Kabalega, despite a disclaimer in the dying sentences of the book that pre-colonial government could be "brutal, arbitrary and discriminatory".

The effects of the conquest arguably were felt throughout the colonial period. The Banyoro were apathetic and listless. Many feared government hospitals because they thought the British wanted to kill off the Nyoro people. With the cattle driven away in the war of the 1890s, this was "a cattle culture *sans* cattle".* In the 1950s Bunyoro still had the fewest cattle per head of population in colonial Uganda.

The population crisis had its origin in pre-colonial times -Doyle thinks the prolonged nineteenth-century struggle between Bunyoro and Buganda is the source - but the British did little to put the situation right. And because Bunyoro was underpopulated it missed out on developments that benefited other parts of the protectorate, notably transport links.

To those that have shall be given: officially until 1926 and unofficially afterwards, "non-productive" areas like Bunyoro were seen as less deserving of capital resources than east and central Uganda, notably Buganda.

Bunyoro thus became a reservoir for migrant labour. Baganda will hardly welcome Doyle's observation that they played "a role in Uganda similar to that of the white settlers in Kenya".

From census returns, Bunyoro's population in 1911 was 126,275 and in 1921 it had fallen to 95,928. Even by 1959 the population had barely recovered to its 1911 level. With the population explosion all over

* Quoting F. Burke, *Local Government and Politics in Uganda* (1964)

Africa in recent decades the current population is around 800,000, although this includes the Lost Counties returned in 1965.

Emigration to elsewhere in the protectorate was one factor in the population problem. Other factors were sexually transmitted diseases and diseases that were able to establish themselves after the invasion. The abandonment of grass burning in the disrupted areas opened the way to East Coast fever and bovine trypanosomiasis, the latter carried by the tsetse fly.

Country abandoned to the bush was ideal for the tsetse fly; as people returned to these areas the human form of 'tryps' spread with them. Loss of control over nature also exposed Banyoro to malaria, river blindness and sleeping sickness. Bunyoro in common with much of East Africa was afflicted in the 1890s with rinderpest and the jigger. The country suffered a long-lasting epidemic of sleeping sickness from the first decade of the new century.

Early colonial conditions, according to Doyle, were ideal for the spread of the tsetse fly - a countryside of bush and swamps with much game. Regulations in 1906 doubled the size of the Budongo forest game reserve.

"The game question, above all, illustrated Bunyoro's secondary status in Uganda [writes Doyle]. The creation of an immense game reserve reflected a disregard for Bunyoro's land rights, its traditional economy and its commercial future."

That traditional economy was symbolised by Nyoro ironwork and by the high-quality salt produced at Kibiro. Both manufactures collapsed in the colonial economy. Poor Banyoro could not afford to buy locally made hoes - that vital tool of agricultural production - and wealthy Banyoro preferred imported German

hoes. Kibiro salt production dived under the weight of imports from India and Aden, and heavy taxation. The population of Kibiro in 1928 was just 353 compared with five thousand in pre-colonial times.

The Banyoro might well have wondered what they got out of the new order. They were heavily taxed, forcibly resettled for disease control, made to grow unpopular or undesirable crops and compelled to supply labour for road-building. Malnutrition was common and child mortality high. In some villages almost half of children did not survive to adulthood.

The malnutrition was caused by a lack of beef -after the war of the 1890s, cattle herds had been all but wiped out a second time, because of a rinderpest epidemic between 1939 and 1946- as well as cultural prohibitions for some people of meats like chicken and goat.

Doyle - always ready to blame the colonial administration with anything he can lay his hand to - complains about the enforced cultivation of "famine foods". These were intended to avoid starvation during famines, but growing them meant people did not have time to cultivate nutritious traditional foods. Thus groundnuts replaced simsim, maize replaced millet and cabbage replaced traditional greens. The unpopular introduced crop, cassava, became a staple despite being known as "nyamira ntyo" [I will just swallow].

Colonial rule had a "devastating effect", Doyle believes. "Bunyoro's development potential was ignored in the early colonial period because districts nearer Lake Victoria already enjoyed good communications and were considered more deserving. Later, Bunyoro's low population densities, combined with its continued lack of railways or first-class roads, meant that postwar development here would be unusually

expensive and lacking in democratic equity. As colonial time progressed, active discrimination tended to give way to passive neglect."

The present book shares Doyle's view that at least until the 1920s the Banyoro were treated as a conquered people, still paying for their resistance. However, it sees Britain's continuing unpaid debt to Bunyoro as essentially political. Doyle argues that in the later part of colonial rule the administration was economically neglectful of a place seen as of little account, but this is hard to sustain on his own figures.

Bunyoro became the main tobacco-growing area in Uganda, and towards the end of the colonial period it had become one of the richest districts in Uganda (although marked by extreme differences in wealth).

Cotton, which was unprofitable for Bunyoro in the early days because of the lack of a ginnery and poor access to markets, later became a lucrative cash crop.

Like the rest of Uganda, Bunyoro was spared the white settler class that dominated Kenya, where in the 1950s the Mau Mau revolt protested at inequitable land distribution. Britain encouraged settlers in Kenya to produce cash crops on a large scale to help pay for the operating costs of the Uganda Railway. The land troubles of Kenya therefore had their origin north of the Great Lake since the railway was built to serve Uganda.

This dramatic line, opened in 1901, ran from Mombasa to Port Florence (later Kisumu) on the southern side of Lake Victoria, traversing the Rift Valley. From Kisumu goods and passengers crossed the lake to Uganda. The Uganda Railway finally lived up to its name as a railway *in* Uganda, not merely *for* Uganda, by reaching Jinja in 1928 and Kampala in 1931.

The city of Nairobi, Kenya's capital, was previously nothing more than a collection of huts at a river crossing. It was chosen as the railway headquarters because it was halfway along the six-hundred-mile line.

Unlike in Kenya, Uganda's cash crops were in the hands of Africans. Trade in cotton grew rapidly. In 1905 baled cotton exports were valued at £200; in 1906 £1,000; in 1907 £11,000; in 1908 £52,000. By 1915 cotton exports had climbed to £369,000, and Britain was able to end its subsidy of the colonial administration in Uganda.*

12 Independence and after

TIME softens pain and when Tommy Gee was in Bunyoro, from 1951 to 1954, he found a low level of political consciousness compared with Buganda. The Lost Counties, he says,* were not a live issue, and Kabalega was "an historical figure", not the folk hero he has become in modern Uganda.

The Gee family were typical of colonial administrators, who saw themselves not as conquistadores but as promoters of development among their other roles – the Oxfam and Christian Aid workers of their day. Tommy was first assistant district commissioner and then district commissioner. He was only in his twenties. Looking back, he feels it was a measure of the lack of importance attached to Bunyoro that a more senior officer was not appointed as DC.

"Bunyoro was a kingdom defeated by the Baganda so it was greatly impoverished and a far cry from its former glory, but it had its pride, and remembered when they'd won their fights against the Baganda," says Tommy.

Today he and his wife, Anne, live in the Suffolk countryside in a house with many mementoes from Uganda, often gifts from local people. They look back with pride on their seventeen years in the country.

"We were privileged to be sent to undertake the work," says Tommy. "Some of the colonial powers were exploitative, for example, Belgium in the Congo. I

* Unsigned article, www.ciaonet.org/atlas/countries

* Interview with author

believe that one day Britain's overall record will be recognised despite the bad things."

He is no flag-wagging imperialist. After independence in 1962 – being among the five per cent who the local people felt were "on the side of the angels", as they put it – Tommy became permanent secretary for education charged with securing a massive increase in secondary schools.

The Gees left in 1965. "We said we'd never go back because we didn't want to interfere. We'd handed over and we felt it was wrong to go back." And they haven't.

It is vividly remembered, however. Tommy continues to follow events in Uganda.

Life in Bunyoro certainly was not luxurious for Tommy, Anne and their children. The family had no meat, milk or butter because of trypanosomiasis (tryps), as well as rinderpest, East Coast fever and occasionally anthrax. Water was scarce and had to be carried on mules to the house. Malarial mosquitoes were a constant hazard. One of the children died of pneumonia soon after birth.

Tommy shot guinea fowl and brought them home for a meal. He contracted typhoid fever but survived. One colleague died of blackwater fever. Another was eaten by a lion. He went after it in the bush following a close hit, and it took him.

Tito Winyi, who was still the mukama, his wife (known as the omugu) and many of the Nyoro chiefs lacked the sophistication of their opposite numbers in Buganda, Tommy remembers. Leading Baganda had access to the best schools, and some sent their children to England for education.

Kabalega's hostility to Britain had not been passed down in the Gees' everyday experience. 'We found no hostility towards the British. On the contrary, expatri-

ates were made use of. We weren't dealing with the big things for the most part. We were practically useful."

Anne's dinner party was an example. This was to be a grand affair including the kabaka of Buganda and other kings on the occasion of their biennial rulers' conference. There would be no problem with crockery and cutlery for the big numbers; "we have all that", the palace said.

Stored in a large hut, Anne found, was an "Aladdin's cave" of items presented as gifts to the bakama over the years, unused and many of them in the original packing and wrapping. A blue vase known to have been presented by Sir Samuel Baker was not to be found, however.

The dinner was a great success. The guests tucked into a three-course western meal with the ever-popular steak.

Another case in point that Tommy remembers was an ex-servicemen's resettlement scheme at Kigumba, where bush was cleared to grow tobacco and other cash crops under the guidance of an agriculturalist.

"Broader issues like representative government, our sense of justice, and law and order, did penetrate, though," Tommy adds.

"I remember some anxious occasions when we had to enforce law and order, but on the whole our administration was peaceful, just, respected and accepted. People knew that we were there to protect them, and to provide access to the West's education, medicine, agriculture, technology, democracy and so on.

"Milton Obote's political war-cry was that the Uganda Peoples' Congress would combat poverty, ignorance and disease. He was continuing our policies, but was more succinct and connected with the people."

Tommy was very aware that the truncated Bunyoro

was not well endowed agriculturally unlike the enlarged Buganda. The only serious cash crop was tobacco while Buganda grew rich on coffee and cotton.

This and the small population put the Banyoro "at a serious disadvantage", he says. Large herds of cattle were kept outside Bunyoro. Anne's fillet steaks came from slaughter of royal cattle kept outside the kingdom.

A census in 1959 gave the population of Bunyoro as 128,198 and Buganda as 1,881,149. Buganda's land area at that time was about three and half times that of Bunyoro, but the population was more than 14 times greater. Yet before the coming of the British the two kingdoms were able to engage each other militarily on level terms. With colonialism development became focused on Buganda. It is a dramatic illustration of the adage "To the victor the spoils".

Politics entered Bunyoro in a big way when, with independence in view, the governor, Sir Andrew Cohen, was promoting a unitary state in Uganda. This had implications for the historic kingdoms, and required a revision of the Bunyoro Agreement.

Guided by Tommy, the mukama and his chiefs signed the changes. "The kabaka of Buganda wouldn't sign – and you know what happened to him [he was deported to Britain]."

Tommy says he remains "ambivalent" about British policy for a unitary state in Uganda. "We had promised indirect rule from first contact, and a federal state was the logical conclusion. A unitary western democracy has been at the root of misuse of power and led to the collapse of good government."

For Onyango Odongo, however, the absence of a unitary state in the colonial years created the conditions that tyrants later exploited. (*A Political History of*

Uganda: Yoweri Museveni's Referendum 2000) Tribal governments – variously called kingdoms, territories and districts – had separate relations with the central government, he says. There were no socio-political or economic networks linking one with another.

This case can be argued both ways. Federalism is a more complex political system, but it is hard to see why a unitary regime should play better in Bunyoro than it does in Scotland or Bavaria. Both enjoy powers independent of their respective central governments.

Uganda, once called "the Pearl of Africa", is now best known in the West for the tyrannical regime of Idi Amin in the 1970s. The country's troubled post-independence history has included two periods of government by Milton Obote, who was overthrown both times, the flight into exile of the kabaka of Buganda as troops stormed his palace and a long guerrilla war that brought Yoweri Museveni to power in 1986.

Whatever the arguments for and against unitary government in a Ugandan setting, Britain managed the worst of both worlds by exiling Sir Edward Mutesa II, the kabaka of Buganda, in 1953 because of his opposition to a unitary state, then allowing him back in triumph two years later.

The deportation caused uproar with Baganda donning the pre-colonial garb of bark cloth in symbolic protest, as Mutesa, who was dubbed "King Freddie", recalls in his memoirs, *Desecration of My Kingdom*.

The governor, it seems, was not a man to tread carefully. "He began, as he continued, in a whirl of energy [writes Mutesa] ... he was incessantly promising new jails, laying foundation-stones, travelling about the country, or simply giving parties. There he would continue to speak, halting conversation for a moment to beckon an official and say, 'I think we can have a new

school-house in Mbale, don't you? Make a note of it'."

Owen Griffith, who served in the Uganda administration from 1944 to 1963, suggests that Sir Andrew Cohen threw away one of the brightest colonial legacies in Africa.*

To deport the kabaka was a mistake; to allow him back was an "even greater mistake". This entrenched his authority in Buganda and set the scene for a clash with politicians from elsewhere in the protectorate.

"On the surface, all seemed set fair [writes Griffith]. Thanks largely to Andrew Cohen, Uganda was better prepared for independence than any territory in East and Central Africa. Africanization of the civil service had proceeded apace; education and medical services were of a high standard; the economy was sound with the African share in it steadily increasing; finances were strong; there were no serious problems, for example arising from large-scale alienation of land to foreigners or chronic land hunger, which might have driven the government off course."

All was not what it seemed, however. "Though no-one paid much attention to it at the time, there was clearly an ominous gap between the newly entrenched feudalism of Buganda and nationalist politicians resentful of the privileged position of the Kingdom. The gap had been hastily and thinly papered over to provide a basis for independence. The British, in the spirit of the times, were all too anxious to get out."

In 1966 Obote decided to break the kabaka's power. Troops attacked the palace. Mutesa II slipped out of a back door and into permanent exile.

"From the day of the Kabaka's final downfall, there began the cycle of conspiracy, repression and coup which made Uganda one of the most wretched coun-

* "What went wrong?" in *Looking Back at the Uganda Protectorate*, edited by Douglas Brown

tries in Africa, and all but destroyed orderly government," Griffith comments.

A personal postscript gives an insight into cultural differences between Uganda's ethnic groups. Griffith was in Teso, a north-eastern district, awaiting the kabaka on a triumphal tour after his first exile.

He recalls: "The Kabaka arrived about four hours late. He was perfectly courteous and friendly towards me, but he ignored almost completely the Iteso leaders. Such conduct was in accordance with the seigniorial traditions of his Kingdom, but it just did not do with the more egalitarian nilotic and nilo-hamitic people of northern Uganda."

The Baganda's love of their country was matched by the Banyoro's for theirs. Walter Bazley, a colonial officer in Bunyoro during the closing years of British rule, notes the intensity of feelings – "a combination of the Russian love of their land which they call Holy Russia; the French concern for their language, the language of princes and lovers whose purity is a national obsession; the American mania surrounding their political system; and finally the British admiration of their royalty combined with their sense of history". (*Bunyoro, Tropical Paradise*)

Bunyoro was, however, a backwater. Bazley, a Canadian, found it made even Canada seem lively.

Kabalega was remembered as a Robin Hood figure – "a fugitive in the forests, a hunted man, yet he was the true Mukama, the chief milkman of his tribe, an aristocrat whose place was the open grassland among his pure white cattle". But for Bazley the parallel with Robin Hood broke down.

"Robin Hood, according to improbable legend, had at least stolen from the rich and given to the poor, but the Banyoro adulation of Kabarega possessed no salutary

overtone. He was pictured only as a fugitive surrounded by enemies, an animal eluding pursuit. As a hero figure he did not point in any discernable direction or express any values."

This comment is informative yet unfair. To a beleaguered people the idea of a leader offering dogged resistance to the invader is surely enough in itself.

Today, Bunyoro does not feature on maps of Uganda. In its place are the districts of Masindi, Hoima and Kibale. The traditional kingdoms were abolished in 1967 by President Obote. In 1993 they were restored by President Museveni as cultural but not political entities. Bunyoro therefore lives on in the hearts and minds of its people and in the person of the mukama.

The ancient kingdom of Kitara is recalled in an ambitious language project that took off in the 1990s: Runyakitara is the name for a new language standardised from the mutually intelligible languages, Runyoro, Runtooro, Runyankore and Rukiga.*

Nor has history been forgotten by many Banyoro. In 2004 the mukama, Solomonguru I – Kabalega's grandson -announced a plan to sue Britain for at least £3 billion for alleged war crimes committed during Colonel Colvile's 1894 expedition and the five-year war that followed.

The Mubende Banyoro Committee also announced a lawsuit, against the Ugandan and British governments to wrest back land titles in Kibale district – part of the area returned to Bunyoro in 1965 – from Ganda absentee landlords.

The mukama's suit alleges torture, pillage, destruction of food crops and theft during the war of the 1890s. Sudanese soldiers under British command are said to have killed and raped civilians.

* Jan Bernsten, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, vol 19, no 2 (1998)

The field reports of British officers are key exhibits in the case. Major Thruston's *African Incidents*, referred to above, may be a rare book, but it is well remembered in Bunyoro, where the claimants hope to use its candid observations to support their case.

Documentation for the 133-page claim was put together by Yolamu Ndoleriire Nsamba, the mukama's principal private secretary. Nsamba located hundreds of handwritten reports by British officers, including records in Britain's Public Records Office, Oxford University's Africa library at Rhodes House and the Uganda government archives in Entebbe.*

Among the gravest claims is that after the conquest of Bunyoro Britain allowed hundreds of thousands to starve to death. The civilian population of 2.5 million had become just 100,000 by 1900, the claim alleges.t

Another charge is that the queen mother and a royal princess were interned in Kampala in a place filled with cow dung. They became severely emaciated through lack of adequate food, and died in captivity.

The Uganda *Sunday Monitor* asked (January 2005) the prime minister of Bunyoro-Kitara, Erisa Kagoro Byenkya, about Britain presiding over what amounted to a genocide by default. He replied: "It is true. And again this is from their own records."

Byenkya made clear that the Banyoro were driven as much by the desire for retrospective justice as for compensation. "We want justice as the first thing," he said. Giving educational under-development and expulsion from fertile land in colonial days as examples, he added: "Certainly, they should compensate us. It doesn't have to be cash really but if a programme could be worked out to address these injustices, I think

* *Sunday Monitor* (Uganda), January 9, 2005

t But see also Roscoe, p83

we would be okay."

Among the claimants' difficulties is that the Geneva and Hague Conventions, which embody the international laws of war, were not in force at the time. This is reportedly a line that Britain has already advanced.

Another is the money needed to bring the case to trial. When the lawsuit was announced, Adrian Blomfield of the (London) *Daily Telegraph* wrote from Hoima of the air of poverty surrounding the Nyoro court: "The modern palace, constructed in the 1960s, is a dilapidated white building with garish purple tiles and the heirlooms of the kingdom lie rusting on the floors of damp rooms. There is no money for the 10th anniversary celebrations of King Solomon's coronation – something that may have prompted the suit. Kabalega's tomb itself receives only cursory upkeep."

The venue for the trial is an issue. It might be Uganda or Britain – or the United States, where the Alien Tort Act allows non-Americans to sue other non-Americans if the defendant has US assets that can be seized.*

In such an eventuality, the US government will be squeezed between its anti-colonialist posture and its desire not to be sued itself. The publicity would encourage others to litigate over America's own imperial activities.

If access to the world's best legal brains means Britain holds the high cards, simply the publicity of a trial would be a form of justice for Bunyoro.

13 Mindset of the masters

ALTHOUGH they stumbled in Bunyoro, the thoughtful among Britain's colonial administrators believed they were taking part in the development of the countries in their charge. The words of Sir Harry Johnston, the architect of the Uganda Agreement, as expressed in *A History and Description of the British Empire in Africa* (undated but around 1910), can serve as the credo of generations of imperial civil servants.

"It is only by maintaining [Johnston wrote] a perfectly honest administration of these lands assigned – perhaps only temporarily – to our control, that we shall merit the distinguished position in which we have been placed by circumstances, and that without recourse to mere force we may be able to maintain ourselves as rulers in Africa, with the full consent and fraternal cooperation of the Negroes, negroids, and other backward coloured peoples, for whom we are doing what the Romans and the Normans did for us."

It is easy today to mock the idea of Britain doing for Africa "what the Romans and the Normans did for us". We may call it a mask for exploitation or, patronisingly, say that the administrators were themselves being exploited by imperialism and failed to realise it. The difficulties, however, may lie with us, not them.

Johnston – also a naturalist who was the first to identify the okapi – returned a few years later to the theme of the equality of races through progress. In 1920 he published *The Backward Peoples and Our Relations with Them*. (This includes a map of Africa

* www.irinnews.org (UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs)

shaded to show perceived degrees of backwardness!)

Interestingly, Johnston sees the definition of white and non-white as developmental rather than racial – in other words, white and non-white are synonyms for developed and undeveloped. Hence the Japanese are counted as white; the backward are only *mostly* coloured [original emphasis and terminology].

The closing words of Johnston's book were cited approvingly by Roland Oliver in 1957 as "a passage which belongs in sentiment nearer to 1950 than to 1920". (*Sir Harry Johnston and the Scramble for Africa*)

"The Coloured man on the other hand must remember [Johnston wrote] that his lands cannot properly be developed without railways and without the White man's capital; and the White man in Europe and North America is not going to risk his money where there is no security and where he runs the danger of losing his capital and the investment of his energy. Without the tapping of wealth in rock and soil and desert sand, the Coloured man will always remain poor and futile.

"But the White peoples must try to realize that the still Backward races, the still-decrepit nations, have travelled far in intellectuality since the middle of the nineteenth century, and that the continuance of an insulting policy towards them will join them some day in a vast league against Europe and America, which will set back the millennium and perhaps even ruin humanity in general. Nature will have conquered by setting one half of mankind against the other."

In the early 21st century, the leading industrial nations still dictate the conditions of trade to the Majority World, so the continuing pertinence of Johnston's words does not need underlining.

For westerners of the late nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries it was a commonplace to say that nations evolve towards the highest forms of civilisation. Few dare to express it in that way today, but much of the difference is in language, not content.

Over the issue hangs the pall of social Darwinism, one understanding of which holds erroneously that some races are more primitive than others. Yet an evolutionary perspective, properly understood, is about technology and social institutions, not about human capacities. Against humanity's hundreds of million years of evolution, to say that races differ in their inherent capacities is absurd.

The idea of *development* is predicated on evolution, and not just of an economic kind. Currently favoured concepts like *good governance* and *civil society* involve changes to political and social structures.

The separation of executive and judiciary, elected governments, individual titles in land and emancipation from religious superstition look like universal desires of humanity, not specifically western arrangements. A society that has these arrangements can be called more civilised than one that does not.

Christianity has been a leading force in suppressing slavery in Africa, internal and external, yet is often condemned as an alien, imposed religion. Much of the angst would be avoided if we remember the view of the murdered Ugandan archbishop, Janani Luwum. He pointed out that Christianity was exported to Europe just as Europe later exported it to sub-Saharan Africa.

Modern scholars frequently abhor Christianity's destruction of local customs. Many were based on superstitions surrounding appeasing the ancestors. This has become a most sensitive subject. To call atten-

tion to it is like throwing up on the carpet: not only impolite but also insulting. Nevertheless, the replacement of superstition with reason is part of the journey that modernising societies must make. Renaissance England started to put the power of relics behind it, and our own journey is not yet completed.

As late as 1963, Margery Perham, the then doyenne of British Africanists and the biographer of Lord Lugard, felt able to express this evolutionary perspective in unvarnished words when she described the European impact on African society.

In spite of the apparently settled conditions of the colonial years, "two acids were eating into the healthy cells of family and tribal life". (*The Colonial Reckoning*) They were the western money economy and Christian education. These forces weakened old cultures before they could build new ones.

Through the money economy young men were drawn away from the village, and the cash they earned "bit into the authority of status". Old men sat outside their huts in "otiose bewilderment" as the younger ones "broke off from the clustered group and became units floating hither and thither in the open restless currents of the fluctuating exchange economy".

Christian education elevated the book-learned child above the illiterate parent. The child "would lose respect for the ancestors and perhaps regard the religious or magical powers of the chief and the medicine man as heathen superstition and polygamy as a sin". The Christian schoolboy might find himself in "a mental no-man's-land".

Perham pointed out that most peoples of the world had been through this process of the atomisation of society. In Africa, however, the impact had been sudden and made from outside.

If Perham were writing today she would no doubt express herself more circumspectly. Relativism has become the ruling paradigm. It holds that societies differ in their social and political arrangements but none is "higher" or "lower" than others. Thus the culture and language of the Yamomami in the Amazon rain forest are neither worse nor better than those of urban Sweden.

Of course, relativism is attractive in many ways, encouraging us to help to save weaker cultures from a one-size-fits-all, western approach. Yet it remains as much a paradigm as evolutionism. Neither offers a full explanation of the facts on the ground.

Progress under colonialism, when the evolutionary paradigm ruled, was not as disinterested as some contend. Development was leisurely and often half-hearted. There was a strong emphasis on plantation crops and extractive industries to provide food and raw materials for the home country, locking the colonies into continuing dependency.

Relativism, on the other hand, is to some extent contradicted by the general idea of development, not to mention specifics like the United Nations Human Development Index. Under the relativist paradigm, African countries have built up unpayable debts and created corrupt indigenous elites. It provides no grounds for thinking that without colonialism countries would have become some sort of demi-paradise.

Liberia, Ethiopia and Thailand are among the few countries around the Majority World that escaped colonialism. What they also have in common is that none is among the most advanced countries in its respective region either economically or socially. In fact, they

compare unfavourably with their formerly colonised neighbours.

Nor is the present hold of relativism as total as may be supposed. David Rieff, one of the few modern US writers able to transcend his nation's fixation with colonialism, points out in *A Bed for the Night* the similarity between the European imperialism in the nineteenth century and the West's developmentalism in the 21st century.

Forget the neo-colonialism of globalisation: Rieff's subject is far more counter-intuitive. The great development and relief agencies are seen as the successors of Victorian missionary societies, driven by many of the same impulses.

He writes of the earlier period: "(F)or Europeans of the time, not only was there no moral incompatibility between the antislavery project and the imperial enterprise, but the latter was seen widely as the guarantor of the former."

He adds: "Particularly striking is the similarity in the way the invocation of a higher moral norm led, in practice, to an alliance between activists intent on relieving suffering and great powers in the era of late-nineteenth-century imperialism, and to twentieth-century humanitarian interventionism.

"... And at least some contemporary humanitarians have not shied away from making the connection between their efforts and Western values almost as explicitly as their nineteenth-century forebears would have done."

American private relief agencies generally espouse the same policy goals as the US government – globalisation, free markets, democratic openings and human rights. Most mainline US humanitarian agencies have taken co-operation with government for granted.

"The deepest level of explanation for this is to be found in the abiding Wilsonianism* of the American policy establishment, of which the American humanitarian leadership has always been a member in good standing."

Most European humanitarian groups, too, are in bed with officialdom. Of the world's great relief agencies, Rieff sees the French group *Médecins Sans Frontières* as the least involved with governments. The price of this is to be taken as the perpetual "naysayer".

The organisation went through a civil war on the issue. Bernard Kouchner, one of its founders, broke with MSF after he failed in his insistence that humanitarianism should be at the service of governments.

The underlying issue is whether aid agencies are colluding with a modern form of western imperialism or promoting the spread of universal values.

This book shares Rieff's concern when an aid agency becomes an arm of government. It also believes that the values the agencies espouse, for all that these may be compromised by a too-close association with government, are in the main universal, not specifically western.

Present-day Africa is an impossible challenge for cultural relativists. They cannot recapture the optimism of the 1960s and 1970s, when independence was young and that blissful dawn was alive with prospects.

Practically without exception, African countries have slid into "Big Man" rule and the patronage politics that go with it. Uganda is no exception: President Yoweri Museveni, the ruler who cleaned up the country after Obote and Amin, in 2005 amended the consti-

* Woodrow Wilson, internationalist US president who was the driving force behind the creation of the League of Nations after the First World War

tution to allow himself to serve a third term.

Big Man rule, with its echoes of the pre-colonial era, is deeply troublesome for relativists. If they do not care to defend it now, why should they allow themselves to defend it in historical times when it was the universal mode of government?

A special headache for relativists is when the colonised take the part of the colonisers. The Ugandan-born Dr John Sentamu, who as Archbishop of York is the second-ranking bishop in the Church of England, is nobody's dupe.

He told Sarah Sands of the (London) *Daily Mail* in an interview (November 2006): "While the empire was there, the British thought they were doing some good in the world. For me, the vision was what made the missionaries go out, made the empire what it was: the sense of education, better roads, infrastructure, the separation of the executive from the legislature.

"All these fantastic values which, as someone who was a recipient of them, I can look back on and say: **what a vision!**"

Evolutionism in its Victorian form became discredited because of its assumption that western society had "arrived" in the same way that human beings were the crowning achievement of biological evolution. Just as there is no reason to suppose that humanity has reached its evolutionary end-point, so the modern West has a distance to travel.

A glance at the West's selfish individualism, rampant consumerism, corporate giantism and spiritual barrenness suggests that we are heading into an evolutionary dead-end. Traditional African characteristics like joy of life, sense of family, sense of community, welcome for strangers, fortitude, and fatalism (acceptance of unavoidable circumstances) are traits that the rest of us can envy.

Nor will it do to say that these are characteristics of simpler societies that will be lost in the development process. African societies are not simple; in many ways they are more complex than western ones. More importantly, if these are desirable traits, which this book argues they are, evolution will drive them forward in all societies.

14 Conclusion: two narratives

KABALEGA'S is the name that is synonymous with Bunyoro. Yet from the start he has been the subject of contradictory narratives. Already in the 1870s the conflicting versions of Bunyoro's first relations with Europeans had become entrenched, and the basis had been laid for further misunderstanding and hostility, John Beattie notes in *Bunyoro, an African Kingdom*.

In the European narrative of the time, Kabalega is an untrustworthy and blood-thirsty tyrant who ruled through fear and preferred to fight than to parley. In doing so he brought misfortune on his country.

In the other narrative he is the hero who fought for the independence of his country against impossible odds. He reversed the long decline of his country until finally he was overcome by superior British arms. He was denied the opportunity of coming to terms with the British because of their hostility, fuelled by that of their Ganda allies.

This narrative was unwritten at the time, but it was evidently widely believed among the Banyoro. Otherwise the mukama could not have avoided capture for so long. It is the prevailing narrative about Kabalega today in Uganda, where the Murchison Falls became Kabalega Falls in his honour.

A case in point of observers finding what they want to find was provided by Wilhelm Junker, a German traveller in the 1880s. Junker praised Kabalega for the

full vigour of his manhood, his stately presence and "bright penetrating glance", before adding that this glance "betrayed nothing of the tyrant that he really was". There can be no defence against the interpretative approach that concludes the opposite from the facts presented!

Perhaps Junker was displeased by having to wait for his audience with the mukama, who, as the traveller explained, was closeted for three days with wizards and magicians for the new moon ceremonies.

On the other hand, Junker was favoured with a rare glass of milk – used almost exclusively to fatten the royal wives. (Incidents described in Junker's *Travels in Africa during the Years 1882-86*)

European travellers generally showed cultural blindness. They were in effect condemning Kabalega for not behaving like a European, Christian gentleman when he was neither of those things. When he ordered human sacrifices, for instance, Kabalega was conforming to the ancient traditions of the country, as Gaetano Casati recognised.

Some in today's West are more than ready to atone for their predecessors' blindness, as with Paul Landau's remarks from the comfort of the University of Maryland (USA): "*Tapu*,"* or ancestor-propitiation, did not fall into neglect because of inherent flaws in their (*sic*) host cultures, but because of guns, wells, corvee labour, racial thinking, and extractive bureaucracies, in a word, imperialism. Whether murder and feasting are religions or crimes is always a political matter". (Chap 10 in *Missions and Empire*, editor Norman Sterlington)

Murder is always a crime. Yet this passage expresses no sense that murder in the name of religion

* Sacred practices

is wrong or that the understanding of human sacrifice in places where it was practised has moved on. The author's dislike of missionaries and empire has ensnared him in this ultra-relativistic approach.

Convergent understanding of the Kabalega narratives has not been helped by the fact that only one side left contemporaneous accounts – the Europeans got to write the history. An exception is Sir Apolo Kagawa, who, remarkably, was katikiro of Buganda before the British takeover and for more than two decades afterwards. His several books include *Basekabaka be Buganda* (The Kings of Buganda). This, however, stops with Mutesa, and has little to say about Bunyoro.

The two narratives of Kabalega touch where both agree that he was a spirited and tenacious leader. He showed great valour fighting for his kingdom first against the rising power of Buganda and then against the British.

From Lugard's arrival in 1890 until his capture in 1899 he continued to resist, although seemingly he would have known the fight was hopeless. He could never win the final battle, or even much along the way. The story is of fighting retreats and hit-and-run guerrilla attacks.

This view, however, risks imposing an inevitability on events that they did not have and assuming a totality of information that Kabalega could not have possessed. From the Battle of Mengo in 1892 to the Sudanese Mutiny, there was nothing inevitable about Britain's possession and retention of Uganda.

As late as 1897, the mutiny year, Kabalega might have hoped that the junction of local Muslims, Sudanese rebels and his own forces would prise Bunyoro from the British grasp. It was not unreasonable: the British too knew how tenuous their grasp was at that point.

From the failure of the mutiny until his capture in 1899, Kabalega's cause was hopeless. He had shown he was willing to come to terms; he was too proud simply to surrender.

A classic military dilemma is when to continue fighting and when to stop. The charge that Kabalega brought ruin to his country by keeping up a pointless resistance should be turned onto the British conquerors. They refused him the opportunity of honourable terms and then blamed him for fighting on.

It is impossible to reconcile the two narratives of Kabalega, nor need we try. On the facts presented in this book, readers will decide for themselves.

Bunyoro found itself on the wrong end of political processes. It was treated so harshly because of how Britain saw its imperial role. It perceived its empire as founded on treaties made with indigenous rulers. Bunyoro had not made a treaty and had needed to be conquered. Therefore, on this logic, it did not deserve the entitlements of Buganda, Ankole and Toro, all of which had signed treaties.

Kabalega's repeated attempts to come to terms with Britain failed at least partly because Britain was in alliance with Buganda, Bunyoro's traditional enemy. Colonial administrators inherited and maintained Sir Samuel Baker's negative perceptions of Bunyoro.

Although active hostility towards Bunyoro gave way relatively soon in the colonial period to neglect, the antagonism of both sides lasted longer. Even in the 1930s some British officials had to be warned not to keep viewing Bunyoro as a conquered territory, while the Banyoro were defeatist and suspicious of the colonial administration's every move.

Thus the land reforms of 1931-33 were seen as a way of denying the Banyoro the entitlements long ago given

to Buganda, Ankole and Toro. In fact, British officials were responding to the land problem according to best practice of the period.

We need to distinguish *treatment* from *motives* on the part of the British. Britain's treatment of Bunyoro was unfair but the motives of colonial officials or the imperial government behind them were not malign – just tragically limited.

The situation was made worse by Britain's enthusiastic preference for the Baganda, and the Baganda's unusual willingness to get alongside the colonialists. This was because that enterprising people perceived advantages for themselves in the British connection, particularly an end to political turmoil, the expansion of trade and the entrenchment of their supremacy in the region.

To cap it all, geography favoured Buganda. Its location bordering Lake Victoria gave it easier access to the export markets that were the focus of the colonial cash economy. Across the lake lay Kisumu, the rail-head for the Uganda Railway, which carried goods to the coast. Bunyoro from this point of view was in the remote interior.

Bunyoro's hoped-for lawsuit against Britain for mistreatment during the colonial period – Bunyoro's billions – and its centuries-long historical memory, are signs of an unquenchable spirit. This spirit is an example for peoples in Africa and beyond who seek to reclaim their ancient identities while keeping the best of the modern world.

If Frederick Lugard, the conqueror of Buganda whose immediate successors conquered Bunyoro, had used another route the history of Uganda and southern Sudan might have been different. Lugard entered the region from the African east coast. Many others, from

Baker onwards, came from the north along the Nile.

By Lugard's time this route was blocked by the Mahdists so it could not be used. Yet if he had been able to travel from the north he would have encountered Bunyoro first. This might have become the favoured associate of Britain, not as it turned out its whelping boy. Thus are the chances of history.

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Bunyoro's reward, after the inevitable conquest, was decades of discrimination the effects of which are still felt.

Idi Amin is one of the characters who found themselves Ugandan because of the ethnic mixing that the British conquest set in motion.

Bunyoro may have little chance of seeing its billions, but the case has highlighted one of the greatest failures in the whole empire experience.

Casualty of Empire is for readers who enjoy fast-paced history – and for anyone who wants to understand the emergence of modern Uganda.

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Front cover photograph: Mukama Kabalega in old age,
from John Roscoe's *The Bakitara* (Cambridge University Press, 1923)