

Economic and Military Change in Nineteenth-Century Buganda

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Thesis Abstract

This thesis examines economic and military change in pre-colonial Buganda, with particular reference to the nineteenth century. It explores the material basis of Ganda power, including the domestic economy, the growth of commerce, the development of the canoe fleet, and the organisation of the army. It also considers how the state used its resources in terms of public labour, tribute and slavery to generate wealth and strengthen its position externally. The domestic economy was both more complex and more fragile than has previously been assumed. A wide variety of crops were cultivated by the late nineteenth century, and intensive agriculture was practised alongside the keeping of livestock. Food shortages and cattle disease, however, combined in the late nineteenth century to undermine the Ganda economy at a time of political upheaval and military weakness. In addition to domestic production, the Ganda derived considerable wealth from trade, which underwent dramatic changes in the nineteenth century. Long-distance commerce developed along regional trade routes and was extremely lucrative. The increasing demand for goods such as slaves and ivory from coastal traders was balanced by the demand in Buganda for cloth and guns. Simultaneously, Buganda, one of the most powerful military states in the region, was suffering a military decline after c.1850. In order to offset this, as well as to control the trade routes to the coast, the Ganda developed a large fleet of canoes capable of crossing Lake Victoria. Although the size and capability of these vessels was unsurpassed in the region, their success was limited. By the 1880s, the army had been weakened by the over-emphasis on firearms, while the ability of the Ganda to procure ivory for export was severely impaired: slaves had become the main export.

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Preface

The research for this thesis was begun in September 1993. In February, March and June 1994, I worked in the archives of the Church Missionary Society at the University of Birmingham, and in November and December of that year, in the archives of the White Fathers in Rome. Between February and June 1995, work was carried out in Uganda, chiefly in the Uganda National Archives at Entebbe and in the library of Makerere University, Kampala. In the intervening periods, visits were made to archives at Rhodes House, Oxford, and at the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh. I also consulted materials in the Public Record Office in London. Most of the published primary source material was consulted in the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, although the British Library was critical in locating relatively rare texts.

Funding for the research was provided by the British Academy, and I am extremely grateful to the Academy for the generous provision of financial support necessary to make trips to Uganda, Italy and various archives in the United Kingdom. A number of people assisted in the writing of this thesis, and I wish to mention a few of these. My supervisor at SOAS, Professor Andrew Roberts, was crucial in the development of the thesis at every level and at every stage: what shortcomings remain do so despite his penetrating advice. Without his attention to detail, as well as his appreciation of the 'broader picture', and the often staggering breadth of his knowledge, the thesis would scarcely be worthy of presentation. Also at SOAS, Dr. David Anderson was always on hand with crucial advice at equally crucial stages in both the researching and writing of the thesis. I should also like to record my thanks to Professor Robin Law at the University of Stirling. Robin has had little direct involvement with this thesis, but as my undergraduate tutor at Stirling, it was he who introduced me to Africa and its history. Robin's own high scholarly standards, moreover, have been the model against which I have measured my own efforts,

unrealistic though this may be. Dr. John McCracken, also at Stirling, offered invaluable advice to an ambitious and somewhat clueless undergraduate when the project was in its infancy.

Numerous people in Uganda did more than they will ever know to enhance my appreciation of that country and to assist in the development of my research: in particular I should like to mention Richard Ssewakiryanga, Adolf Mwesige and Ephraim Kamuhangire. Many others, too numerous to mention individually, in Kampala, Jinja and Kabarole (Toro) district, made my stay in Uganda such an enlightening and enjoyable experience. I am also grateful to the many archivists and librarians, in Europe and Uganda, who assisted me. In particular, my thanks go to the archivists at the Special Collections Department, University of Birmingham; at the White Fathers' archives in Rome; at Makerere University Library, Kampala; and at the Uganda National Archives, Entebbe. I must also thank staff at the History Department, Makerere University, and at Makerere Institute of Social Research, for making me welcome and frequently offering sage advice.

My heartfelt thanks also go to my father-in-law, Ronnie Brittain, whose modesty will, perhaps, prevent him from appreciating how revitalising and encouraging our many conversations were at various stages in the writing and researching of this thesis. His generosity and stimulation were of no little importance. Limitations in space permit me to mention only briefly my wife, Claire, although she deserves more than this. Nothing would ever have been done without her, even when we were many miles apart. I can only hope that this is some consolation for the numerous absences, mood-swings and endless monologues which have resulted; it is certainly testimony to her own endurance and boundless optimism. Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, Victor and Anne Reid, and in so doing I offer a mere token in recognition of the rather more troublesome project to which they have given much of their lives.

A Note on Orthography

In general, I have used an anglicised form of Luganda spelling: thus 'Mutesa' rather than 'Muteesa', *Pokino* rather than *Ppookino*, *Bulemezi* rather than *Bulemeezi*, and so on. I have, however, retained Luganda spelling for certain common terms, such as *ssaza* rather than the anglicised *saza*. Other Luganda words - for example, describing types of bananas or other crops - have been spelt according to Luganda orthography either in order to clarify meaning or because this is how they appear in the original source.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to examine economic and military change in pre-colonial Buganda. As will be clear from the review of the secondary literature below, research on the material basis of Ganda power, military organisation and the utilisation of economic resources is essential as otherwise our understanding of this most complex of pre-colonial East African states remains one-dimensional. The history of Buganda has been interpreted almost wholly in terms of its political organisation. There now exists an even greater urgency for such research: for too long, critical areas of Buganda's past have been ignored, while early analyses - for example that the kingdom's military organisation was virtually omnipotent, particularly after c.1850 - have remained unchallenged. As will be shown, the failure of the promise of early scholarship reflects the difficulties of working in Uganda itself during the 1970s and 1980s; yet it also indicative of the waning interest in pre-colonial African history in general over recent years. It is hoped that this thesis will contribute to our understanding of what Ganda power meant in real terms, how the kingdom used the resources at its disposal and met the challenges which confronted it, and the limitations to its dominance of the East African lake region.

The Natural Setting

Buganda was situated on the north-west shore of Lake Victoria. By the beginning of the nineteenth century it stretched between two major rivers: the Nile to the east, on the far bank of which were the people known loosely as the Soga, and the Kagera to the south-west, beyond which lay the kingdoms of Karagwe and Kiziba. As such Buganda possessed an extensive shoreline, and by the nineteenth century the kingdom had incorporated numerous off-shore islands, in particular the Sesse group. The kingdom's lacustrine position was a key factor in its military and economic

development. To the north was Bunyoro: as a result of the Uganda Agreement of 1900¹, the northern boundary of Buganda was considered to be the Kafu river, which flowed between lakes Albert and Kyoga. The pre-colonial Ganda boundary probably lay some 20 or 30 miles south of the Kafu². One other major river ran through the kingdom, namely the Katonga. Numerous smaller rivers and streams, many of them slow-moving swamps, made up the Ganda drainage system. They are indicative of the moisture with which the area has been blessed: the southern part of Uganda enjoys relatively high levels of rainfall, particularly during the two major wet seasons which are between February and June, and between October and December. In the nineteenth century, as now, Buganda was markedly greener than many of its neighbours, even in the more pastoral areas to the north and west.

The areas bordering the lake are particularly rich in vegetation. The landscape is characterised by regular and evenly-spaced hills, between which often lie the sluggish streams mentioned above. Further north and west, these hills become less frequent, and the land flattens out, allowing the keeping of livestock in greater numbers than is possible closer to the lake. Throughout nineteenth-century Buganda, agriculture was combined with the keeping of livestock. Broadly speaking, however, agriculture was predominant in the east and south, and cattle in the north and west. Although, as we shall see in Chapter 3, the Ganda were not unfamiliar with crop failures and drought, the soils of the region are in general extremely fertile and well-watered, and capable of supporting a relatively dense population. Recognition of this important fact is the first, and perhaps the biggest, step toward understanding the material basis of Ganda power and the growth of the kingdom.

¹See below, 'The Religious Wars and the establishment of colonial rule'.

²This gave rise to the controversy of the 'Lost Counties', lost, that is, by Bunyoro at the hands of the British and the Ganda at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Political Background

While it is not the aim of this thesis to examine Ganda political structures, it is necessary to provide a brief outline of those structures and of the changes brought to bear on them, for two main reasons. Firstly, and perhaps most obviously, many of the developments and organisational changes which the thesis does examine cannot be understood without some knowledge of political Buganda. Secondly, one of the arguments of the thesis is that the political history of pre-colonial Buganda should be read in a new light as a result of the examination of social, economic and military developments. It is precisely because of the earlier concentration on Ganda political history that this thesis focuses on issues which are not overtly concerned with politics or chieftainship; equally, however, it is hoped that political change in the nineteenth century might be placed alongside those aspects of Ganda history examined here and that a new synthesis might emerge.

Buganda was originally composed of a number of clans - by the nineteenth century there were around fifty - at the head of which was the *kabaka*, or 'head of the clan heads'. The single most important theme of Ganda political history over the three hundred years before the nineteenth century was the gradual movement of political and territorial power from the *bataka* or clan heads to the *kabaka*. The latter was able, by eroding the freehold estates (*butaka*) of the clans, to control more directly land and thus political appointments. The *batongole*, or chiefs appointed directly by the *kabaka*, became the main agents of government in Buganda, while the *bataka* were increasingly marginalised from the political process. The position of the *kabaka* thus grew more powerful, so that by the end of the eighteenth century he had power of appointment and dismissal over all the major chieftainships in the kingdom. Importantly, non-clan land was 'in the gift of the *kabaka*', as it were, and could not be inherited; thus, the Ganda political system was founded to a large extent on competition between ambitious chiefs seeking the favour of the *kabaka*. Life at the

court - which was, superficially at least, the political hub of the kingdom - was characterised by jostling for position and a certain intrigue.

The *kabaka* himself was the holder of a secular office. The position of *kabaka* did not belong to any one clan; rather, the *kabaka* took the clan of his mother. By the nineteenth century, Buganda appeared to outsiders to be an autocracy dominated at all levels of social, political and economic life by the *kabaka*. His power over chieftainship seemed to demonstrate this, as did the unconditional loyalty and constant displays of affection demanded from his ministers. While the *kabaka* was undoubtedly an important and potent figure in many spheres of Ganda life, however, his authority should not be exaggerated: as was the case in a number of other African societies at this time, much of the personal authority of the ruler was more apparent than real. It is clear that at various points during the nineteenth century, one or two of the *kabaka's* chiefs had as much political power as the *kabaka* himself. To some extent, a situation of this kind had developed by the late 1880s. Indeed, the overthrow of Mwanga in 1888 had many precedents.

Most of the principal royally-appointed chiefs were provincial governors. By the second half of the nineteenth century, Buganda was divided into a number of *ssazas* (usually translated as 'counties') which are listed below along with the title of the governing chief:

Busiro - the *Mugema*

Busujju - the *Kasujju*

Butambala - the *Katambala*

Gomba - the *Kitunzi*

Mawokota - the *Kaima*

Kyadondo - the *Kago*

Kyagwe - the *Sekibobo*

Bulemezi - the *Kangawo*

Buddu - the *Pokino*

Singo - the *Mukwenda*

Several other important chieftainships, notably the *Kimbugwe* and the *Katikiro*, were not territorial titles. It was possible, however, for one man to hold more than one position. Thus the *Katikiro* might also hold the title of *Pokino*. In general, the *Katikiro* was noted as being the second most powerful position after the *kabaka* himself: the title was usually described by contemporary Europeans as being that of a 'prime minister' or supreme judge. In theory, all of these powerful posts might be filled by lowly sub-chiefs or even peasants (*bakopi*) who had come to the notice of the *kabaka*; the latter was seen to have absolute control over the careers of the *bakungu* or high-ranking territorial chiefs³.

The 'Religious Wars' and the establishment of colonial rule

The political history of Buganda in the second half of the nineteenth century is closely bound up with the introduction of foreign religions. *Kabaka* Suna, who probably reigned between the 1820s and the 1850s, first became acquainted with Islam in the mid-1840s, with the arrival in Buganda of coastal merchants. In 1862, the first Europeans to reach the region, Speke and Grant, made *Kabaka* Mutesa aware of Christianity. Between this time and the establishment of the British Protectorate in 1894, political life in Buganda - or at least the capital - was increasingly dominated by allegiance to either Islam or Christianity, while indigenous belief systems (the worship of *balubaale*⁴) remained influential. Mutesa declared himself to be Muslim for much of the 1860s and 1870s, but the situation became more volatile with the arrival of the first Anglican missionaries, members of the Church Missionary Society,

³There has been some debate among historians concerning the definition of such terms as *batongole* and *bakungu*; the discussion here represents an attempt at neutrality. See for example M. Southwold, *Bureaucracy and Chiefship in Buganda*, East African Studies 14 (Kampala, 1961); M. Twaddle, 'The *Bakungu* chiefs of Buganda under British colonial rule, 1900-1939', *Journal of African History*, 10:2 (1969), 309-322; M. Twaddle, 'The Ganda receptivity to change', *Journal of African History*, 15:2 (1974), 303-315. See also D.A. Low, *Buganda in Modern History* (London, 1971) 15-17

⁴*Balubaale*, singular *lubaale*, were indigenous deities or spirits. The Luganda spelling is used here to distinguish the term from *lubale*, which means a wound or scar.

in 1877. French Catholics, members of the White Fathers, reached Buganda in 1879 and henceforward matters were complicated by the presence of two competing Christian denominations. Moreover, the growing Egyptian and Sudanese presence to the north was a source of concern. Visitors from the province known as 'Equatoria', governed in succession by Sir Samuel Baker, General Gordon and Emin Pasha, reminded Mutesa in the late 1870s of the potential military threat from this direction.

In his last years, Mutesa was able to play the different groups off one another and so remained more or less in control of the powerful new influences entering his kingdom. To Mutesa, who was above all a pragmatic ruler, each group represented something which Buganda could utilise to its advantage. The coastal traders were agents of the vital international trade system, connected ultimately to Zanzibar, which brought to Buganda cloth and guns. The *kabaka* was thus keen to curry favour with those whom he saw as the representatives of the Sultan. The European missionaries were similarly ambassadors of a powerful technological culture whose presence in Buganda could only lead to the kingdom's advancement. It may be argued that recognition of these potential material gains was the sole reason behind Mutesa's tolerance of such disruptive influences.

In the meantime, however, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism were all claiming converts among the chiefs at the Ganda capital. This was especially true among the young and militant chiefs and 'pages' with whom Mutesa and, after the latter's death in 1884, Mwanga were increasingly surrounding themselves. In the mid-1880s, Mwanga, whose handling of state matters was less assured than that of his father, attempted to violently crush allegiance to foreign religions. By 1888, however, political camps identifying themselves with one or other of the new religions had developed at the capital. Ostensibly at least, one of the justifications for the coup which removed Mwanga in 1888 was the *kabaka's* intolerance of foreign religions. Although Mwanga was reinstated in 1889, these politico-religious camps remained in

conflict with one another until the British imposed a settlement, using a mixture of military force and negotiation, in the mid-1890s. The British presence in the area was at first represented by the Imperial British East Africa Company, to which a Royal Charter had been granted in 1888. The IBEAC, headed in Buganda by Frederick Lugard, signed a treaty with Mwanga in December 1890, five months after an Anglo-German treaty had confirmed that 'Uganda' was within the British sphere. Financial difficulties led to the withdrawal of the IBEAC in 1893; it was replaced by a provisional protectorate under Sir Gerald Portal. A little over a year later, the Liberal government of Rosebery formally assumed the protectorate over Buganda; this was extended in 1896 to include Bunyoro and the kingdoms to the west. The culmination of this process was the Uganda Agreement of 1900, which established the pattern of relations between the British and the 'native council', and dealt with questions of law, taxation and land tenure.

A Note on the Ganda Kinglist

It is impossible to date with any certainty the reigns of Mutesa's predecessors, and the problems of the existing kinglist have been highlighted by David Henige⁵. The basic chronology used in this thesis does not differ greatly from that tentatively constructed by Kiwanuka, which was in turn based on Apolo Kagwa's kinglist⁶, as indeed most subsequent scholarship has been. Kiwanuka's dynastic chronology was calculated at 30 years per generation, which is probably as accurate as we can expect. Nonetheless, the criticisms recently made by Wrigley are sound⁷. In particular, this thesis takes note of Wrigley's estimates for the reigns of nineteenth-century rulers.

⁵D. Henige, "'The Disease of Writing': Ganda and Nyoro kinglists in a newly literate world", in J.C. Miller (ed.), *The African Past Speaks* (Folkestone/Hamden, 1980) 240-61

⁶See A. Kagwa [tr. & ed. M.S.M. Kiwanuka], *The Kings of Buganda* (Nairobi, 1971) Appendix 3. Apolo Kagwa was the *Katikiro* of Buganda from 1889 to 1926; much of his work was based on 'oral history' as well as his own experiences at the centre of Ganda politics. We examine Kagwa's writings later in this chapter, as well as in Chapter 2.

⁷C.C. Wrigley, *Kingship and State: the Buganda dynasty* (Cambridge, 1996): See Chapter 2 in particular.

Thus, it is likely that Suna became *kabaka* around 1830, and died in late 1856; Semakokiro and Kamanya probably reigned between the end of the 1790s and 1830⁸.

The Secondary Literature

Buganda is well-known to historians of Africa, even though the kingdom came to the attention of literate society comparatively late in the pre-colonial period. But the manner in which the early observations were made seems to have had an enduring influence over the historiography of Buganda. The explorers Speke and Grant arrived in the kingdom just as Mutesa's reign was beginning. Their admiration of the complex and highly 'bureaucratic' socio-political structure was echoed by the escalating number of Europeans who passed through Buganda in various capacities in the 1870s and 1880s. Adventurers, missionaries and, eventually, colonial administrators were struck by Buganda's hierarchical organisation, the like of which, it was frequently suggested, did not exist anywhere else in Africa south of the Sahara. After the obligatory caveat concerning the kingdom's essential savagery, it was widely held that the Ganda possessed an intelligence and a capacity for self-improvement which held out great potential. This was demonstrated by the alacrity with which so many Ganda embraced Christianity in the 1880s and 1890s. Indeed, the basic framework of Buganda's political structure was used as the model of government for the whole Uganda Protectorate in 1900.

This fascination with political Buganda has continued to shape scholarship on the kingdom throughout the twentieth century as the study of African history has expanded. Despite the enormous volume of material produced by historians relating to Buganda over the last few decades, it is possible to identify certain strands of thought and established patterns of approach. It will be seen, thus, that quantity does not necessarily mean variety: while certain aspects have attracted the attention of writers over the years, critical spheres of Ganda history have been neglected.

⁸ibid., 229

Buganda, which undoubtedly ranks alongside other states with large historiographies, such as Asante, Dahomey, and the Zulu, has been overtaken by studies of the latter. Political history has been made the primary focus of study among the analysts of Buganda's past, the implication being that social and economic change could not be studied either because there was none, or because the evidence for it was irretrievably lost. It is hoped that this thesis demonstrates that its sources, none of which represents a new 'find' and all of which have been used by other historians, do contain an enormous amount of data germane to studies of this kind.

The distinction between 'primary' and 'secondary' sources is often blurred, particularly when dealing with late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historiography. The definition depends on the purpose for which the source is used. Thus, much early historiography may be described as 'primary source material' as it included work written by those who observed or directly participated in many of the events they purported to describe. The same can be said of those early writers who based their work on recorded oral history and data provided by a wide range of informants. The historiography of Buganda, therefore, really begins with Robert Ashe, a C.M.S. missionary who observed at first hand the events of the late 1880s and early 1890s. His *Two Kings of Uganda* (1889) and *Chronicles of Uganda* (1894) represented the earliest attempts to place these events in a historical context⁹. In the years following the establishment of the Protectorate, another C.M.S. missionary, John Roscoe, and the *Katikiro* of Buganda, Apolo Kagwa, likewise sought to compile both historical and ethnographic surveys of Buganda, using oral 'traditions' and a number of informants¹⁰. Others followed during the 1930s, by which time the *Uganda Journal*

⁹Earlier travellers had made limited investigations into Buganda's past, but Ashe's work represented a more comprehensive exploration: see also J.H. Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (Edinburgh & London, 1863) esp. Chap. IX; H.M. Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent* (London, 1878) I, esp. Chap. XIV

¹⁰I have used translations of Kagwa's three main works; the potential shortcomings of these translated editions are discussed in Chapter 2 below. The volumes by Kagwa which are of most relevance in a historiographical context are: [tr. E.B. Kalibala, ed. M.M. Edel], *Customs of the Baganda* (New York, 1934); [tr. J. Wamala], 'A Book of Clans of Buganda' [typescript translation in Makerere University, Kampala, c. 1972]; and *Kings* (see note 3 for a full citation). Roscoe's most important works are: *The*

offered a new outlet for historical debate. Ham Mukasa and John Gray had important articles published¹¹, while B.M.Zimbe and J.Miti also wrote books based on oral history and on their own experiences during the last years of the nineteenth century¹².

After the Second World War, there was a considerable surge in interest in Ganda history, and much research was undertaken at Makerere University and the East African Institute of Social Research. Pre-colonial Buganda attracted the attention of a number of writers in the 1950s, including Cox, Mayanja, Oliver, Low and Wrigley¹³, who shared an interest in nineteenth-century political developments. Wrigley and Ehrlich alone began to research the kingdom's economic past, albeit the impact of colonial rule on what was perceived to be a static indigenous economy¹⁴. They were both basically concerned to show that the pre-colonial economy was almost completely lacking in dynamism: only with the establishment of the Protectorate did conditions permit any kind of economic change or growth. In fact, as we shall see, the evidence suggests that there was great dynamism with regard to pre-colonial commerce, both regional and long-distance. There was also constant innovation in

Buganda: an account of their native customs and beliefs (London, 1911); and *Twenty-five Years in East Africa* (London, 1921). See Chapter 2 for a fuller discussion of both Kagwa and Roscoe as primary sources.

¹¹J.M.Gray, 'Mutesa of Buganda', *Uganda Journal*, 1:1 (1934) 22-49; J.M.Gray, 'Early history of Buganda', *Uganda Journal*, 2:4 (1935) 259-71; H.Mukasa, 'Some notes on the reign of Mutesa', *Uganda Journal*, 1:2 (1934) 116-33, 2:1 (1935) 65-70

¹²Again, translations of these works have been used: J.Miti, 'A History of Buganda' [typescript translation in SOAS, London, c.1938]; B.M.Zimbe [tr.F.Kamoga], 'Buganda ne Kabaka' [typescript translation in Makerere University, Kampala, c.1939]. Miti, according to Kiwanuka, was a "Muganda historian, a contemporary of Kaggwa and a product of the royal court of the 1880s and 1890s": see Kiwanuka's 'Introduction' to Kagwa, *Kings*, xlvii. Zimbe was also a junior court page during the 1880s; he later joined the C.M.S. mission and became a clergyman.

¹³These writers came from varying backgrounds: while Oliver, Low and Wrigley were trained scholars, Cox was a colonial government official, and Abu Mayanja was a political activist, the first Secretary-General of the Uganda National Congress. See: A.H.Cox, 'The growth and expansion of Buganda', *Uganda Journal*, 14:2 (1950) 153-9; A.M.K.Mayanja, 'Chronology of Buganda 1800-1907, from Kagwa's *Ebika*', *Uganda Journal*, 16:2 (1952) 148-58; R.Oliver, 'The royal tombs of Buganda', *Uganda Journal*, 23:2 (1959) 124-33; C.C.Wrigley, 'The Christian revolution in Buganda', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 2:1 (1959) 33-48; D.A.Low, 'The British and Buganda 1862-1900', D.Phil. dissertation, University of Oxford, 1957; D.A.Low & R.C.Pratt, *Buganda and British Overrule 1900-1955* (London, 1960). Low also published a number of essays, which later appeared together in Low, *Buganda in Modern History*.

¹⁴C.C.Wrigley, 'Buganda: an outline economic history', *Economic History Review*, 10 (1957) 60-80; C.Ehrlich, 'The economy of Buganda 1893-1903', *Uganda Journal*, 20:1 (1956) 17-26

local industry and, particularly after the arrival of Arab merchants, in local agriculture. In the late 1950s and 1960s, Southwold, Richards, Fallers and Gutkind also undertook research into socio-political Buganda, often from an historical-anthropological standpoint¹⁵. The work done during this time was critical in establishing a professional approach to the Ganda past; it also established the major themes of study with regard to nineteenth-century Buganda, namely the role of kingship, political office, and the religious wars of the late 1880s and early 1890s which threw Ganda politics into flux.

During the 1960s and early 1970s, further ground-breaking work on pre-colonial Buganda - and in particular on the politics of the late nineteenth century - was undertaken, notably by Rowe, Kiwanuka and Wright¹⁶. Rowe and Kiwanuka especially pushed Ganda historiography forward in their analyses of Luganda source materials and the kind of pre-colonial past which could be constructed using such sources. The immense potential for historians of nineteenth-century Buganda was made clear through their efforts; at the same time, on a wider regional level, a number of scholars were turning their attentions away from a purely political interpretation of the Ganda past and towards the development of the nineteenth-century economy and the role of commerce. In so doing they were building on the

¹⁵ By M. Southwold, see *Bureaucracy and Chiefship*; 'Succession to the throne of Buganda', in J. Goody (ed.), *Succession to High Office* (Cambridge, 1966) 82-126; and 'The history of a history: royal succession in Buganda', in I.M. Lewis (ed.), *History and Social Anthropology* (London, 1968) 127-51. By A.I. Richards, 'Authority patterns in traditional Buganda', in L.A. Fallers (ed.), *The Kings Men* (London, 1964) 256-93, and *The Changing Structure of a Ganda Village* (Nairobi, 1966). L.A. Fallers produced a number of essays, among which were 'Despotism, status and social mobility in an African kingdom', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 2:1 (1959) 4-32, and 'Social stratification in traditional Buganda', Fallers (ed.), *The Kings Men*. 64-117. By P.C.W. Gutkind, see 'Notes on the kibuga of Buganda', *Uganda Journal*, 24:1 (1960) 29-43, and *The Royal Capital of Buganda: a study of internal conflict and external ambiguity* (The Hague, 1963).

¹⁶ By J.A. Rowe, see: 'The purge of Christians at Mwangwa's court', *Journal of African History*, 5 (1964) 55-72; 'The reign of Kabaka Mukabya Mutesa 1856-1884', Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1966; 'Myth, memoir and moral admonition: Luganda historical writing 1893-1969', *Uganda Journal*, 33:1 (1969) 17-40. By M.S.M. Kiwanuka, see: 'The traditional history of the Buganda Kingdom: with special reference to the historical writings of Sir Apolo Kagwa', Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1965; 'Sir Apolo Kagwa and the pre-colonial history of Buganda', *Uganda Journal*, 30:2 (1966) 137-52; *Muteesa of Uganda* (Nairobi, 1967); *A History of Buganda from the foundation of the kingdom to 1900* (London, 1971). By Michael Wright, see *Buganda in the Heroic Age* (Nairobi, 1971).

earlier efforts of Wrigley and Ehrlich. Thus, Langlands published work on Ganda crops¹⁷; Tosh, Hartwig and Kenny on the growth of trade¹⁸; and Uzoigwe and Kottak on the role of markets and the material basis of state power¹⁹. Waller's M.A. dissertation on the pre-colonial Ganda economy²⁰ also opened up a wide range of critical issues which earlier scholars had either overlooked or considered unimportant; his analysis of commercial changes in the late nineteenth century has to some extent acted as a signpost for this thesis. During the 1970s, too, a number of works on Buganda's immediate neighbours emerged, such as Uzoigwe, Buchanan and Steinhart on Bunyoro²¹, Karugire on Ankole (Nkore)²², Katoke on Karagwe²³, and Cohen on Busoga²⁴.

Above all, however, the most popular topics of examination in Ganda historiography have been the lives of Mutesa and Mwanga, and more especially the political and

¹⁷See two articles in particular by B.W.Langlands: 'The banana in Uganda 1860-1920', *Uganda Journal*, 30:1 (1966) 39-63; and 'Cassava in Uganda 1860-1920', *Uganda Journal*, 30:2 (1966) 211-218.

¹⁸By J. Tosh, see 'The Northern Interlacustrine Region', in R.Gray & D.Birmingham (eds.), *Pre-Colonial African Trade* (London, 1970) 103-118. Gerald Hartwig's interests lay primarily with Ukerewe, but his examination of lake commerce raised a number of questions pertinent to the Ganda position: 'The Victoria Nyanza as a trade route in the nineteenth century', *Journal of African History*, 11:4 (1970) 535-52; *The Art of Survival in East Africa: the Kerebe and long-distance trade, 1800-1895* (New York & London, 1976). By M.Kenny, see: 'Salt trading in eastern Lake Victoria', *Azania*, 9 (1974) 225-228; 'Pre-colonial trade in eastern Lake Victoria', *Azania*, 14 (1979) 97-107. See also R.Austen, 'Patterns of development in nineteenth-century East Africa' and C.F.Holmes, 'Zanzibari influence at the southern end of Lake Victoria: the lake route', both in *African Historical Studies*, 4:3 (1971) 645-657, 477-503. The work of R.W.Beachey should also be mentioned in this context, although his analysis is often weakened by over-generalisation and factual error: see 'The arms trade in East Africa in the late nineteenth century', *Journal of African History*, 3:3 (1962) 451-467; 'The East African ivory trade in the nineteenth century', *Journal of African History*, 8:2 (1967) 269-290; *The Slave Trade of Eastern Africa* (London, 1976)

¹⁹G.N.Uzoigwe, 'Pre-colonial markets in Bunyoro-Kitara', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 14:4 (1972) 422-455; C.P.Kottak, 'Ecological variables in the origin and evolution of African states: the Buganda example', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 14:3 (1972) 351-380

²⁰R.D.Waller, 'The Traditional Economy of Buganda'. M.A.Dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1971.

²¹G.N.Uzoigwe, *The Anatomy of an African Kingdom: A History of Bunyoro-Kitara* (New York, 1973); C.Buchanan, 'Perceptions of interaction in the East African interior: the Kitara complex', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 11 (1978) 410-428; E.I.Steinhart, 'From "empire" to state: the emergence of the kingdom of Bunyoro-Kitara, c.1350-1890', in H.J.M.Claessen & P.Skalnik (eds.), *The Study of the State* (The Hague, 1981) 353-70

²²S.R.Karugire, *A History of the Kingdom of Nkore in Western Uganda to 1896* (Oxford, 1971)

²³I.K.Katoke, *The Karagwe Kingdom* (Nairobi, 1975)

²⁴By D.W.Cohen see in particular: *The Historical Tradition of Busoga* (Oxford, 1972); *Womunafu's Bunafu: a study of authority in a nineteenth-century African community* (Princeton, 1977)

religious factions at their courts, culminating in the 'religious civil wars'. Doubtless it seemed as though this imbalance might be offset with the appearance in 1971 of Kiwanuka's major monograph on pre-colonial Buganda. Indeed, the scope of *A History of Buganda* has yet to be rivalled. But while it may be the best we have to date, it is a work riddled with failings and omissions. As something of a Ganda nationalist, Kiwanuka was apparently interested in the promotion of Buganda first and the pursuit of an objective history second. We are repeatedly reminded of Buganda's power and prestige, and of how the neighbouring peoples regarded the Ganda with awe and terror, but we are scarcely told why. Kiwanuka's work is particularly weakened by its author's failure to analyse the structure and motivation of the army and navy which so 'terrorised' the region. He also ignores long-term trends and the policy-objectives of successive rulers in the nineteenth century. The economic and material bases of Ganda expansion, and the critical role played by expanding commerce, are also dealt with briefly. The main strength of *A History of Buganda* is in its treatment of political history; still, in a monograph covering seven centuries, more than a third is taken up with the last twenty years of the nineteenth century.

From around 1970 onward, research on pre-colonial Buganda suffered, largely because of political turmoil within Uganda itself which only in recent years has subsided sufficiently to permit the renewal of academic enquiry within the Republic. Thus the period between Amin's rise to power in 1971 and Museveni's capture of Kampala in 1986 saw a suspension of research in Uganda itself, although certain scholars continued to publish work on Buganda, for example Twaddle, Rusch, Atkinson, Kasozi, Henige, and Ray²⁵. Even so, Ray and Twaddle, for example, had been to Uganda to undertake research before the country became effectively closed to

²⁵M. Twaddle, 'The Muslim revolution in Buganda', *African Affairs*, 71 (1972) 54-72; W. Rusch, *Klassen und Staat in Buganda vor der Kolonialzeit* (Berlin, 1975 - with English summary); R.R. Atkinson, 'The traditions of the early kings of Buganda: myth, history and structural analysis', *History in Africa*, 2 (1975) 17-57; A.B.K. Kasozi, 'Why did the Baganda adopt foreign religions in the nineteenth century?', *Mawazo*, 4 (1975) 129-52; Henige, "'The disease of writing'" (see footnote 5); B. Ray, 'Royal shrines and ceremonies of Buganda', *Uganda Journal*, 36 (1972) 35-48

scholars. In general, the interests of these writers lay in analysing Ganda kingship, the structure and ritual of royal authority, and the political and religious events of the late nineteenth century. With the exception of Rusch, whose work was based in large part on secondary sources, there was during the 1970s no further study of the pre-colonial economy. Rusch's work, while thematically-structured and thorough in its coverage of key issues, sought to offer a Marxist interpretation of the Ganda economy: notably, the Ganda peasantry were trapped within an exploitative system operated by an indolent aristocracy. In the light of earlier work, for example that of Tosh and Hartwig, Rusch's approach was somewhat regressive.

Since the mid-1980s, relative stability in Uganda has permitted scholars such as Schiller²⁶, Ray²⁷, and, in particular, Twaddle and Wrigley to renew their investigations in the Republic itself. Twaddle's work has established him as the leading scholar of late-nineteenth century Ganda political organisation²⁸, while Wrigley's most recent work is the culmination of four decades' enquiry into the pre-colonial past and the usefulness to the historian of 'traditional' Ganda accounts²⁹. Most of the works on Ganda history already mentioned have something to say about military organisation, but, as with economic and commercial history, this is dealt with cursorily. This critical topic of debate has become swamped by clichés, and no-one, indeed, has seriously tried to analyse what Ganda military power actually amounted to. Twaddle has offered some insights into the organisation of the army and the role of firearms³⁰; moreover, as we shall see, he alone has attempted to explore the

²⁶L. Schiller, 'The royal women of Buganda', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 23:3 (1990) 455-473

²⁷B. Ray, *Myth, Ritual and Kingship in Buganda* (Oxford, 1991)

²⁸In particular, see: 'The ending of slavery in Buganda', in R. Roberts & S. Miers (eds.), *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Wisconsin, 1988) 119-149; 'The emergence of politico-religious groupings in late nineteenth century Buganda', *Journal of African History*, 29:1 (1988) 81-92; *Kakungulu and the Creation of Uganda 1868-1928* (London, 1993)

²⁹Wrigley, *Kingship and State*. Also by Wrigley, see 'The Kinglists of Buganda', *History in Africa*, 1 (1974) 129-39, and 'Bananas in Buganda', *Azania* 24 (1989) 64-70

³⁰In particular, see Twaddle, *Kakungulu, passim*

complexities of slavery and the slave trade³¹. But these areas of Buganda's past have otherwise remained untouched, except by the most uncritical of analyses. Indeed, there seems to have been an assumption that if Speke found Buganda a powerful state in 1862, then the kingdom must have been at the height of its power. Little attempt has been made to place the Ganda of 1862 in their historical or indeed geographical context: sadly, Kiwanuka's account has remained the closest there is to such an approach for a quarter of a century, and, as we have seen, his concern was to depict Buganda as undisputed master of all it surveyed and Mutesa as an unqualified success in everything he did.

The omissions of the secondary literature are further highlighted when work on other parts of sub-Saharan pre-colonial Africa is considered. Kiwanuka's *A History of Buganda*, for example, lacks the commitment and energy so evident in Feierman's study of the Shambaa³²; it also lacks the fine detail and detached analysis of Law's work on the Yoruba empire of Oyo in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a period and subject area for which the sources are hardly profuse³³. Law's more recent work on the 'slave coast' of West Africa is exemplary in its treatment of domestic economies and the social and military dimensions to commerce³⁴. Wilks' study of the Asante, while primarily a work of political history, also offers much to historians of other parts of Africa in its treatment of commercial developments and communication networks³⁵. Again in a West African context, mention should be made of Hopkins' work³⁶: while the present thesis is not a work of economic history in this sense, it has drawn inspiration from Hopkins' formidable achievement. Each of his chapters is driven by a central idea which he pursues meticulously and diligently. East African historiography is the poorer for the absence of a comparable work.

³¹M. Twaddle, 'Slaves and Peasants in Buganda', in L.J. Archer (ed.), *Slavery and Other Forms of Unfree Labour* (London, 1988) 118-129; also 'The Ending of Slavery in Buganda'

³²S. Feierman, *The Shambaa Kingdom: a history* (Madison, 1974)

³³R. C. C. Law, *The Oyo Empire c.1600-c.1836* (Oxford, 1977)

³⁴R. C. C. Law, *The Slave Coast of West Africa 1550-1750* (Oxford, 1991)

³⁵I. Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1975)

³⁶A. G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (London, 1973)

Work on economic, commercial and social change in nineteenth-century Tanzania and Kenya should also be mentioned: although nearly thirty years old, the collection of essays on Tanzania edited by Roberts, for example, is important as it explores historical themes either ignored or taken for granted in the context of Buganda³⁷. This is also true of work on nineteenth-century Kenya, and on the Kamba in particular³⁸. More recently, Ambler's study of central Kenya has taken this kind of study forward, largely through its examination of the interaction between trade and the domestic economy³⁹. In the context of long-distance trade and, in particular, the development of canoe transport, Harms on pre-colonial Zaire provides a useful and instructive reference point⁴⁰. The material basis of power and the organisation of resources to meet external challenges are also themes which have been pursued in a southern African context, most recently in a fine study of Lesotho by Eldredge⁴¹.

Again, studies of armies, warfare and the background to military expansion in other parts of Africa have served as models or inspiration for this thesis. Jeff Guy's work, for example, examines Zulu military expansion in remarkable depth⁴². Kagame produced an admirably thorough survey of the 'regiments', as well as the campaigns in which they were involved, of pre-colonial Rwanda⁴³. In Central Africa, Roberts' essay on the introduction and impact of firearms in Zambia raises issues and problems

³⁷A.D.Roberts (ed.), *Tanzania Before 1900* (Nairobi, 1968). Roberts' own work on Mirambo and the Nyamwezi remains relevant.

³⁸For example, I.N.Kimambo, 'The Economic History of the Kamba 1850-1950', in B.A.Ogot (ed.), *Hadith 2* (Nairobi, 1970) 79-103; K.Jackson, 'The Dimensions of Kamba Pre-Colonial History', in B.A.Ogot (ed.), *Kenya Before 1900* (Nairobi, 1976) 174-261

³⁹C.H.Ambler, *Kenyan Communities in the Age of Imperialism* (New Haven & London, 1988)

⁴⁰R.W.Harms, *River of Wealth, River of Sorrow: the central Zaire basin in the era of the slave and ivory trade, 1500-1891* (New Haven & London, 1981)

⁴¹E.Eldredge, *A South African Kingdom: the pursuit of security in nineteenth-century Lesotho* (Cambridge, 1993); also W.Beinart, 'Production and the material basis of chieftainship: Pondoland, c.1830-1880', in S.Marks & A.Atmore (eds.), *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa* (London & New York, 1980) 120-147

⁴²In particular, see J.Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom: the Civil War in Zululand 1879-1884* (London, 1979); J.Guy, 'Ecological factors in the rise of Shaka and the Zulu Kingdom', in Marks & Atmore, *Pre-Industrial South Africa*, 102-119

⁴³A.Kagame, *Les Milices du Rwanda Précolonial* (Brussels, 1963)

germane to much of sub-Saharan Africa in the nineteenth century⁴⁴. But it is once again on West Africa that some of the best scholarship has been focused. Robert Smith in particular, in his excellent study of armies, tactics, weaponry and the ethos of warfare, was the pioneer of an approach to pre-colonial history which should surely be taken much further⁴⁵. A number of other West Africanists have shown themselves willing to explore these subject areas⁴⁶.

The structure of the thesis

In the thesis, I have attempted, firstly, to fill in some of the gaps of the historiography, and secondly, to expand on a number of themes dealt with briefly by earlier scholars. The fundamental rationale of the thesis is the way in which Buganda organised its natural and human resources in the pursuit of three main objectives: profit and the generation of wealth through both commerce and homestead production; internal cohesion; and external security. As such, each of the chapters is concerned with both private and public life; the thesis is not a study of 'the state' in itself, but of the relationship between the state and its subjects, and between the state and its resources. The thesis systematically examines a number of topics concerned, in different ways, with these relationships and objectives.

Chapters 3 and 4 therefore deal with 'production', a broad term I have used to include agriculture and animal husbandry, hunting and fishing, and the fabrics and metal industries. These activities were, collectively, the very basis of the growth of the Buganda kingdom, and as such they have not gone unnoticed in the secondary literature. I have attempted to develop the analyses ventured by a number of earlier scholars, notably Langlands, Wrigley and Richards. In general, the importance placed

⁴⁴A.D.Roberts, 'Firearms in North-eastern Zambia before 1900', *Transafrican Journal of History*, 1:2 (1971) 3-21

⁴⁵R.S.Smith, *Warfare and Diplomacy in Pre-Colonial West Africa* (London, 1989); also R.Smith & J.F.Ade Ajayi, *Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1971)

⁴⁶See T.Falola & R.Law (eds.), *Warfare and Diplomacy in Precolonial Nigeria* (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1992); also N.L.Whitehead & R.B.Ferguson (eds.), *War in the Tribal Zone* (Santa Fe, 1992)

on Ganda agriculture by earlier authors was implicit, rather than fully explained. In Chapter 3, I attempt to make explicit the vitality of farming in pre-colonial Buganda; the kind of crops produced and the regions most noted for the production of certain crops; and the extent to which the fertility of the land was frequently offset by drought and subsequent crop failure. Alongside this, it is clearly essential to examine the parts played by fishing, hunting, and cattle-keeping: these activities, like food production, had socio-political and commercial, as well as nutritional, dimensions. I endeavour to show that, in the 1870s and 1880s, Buganda's productive base was being undermined by cattle disease, by drought and crop failure; I argue that these calamities were in fact more powerful determinants of the course of political and military events at this time than earlier authors have suggested. A similar approach is employed in Chapter 4 in examining the main 'industries' of the Ganda, metal-working, fabrics and pottery. The importance of these occupations - and the ways in which they changed in the course of the nineteenth century - has been overlooked in the secondary literature. Kiwanuka, for example, suggests that the search for sources of iron influenced the nature and direction of Ganda expansion, but he fails to demonstrate how this influence worked in practice. I examine the cultural, economic, and social dimensions of activities such as iron-working, and attempt to show how iron was both a means and an end in Ganda expansion. I also seek to demonstrate how so seemingly mundane a material as barkcloth should be seen as one of the keys to Buganda's economic strength in the lake region.

Chapter 5 deals with trade, both regional and long-distance, and I develop some of the themes first examined by scholars such as Tosh and Waller a quarter of a century ago. The chapter looks at the growth and operation of commerce in greater detail than has previously been the case: I examine the range of goods traded, the development of pre-colonial currencies, and the growth of the slave trade in the second half of the nineteenth century; I suggest that the Ganda were relatively unrestricted by centralised political control, and that participation in long-distance trade was not

confined to chiefs and the powerful men of the kingdom. Perhaps the most important contribution the chapter makes to our understanding of pre-colonial Buganda is in its examination of the role of commerce in the growth of the state; the Ganda were vigorous traders, and the kingdom to some extent owed its regional dominance in the nineteenth century to its commercial strength.

Yet commercial advantage often had to be protected and promoted through military action: military organisation is the subject of study in Chapters 6 and 7. I pursue in depth a number of themes which have been either taken for granted or simply ignored in the secondary literature, including the constitution of the army, the development of weaponry, and the impact of firearms. I also analyse the role of militarism and war in Ganda history: the motivation behind war, for example, is a subject for too long ignored by scholars. The army was critical to internal cohesion and the stability of the political system. Above all, I challenge the view - most forcefully argued by Kiwanuka - that in the nineteenth century Buganda was all-powerful and that its neighbours regarded the kingdom with awe and dread. On the contrary, I argue that Buganda was in military decline after c.1850, for a number of reasons, not least among which were internal political developments and, later on, the detrimental effects of what might be termed the 'firearm cult'. In Chapter 8, I draw together the themes of commercial expansion and military decline, and I focus on the Ganda on Lake Victoria. As we have seen, a number of scholars have highlighted the importance of the lake as a trade route, notably Hartwig and Kenny. I take this theme further by examining the history of the canoe in Ganda military and economic history. I argue that the canoe fleet developed in the nineteenth century had its origins in Buganda's ancient fishing communities, but was created to stem military decline on land and to control the long-distance trade which had become so vital to the kingdom.

Finally, Chapters 9 and 10 continue the general theme of the state's utilisation of its resources: Chapter 9 focuses on the organisation of public labour in the construction

of roads and buildings, the development of state 'taxation', and the relationship between particular professional and social groups with the labour system. I argue that the organisation of public labour was critical to the maintenance of the political establishment; it demonstrated the pursuit of internal cohesion which was achieved by balancing individual commercial and productive freedom with an ethos of collectivity in certain spheres of public life. While Chapter 9 considers the nature of 'free' labour, Chapter 10 deals with the institution of slavery and its importance to the economic and political life of Buganda. Here I develop themes which have been considered in detail by few historians, Twaddle being a recent exception. The critical issues of what slavery meant in its many manifestations, who was enslaved, and the functions performed by slaves, are examined in Chapter 10.

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We have already noted how political turmoil in Uganda in the 1970s and 1980s is partly responsible for the failure to develop the research themes discussed above. This said, interest in pre-colonial history has diminished over the last twenty years or so, as will be evident from the age of some of the work cited above. That this is the case is due to a number of factors. Prominent among them is the renewed interest in the colonial period, engendered by the availability of archives and other source materials relating to this era since the 1970s. Conversely, confidence in the sources for the pre-colonial period has waned somewhat, with optimism about the possibilities of using oral histories in the reconstruction of the pre-colonial past fading after the 1960s and being replaced by scepticism about the genuine historical value of such sources. In the case of Buganda, this scepticism is perhaps best and indeed most elegantly expressed in Wrigley's latest work⁴⁷. The sources used for the present thesis are more fully examined in the following chapter. But it is clear from my own

⁴⁷Wrigley, *Kingship and State*, esp. Chaps. 2 & 3

research that outright pessimism in the 1990s is as unwarranted as was, perhaps, the optimism of the 1960s. Unpublished archival material still yields much new data, simply because the questions being asked in this thesis are different from those posed previously. Oral 'traditions' and accounts may demand greater scepticism in the reconstruction of political events, but they can be extraordinarily rich in the information they (often inadvertently) yield regarding broader social and economic patterns. If a recorded oral account is compared to an old photograph (a dubious comparison, admittedly, although old photographs may also be 'touched up' from time to time), then it is the background scene, rather than the foreground in focus, which can offer some of the richest data on the period it describes.

It can be seen that selected areas of Buganda's past - crudely summarised, centralised political society - have received ample attention in the existing literature. However, many critical themes have been ignored, or only partly and uncritically examined. Ganda historiography has suffered from the early fascination with the kingdom's political make-up and the social implications of such centralisation. Despite the decline in the study of the pre-colonial past, investigation in other parts of Africa - particularly West Africa - has indicated what still needs to be done and what *can* be done. Buganda still has much to offer the interested historian. The phenomena of Ganda organisation, expansion and, as this thesis argues, decline have needed thorough examination for some time. These themes - Ganda military structure and ethos, the role of commerce, economic developments, the material basis of power - surely represent that which is special about Buganda in the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER 2

The Sources

A variety of primary sources have been used in the research for this thesis, but they share one important characteristic, which is that they are all written, whether published or unpublished. In the 1960s, historians of nineteenth-century Africa had more or less ready access to a wide range of living informants; this is no longer the case. This disadvantage is at least partly compensated for by the wealth of material left by literate Ganda in the early twentieth century; and by the work done by scholars in the 1960s, notably Kiwanuka, who managed to collect data from a number of informants. Moreover, despite being brought to the attention of literate society relatively late (at the end of the 1850s), Buganda was well served subsequently by numerous writers whose observations survive in countless publications and archival collections. These by no means represent new ground as source materials: explorers' accounts, the archives of the Church Missionary Society and of the White Fathers, and the Uganda National Archives (U.N.A.) at Entebbe have been used by historians for many years. But, as we have seen in the previous chapter, they have been used within a fairly narrow framework and have clearly not been exhausted.

Published European Accounts¹

Like any source material created by outsiders dealing with a non-literate society far removed from their own, published accounts by Europeans are fraught with difficulties for the historian. Yet they are of fundamental importance to the study of pre-colonial African history. We are often forced to rely heavily on the information these works contain, and the scenes they purport to describe, while remaining aware

¹The distinction between published and unpublished accounts is not always straightforward. Generally, however, this section deals with those works written with publication in mind, although the case of David Livingstone is an exception. As we note below, Lugard's diaries were later published, but the manner in which they were written suggests that they should be analysed alongside 'unpublished' material.

of the shortcomings and inevitable imbalances therein. To some extent, it is possible to write in general terms about the value and limitations of such material. Nonetheless, each author needs to be assessed separately: while nineteenth-century and early colonial writers in general shared a common attitude and inherent prejudice - most obviously of a racial nature - different authors were concerned with issues and audiences which varied in important but subtle ways. In the interests of brevity, however, we will concentrate on the key texts.

Buganda was known personally to a number of Arab merchants from the mid-1840s, but it was not brought to the attention of Europeans until the expedition of Burton and Speke in the late 1850s. The works resulting from this expedition are therefore the earliest contemporary accounts referring to Buganda: Burton's is the more valuable, as he was able to use his knowledge of Arabic to glean much information from coastal traders at Tabora and Ujiji². Neither man, however, visited Buganda at this time. Burton was an impressive and highly complex character: his writings and their biases are open to extensive analysis. But the historian has two main problems with Burton, the first being that he was a fervent admirer of Arab culture and frequently went to some lengths to depict African civilisation in a particularly harsh light. Secondly, his is not a first-hand account: while his *Lake Regions* provides much useful data on Buganda toward the end of Suna's reign, we should be suspicious of his implicit claim to quote *verbatim* his Arab informants.

Speke returned to the lake region in 1861-2 intending to prove that the Nile ran out of Lake Victoria, and in 1862 became the first European to reach Buganda. A little later he was joined by his companion James Grant, and the books written by these two are among the essential primary sources for historians of Buganda and indeed of East

²R.F.Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa* (London, 1860) 2 Vols. The bulk of Burton's text had appeared the year before: see R.F.Burton, 'The Lake Regions of Equatorial Africa', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, 29 (1859) 1-454. For Speke's account of this expedition, see J.H.Speke, *What Led to the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (Edinburgh & London, 1864)

Africa generally³. Their accounts are remarkably detailed, particularly that of Speke who spent a total of six months in the kingdom. The reliability of the information is somewhat harder to assess. Burton was by far the most intelligent of the three, and possibly of any of the European observers to visit pre-colonial Buganda. But perhaps it is this very intellect which renders Burton less reliable. He was able and, moreover, willing to manipulate what he saw into something he wanted his readers to see. Conversely, Speke and Grant may therefore be more reliable: it is a tenuous argument, but possibly their duller minds and less active imaginations led them to record what they saw more faithfully. They were, however, ostensibly staunch humanitarians and opposed to the slave trade: Speke in particular repeatedly alludes to the cruelty of Ganda society, the apparent worthlessness of human life at the Ganda court, and, ultimately, the arbitrary and unquestioned authority of the *kabaka*. It might be suggested that this was some time before the call for Christian humanitarianism in Buganda reached any kind of force, and that Speke mentioned these acts of barbarity and savage power more to show himself in a healthy light. According to his *Journal*, for example, on more than one occasion Speke intervened to prevent Mutesa from committing bloody crimes. Nonetheless, there was already a growing missionary presence in East Africa at this time, and Speke's emphasis on such matters may have been partly designed to arouse missionary interest.

The content of the books themselves, and what their respective authors actually thought valuable to record, is also worth noting. Speke wrote almost wholly in the first person: compared to Grant, much of what Speke described involved himself. This was the case in his descriptions of his relations with the *kabaka*, and how he refused to be degraded in those relations; and also in his regular reminders to the reader of the greatness of his geographical discoveries, and how, in this respect, he

³J.H. Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (Edinburgh & London, 1863); J.A. Grant, *A Walk Across Africa* (Edinburgh & London, 1864); J.A. Grant, 'Summary of observations on the geography, climate, and natural history of the lake region of Equatorial Africa', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, 42 (1872) 243-342

had been right all along. Close reading of Speke's *Journal* reveals an arrogance and egotism which is less evident in Grant's work. Grant did indeed play second fiddle on the expedition, and seems to have been content with this arrangement. There is less of the first person in his narrative, except when he complains of dreadful journeys and ill-health (Grant suffered more than Speke). Grant concentrated much more on aspects of Buganda which Speke presumably found uninteresting, such as botany, agriculture and trade; his account qualifies Speke's image of the omnipotent ruler. In Grant's writing, then, we sense a more prosaic man content to get on with the job at hand and indeed happy to be involved at all. Such level-headedness perhaps makes him a more attractive historical source. It is also possible to consult the original manuscripts of these works, and in Grant's case his actual 'African Journal', which raises the question of editorial tampering. From my own brief period working in the relevant archive, however, there appears to be little deviation between manuscript and published form, although Grant's original journal may be worth examining more closely⁴.

Twelve years passed before another European visited Buganda, although in the intervening period two travellers, Baker, who was governor of Equatoria between 1869 and 1873, and Livingstone, had dealings with the kingdom's envoys⁵. Neither is a major source, although Livingstone's account of the Ganda at Tabora in 1872 is of interest, while he also gleaned information about Buganda from Arab merchants. Livingstone's own biases are well-known: Africa was the 'open sore of the world', cursed by warfare and the slave trade. In his brief treatment of Buganda, he seems to have been determined to depict Mutesa in a harsh light as a tyrannical and brutal ruler

⁴The Grant Papers, National Library of Scotland, MS 17915. Grant's handwriting is, unfortunately, extremely difficult to read. See also the private collection of William Blackwood & Sons (Speke and Grant's publishers), National Library of Scotland, MSS 4872-4874, for the manuscript and proofs of Speke's *Journal*.

⁵S.Baker, *Albert Nyanza, Great Basin of the Nile* (London, 1866) II, 187-8; S.Baker, *Ismailia* (London, 1874) II, 461-3; H.Waller (ed.), *The Last Journals of David Livingstone in Central Africa* (London, 1874) II, 226-7

committed to the slave trade and the accumulation of firearms. Later missionaries in Buganda itself expressed similar sentiments.

These accounts were followed by the major testimonies of the mid-1870s. Colonel Chaillé-Long, in the service of the Egyptian Government, reached Buganda from the north in 1874, while Henry Morton Stanley arrived there in 1875⁶: the latter's account in particular is of enormous importance to historians. Chaillé-Long is an informative, though under-used, source. He was determined, however, to show that he could not be pushed around by any African king; moreover, he apparently relished his own descriptions of royal cruelty, as seen, for example, in the rows of skulls to be spotted on leaving the capital. He also wanted to make clear that Buganda was not as beautiful as the few previous travellers had heard or suggested. It is clear that Chaillé-Long was attempting to carve a niche for himself in the rapidly-expanding market for Africana in Europe. Opinionated adventurers were virtually guaranteed a reading public hungry for tales of dark ritual and bloody deeds.

No-one understood this better than Stanley who four years before his arrival in Buganda had made his name as the man who 'found' Livingstone, and who ever since had been striving to prove that he was capable of much more. Stanley's *Dark Continent*, like the works of Speke and Grant before it, is an important source for pre-colonial Buganda; unfortunately, as with Burton, it is virtually impossible to divorce the man himself from what he wrote. Desperate for respect, Stanley projected himself as Livingstone's rightful heir. He claimed to have introduced major innovations to Ganda military and economic culture: for example, he famously maintained that he had initiated trade between Buganda and the south end of Lake Victoria, which, as we shall see in Chapter 8 below, was patent nonsense⁷. Stanley

⁶C. Chaillé-Long, *Central Africa: Naked Truths of Naked Peoples* (London, 1876); the major account of Stanley's expedition is contained in H.M. Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent* (London, 1878) 2 Vols., although there are others, as we shall see below.

⁷On a smaller scale, he claimed that he suggested to the Ganda during their war with Buvuma in 1875 that a causeway might be built across the narrow strip of water, enabling them to attack the enemy.

was also notoriously impatient with his African entourage; he was positively bellicose towards hostile Africans which he met *en route*. Comparison between *Dark Continent*, which was his final version of events, and more recently published diaries and letters⁸ would seem to suggest that Stanley played down the use of his gun against Africans when it came to presenting the 'facts' to the public. These considerations clearly affect the reading of Stanley's evidence. His attempt to portray Buganda in the best tradition of the 'noble savage' but one which was morally bankrupt and crying out for redemption is doubtful in its historicity. Yet Stanley did possess a keen eye for detail, and his rich descriptions of Ganda daily life, though idealised, are among the best we have. He was certainly successful in his call for missionary work in Buganda: by the end of the decade, the Anglican Church Missionary Society and the French White Fathers had arrived in some force.

Emin Pasha, the governor-general of Equatoria who visited Buganda in 1876 and again in 1877-8, is also an important source. Alert, intelligent and informed, Emin had an eye for detail which was unsurpassed among the nineteenth-century visitors to the kingdom, and his descriptions of commerce and agriculture are among the richest available to the historian of Buganda⁹. Moreover, his scientific training allowed him to make illuminating observations concerning mineral deposits and the natural environment. The missionary Robert Felkin is also worthy of special mention: although in Buganda for a comparatively short period in 1879, Felkin clearly made the most of his stay and had much of interest to say on a wide range of topics. As with Emin Pasha, it is Felkin's attention to detail - for example, in his discussions of

However, there is evidence that this tactic was employed during the reign of Suna: A.Kagwa [tr.&ed.M.S.M.Kiwanuka], *The Kings of Buganda* (Nairobi, 1971) 129

⁸R.Stanley & A.Neame (eds.), *The Exploration Diaries of H.M.Stanley* (New York, 1961); N.R.Bennett (ed.), *Stanley's Despatches to the New York Herald, 1871-2, 1874-7* (Boston, 1970)

⁹I have used translations of Emin's writings: in particular, see G.Schweinfurth *et al* (eds.), *Emin Pasha in Central Africa* (London, 1888), and G.Schweitzer (ed.), *Emin Pasha: His Life and Work* (London, 1898) 2 Vols.. See also translated extracts by J.M.Gray, 'The diaries of Emin Pasha', *Uganda Journal*, 25 (1961) 1-10, 149-70, and *Uganda Journal*, 26 (1962) 72-95

slavery and of military organisation - which sets him apart from many of his colleagues and contemporaries¹⁰.

From the late 1870s onward, the published source material becomes voluminous, and indeed there is too much of it to recount in detail here¹¹. Missionaries, soldiers, colonial administrators and sportsmen published volumes on Buganda or the broader region, most of which contain something worthy of the historian's attention but which all suffer from the kind of literary limitations discussed above¹². Many of them describe periods and events outside the chronological scope of this thesis, yet they are still worthy of close examination, for two main reasons. Firstly, such works often *are* describing pre-colonial conditions: it is clearly foolhardy to ignore an account simply because it was written in and about the mid-1890s, for example, as though every aspect of Ganda life depicted therein will have radically altered since the establishment of the Protectorate. Secondly, it is often clear where changes *have* taken place since, say, 1890, and the ways in which such changes may have been instigated by an early colonial authority¹³. Not only are these of interest in themselves; for the purpose of pre-colonial history they provide clues to what the situation had been previously, even if the former situation is not made explicit.

One of the most prolific though problematic of the later observers was John Roscoe¹⁴. He collected vast amounts of data both by his own efforts and through Ganda

¹⁰See C.T.Wilson & R.W.Felkin, *Uganda and the Egyptian Soudan* (London, 1882) 2 Vols; R.W.Felkin, 'Notes on the Waganda tribe of Central Africa', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, 13 (1885-6) 699-770

¹¹See the bibliography for a full list of relevant material.

¹²The more significant publications include: R.P.Ashe, *Two Kings of Uganda* (London, 1889) and *Chronicles of Uganda* (London, 1894), already mentioned in a historiographical context; G.Casati, *Ten Years in Equatoria* (London & New York, 1891) 2 Vols.; A.R.Cook, *Uganda Memories 1897-1940* (Kampala, 1945); L.Decle, *Three Years in Savage Africa* (London, 1898); J.R.MacDonald, *Soldiering and Surveying in British East Africa* (London & New York, 1897)

¹³Military organisation and agriculture, for example, had undergone relatively recent changes by the mid-1890s. Backward extrapolation, used with discretion, may still be a profitable method of reconstruction.

¹⁴His major work is *The Baganda: an account of their customs and beliefs* (London, 1911). A later and more general volume also contains some relevant material: see *Twenty-five Years in East Africa*

collaborators, most famously Apolo Kagwa, relating to the pre-colonial kingdom. Roscoe served in Buganda as a missionary from 1891, but he was keen to concentrate on Buganda in the reigns of Suna and Mutesa, as he himself suggests in his introduction to *The Baganda*. Roscoe, however, was actually doing the fieldwork of an eminent British anthropologist, J.G.Frazer, and was thus confined to a fixed agenda. Frazer, and thus Roscoe himself, was concerned with ritual and 'primitive belief', seeking to demonstrate the progression of man from magical through religious to scientific thought. Much of Roscoe's work reflects this, and the missionary spilt much ink describing those (apparently endless) ceremonial aspects of Ganda life which seemed to support his mentor's thesis. Nonetheless, with these reservations firmly in mind, Roscoe is an important source; he is particularly informative on aspects of military organisation and the growth and operation of commerce which other, possibly more reliable, sources ignore.

Unpublished European Accounts¹⁵

Research for this thesis was carried out in three main archives: the Church Missionary Society archive at the University of Birmingham, the archives of the White Fathers in Rome, and the Uganda National Archives at Entebbe¹⁶. The criticisms discussed above also apply to the archival material, but several points are worth making with regard to unpublished accounts. In general, it is clear that unpublished accounts are theoretically more reliable, being more immediate and unburdened by afterthought. This is, of course, relative: some of Lugard's letters to the Imperial British East Africa Company in the Uganda National Archives describe the events of several months past. Arguably, this is ample time for careful and

(London, 1921). For a critique of Roscoe's work, and its relation to that of Kagwa, see J.A.Rowe, 'Roscoe's and Kagwa's Buganda', *Journal of African History*, 8 (1967) 163-6

¹⁵The ensuing discussion is also relevant to personal diaries published posthumously. John Gray's 'The diaries of Emin Pasha' and H.Waller's edition of *The Last Journals of David Livingstone in Central Africa*, mentioned above, are cases in point, as is M.Perham (ed.), *The Diaries of Lord Lugard* (London, 1959). Vols.I-3 of Lugard's *Diaries* are relevant to historians of Buganda.

¹⁶Some work was also done in the Public Record Office at Kew, and at Rhodes House Library in Oxford.

deliberate wording. By contrast, the entries of the White Fathers' 'Rubaga Diary' were in general made daily, when thoughts and impressions were fresh. Both these examples have advantages and disadvantages. Analytical afterthought on the part of the witness is not *necessarily* unhelpful, while temporarily forgotten events can return to memory with the passage of time. Equally, however, such analysis, given the time to flourish, is naturally selective and the writer provides a more manipulated account as a result. Facts considered by the writer as unimportant to his or her *interpretation* of events are lost.

Precautions taken, one can state unequivocally that both missionary archives are extraordinarily rich. The CMS arrived in Buganda in 1877, the White Fathers in 1879. Unfortunately for the historian, the White Fathers left Buganda in 1882 and did not return until 1885. Moreover, both organisations were confined to the capital until the early 1890s. Even so, the material they provide on commerce, on local agriculture, on food shortage and cattle disease, and on warfare is invaluable. To some extent, the Anglican missionaries appear to have had less time and respect for indigenous society, and on balance provide less data than their French counterparts. Alexander Mackay, the most vociferous of the Anglicans, best typifies this: his attention to detail was striking, and when he chose to he was able to produce some wonderful accounts of local events and developments. But his fierce brand of evangelism more often than not led him to simply summarise all around him as the work of Satan, and to wax lyrical on the need for Christ in Buganda¹⁷. Something of a dilemma is also presented by Mackay's vehement anti-slave trade sentiments. He offers some fine accounts (as well as figures) of the slave trade; yet we know that his axe was being well and truly ground. Whether or not we regard his descriptions as exaggerations, however, they are too detailed to ignore. Moreover, Mackay was an 'artisan missionary' and the 'handy-man' of the CMS mission: he had an eye for the

¹⁷This is even more true of the published account of Mackay's life, compiled from his diary and letters shortly after his death: see A.M.Mackay [ed. by his sister], *Pioneer Missionary in Uganda* (London, 1890)

way in which certain Ganda industries were organised, and a grasp of how things worked. It was Mackay, after all, who introduced printing to Buganda.

The White Fathers, by contrast, were less given to evangelical rants. Their genuine interest in the Ganda and their society is evident in both their diaries and letters¹⁸. They seem to have become directly involved in local developments, for example in commerce. Much to the Anglicans' indignation, the White Fathers regularly purchased slaves from the Ganda: the French were no less opposed to the trade than the CMS, but it seemed to them that purchase was the quickest way to liberation and, of course, conversion. Whatever the motives, this policy meant that the White Fathers developed close contacts with slave dealers and were able to describe buying processes, origins of slaves, prices and commodities to be exchanged. Their accounts are thus remarkably rich. Clearly, the three-year absence in the early 1880s represents a major gap in our knowledge.

The main strength of the relevant material in the Uganda National Archives, by comparison, is the fact that they contain reports on conditions outside the capital. The correspondence, written by colonial field officers whose prejudices were now backed by political authority, describes areas of Buganda, and the issues which affected those areas, on which no written source had existed previously. Again backwards extrapolation is usually necessary, but many of the accounts are rich in data clearly pertaining to the pre-colonial era. Descriptions of regional commerce, for example, are particularly informative: as late as 1905, as we shall see in Chapter 5, reports on trade between Bunyoro and Buganda are relevant to the period under examination. Colonial officers were often dispatched to areas which had remained relatively unaffected by the British presence in Kampala. The accounts of the Sesse islands, for example, are especially revealing: it seems as though Sesse chiefs were

¹⁸See also their published works, especially J.Gorju, *Entre le Victoria, l'Albert et l'Edouard* (Rennes, 1920), and A.Nicq (ed.), *Le Père Simeon Lourdel* (Algiers, 1906). Their annual publication *Les Missions Catholiques* is also a mine of information: a full set of these is held at the Rome archive.

willing to air grievances to colonial officials concerning their relations with the mainland. Such grievances, which were clearly pre-colonial by their very nature, tell us much about the role of the Sesse in nineteenth-century Ganda development.

Ganda Source Materials

As pointed out in Chapter 1, I have consulted translations of the work by Kagwa and other Ganda authors. While clearly convenient for those untutored in Luganda, these editions are liable to misuse. Rowe, for example, has shown that Kalibala's translation of Kagwa's *Ekitabo kye mpisa za Baganda* is often misleading and lacks the thoroughness one might expect from a more scholarly effort¹⁹. In an attempt to offset this disadvantage, I have tried to avoid analysis of precise wording, i.e. the words of the translators themselves.

The problems of dealing with recorded oral histories and 'traditions' are well-documented in the case of Buganda and have been explored by, in particular, Henige, Kiwanuka, Rowe and Wrigley²⁰. This thesis has taken account of their criticisms of such sources, even though these writers were largely concerned to question the reliability of recorded political, rather than social or economic, history. The idea that Buganda was governed by a Western-style royal dynasty, with a chronologically-structured succession list, was first put in writing by Speke, who provided the earliest kinglist²¹. Over the ensuing forty years, this kinglist was lengthened and virtually set in stone, largely through the writings of Kagwa. The explanation of pre-colonial Ganda government in the terminology of the Western constitutional monarchy

¹⁹Rowe, 'Roscoe's and Kagwa's Buganda', 165. Rowe indicates that Roscoe and Kagwa often used the same sources of information; each probably helped shape the other's work, such was the extent of their collaboration.

²⁰D.Henige, 'Reflections on early interlacustrine chronology: an essay in source criticism', *Journal of African History*, 15:1 (1974) 27-46; D.Henige, "'The Disease of Writing': Ganda and Nyoro kinglists in a newly literate world', in J.C.Miller (ed.), *The African Past Speaks* (Folkestone/Hamden, 1980) 240-61; Kiwanuka's 'Preface' to Kagwa, *Kings*; J.A.Rowe, 'Myth, memoir and moral admonition: Luganda historical writing 1893-1969', *Uganda Journal*, 33:1 (1969) 17-40; C.C.Wrigley, *Kingship and State: the Buganda dynasty* (Cambridge, 1996), esp. Chapter 2

²¹Speke, *Journal* 252

doubtless served very well the purposes of the new colonial power, which was able to claim that they were merely backing up an extant political organisation. But this arrangement also suited the Ganda, as Wrigley and Twaddle have suggested²². Both these authors incisively argue that the Ganda kinglist was manipulated to meet the challenges of the colonial period.

The material contained in the works of Kagwa²³, Miti²⁴ and Zimbe²⁵, as well as in the *Munno* series²⁶, must therefore be treated with considerable caution, particularly when it purports to describe political history. Kagwa's *Kings* is primarily a political history, but it is the references to warfare with which this thesis is concerned. Descriptions of battles and campaigns abound: these may also, like the kinglist itself, be manipulated or simply invented. It is clear that much scepticism is required, as well as a good deal of reading between the lines. But Kagwa's prosaic narrative is an advantage: rarely does he explicitly venture his own opinions or analysis of particular events. This lends credence to his writing, as does the fact that he does not present the reader with a catalogue of Ganda victories: defeats are also recorded, as are wars which lasted for a relatively long time because the Ganda were unable to overcome their enemies. It is possible, then, to discern general developments, to date the growth of Ganda military power, and to judge which rulers may have been the most successful in terms of the extension of Ganda influence. Kagwa's data on the eighteenth century, for example, is particularly rich: it can also be usefully compared with material on *Kabaka* Mawanda in *Munno*. Miti and Zimbe, who to some extent wrote their histories to counter Kagwa's version, are less useful on the period before

²²Wrigley, *Kingship and State* 113; M. Twaddle, 'On Ganda historiography', *History in Africa*, 1 (1974) 303-15

²³These works have already been mentioned, namely Kiwanuka's scholarly edition and translation of *Kings; Customs of the Baganda*; and 'A Book of Clans of Buganda'. The last of these is an unpublished typescript held at Makerere University Library.

²⁴Miti, 'A History of Buganda', manuscript held in the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London

²⁵Zimbe, 'Buganda'. This is also an unpublished typescript, held at Makerere University Library.

²⁶A number of articles from the early *Munno* volumes have been used. Thanks go to Mr. Richard Ssewakiryanga of Makerere University for his assistance in translating this material, as well as discussing it with me in unlikely venues.

Mutesa, but again their accounts of military developments in the second half of the nineteenth century are valuable.

Much of the material in these writers' work is, of course, allegorical, and accurate interpretation becomes a matter of intelligent guesswork. This is the case, for example, with Kagwa's description of the first luxury trade goods to reach the Ganda court in the late eighteenth century, as we shall see in Chapter 5. But often sources of this kind casually mention events, or places, or interactions between people, which tell us much about social and economic conditions. Again, we are concerned with the examination of the background, not the foreground, of the picture. Kagwa states that *Kabaka* Semakokiro ordered the Ganda to grow barkcloth trees. Kagwa himself seems to have regarded this as important enough to mention, but it is scarcely something which he should want to invent. In other sources, there are casual references to canoes, or the growth of certain crops, or a fishing village which seems to have been a trading centre: these are aspects of life which would hardly have been 'made up' for the sake of political or intellectual convenience in the early colonial period. Such glimpses into areas of the past which have been neglected are critical to our reconstruction of economic, social and commercial change. Conversely, the fact that a particular source fails to mention these 'other dimensions' - Kagwa's *Kings*, for example - is scarcely evidence that they did not exist. Just as literate Ganda had their reasons for including certain 'information' about their country's past in their writings, equally they had *no reason* to include data which was perceived as unimportant, or simply taken for granted. Thus, when such data does appear, it is all the more credible.

Kagwa's *Clans of Buganda* is a mine of information in this regard. Clan histories can also be responses to current political circumstances, manipulated by the needs of the present rather than intellectual curiosity about the past. Still, they are important sources for social and economic history, incorporating data on tools, professions,

social mobility, and so on: such data may or may not be part of a carefully crafted 'clan heritage' but the fact that it is included at all is the historian's concern. Economic, material and military change in Buganda can thus be reconstructed from the debris left in the wake of rapidly-constructed political histories. As Justin Willis has recently pointed out²⁷, the use made by historians of 'clans' to reconstruct the East African past is open to question: the concept of 'clan' itself may be a dubious one. The use of clan histories in this thesis is restricted to what they can tell us about military and economic developments germane to the kingdom as a whole, or perhaps to particular districts, not as historical building blocks in themselves.

Material Culture as Evidence

Finally, the work of Trowell and Wachsmann, both in print²⁸ and at the Uganda Museum in Kampala, is of great value to the historian of Buganda. Their *Tribal Crafts* contains much of value regarding material culture, with hundreds of detailed drawings of artefacts and implements used in a broad range of activities from hunting to fishing to agriculture. Historians of the region's economic and material past can find an enormous amount of data therein. Some such artefacts may also be viewed at the Uganda Museum, where at present there are impressive displays of implements employed in iron-working, fishing and farming during the pre-colonial and early colonial eras. The military displays are particularly striking: nineteenth-century European accounts do not prepare one for the sight of an actual Ganda spear and shield. It is, of course, educational to view these artefacts up close; yet they are sources of inspiration to the historian as much as reminders of the living past.

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²⁷J. Willis, 'Clan and history in Western Uganda: a new perspective on the origins of pastoral dominance', Annual Lecture of the British Institute in Eastern Africa, London 2 February 1996

²⁸In particular, see: M. Trowell, 'Some royal craftsmen of Buganda', *Uganda Journal*, 8:2 (1941) 47-64; M. Trowell, 'Clues to African tribal history', *Uganda Journal*, 10:2 (1946) 54-63; M. Trowell & K. Wachsmann, *Tribal Crafts of Uganda* (London, 1953)

I conclude the chapter by considering some of the characteristics of the European sources. Western contextualisations are clearly visible, especially in the earlier accounts describing political customs and institutions. Perhaps the most obvious example is the manner in which Mutesa was perceived as omnipotent, an absolute despot with whom no-one dared disagree. Europe had only relatively recently cast aside the notion of divine kingship: European observers, imbued with the values of science and reason, assumed that Africa must still belong to that dark and savage era. They witnessed the highest chiefs in the land grovel in the dust before the *kabaka*; the court rang with cries of loyalty to the *kabaka* and reverent proclamations concerning the time-honoured authority vested therein. Only in the late 1870s did a few missionaries begin to wonder if all of this was not some elaborate but meaningless court performance. Similar contextualisations occurred when Europeans observed the Ganda economy. Most travellers commented upon the apparent prosperity of the country: the abundance of luxuriant vegetation, the fertility of the soil, and the seeming ease with which the Ganda won their livelihood from a freely-giving environment. But these observations led Europeans to conclude that the Ganda economy was static: sometimes depicted as a soporific idyll, the Ganda economy was inherently unprogressive, while the people themselves were lazy and unwilling to aspire to anything greater than a regular supply of bananas. This was a one-dimensional view of a tropical production system. Representatives of the 'workshop of the world' imposed, and continue to impose, their own notions of 'economic progress' on Buganda and tropical Africa more generally.

We find ourselves in the position, then, of disagreeing on a fundamental level with the views expressed by contemporary Europeans while relying on their evidence to reconstruct the past which they have witnessed. As we shall see, it is usually possible to pinpoint comments and observations which in fact contradict the overall conclusions of the witness: in the economic context, such evidence supports the thesis that the Ganda economy was often 'dynamic', that it exhibited both change and

continuity, and that it was certainly more complex than might initially be supposed. Unfortunately, as we have seen in the previous chapter, extant scholarship had tended to overlook this²⁹, assuming that only with the establishment of European administration and the development of large-scale export crops did the Ganda economy begin to 'expand' and 'progress'. Despite the wealth of economic and social data, however, the preoccupation of nineteenth-century observers with political organisation is clear, and modern scholars have tended to follow the line of their gaze. In general, Europeans *were* more interested in Ganda political structures and the rationalisation of kingship than in exchange or production. They were more likely to convey a sense of bloody and mindless violence when describing military activity, rather than attempt to understand the complexity of military organisation and the motives behind warfare. In a crude sense, the European sources have tended to dictate the terms by which Ganda historiography has been composed. But the evidence to support a more sophisticated history *does* exist, if one looks hard enough. Of course work of this kind is a gamble, as was suggested to the present writer by a senior scholar: the source material is not as straightforward as it is for a later period and on a different theme. But in the realm of historical enquiry, to remain stationary is eventually to go backward.

²⁹See Waller, 'Traditional Economy', for a partial exception to this rule.

CHAPTER 3

The History of Ganda Production # 1: Crops and Animals

In this and the next chapter, we will examine the key areas of Ganda production, a term which is used with a certain flexibility. Thus there are included in the present chapter studies of farming, pastoralism, hunting and fishing, while in the next we examine such activities as barkcloth-making, metal-working and pottery. All of these are germane to the broader examination of the ways in which land was used and energy expended. Some were clearly more important than others, but taken as a whole they represent the chief occupations in Buganda during the nineteenth century, occupations which had a significant impact on the economic and material development of the kingdom. As we shall see, agricultural production was crucial to the development of Ganda political and economic society, while the search for good pastureland and the need to secure ivory supplies were driving forces behind Ganda expansion. Throughout the nineteenth century, Buganda had experienced food shortages; in the last decades of the century, however, the kingdom was beset by ecological crises which severely impaired military growth, aggravated internal social and political tensions, and undermined the kingdom's ability to meet external challenges, both commercial and political.

As will be clear from the account given below, Ganda agriculture was characterised to some extent by regional diversity. In his travels toward the lake shore in 1878, Emin Pasha commented upon the apparent industriousness of the people, suggesting that "new fields and plantations were springing into existence"¹. Clearly the land around the capital was much used. Cultivation here was probably more intensive than elsewhere in the kingdom, with the exception of the fertile areas of Buddu and Kyagwe. Much of Singo and Bulemezi was less fertile than areas nearer the lake, and

¹G.Schweinfurth *et al* (eds.), *Emin Pasha in Central Africa* (London, 1888) 39

large tracts of land were more suited to the keeping of cattle than to agriculture. In the northern parts of the kingdom, plantations were less common; this was in large part due to the higher level of rainfall to the south². Nevertheless, there were few uncultivated areas in Buganda by the late nineteenth century. Even in the 'frontier' regions between Singo and Bulemezi and Bunyoro, or between western Buddu and Ankole, characterised by rolling pastureland, bananas were grown, as were maize, sorghum and durra, and sweet potatoes.

Notwithstanding the changes which were wrought on the region during the nineteenth century, it is possible to make some general remarks concerning regional diversity. The *ssaza* of Kyadondo, for example, had a relatively low plantain yield, and depended more on sweet potatoes. Singo was noted more for its pastureland than its agriculture, although it is worth noting Kagwa's assertion that famine or food shortage was markedly absent from Singo's history. Although parts of Kyagwe were devoted to the raising of livestock, the *ssaza* was also rich in bananas, particularly in the south. The Kyagwe districts of Kasai and Mpoma were renowned for producing plentiful and much-favoured coffee-crops. Bulemezi was not generally noted as being agriculturally prosperous, but Busiro to the south enjoyed a high yield of sweet potatoes, yams, sugar-cane and a number of fruits, if not of bananas: again, Kagwa tells us that famine "was never felt here as severely as in other parts of the country". Mawokota was wealthy in bananas and potatoes, while pastoralism was predominant in Busujju and Gomba, although the former also contained extensive arable land. Buddu, it would seem, was rich in just about everything, although in indigenous accounts agriculture is to some extent overshadowed by the famed local industries, such as barkcloth production and iron-working³. Alongside bananas and sweet potatoes, sesame⁴ was common to most districts.

²For example, J. Roscoe, *The Baganda* (London, 1911) 4

³A. Kagwa [tr. E. B. Kalibala, ed. M. M. Edel], *Customs of the Baganda* (New York, 1934) 162-6

⁴For example, H. M. Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent* (London, 1878) I, 383; H. B. Thomas & R. Scott, *Uganda* (London, 1935) 113, 153

Bananas⁵

By the late nineteenth century Ganda agriculture was diverse, but throughout the period under study - and indeed up until the present day - the banana in its many forms was the staple crop in Buganda, as in many areas of East Africa. It was introduced to the region from Southeast Asia, although exactly when remains a matter of debate⁶. Certainly, the banana tree is thought to have been crucial in the early Bantu colonisation of the forest environment, and important to Buganda's economic, social and, ultimately, political development. Ganda society developed to some extent around the banana plant: to use Feierman's neat summary, "Buganda's banana and plantain gardens were the key to the economic, and therefore political, value of land"⁷. The relative stability of the crop facilitated the stability of settlement, as Richards has argued: "Ganda villages certainly had fixed names and, since bananas can be cultivated many years on the same spot, many such settlements may well have been in existence for 200 to 300 years"⁸.

The banana tree transcended divisions of class and clan. It was an investment for life, for, once fully grown, it can produce fruit for many years. For the Ganda, the plant was closely associated with the foundation of their kingdom and was perhaps seen to

⁵Most historians of Buganda have had something to say about the ubiquitous banana, and the ensuing discussion owes much to their analyses. To mention just a few, some of the more pertinent writings include: G.A.Wainwright, 'The coming of the banana to Uganda', *Uganda Journal*, 16:2 (1952) 145-47; B.W.Langlands, 'The banana in Uganda 1860-1920', *Uganda Journal*, 30:1 (1966) 39-63; C.C.Wrigley, 'Buganda: an outline economic history', *Economic History Review*, 10 (1957) 60-80; C.C.Wrigley, 'Bananas in Buganda', *Azania*, 24 (1989) 64-70

⁶A brief sample of suggestions shows the uncertainty surrounding this question. In 1968, John Sutton suggested that bananas "began to reach Africa about two thousand years ago along the trade and migration routes of the Indian Ocean": J.E.G.Sutton, 'The Settlement of East Africa', in B.A.Ogot & J.A.Kieran (eds.), *Zamani: a survey of East African history* (Nairobi, 1968) 72. Vansina places their introduction considerably earlier, possibly in the first millennium BC.. He points out that after the banana tree was introduced to Buganda, it produced there "twenty-one original somatic mutants - mutations in the body cell, not from cross-fertilisation". This process in itself may have taken two thousand years: in P.Curtin *et al* (eds.), *African History* (London & New York, 1978) 18. More recently, Christopher Wrigley wrote of bananas: "When they arrived in this area, and what the inhabitants ate beforehand, are the most important questions in the history of Buganda and the most difficult to answer": C.C.Wrigley, *Kingship and State: the Buganda dynasty* (Cambridge, 1996) 61

⁷Curtin *et al*, *African History*, 170

⁸A.I.Richards, *The Changing Structure of a Ganda Village* (Kampala, 1966) 19

have viviparous qualities⁹. According to one tradition told to Stanley, Kintu brought to Buganda the first banana-root and sweet potato¹⁰. Indeed the *ngo* clan claim to have been in possession of the first plantain under Kintu, a claim which underlines the perceived 'sacredness' of the plant¹¹.

There was a wide variety of bananas in the nineteenth century. Emin Pasha noted in 1877 that certain types were used in the making of beer, and others only for cooking¹². A number come under the generic term *gonja*, which is a large sweet plantain eaten either baked or boiled, while the most common type consumed was and remains *matooke*. *Kitembe* refers to a wild plantain, although it is unclear whether this was put to any use, while *kiwata* was the banana and plantain peel which was often fed to domestic animals as supplementary food. Some regional names also existed for bananas grown in particular *ssazas*: *nnakabululu* and *nnakinnyika*, for example, were the commonest types cultivated in Buddu, and would presumably have become widely available to the Ganda in the late eighteenth century. Similarly, *nnakyetengu* refers to a short plantain tree common in Kyagwe. Certain plantations may also have had reputations for high-quality produce. Emin Pasha noted the area of 'Debatu', just north of the Ganda capital, which in the late 1870s was "celebrated throughout Uganda on account of the quality and excellence of its bananas"¹³.

Writers such as Wrigley, who considered cultivation of bananas 'simple' and food preparation 'even simpler', and Low, for whom food production was equally straightforward and undemanding¹⁴, have suggested that the banana virtually cultivated itself. This meant that women could thus take charge of production, leaving

⁹This may be set in contrast to the perception of the banana in Eastern religion: for Buddha, the banana plant was the symbol of the futility of earthly possessions, because its 'flowers' were sterile and no fertilisation thus occurred: M. Toussaint-Samat [tr. A. Bell], *The History of Food* (Cambridge, 1994) 678

¹⁰Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 345-6

¹¹Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 141

¹²Schweinfurth, *Emin Pasha*, 38-9

¹³*ibid.*, 48

¹⁴Wrigley, *Kingship and State*, 60; D. A. Low, *Buganda in Modern History* (London, 1971) 13

the men to indulge in their preferred pursuits of war and politics. The implied argument that because cultivation was largely (but by no means wholly) a female occupation, it therefore was a less significant activity in Ganda life, is surely gratuitous. Indeed one must challenge the sharp distinction thus made between cultivation on the one hand, and war/politics on the other, as though they were not perpetually changing and intermingling within the overall make-up of a society. It is certainly not clear that bananas were as easily produced as has been suggested. One missionary regarded the process as "quite an art", involving constant careful pruning, the laying of fertiliser (using dead leaves and outer layers of fibre from the stems) and, above all, the struggle to ensure successive crops¹⁵. It was, in sum, a formidable responsibility. Moreover, as we shall see below, Buganda's food supply was not always as certain as has been assumed.

Crops and Plantations

Much of the agricultural work was performed by women. Most of the nineteenth-century accounts of the maintenance of plantations describe the female struggle to keep the family supplied with food. Emin noted women "digging in the fields, planting sweet potatoes or plucking up the grass"¹⁶. Kagwa tells us that millet, for example, had to be harvested by women. Nonetheless, men also had important roles to play in agriculture: it was they who constructed racks for the storing of sesame, and while the women winnowed it, the men beat the grain¹⁷. Moreover, it was the men who undertook the initial clearing of land for a plantation, removing grass and bush so that the women could begin their digging¹⁸. Still, there seems little doubting

¹⁵Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 429-31. During the dry season, banana trees were left largely to themselves, although fruit was removed as it ripened. The bulk of the work was performed during the wet seasons. Banana trees have the great advantage of producing food all year around (although less so during dry seasons), but the price of this is more or less constant labour. Moreover, a banana plant produces only one bunch or 'hand' in its life, although that bunch may consist of anything up to 400 bananas. After this it dies, and a banana plantation is perpetuated by the planting of rhizomes or cuttings of spontaneous shoots: Toussaint-Samat, *History of Food*, 678-9

¹⁶Schweinfurth, *Emin Pasha*, 124

¹⁷Kagwa, *Customs*, 108

¹⁸Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 427

the essential truth in Roscoe's assertion that "Girls were taught to cook and to cultivate as soon as they could hoe; to be a successful manager of the plantain grove and to be an expert cook were regarded as a woman's best accomplishments"¹⁹.

Plantations were never solely devoted to the banana. When a family or 'peasant unit' acquired land and sought to establish a plantation, banana tree shoots would be provided by the extended family, or perhaps by friends and neighbours; yet the first crop of bananas would not appear for at least twelve months. In the meantime, other foods were used to supplement the diet, again often provided by relatives. Most prominent among these alternative crops, by the nineteenth century, was the sweet potato²⁰. From the outset, then, bananas necessarily formed only part of a farmer's produce. The sweet potato was of more recent introduction than the banana, but by the middle of the nineteenth century it was widely grown. Even so, it seems to have acquired a symbolic foreignness in popular tradition. Stanley was told that *Kabaka Nakibinge* "fought and subjected the Wanyoro, who, from their predilection for sweet potatoes, may have deemed themselves long ago a separate people from the Waganda"²¹.

Plantations tended to be laid out on the sides of the hills which characterise much of Buganda's landscape. The Ganda rarely cultivated in the 'valleys', although an exception may have been made at times of low rainfall, when they were forced to seek moisture for their sweet potato crop. Plantations of bananas might cover considerable areas of land; many would have stretched from hill to hill, being criss-crossed by streams and swamps²². Sweet potatoes may have been planted first in new plots of land, to prepare the soil for banana trees. In 1875, Stanley described the 'average plantation' as being divided into numerous plots, in which were planted

¹⁹ibid., 79

²⁰ibid., 429-30

²¹Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 349-50

²²ibid., 4

large sweet potatoes, yams, green peas, kidney beans, some crawling over the ground, others clinging to supporters, field beans, vetches, and tomatoes. The garden is bordered by castor-oil, manioc, coffee, and tobacco plants. On either side are small patches of millets, sesamum, and sugar-cane. Behind the house and courts, and enfolding them, are the more extensive banana and plantain plantations and grain crops, which furnish [the peasant's] principal food . . .²³

This is probably a somewhat idealised picture, but it does seem likely that most Ganda cultivated a wide variety of crops within their enclosures. Moreover, as we shall see below, food production was undoubtedly diversified with the arrival of the coastal merchants. With regard to the agricultural implements used, there was considerable regional variety. The hoe, of course, was the basic tool in use throughout the region, but that of the Ganda, with its flattened shoulders, was distinct from that of surrounding peoples. The Ganda bill-hook, however - used for clearing bush and pruning banana trees - was basically very similar to that of the Soga and the Nyoro²⁴.

Maize, like the sweet potato, was introduced from the New World²⁵. It was apparently grown by Semakokiro, before his accession, in the second half of the eighteenth century²⁶. Through much of the nineteenth century, however, maize was probably not grown in particularly large quantities, being viewed as a relish or supplementary food, although this may have been changing by the 1870s. It was noted by Speke in 1862²⁷, while in 1877 a missionary noted that a variety of maize grew 'luxuriantly' on higher ground around the capital²⁸. By the mid-1890s, maize or

²³Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 383

²⁴M. Trowell & K. Wachsmann, *Tribal Crafts of Uganda* (London, 1953) 27, 102. This work painstakingly documents dozens of tools used throughout the region, and contains an enormous number of detailed drawings. As we shall see in the following chapter, however, hoes were traded throughout the region, and the Ganda in particular imported iron implements from both Busoga and Bunyoro.

²⁵Sutton, 'The Settlement of East Africa', 72

²⁶A. Kagwa [tr. & ed. M. S. M. Kiwanuka], *The Kings of Buganda* (Nairobi, 1971) 91

²⁷J. H. Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (London & Edinburgh, 1863) 266

²⁸C.M.S. CA6/025/11 Wilson to Wright 21.11.77

'Indian corn' was being grown in northern Bulemezi, and appears to have been almost as common as bananas, sweet potatoes and beans²⁹. Beans, peas, yams and sesame were common, while marrows, groundnuts and tomatoes were probably introduced by the Arabs in the second half of the nineteenth century. Onions, which had been introduced by the mid-1870s, also belong to the latter group, although it is unclear to what extent, if at all, they were grown outside the capital³⁰. A missionary noted in the late 1880s that onions were "not largely cultivated"³¹.

It is clear that the arrival of coastal traders had an impact on local agriculture, although it is not easy to assess the strength of this impact outside the capital. Our assessment depends to some extent on how long we judge the Arabs to have been growing their own crops in Buganda. This had probably begun after 1860: from this time, there was a permanent Arab settlement at or near the Ganda capital, and within a few years their produce had begun to permeate indigenous cultivation. Roscoe suggested that the Arabs had introduced a number of fruits which the Ganda had begun to grow themselves³². At the end of the 1870s, it was reported that wheat and rice were grown solely by the Arab community. The production of these crops was still in the hands of coastal merchants and the Ganda remained untutored in their cultivation. Yet it is likely that the produce itself was stored and consumed by the locals at least in the vicinity of the capital³³. In 1880, wheat was sold to the French mission by a coastal trader who had brought it from Tabora, while around the same time Mutesa himself sent a present of rice to the mission³⁴.

²⁹U.N.A. A2/2 Gibb's 'Diary of Mruli Expedition' 7.5.94

³⁰See note 22.

³¹R. Ashe, *Two Kings of Uganda* (London, 1889) 302ff

³²Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 5

³³A. Mackay [ed. by his sister], *Pioneer Missionary in Uganda* (London, 1890) 108

³⁴White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 1/18.5.80, 28.5.80

Sugar-cane seems to have been reasonably common, and was chewed in a raw state³⁵. Millet was used primarily for the brewing of beer³⁶. Other drinks, of variable alcoholic content, were (and still are) brewed from bananas and plantains. *Kabula*, *lujjukira* and *mufuka* are all types of bananas used solely for brewing; beer in general was an important part of the Ganda diet, and its consumption was an integral part of social interaction. Another crop of great social importance was coffee, although its commonness is difficult to assess. Arriving at Masaka, Buddu, Speke observed that coffee grew "in great profusion all over this land in large bushy trees, the berries sticking on the branches like clusters of holly-berries"³⁷. Indigenous coffee had probably been grown in Buganda for several centuries. The berry was known locally as *mmwanyi* and was classified as *robusta* in 1898³⁸. The antiquity of the crop is hinted at by the story that it was a member of the *ennyonyi* clan who originally 'came with Kintu' to be the latter's 'coffee cook'³⁹. It was rarely, if ever, made into a drink, but normally chewed after being dried and baked in the sun. Throughout the lake region, coffee berries played an important ceremonial role, being offered to guests as part of an elaborate diplomatic process indigenous to Buganda, Toro, Ankole and Bunyoro. Buddu was probably Buganda's most coffee-rich *ssaza*⁴⁰, suggesting that coffee became more widely available in the second half of the eighteenth century. Lugard also tells us that coffee grew "with little cultivation and care" in Buddu⁴¹. It was also cultivated on several islands⁴².

Tobacco was also grown in a number of districts, although possibly those closer to the lake rather than outlying regions; according to Emin Pasha, tobacco grown on higher-

³⁵For example, Thomas & Scott, *Uganda*, 151: "The indigenous types [of sugar] found in Buganda are not suitable for economic cultivation, but are largely grown by natives on their own plots for chewing".

³⁶Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 432-4

³⁷Speke, *Journal*, 275

³⁸Thomas & Scott, *Uganda*, 143-4. *Robusta* was distinct from *arabica*, the seeds of which were distributed by the Protectorate Government from 1904, and which became the more important export coffee from Uganda.

³⁹Kagwa, *Customs*, 11

⁴⁰Schweinfurth, *Emin Pasha*, 118

⁴¹U.N.A. A26/4 Lugard to Admin.-Gen., IBEAC 13.8.91

⁴²Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 5

lying ground was considered the best⁴³. It was both smoked and chewed⁴⁴. In either southern Singo or northern Busiro, a 'white-flowering' and 'rose-tinted' variety was widely cultivated; in addition to the tobacco itself, the leaves of the plant were apparently eaten as a vegetable⁴⁵. The Ganda also imported tobacco from Ankole⁴⁶. This crop also seems to have been of considerable age: as with much other significant produce, it was supposedly brought to Buganda by Kintu⁴⁷, while the *kabaka* himself had an attendant, from the *ennonge* clan, in charge of the royal tobacco⁴⁸.

The usage of conventional fertiliser in the form of vegetable debris has already been noted, but cultivation was also attended by a range of taboos and deities. For example, the Ganda made use of amulets in the shape of "half-charred pieces of human skulls", according to Emin; these, scattered around plantations, were thought to increase the fertility of the soil⁴⁹. Other fertility rituals were performed. Having been taught the skills of cultivation, a girl carried home the first fruits of her labour, an occasion which apparently prompted sexual intercourse between various members of her family. This was supposed to ensure the girl's continued success in the plantation⁵⁰. Similarly, women who did not menstruate, according to Roscoe, were considered "to have a malign influence on gardens, and to cause them to become barren if they worked in them"⁵¹. Mukasa, the omnipotent god of the lake, was also seen as the god of plenty, and was thus closely associated with fertility⁵². In addition, there existed Kitaka, the 'earth god', who "was consulted by women when they wished to secure good results from a newly-made garden; offerings and requests were also

⁴³Schweinfurth, *Emin Pasha*, 78

⁴⁴*ibid.*, 32

⁴⁵*ibid.*, 40

⁴⁶*ibid.*, 78

⁴⁷J.R.MacDonald, *Soldiering and Surveying in British East Africa* (London, 1897) 135

⁴⁸Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 143

⁴⁹Schweinfurth, *Emin Pasha*, 36

⁵⁰Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 80

⁵¹*ibid.*, 80

⁵²*ibid.*, 290

made to him in order that the land might yield abundant crops". The goddess Nagawonyi is supposed to have possessed the ability to end periods of drought or hunger, an ability derived from her acquaintance with the gods of the elements. During such periods of hardship, people approached her shrine with enquiries as to when they might expect rain to fall⁵³. Another goddess, Nagadya, was also propitiated when lack of rain had caused a shortage of food⁵⁴. Katonda, the creator deity, was rarely mentioned in this context, although during the dearth of 1880 he was brought to the attention of the missionary Livinhac, who wrote: "Still there are complaints of hunger. The people say that the banana trees do not give fruit. When asked why, they say that it is Katonda who makes it this way"⁵⁵.

'Queer Foods' and Famine in the Nineteenth Century

One of the most fundamental misjudgements made by many nineteenth-century observers was that the Ganda were the dumb recipients of their country's natural wealth: foodstuffs grew in abundance and apparently without assistance, and all the Ganda had to do was consume them. The fact that famine foods existed suggests that there was a greater struggle to procure food from the land than has hitherto been perceived. The Ganda may have been, as Wrigley has suggested, "as well secured against famine as any [people] in Africa"⁵⁶, but they were not immune from severe shortages. This is evident from the existence of deities associated with the breakdown of the food supply, and also from the importance in the Ganda diet of roots and other back-up provisions⁵⁷. *Bikoso*, for example, was the edible root of a water plant. Roots were mostly used as emergency food, and were not normally preferred. Many roots were only eaten in times of famine or at least of food shortage. The roots of plantain trees, for example, were eaten during such times⁵⁸. In 1880, one

⁵³ibid., 313, 315

⁵⁴ibid., 318

⁵⁵White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 1/25.6.80

⁵⁶Wrigley, *Kingship and State*, 61

⁵⁷Schweinfurth, *Emin Pasha*, 37

⁵⁸Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 439

missionary wrote that at the court "many people have told me that a good number of Baganda were reduced to eating the roots of banana trees"⁵⁹. The root of the water lily, *nsakwa*, was probably eaten only during famine. In 1890, Lourdel noted that large numbers of Ganda had retreated to forested areas where they were able to live on roots⁶⁰. A British official wrote from Buddu in 1906: "I have been through each country and have seen for myself that there is scarcity of food but no real famine . . . I have seen no case of 'living skeletons', for the natives always procure roots and herbs which, though coarse, are nourishing enough"⁶¹.

The existence of a number of Luganda terms for 'famine foods' suggests that the Ganda made allowance for the failure of staple crops. *Kaama*, for example, is a small yam, seemingly growing wild, eaten during shortage. The preparation of *kigomba* is evidence of local foresight: it consisted of a mash made from dried plantain, being stored away and consumed during times of famine. Likewise, *mutere* was food chopped into small pieces and dried for future use. Other emergency foods were *mpambo* (the gourd-seed) and *mpengere* (dry sorghum millet). Although strangers and travellers were entitled to 'help themselves' to local reserves of food and to arrive uninvited to meals, Kagwa stipulates that this occurred only in times of plenty. Indeed, the custom probably says more about social behaviour than it does about agricultural productivity⁶².

Food was not taken for granted, and indeed it had great political and cultural importance. Grand ceremonies involving the distribution of food were often held at the royal enclosure. Chiefs and sub-chiefs of varying rank were brought together for enormous feasts in what amounted to conspicuous culinary consumption: the *kabaka's* power-base may have been strengthened by this display of his substantial

⁵⁹White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 1/24.8.80

⁶⁰White Fathers: C14/192 Lourdel to Supérieur-Général 25.1.90

⁶¹U.N.A. A8/7 Isemonger to Sub.Comm. 31.1.06

⁶²Kagwa, *Customs*, 130

food resources, the implication being that the food was produced from his own plantations in or near the capital⁶³. The *kabaka* had, by the nineteenth century, a formidable army of cultivators and cooks who belonged to a personalised production system. The precise origins of such a system are unclear, although in the late seventeenth century, *Kabaka* Ndawula "gave the village of Kikaaya to his mother's relatives, where they could cultivate food for him"⁶⁴. It is likely that the failure of crops in the late nineteenth century served to undermine the *kabaka's* political position at the capital.

Famines are periodically noted in the indigenous sources: a 'disastrous famine' is noted during the reign of Kamanya, when people "ate queer foods", while a famine was apparently raging at the time of Suna's accession, perhaps around 1820⁶⁵. The European missionaries in the early 1880s frequently complained about a shortage of food, as did, more importantly, those Ganda attached to them, who would have been better judges of what was normal. In mid-1880, the missionary Pearson noted a food shortage at the capital, and indeed described it as a "veritable famine". This seems to have been due to unusually low rainfall, and even bananas were scarce⁶⁶. Livinhac wrote around the same time that the Ganda "are always complaining of hunger. It is not without a lot of trouble that we procure the necessary provisions for ourselves". A little later he reported that one of the *Katikiro's* men had died of hunger, having been sent some distance from the capital in search of food: at the capital itself, "provisions are very rare"⁶⁷.

⁶³*ibid.*, 88

⁶⁴Kagwa, *Kings*, 59. Clearly it was critical that the *kabaka* was able to adequately feed the large numbers of people attached to his enclosure. In a sense this made food shortage a matter of grave concern as regards his authority in the capital.

⁶⁵Kagwa, *Customs*, 142-3

⁶⁶C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1881/22 Pearson to Mackay 29.7.80. Nearly four months earlier, the French missionary Livinhac wrote: "For the past several weeks, bananas have been scarce because of the drought during the months of October, November, December and January": *White Fathers: Rubaga Diary* 1/1.4.80. Although this was the dry season, rainfall seems to have been low by normal standards.

⁶⁷*White Fathers: Rubaga Diary* 1/16.4.80, 1.5.80

Two years later, in October 1882, the missionary O'Flaherty reported that for the past month there had been "a dearth in the land", and that food prices had increased considerably⁶⁸. This 'famine' continued to bite through November⁶⁹. Nor was it confined to the lower echelons of society: in August of that year, Lourdel recorded a visit to the mission by the young Mwanga who "suffers from hunger like the others"⁷⁰. In mid-1884, Mutesa abandoned a proposed military campaign in view of the smallpox, cattle disease and famine then present in Buganda. The 'famine' did not prevent O'Flaherty from enjoying a 'royal dinner' of beef, mutton, venison, edible rat, fowls, fish, various fruits and plantain wine⁷¹. Yet in October 1884, O'Flaherty continued to complain about the famine in Buganda⁷². In late 1886, Mackay reported a "severe time of drought", resulting in food shortages⁷³.

Conditions in Buganda continued to fluctuate through the late 1880s: in April 1888, for example, the missionary Walker noted that food was cheap and by implication relatively abundant⁷⁴. Significantly, however, by 1888 the army's licence to plunder had been curtailed. While moving across country, soldiers were no longer permitted to seize livestock, but only bananas and certain other common crops⁷⁵. The reason for this is not made explicit, but it was probably connected to the fact that Buganda's agricultural and pastoral base was increasingly unstable, ravaged in recent years by drought and disease.

⁶⁸C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1883/55 O'Flaherty to Wigram 1.10.82

⁶⁹C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1883/56 O'Flaherty to Wigram 10.11.82

⁷⁰White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 2/16.8.82

⁷¹C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1884/115 O'Flaherty to Wigram 7.7.84

⁷²C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1885/24 O'Flaherty to Wigram 6.10.84

⁷³C.M.S. G3 A5/0 1887/162 Mackay to Lang 27.12.86. The situation was aggravated by the persistence of various recently-introduced diseases, notably strains of smallpox and syphilis, which had been increasingly common in Buganda since the arrival of the coastal merchants in the 1840s. See for example Miti's ill-disguised contempt for the 'diseased immigrants' in J.Miti, 'A History of Buganda' [c.1939] I, 130-1. The White Fathers also noted the existence of *kawumpuli*, a term meaning bubonic plague or, more generally, a serious epidemic. See White Fathers: C13/101 Livinhac to Lavigerie 10.6.88. For a discussion of human disease in Buganda during this period, see H.Médard, 'Epidémies, développement du commerce et pratiques médicales au Buganda précolonial', in F.Raison Jourde, *Hygiène et épidémies dans l'océan Indien* (Paris, 1996) 4ff

⁷⁴C.M.S. G3 A5/0 1888/325 Walker to Lang 25.4.88

⁷⁵C.M.S. G3 A5/0 1888/389 Walker to Lang 18.6.88

Roscoe asserted that the peasants preferred not to live in the capital because of the perpetual shortage of food there⁷⁶. It is indeed likely that there were major logistical problems in keeping the urban population adequately fed. Although the *kabaka* had his own plantations in or close to the royal enclosure, it seems certain that a great deal of food was carried in from outside the capital. *Ssaza* chiefs, while in residence at the capital, may have had food brought in from their 'country estates' on a regular basis⁷⁷. A missionary wrote in 1889 that "the people of the capital only live on that which is brought to them from the countryside"⁷⁸. For Buganda as a whole, the fertility of the Sesse islands proved essential during the 'religious wars', when some of these islands - noted for their fine bananas, sweet potatoes, yams and coffee - fed a great many mainland Ganda afflicted by the collapse of agricultural production⁷⁹. Even so, not all the Sesse were noted as being cultivators, and the fertile soil may not always have been utilised to the full, no doubt owing to the prominence of fishing⁸⁰. Moreover, the islands were also affected by the concatenation of natural and man-made disasters at this time. In late 1890, the banana crop on Sesse failed, and the islanders were reduced to eating the roots of the banana trees⁸¹.

Food shortages, resulting from the widespread abandonment of plantations, became both chronic and frequent in the later nineteenth century with heightened social and political insecurity. Agricultural production was deeply undermined by the 'religious wars' from the late 1880s onward. Large tracts of land around the lake and further inland - notably in Singo and Bulemezi - were laid waste of people and, thus, cultivation. In late 1890, Walker wrote:

⁷⁶Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 246

⁷⁷J. Roscoe, *Twenty-five Years in East Africa* (London, 1921) 193

⁷⁸White Fathers: in *Les Missions Catholiques* Vol.21 (1889) 155

⁷⁹Kagwa, *Customs*, 157

⁸⁰*ibid.*, 158

⁸¹White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 4/1-6.9.90

The whole country of Buganda on the borders of Bunyoro is a desert. The houses have been burnt, the gardens destroyed, & the people carried away into Bunyoro as slaves. . . The whole country of Singo . . . has been depopulated and destroyed. Just about the capital here the land is cultivated, & the people are numerous, but in all other parts the country is desolated. From plague, war, & famine thousands have died.⁸²

Several months earlier, another missionary reported that there had been "little cultivation in Buganda for some two years past"⁸³. We have already noted the extent to which the capital was dependent on the countryside for much of its food: the situation in the early 1890s would have amounted to a crisis of supply for urban dwellers. Even in 1892, one missionary noted that chiefs in the capital were dependent on produce brought in "from distant gardens"⁸⁴. The gravity of the economic situation may have been a factor in the relative ease with which the IBEAC established itself in Buganda⁸⁵. Many of Mwanga's most prosperous food-producing areas had been devastated, and it is clear that the embattled *kabaka* was attracted by the Company's promises of material assistance.

In 1891 in Buddu, the missionary Baskerville noted the apparent prosperity of that *ssaza*: Buddu was "full of resources to draw upon" and food was abundant. However, Baskerville also observed that "the poor eat sweet potatoes without salt or relish of any kind generally, to them plantains are a great treat"⁸⁶. The missionary had not known Buddu in its prime: clearly even this *ssaza*'s famously ample resources were stretched. Iliffe has taken Baskerville's testimony to suggest a growing poor stratum in Buganda, which is probable, but he is misleading in arguing that such poverty can be seen in terms of an enslaved class and also a gulf between the capital and

⁸²C.M.S. G3 A5/0 1891/77 Letters from Walker 1-4.11.90

⁸³C.M.S. G3 A5/0 1891/66 Gordon to Lang 20.1.90

⁸⁴C.M.S. Acc.84 F3/1 Book 3, 3

⁸⁵See Chapter 1 for a brief summary of this process.

⁸⁶C.M.S. G3 A5/0 1892/50 Baskerville to Stock 13.8.91

countryside⁸⁷. We have seen not only how food shortage could strike the capital as well as the outlying districts, but also how the capital was often directly affected by agricultural breakdown in the countryside. Moreover, as we shall see in a later chapter, slavery did not necessarily mean poverty.

Later, depopulation and the attendant outbreak of sleeping sickness would destroy many formerly prosperous areas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A report from Buddu in 1897, for example, suggests that many settlements and plantations had recently been abandoned and left to the mercies of the bush⁸⁸. Around the same time, another official in Buddu wrote: "All the food brought by the Waganda today to feed the troops & c. consisted of about a dozen small packets of potatoes which would probably make about one load in weight . . . There is quite a famine in this part of Buddu"⁸⁹. The situation was little improved by the following year, Wilson observing that the plantations "have been sadly neglected, and one of the richest of the provinces is, for the moment, in a somewhat desolate state"⁹⁰.

Pastoralism in Pre-Colonial Buganda

Compared to Ankole to the west, Buganda was not ideal pastoral country, a point noted most recently by Wrigley⁹¹. Yet while rolling hills and dense foliage could not support large concentrations of cattle, this kind of landscape did not cover the whole of the kingdom. Many contemporary Europeans believed that the Ganda were snobbish about the keeping of cattle, even though it was clear that the Ganda had no qualms about keeping goats and other livestock. Nineteenth-century sources frequently suggest that the Ganda regarded pastoral communities as inferior. There is little real evidence for this, although there are scattered indications that Hima cattle-

⁸⁷J. Iliffe, *The African Poor* (Cambridge, 1987) 59

⁸⁸U.N.A. A4/9 Pordage to Wilson 4.9.97

⁸⁹U.N.A. A4/9 Grant to Wilson 12.9.97

⁹⁰U.N.A. A4/12 Wilson to Berkeley 4.9.98

⁹¹"Cattle do not greatly thrive in the over-lush vegetation of Buganda, and one of the main themes of the country's history is their acquisition from the drier grasslands to the west and their subsequent distribution to a population hungry for meat and milk": Wrigley, *Kingship and State*, 61

keepers were regarded as essentially alien and therefore not to be trusted⁹². There was no linguistic, let alone racial, distinction between cultivator and pastoralist in Buganda⁹³. It is clear, however, that there were important economic and social distinctions between cultivators and herdsmen. Most of the cattle in Buganda were probably tended by the Hima, and in so doing they were politically subordinate. It is not clear, however, as Waller suggests, that "herding was done by Hima war-captives"⁹⁴. The Hima were not, as far as they can be identified as a 'class', enslaved. It is true, however, that Hima women, considered highly attractive by Ganda men, were extremely popular as wives. Many Hima women found their way into the harems of chiefs and the *kabaka*⁹⁵. More generally, relations were usually defined in terms of exchange of services: this normally involved cattle-keeping in return for land.

Contemporary Europeans perceived the Hima as the 'keepers of the herds'; one missionary described them as "the great cattle tribe"⁹⁶, a description which was reasonably accurate. Emin Pasha depicted the following scene a short distance from the capital in 1877:

⁹²For example, Kagwa describes a plot against Kayira, the *Katikiro*, during the reign of Mutesa. The plot was designed to have Kayira dismissed from office. He was accused of being 'a Munyoro and a Muhima'; he replied that his mother was Hima, but this was not deemed sufficient reason for dismissal: Kagwa, *Kings*, 148-9

⁹³It is now well-known that racial notions were perpetuated by contemporary Europeans to explain the existence of relatively 'advanced' African civilisations. One French missionary was fairly typical in setting the Hima apart from the predominantly agricultural Ganda, suggesting that the pastoralists were "an aristocratic class" and that they "retained a dignity and a kind of independence of which the Negro is incapable": White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 1/18.1.80. The 'Hamitic myth' was applied to Buganda by Speke (see his *Journal*, Chap.IX), who was convinced that anything remotely civilised encountered in sub-Saharan Africa must have its origins in a more northerly, and lighter-skinned, people. Ideas of this nature continued to be bandied about well into the present century, notably by C.G.Seligman, whose *Races of Africa*, first published in 1930, was reprinted several times. Seligman, considering the supposed arrival from the north of a 'white' or Hamitic aristocracy, wrote: "No doubt it is at least in part due to this 'European' influence that we find the curious mixture of primitive and advanced elements in the social institutions of the interlacustrine communities" (1966 edition) 138. For a brief but informative criticism of the argument, see Wrigley, *Kingship and State*, 72-3

⁹⁴R. Waller, 'The Traditional Economy of Buganda', M.A. Dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1971, 20. The evidence he cites does not warrant such a statement.

⁹⁵Schweinfurth, *Emin Pasha*, 517

⁹⁶C.M.S. Acc.84 F3/1 Book 5, 23

. . . we passed a neat zeriba, and shortly afterwards a village inhabited by dark-coloured Wahuma herdsmen. Six or seven houses for cattle, and two or three for herds, encircled by high, thick, thorn hedges, formed the dirty and neglected compounds . . . On account of the character of the Wahuma, who live almost entirely on milk, cultivation worth naming was not to be seen . .

.⁹⁷

Their mode of living, distinct in relation to the agriculturists among whom they lived, was characterised by an almost total reliance on livestock. Lourdel also stated that they depended "almost exclusively on milk"⁹⁸. Theirs was an important contribution to Ganda economic life. Kagwa offers an example of this, as well as of the curious mixture of autonomy and servility which characterised pastoralist life: "When Suna became king there was a famine. The Bahima people worked very hard to supply their masters with milk. Those who were suffering from hunger saw these people with milk and thought they were not suffering . . ." ⁹⁹. It is clear that the Hima, not cultivating a great deal themselves, exchanged such goods as milk and butter in local markets and villages for agricultural produce¹⁰⁰. A type of ghee was also an important product of pastoral communities¹⁰¹. It seems likely, therefore, that the Hima owned cattle, as well as tending those of chiefs, although taking a share of the produce for either trade or consumption may have been part-payment for the task of herding for chiefs. Farmers would have tended their own herds, which were probably small in comparison, in some cases consisting of one or two cows. Often women had the role of tending livestock in smaller homesteads, even though, in theory, women were forbidden to eat sheep, chicken and the eggs of certain fowls¹⁰². The *kabaka* and the chiefs sustained their own herds not only through war booty, but also through the imposition of a livestock tax, or *kikungo*, which involved the payment of one in

⁹⁷Schweinfurth, *Emin Pasha*, 43

⁹⁸White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 2/15.1.81

⁹⁹Kagwa, *Customs*. 143

¹⁰⁰Schweinfurth, *Emin Pasha*, 131

¹⁰¹U.N.A. A9/2 Comm.'s office to Sub.Comm. 10.8.03

¹⁰²Kagwa, *Customs*, 104-5

every twenty cattle, and the same for goats¹⁰³. Doubtless the poorer echelons of society paid their *kikungo* in the latter.

Some time later, Emin noted another Hima settlement, this time much further north, which had charge of a portion of the *kabaka's* cattle¹⁰⁴. It is clear that both *kabaka* and chiefs had herds scattered throughout the kingdom, in areas more suited to grazing. In 1862, Speke mentioned 'Kari', probably in Bulemezi, as being one of Mutesa's "most extensive pasture grounds"¹⁰⁵. In 1879 the missionary Felkin noted a large herd in northern Singo tended by 'the King's herdsman'¹⁰⁶, a post more closely examined below. Lugard reported from northern Buddu in 1891: "Here I saw a few cattle of the King's, the first cattle I have seen in Uganda, and the fact of their being sent here proves that the place is considered richer in pasture, or healthier, than the majority of Uganda"¹⁰⁷. These herds were jealously guarded: in 1885, according to Mackay, Mwanga dispatched the *Mujasi* "far off to the borders of Bunyoro to plunder a chief who had been arrested for appropriating some of the king's cattle"¹⁰⁸.

As we have already noted, particular areas were good for grazing, and the larger herds of cattle were widely distributed. In more densely populated areas, clearly, space was a problem (not to mention the fact that densely populated areas tended to be those less suited to extensive grazing). The spacing of homesteads in the more open country to the north would have been less problematic. Nearer the lake, land had to be used with greater efficiency. Vegetable plantations were usually divided by small tracts of land set aside for grazing, and these may have been shared by the owners of adjoining cultivated plots¹⁰⁹. This ran the risk of over-grazing, however, and the lack of good grazing land in the more populated areas would have compounded the problems of

¹⁰³ibid., 94

¹⁰⁴Schweinfurth, *Emin Pasha*, 131

¹⁰⁵Speke, *Journal*, 454

¹⁰⁶C.M.S. CA6/010/48 Felkin's Journal 9.2.79

¹⁰⁷U.N.A. A26/4 Lugard to Admin.-Gen., IBEAC 13.8.91

¹⁰⁸C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1885/98 Mackay to Wigram 7.5.85

¹⁰⁹Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 383; Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 4

cattle disease later in the nineteenth century, as we shall see below. It is clear, however, that the *kabaka* possessed extensive herds in the vicinity of the capital, which he used to feed his enclosure and his guests, and to distribute as largesse¹¹⁰. Lourdel suggests that the *kabaka* and the prominent chiefs regularly moved their herds between their estates and the better pastures. A herd would be kept close to the capital for no longer than a month or two, when it would be replaced by another¹¹¹. The purpose behind this system of circulation was clearly to ensure that all the herds were given the better pastures in which to graze for a certain period. Perhaps, too, certain superior pastures were left unoccupied for a time to allow them to rejuvenate, through a system of pastoral rotation.

The missionary Felkin estimated the Hima population in Buganda as standing at between forty and fifty thousand, inhabiting numerous settlements scattered throughout the kingdom¹¹². Most of these communities would have been found in the better grazing regions, such as parts of Gomba, Singo and Bulemezi. Emin noted a large area in either northern Busiro or southern Bulemezi which had many cattle¹¹³. Singo was noted for its fine grazing land, particularly, Kagwa tells us, in the districts of Kitesa and Kyanamugera¹¹⁴. This was not, however, the case in the southern part of the *ssaza*, to the east and north of Lake Wamala. From here a British official wrote in 1901: "None of the part referred to being a cattle country, the grass is not burnt with the object of getting good grazing"¹¹⁵. It is not clear whether the method of grass-burning to induce better pastureland was widely applied. Kyagwe also supported large numbers of livestock, boasting a wealth of cattle, goats and, unusually, sheep, although the latter were relatively rare. The districts of Busubika and Matembe in Bulemezi also contained good grazing land.

¹¹⁰C.M.S. CA6/016/35 Mackay to Wright 17.11.78

¹¹¹White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 2/15.1.81

¹¹²Schweinfurth, *Emin Pasha*, 517

¹¹³*ibid.*, 133

¹¹⁴Kagwa, *Customs*, 162ff

¹¹⁵U.N.A. A8/1 Tomkins to Comm. 5.9.01

Further south, cattle-keeping was important in the economic life of Busiro, particularly in the district of Bulam; most of Busiro's pastureland was located in the north of the *ssaza*, although herds of cattle - as well as goats, which were ubiquitous - were kept around the capital. Mawokota had a thriving pastoral economy, and Busujju contained several noted grazing lands. Buddu, lying close to the cattle-rich country of Ankole, boasted a wide variety of cattle, as well as goats and sheep¹¹⁶. Western Buddu in particular afforded substantial grazing areas¹¹⁷. To the north-west, Gomba was a cattle *ssaza*: Kagwa recorded that the districts of Ekitabuza and Kakubansiri were "the healthiest and most fattening pastures"¹¹⁸. There is no doubt that as Buganda expanded west, it incorporated much excellent pastureland. Ankole boasted some of the finest pastures and cattle in the region, and by 1800 Buganda bordered on these pastures. Clearly, then, although the Ganda did maintain some livestock in the core areas (Busiro, Mawokota and Busujju), the kingdom became, between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, even more of a cattle country by virtue of its gradual expansion west. Still, the Ganda reputation as agriculturists, whether wholly accurate or not, remained: according to Zimbe, pastoralists in Ankole looked down upon the Ganda "and wanted no Muganda to own cattle because they considered us Baganda to be 'Ugly-Rustic-Slaves'"¹¹⁹.

Livestock in Ganda Social and Economic History

Like most important components of pre-colonial Ganda life, cattle are mentioned in the context of Kintu, who, according to one version, arrived in Buganda with a man from the *ngabi* clan: the latter was the *kabaka's* personal herdsman and, by implication, the head of all other herdsmen¹²⁰. Another indigenous account appears

¹¹⁶Kagwa, *Customs*, 162-6

¹¹⁷F.Lugard, 'Travels from the East Coast to Uganda', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, 14 (1892) 832

¹¹⁸Kagwa, *Customs*, 162-6

¹¹⁹B.M.Zimbe [tr.F.Kamoga], 'Buganda ne Kabaka' [c.1939] 219

¹²⁰Kagwa, *Customs*, 11

to suggest that Kintu found cattle already being tended in Buganda, and that the local ruler himself had a chief herdsman called Kajongoro. Indeed, Zimbe tells us that "cattle, then, were regarded as important as banana gardens are these days". The pasturelands referred to here were probably in the area of southern Singo, possibly near Lake Wamala¹²¹. Zimbe was careful to make a distinction between 'Kintu's people' and those who, in this account, were there already: the latter smeared their bodies with earth and kept cattle. Zimbe explained how their distinctiveness was respected within the new social and political order established by Kintu and his successors:

Some of the customs which the people of Kabaka Wamala had are even now still existing: for instance, Basekabaka of Buganda wore bracelets around their ankles. And Basekabaka of Buganda were jealous people that they did not like to see peasants wearing the things they themselves wore, [but despite this] the herdsmen were allowed to wear bracelets around their legs and could come in front of the Kabaka . . . almost nude, having on only a goat skin.¹²²

Significantly, too, they "had permanent places for their abode, such as flat places and plains"¹²³.

Whatever the precise origins of the position, the role of the *kabaka's* chief herdsman remained a significant one until the end of the nineteenth century. Kanyambo, the official royal herdsman, was a great favourite of Mwanga, who took pleasure in giving him the best of the royal herds to tend. Kanyambo's cattle enclosure was at Kisubi, a few miles south of the capital. The Hima under Kanyambo's charge regularly brought cows to fill the enclosures of Mwanga's favourites at the capital.

¹²¹Zimbe, 'Buganda', 10

¹²²*ibid.*, 11-12. Wamala or Wamara has been identified as being the last of the Chwezi rulers in the region: see G.S.Were, 'The Western Bantu Peoples from A.D. 1300 to 1800', in B.A.Ogot & J.A.Kieran (eds.), *Zamani: a survey of East African history* (Nairobi, 1968) 179. A discussion of the Chwezi, who are still shrouded in some mystery, is outside the scope of this thesis, but for the findings of the most recent archaeological research see J.Sutton, 'The Antecedents of the Interlacustrine Kingdoms', *Journal of African History*, 34:1 (1993) 33-64.

¹²³Zimbe, 'Buganda', 12

Kanyambo was not alone, however. Another royal herdsman, Kamutasa, had his enclosure within the grounds of the palace, where he tended at least 300 cattle. He was apparently responsible for supplying the *kabaka* with milk¹²⁴.

As we shall see in the context of other spheres of economic history, many of these posts were regarded as belonging to particular clans, and the award of such honours are enshrined in clan histories. Kawuka, of the *ngeye* clan, was the title of the *kabaka's* chief goatherd¹²⁵. The *nseene* clan was closely associated with pastoralism: one tradition has it that, significantly, the clan came originally from Busongora to the west and that one of the 'founding fathers' of the clan was himself a Hima shepherd. Kagwa wrote:

They came to Buganda with their cows and on their arrival in Buddu, they settled at Bwera and they dug a pond which they called Balibowa Mpungu. This still exists in Buddu today. It was from this pond that their cattle drank. From Bwera, they settled . . . in Gomba and they were staying at Nakanoni village where they grazed their cattle. From this place, they went to Kisozi in the same county and they established themselves and had a lot of cattle. Kalibbala separated from the others and befriended Chwa Nabaka [Chwa I, Kintu's supposed successor] and settled at Nsisi [in Gomba], where he is up to now . . .¹²⁶

Considering their pastoral origins, it should come as no surprise that the 'Bansenene' should see their main role as that of cattle-grazers. Moreover, Kagwa records that Mugalula Buyonga, the 'parent' of the clan, "is a 'Muhima' up to now". Precisely what Kagwa means by this is unclear. What is more certain, however, is that the *nseene* clan provides a good example of how social and cultural interaction might gradually dilute a purely pastoral way of life. Members of the *nseene* clan who had given up pastoralism in favour of cultivation were known as *Abaima Abatasunda*, which,

¹²⁴ibid., 161

¹²⁵A. Kagwa [tr. J. Wamala], 'A Book of Clans of Buganda' [c.1972] 4

¹²⁶ibid., 13

according to Kagwa, literally means 'the bahima who did not churn milk'¹²⁷. This fascinating turn of phrase implies something of an erosion of pastoral living in favour of the relatively 'new' economics of cultivation. By 1800, the Hima population may have been much less than a century before, which is ironic considering that by the early nineteenth century Buganda had expanded to incorporate more pastureland than previously. The missionary Ashe suggested that by the late 1880s, many Hima had begun to eat sweet potatoes and other vegetables, which he saw as evidence of a gradual shift from the pastoral to the agricultural life¹²⁸. During the 1880s, however, the process was hastened as a result of livestock disease, as we shall see below.

The *njovu* clan claim to have arrived with Kintu and to have become his official cattle herdsman. Kimera supposedly appointed a *njovu* sub-chief, Sensalire, his official herdsman, a post which remained hereditary over the ensuing centuries. According to Kagwa's history of the clan,

Sensalire had many herdsman under him. Each month they used to bring bulls from which the Kabaka had his meat. Each day the herdsman brought six cows, sometimes four, which would yield enough meat for the whole month. Sensalire's turn would come first. After him the next month was provided for by Namenyeka of the Mamba clan. After him it was the turn of Sebalijja the chief cowherd . . .¹²⁹

Namenyeka was a sub-chief of the *mamba* clan based in Busiro, although oddly, in the section dealing specifically with this clan in his *Clans*, Kagwa does not mention this duty. Kamenyamiggo, a sub-chief of the *lugave* clan, also based in Busiro, was noted as being "the king's chief herdsman", although it seems likely that by the nineteenth century this title was purely honorific¹³⁰.

¹²⁷ibid., 19. Kagwa, himself a member of this clan, presumably belonged in this category.

¹²⁸Ashe, *Two Kings*, 339

¹²⁹Kagwa, 'Clans', 26-7

¹³⁰ibid., 45

Sebalijja is noted in a number of sources as being the chief herdsman, although his history - in the context of clan or anything else - is unclear. In 1880, Lourdel mentioned the 'Savaridja', the "great keeper of the king's herds", as being stationed near the capital. The missionary wrote that "the guard of the herds is given by preference to the Bahimas who have a particular talent for this profession, having reliable remedies for the illnesses of their animals . . . The Savaridja . . . has all the traits of the Muhima"¹³¹. Sebalijja is also mentioned as being in charge of the *kabaka's* cattle in 1906¹³². Finally, in terms of clans, the *nyonyi* clan claim that one of their sub-chiefs, Kabengwa, was made the 'grazer' of the *kabaka's* cow (singular) at some indefinite date¹³³. These various duties, as well as the repeated appearance of cattle in symbolic terms, are significant. Nakibinge, the sixteenth-century *kabaka*, having approached Wanema of the Sesse islands for military assistance, was given by the latter the symbolic gifts of a coffee tree, a plantain tree and a cow. The *nvuma* clan was entrusted with the care of this cow which, apparently, provided Nakibinge with milk on the way to the battle¹³⁴.

Goats were less important socially than cattle, but more numerous. Goats were a much more immediate and practical source of income. They were regularly bought and sold at market and they often formed part of a dowry; as such they were standards of wealth. Perhaps most importantly, they were more readily eaten than cattle among the bulk of the population. The flesh of goats may have been the only kind of meat eaten by peasants on a regular basis. Cattle, much more than goats, were standards of wealth in themselves, and were probably eaten regularly only by chiefs. The missionary Fisher, for example, mentions the brother of the *kabaka's* mother, Ndalika (usually known as the *Sabaganzi*), who "was reputed very rich, maintaining a big establishment of nearly 100 wives with flocks and herds". His possession of

¹³¹White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 2/15.1.81

¹³²U.N.A. A8/7 Sturrock to Sub.Comm. 9.4.06

¹³³Kagwa, 'Clans'. 101

¹³⁴*ibid.*, 58

'flocks and herds' suggests his considerable wealth¹³⁵. His enclosure was in Gomba, one of Buganda's prime grazing regions¹³⁶.

For ordinary folk cattle were symbols of wealth, and any they possessed were probably usually eaten in the event of an animal dying naturally, although beef might be purchased in markets. The missionary Girault wrote that "the Wagandas eat little meat; however, they like it very much; when a cow dies, they eat it . . . Today, one of the cows which we have at Savaganzi's died; Savaganzi sold it for two goats"¹³⁷. It is striking that on this occasion the *Savaganzi* sold the meat for more livestock. During the 1860s and 1870s, the consumption of meat at the capital may have been periodically influenced by the Arab traders, who described themselves as practising Muslims. Grant was told that Speke "was a favourite with the king, because he was not, like the Arabs, particular about having the cattle or goats killed according to Mohammedan rites"¹³⁸. It is not clear how seriously Islamic practice was taken by the Ganda in this respect.

Cows were also sold at market, and in the late nineteenth century were usually exchanged for substantial goods such as slaves. A colonial official in Kampala wrote in 1901: "During the early part of this month . . . the natives got an idea into their heads that Government intended taking all their cattle, sheep and goats, with the result that they were killing them off wholesale . . . [A]pparently [the rumour] was started by some Baganda traders who wanted to buy up goats etc. at a cheap rate"¹³⁹. This gives some idea of their social and economic value. Livestock was also traded between Buganda and its neighbours. At the important Ganda-Soga market in what was to become Jinja, bulls, cows, sheep, goats and fowls were regularly traded¹⁴⁰. In

¹³⁵C.M.S. Acc.84 F3/1 Book 5 2,7

¹³⁶ibid., 8

¹³⁷White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 1/2.10.79

¹³⁸J.A.Grant, *A Walk Across Africa* (Edinburgh & London, 1864) 217

¹³⁹U.N.A. A8/1 Tomkins to Comm. 8.11.01

¹⁴⁰U.N.A. A8/1 Grant to Jackson 16.3.02

Ankole, barkcloth was given in exchange for cattle¹⁴¹. The Ganda derived substantial numbers of cattle and goats through warfare during the nineteenth century and doubtless earlier, but tribute was also an important source, if only for the *kabaka* and chiefs. Busoga in particular continued to supply Buganda with livestock until the 1890s¹⁴². Mwanga was especially keen to acquire Soga livestock, and instances of tribute from Busoga in the form of cattle and goats become more numerous after 1884. Cattle may also have been acquired in this way from Karagwe¹⁴³. The increasing incidence of disease among Ganda cattle at this time may account for the heightened demand.

Livestock Disease in the Late Nineteenth Century

Kagwa stated that "[o]riginally, the Baganda did not eat meat" and that it was Kintu's son Mulanga who converted the Ganda to meat-eating¹⁴⁴. Precisely why this assertion should be made is unclear, but it may be related to the fact that, as we have already noted, the regular consumption of beef was the preserve of chiefs. By the early 1890s, according to Lugard, beef was widely available at markets in the capital¹⁴⁵: this may have been a relatively recent phenomenon, and was perhaps connected to the death of large numbers of cattle from disease. In any case, the rate at which the *kabaka* killed cattle for food would have seemed extravagant to the vast majority of Ganda and certainly did not represent a national trait. By 1906, one cow was slaughtered per week from the *kabaka's* herds to feed a much-reduced household¹⁴⁶. Although this was above average, it was probably a fraction of the numbers killed weekly by the *kabaka* during much of the nineteenth century. In the early 1860s, Mutesa ordered cattle to be killed regularly, and often shot them himself for sport¹⁴⁷. Kagwa tells us that Mutesa would order his Hima herdsmen "to bring about one

¹⁴¹U.N.A. A8/4 Anderson to Sub.Comm. 6.1.04

¹⁴²U.N.A. A2/1 Arthur to Berkeley 12.4.93; A2/2 Grant to Colvile 6.8.94

¹⁴³U.N.A. A26/4 Lugard to Admin.-Gen., IBEAC 24.12.90

¹⁴⁴Kagwa, *Kings*, 6

¹⁴⁵Lugard, 'Travels', 831

¹⁴⁶U.N.A. A8/7 Sturrock to Sub.Comm. 9.4.06

¹⁴⁷Speke, *Journal*, 370, 380

hundred or two hundred head of cattle every day" in order to spear them¹⁴⁸. This is clearly exaggerated, but Mutesa was indeed notably wealthy in cattle. Indeed, the overall impression conveyed by Speke is that cattle were remarkably abundant in 1862, seemingly much more so than in the late 1870s.

The Ganda may have been less reliant on cattle than many of the surrounding peoples, but the role of cattle was critical enough for the diseases of the late nineteenth century to have a devastating effect. Livestock suffered heavily during the droughts and food shortages of the early 1880s. As early as 1879, Lourdel's attention was drawn to the unhealthy state of local livestock: ". . . cows and goats scarcely give any milk. All the animals seem to be suffering from a disease of the intestines which is due to the bad water which they drink"¹⁴⁹. Two years later, Lourdel noted that herds in the vicinity of the capital were diminishing, while the cattle that remained were painfully thin; again, he claimed that this was due to bad water and poor pastures¹⁵⁰. In 1882, the missionary O'Flaherty complained that goats and cows were becoming expensive, suggesting their relative scarcity, and he later wrote that a number of cattle at the mission had recently died¹⁵¹. At the same time, Mackay reported that cattle-disease was rampant, writing that "we have lost nearly all our cows & goats"¹⁵². In mid-1883, this state of affairs persisted: as O'Flaherty wrote, "One can get a goat or a cow to buy only very seldom"¹⁵³. The situation was exacerbated by recent military defeats, the army failing to bring cattle from Bunyoro¹⁵⁴.

¹⁴⁸Kagwa, *Kings*, 140

¹⁴⁹White Fathers: C14/123 Lourdel to his parents 20.7.79

¹⁵⁰White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 2/15.1.81

¹⁵¹C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1883/55 O'Flaherty to Wigram 1.10.82; G3 A6/0 1883/56 O'Flaherty to Wigram 10.11.82

¹⁵²C.M.S. Acc.72 F1/6 Mackay to his father 6.7.82

¹⁵³C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1883/103 O'Flaherty to Wigram 1.6.83

¹⁵⁴C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1883/104 O'Flaherty to Wigram 19.6.83. It was reported the following month that "tens of thousands" of cattle were due to arrive after a successful campaign in Ihangiro: it is not clear if they ever did: C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1883/120 Mackay's Journal 4.7.83

By mid-1884, cattle disease seems to have been prevalent throughout Buganda; this, in addition to smallpox and 'famine', prompted Mutesa to abandon a planned military campaign to the north¹⁵⁵. As we have already noted, by 1888 armies on the move across country had been prohibited from seizing livestock, previously a common practice¹⁵⁶. This move reflects the deep concern felt regarding Buganda's increasingly weak pastoral base. By the end of the 1880s, levels of livestock in Buganda appear to have been extremely low. Unable to wage war in their weakened and divided state, the Ganda were compelled to rely on tribute. A missionary observed in early 1890 that a number of tributary societies, among them Busoga and Kiziba, had been supplying Buganda with livestock "on the understanding that help from the Company is near"¹⁵⁷.

The chronology of these events is striking. The African rinderpest epidemic did not erupt until 1889-90, yet a more local livestock disease had broken out in Buganda several years earlier, a fact ignored by the major works on the subject¹⁵⁸. By 1890, the Ganda had been struck by a second, even more destructive, wave of disease which had come from the direction of the Horn. In 1891, Lugard came across a small herd of the *kabaka's* cattle in Buddu, the first cattle he had seen in Buganda: plague had destroyed herds in both Bunyoro and Buganda¹⁵⁹. Bulemezi was among those

¹⁵⁵C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1884/115 O'Flaherty to Wigram ? .7.84

¹⁵⁶C.M.S. G3 A5/0 1888/389 Walker to Lang 18.6.88

¹⁵⁷C.M.S. G3 A5/0 1891/66 Gordon to Lang 20.1.90

¹⁵⁸In his important work on trypanosomiasis in Africa, John Ford has markedly little to say on pre-colonial outbreaks of the disease, while Buganda itself is scarcely mentioned: J.Ford, *The Role of the Trypanosomiasis in African Ecology* (Oxford, 1971). See also J.M.MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester & New York, 1988) 134ff, J.Musere, *African Sleeping Sickness: Political Ecology, Colonialism and Control in Uganda* (Lewiston, 1990) 106ff.

¹⁵⁹U.N.A. A26/4 Lugard to Admin.-Gen., IBEAC 13.8.91. At the same time, the missionary Baskerville was rather more sanguine about livestock in Buddu. He wrote that "when the country has recovered from the late troubles cows, sheep & goats will again be plentiful. Even now it is easy to keep a supply of meat. Fowls and eggs too can be procured . . .": C.M.S. G3 A5/0 1892/50 Baskerville to Stock 13.8.91. As late as 1903, a colonial official noted the prevalence of what was known locally as *makebe*, a disease of calves: "The best known cure among the 'Wahima' appears to be to slightly incise the growth and to blister with the raw juice of the Euphorbia tree". It was estimated that this cured around 30 per cent of infected cattle: U.N.A. A6/12 Campbell & Co. to Dep.Comm. ? .1.03

districts worst affected¹⁶⁰. In many areas, bush and wildlife had encroached on human settlement as a result of depopulation. Near Mengo, Baskerville reported that "leopards have been very troublesome, taking calves and goats"¹⁶¹. The economic consequences of the epidemic for the Hima must have been catastrophic, although the fate of pastoral communities is unclear. Lugard observed that "prior to the death of the cattle [the Hima] were the herdsmen of the Waganda; but now they have gone I know not whither, and one sees few of them"¹⁶². They may have been compelled to take up agriculture, as happened in other parts of East Africa at this time¹⁶³. Walter Rusch is half-right when he states that the Hima "were more and more included and integrated into the Baganda economy as professional herdsmen"¹⁶⁴: they were probably integrated, but not necessarily as herdsmen, and it took the devastation of cattle in the last years of the nineteenth century to effect this process.

The Economic and Political Significance of Hunting

In the nineteenth century, the main function of hunting was the provision of ivory, and it is necessary to distinguish between hunting for commerce and that for protection, food or even sport. The hunting of wild animals - large cats, antelopes, buffalo and elephants - recurs throughout Buganda's 'traditional' history, with reference to either the heroism and masculinity of great men, or the need for food. One tradition has it that herein lie the origins of the clan system in Buganda: having arrived in a barren and foodless part of the country, Kintu and his people were forced to kill and eat any animal they came across. This threatened with extinction the already-fragile meat reserves, so Kintu decreed that in the event of anyone being made ill by the meat of a certain animal, neither he nor his descendants were to touch that meat again. These

¹⁶⁰Kagwa, *Customs*, 162-6

¹⁶¹C.M.S. G3 A5/0 1892/89 Baskerville's Journal 18.11.91

¹⁶²Lugard, 'Travels', 823

¹⁶³For example, see H.Kjekshus, *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History* (1977) Chap.7

¹⁶⁴W.Rusch, *Klassen und Staat in Buganda vor der Kolonialzeit* (Berlin, 1975) - see English summary, 374

aversions became clan totems¹⁶⁵. Namugazi, the 'father' of the *mpologoma* clan, supposedly went hunting with Kintu and became ill after eating the meat of the lion he had tracked and killed¹⁶⁶.

The importance of game hunting is underlined by the fact that a newly-enthroned *kabaka* was expected to undertake a symbolic 'first hunt'¹⁶⁷. The ritual importance of the hunt was evident in the middle of the nineteenth century. The great 'economic reviews' held by Mutesa involved hunters: Speke wrote that "[t]he master of the hunt exposes his spoils - such as antelopes, cats, porcupines, curious rats, & c., all caught in nets, and placed in baskets - zebra, lion, and buffalo skins being added"¹⁶⁸. Speke also referred to the presence at the royal court of the *kabaka's* 'gamekeepers'¹⁶⁹. By the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the *kabaka's* main preoccupation was with elephant-hunting, which had a tangible economic value. Mwangi is known to have gone elephant-hunting in 1886¹⁷⁰, while in 1887 one missionary noted that Mwangi "has killed a dozen elephants in his hunts"¹⁷¹.

Other game hunted included buffalo, possibly for meat and certainly for skins. These appear to have been in decline for much of the nineteenth century, although after 1900 they were once again on the increase throughout Buganda¹⁷². Eland, antelope, zebra and bush buck were hunted for their skins, horns and flesh¹⁷³. The skins of large cats were also highly prized. The missionary Livinhac described a hunt for wild cats in 1880:

¹⁶⁵Kagwa, 'Clans', 1

¹⁶⁶*ibid.*, 2

¹⁶⁷*ibid.*, 14

¹⁶⁸Speke, *Journal*, 258-9

¹⁶⁹*ibid.*, 297

¹⁷⁰White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 3/4.3.86

¹⁷¹White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 3/6.10.87

¹⁷²U.N.A. A8/7 Notes on Games and Reserves by Tomkins 25.7.05. See also MacKenzie, *Empire of Nature*, 214

¹⁷³See Thomas & Scott, *Uganda*, Chap. XXVI

The hunt usually takes place with a great collection of people, of dogs, of sticks, and, when the chief is in the party, some guns. Each man has in one hand a dog and in the other a stick and advances in this way towards the place where he hopes to find the animal. I refer here to the hunt for cats which are rarely dangerous. For the [Ganda] are not people to go with a simple stick to meet the lion, the panther, or the elephant. When the hunters are fortunate enough to kill the animal, they carry it back to the sound of the horn, shouting loudly . . .¹⁷⁴

Before being replaced by barkcloth in the second half of the eighteenth century¹⁷⁵, skins were widely worn, and during the nineteenth century they continued to have great commercial value, particularly as exports¹⁷⁶. Culturally, too, certain skins were important. As noted above, the skins of lions, zebras and buffalo were regularly presented at the royal court; leopard skin was associated with royalty or at least considerable authority. According to Speke, only the *kabaka* could possess the skin of the zebra¹⁷⁷, while Roscoe suggests that there was also a royal monopoly on lion skins¹⁷⁸. Hides of lions, zebras and leopards were among the gifts sent to Queen Victoria by Mutesa in 1879¹⁷⁹. Antelope skins appear to have been more commonly worn¹⁸⁰, as were the skins of goats. Speke noted in 1862 that the *Kangawo*, on the occasion of a military campaign, was splendidly attired in "long white-haired goat-skins"¹⁸¹. Indeed, the wearing of skins was closely associated with military activity, unlike barkcloth. 'Shoes' of sorts were also made from hide. By the early sixteenth century, cow-hide shoes were associated with fortune-telling, according to the history

¹⁷⁴White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 1/2.9.80

¹⁷⁵Barkcloth was an indigenous fabric of some antiquity, but its production appears to have escalated dramatically in the late eighteenth century: see Chapter 4 below.

¹⁷⁶For example, Schweinfurth, *Emin Pasha*, 120-1; see Chapter 5 below for a fuller examination of such commerce.

¹⁷⁷Speke, *Journal*, 458

¹⁷⁸Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 408-9

¹⁷⁹Zimbe, 'Buganda', 53

¹⁸⁰J.A. Grant, 'Summary of observations on the geography, climate, and natural history of the lake region of Equatorial Africa', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, 42 (1872) 273

¹⁸¹Speke, *Journal*, 420

of the *ngonge* clan¹⁸². The making of sandals, however, usually for use among the wealthy, may be first dated to the reign of Kimbugwe in the early seventeenth century¹⁸³. One missionary purchased 'shoes' as worn by chiefs in 1879; these were made of buffalo hide¹⁸⁴. Nor were skin products confined to clothing: hide mats were also common¹⁸⁵.

In 1874, Chaillé-Long considered that tanning was an important peasant industry, if no longer exclusively concerned with clothing: rather, tanners made large sheets from cow, leopard and rat skins "beautifully tanned and sewed together"¹⁸⁶. Stanley refers to the importance of "otter skins of a very fine quality"¹⁸⁷. In 1879 the missionary Girault wrote: "We have purchased some tanned goat-skins; these skins, cut in the shape of a hat and sewn together, are coloured dark red, those which serve as hats being very strong and water-proof"¹⁸⁸. In the late 1880s, Ashe observed that working with the skins of cows, goats, antelopes, leopards and buffalo still represented a significant industry¹⁸⁹. The *kabaka* had his own tanners, an honour associated with the *nkerebwe* clan. Suna apparently established a village in Mawokota in which members of this clan could work with skins: according to Kagwa, the chief, Kiina, "is even at the present day the owner of and leader of those who are in charge of preparing the skins"¹⁹⁰.

The Hunt for Ivory

The game hunting discussed above originally provided food, and, as the agricultural and pastoral base became more stable, skins became important. Hunting of smaller game may have constituted sport, while protection of plantations may also have been

¹⁸²Kagwa, 'Clans', 10

¹⁸³Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 410

¹⁸⁴White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 1/22.11.79

¹⁸⁵Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 408-9

¹⁸⁶C. Chaillé-Long, *Central Africa* (London, 1876) 134

¹⁸⁷N. Bennett (ed.), *Stanley's Despatches to the New York Herald 1871-2, 1874-7* (Boston, 1970) 227

¹⁸⁸White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 1/28.11.79

¹⁸⁹Ashe, *Two Kings*, 312-3

¹⁹⁰Elsewhere, however, Kagwa suggests that Kiina belonged to the *mamba* clan: Kagwa, 'Clans', 46, 98

a consideration. Elephants could certainly represent a threat to crops, and this was probably a motivating factor in their being hunted; but the lure of ivory was more powerful even than this. The commercial value of ivory is examined in the chapter on trade below: here we look briefly at its acquisition by the Ganda.

The external demand for ivory reached enormous proportions from the 1840s onward, during which time the Ganda were to some extent middlemen rather than producers. Much of the ivory traded by the Ganda originated outside the kingdom's borders, the Ganda acquiring it either through trade, tribute or warfare. By the second half of the nineteenth century, Buganda's own elephant population seems to have been somewhat depleted¹⁹¹. But Ganda elephant hunters, if relatively few in number, remained active throughout this period. They operated at the fringes of the kingdom, in the areas bordering Bunyoro, Busoga and Ankole. They represented an increasingly specialised profession, and thus were quite distinct from the hunters of smaller and less important game. In 1886, one missionary described an attempt by Mwanga's 'police' to arrest a group of ivory hunters who were suspected Christian readers. The hunters, who were of an independent mind, resisted arrest by opening fire on their would-be persecutors. Mwanga may have temporarily forgotten the honour normally bestowed on such men; soon after the incident, he ordered that "no-one is to touch my ivory hunters and those who have already been arrested are to be set free"¹⁹².

Kyagwe was noted for its large game population, and elephant-hunting remained important there until the late nineteenth century¹⁹³. The main clan of Kyagwe, the *njaza* clan, had been renowned as hunters for several centuries. They possessed a

¹⁹¹Jonathan Musere has suggested that the continued slaughter of elephants during this period aided the spread of the tsetse fly throughout the region, as elephants were themselves natural hosts of the insect, as well as being "natural destroyers of bush, hence instrumental barriers to the existence of tsetse habitat". In other words, the disappearance of elephants led to a movement of the tsetse fly onto less robust hosts: Musere, *African Sleeping Sickness*, 121

¹⁹²White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 3/10.8.86. Hunters continued to be attracted to the mission: in late 1887, it was noted that of recent converts, "six or seven were ivory hunters who are four or five days' march from here": White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 3/2.12.87

¹⁹³Kagwa, *Customs*, 163

special spear used in the hunting of elephants, called 'Nakungu'¹⁹⁴. Kagwa tells us that they were made the "chief elephant hunters for the king"; the fact that Kimera "found them already long established in that office as they were hunters for Namuyonjo" suggests that their reputation had been founded long before Buganda had¹⁹⁵. It is surely significant, moreover, that, according to Kagwa's history, the clan was originally from Bunyoro; by the beginning of Kimera's reign, they were to be found in the Mabira forest in southern Kyagwe¹⁹⁶. The Bunyoro connection becomes even more interesting when one considers the traditions of the *mbogo* clan: the 'parent' of this clan had become "Kimera's man" while Kimera was still in Bunyoro, before the latter returned south to become *kabaka*. This man, Kayirra, later became Kimera's chief hunter¹⁹⁷. It is clear that many hunting skills had been acquired from the Nyoro, who were the dominant power in the region at the time of Kimera.

By the late nineteenth century, the Ganda were hunting at the edges of the kingdom: in 1900, for example, elephant traps were observed in northern Singo and Bulemezi¹⁹⁸. In the early 1890s, MacDonald noted that in Bulemezi, "the great plains which form the northern part of that province [have been] abandoned to game". The same was true of Singo, where isolated plantations were vulnerable to roaming herds of elephants, encroaching once more on previously peopled areas¹⁹⁹. In 1905, a colonial official noted that "there are nearly always a few big herds to be found in Singo", as well as in Buwekula, Buruli and Mawogola²⁰⁰. Elephants could also be found in Buddu, although in 1905 a local official observed that much of the larger game had been driven away by drought²⁰¹. The droughts of the early 1880s may have

¹⁹⁴Kagwa, 'Clans', 92

¹⁹⁵*ibid.*, 92

¹⁹⁶*ibid.*, 92

¹⁹⁷*ibid.*, 96

¹⁹⁸U.N.A. A6/9 Declé to Johnston 30.10.00

¹⁹⁹MacDonald, *Soldiering and Surveying*, 194

²⁰⁰U.N.A. A8/7 Notes in Games and Reserves by Tomkins 25.7.05

²⁰¹U.N.A. A8/7 Isemonger to Comm. 11.8.05

had a similar effect; moreover, one missionary claimed in 1890 that disease had carried off great numbers of wild animals, including elephants²⁰².

We have already seen that elephant hunters were often equipped with guns: in 1901, for example, a number of chiefs were sending parties of hunters to *shoot* elephants²⁰³. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that the Ganda employed actual elephant guns, nor is it clear that guns replaced indigenous methods of hunting. As late as 1905, older weaponry was still widely used. An official wrote at that time that "[t]he gun is not the weapon we have to fear in our preserves; the net, spear and native snares are what do the mischief"²⁰⁴. This might suggest that hunting, unlike soldiery, remained in the hands of professionals to some extent. Various kinds of traps and weapons were employed²⁰⁵: the explorer Declé noted the existence of cruder elephant traps south of the Kafu river in 1900. These were "long & very deep narrow ditches in the long grass so that elephants passing at night are bound to break their leg if they put a foot in one of these ditches"²⁰⁶. A British official recorded another method in 1904:

. . . four elephants were wounded by Mkwenda's hunters in Uganda, by means of spear heads concealed in the ground, in such a way that when an elephant crossed the path it trod on the spears so placed with the result that they penetrated the elephant's foot, and remained there . . .

The Ganda then followed the injured beasts across the Kafu into Bunyoro "in the hope of being able to shoot them in their disabled condition"²⁰⁷.

²⁰²White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 4/5-11.10.90

²⁰³U.N.A. A8/1 Tomkins to Comm. 11.12.01

²⁰⁴U.N.A. A8/7 Notes on Games and Reserves by Tomkins 25.7.05. The bow and arrow were used neither in hunting nor in war: see Chapter 7 below.

²⁰⁵See Trowell & Wachsmann, *Tribal Crafts*, 262-9

²⁰⁶U.N.A. A6/9 Declé to Johnston 30.10.00

²⁰⁷U.N.A. A8/2 Grant to Fowler 28.6.04

The Growth of the Fishing Economy

Fishing was one of the key economic activities in pre-colonial Buganda, as we shall also see from the chapters below on trade and canoes. In this section we focus on the fishermen themselves, their quarry and methods. Throughout the nineteenth century, fishing remained a specialised profession, and although demands were made on the labour of shoreline communities, the methods of fishing appear not to have been affected by the expansion of long-distance lake travel. The enormous canoes which so impressed Europeans and apparently struck fear into the hearts of Buganda's shoreline enemies were rarely, if ever, used for fishing. Indeed, many long-established fishing communities may have looked somewhat askance at these huge vessels. Kagwa stressed the exclusivity of fishing life, suggesting that 'in the old days' fishermen rarely travelled to the mainland, if they lived on the islands, or to the capital, if they lived on the mainland shore²⁰⁸. The highly active trade network which existed between fishing communities and the hinterland shows this to be exaggerated, but clearly cultural barriers were firmly in place.

Fishing was critical to regional diet and the local economy²⁰⁹. According to Roscoe, fish was "one of the principal articles of diet among the poorer people", while the *kabaka* and a number of eminent chiefs had their own fishermen to supply them with fish in return for plots of land²¹⁰. Further inland, supplies of fish from the lake were supplemented by river-fishing²¹¹. By the late nineteenth century, most chiefs of high rank owned land either bordering the lake on the mainland, or on one of the islands²¹². Lake and river fishermen may not have regarded themselves as professionally related; rather, lake fishermen had by the nineteenth century fostered an exclusive, even introverted, group consciousness. Roscoe remarked, "[i]t was a

²⁰⁸Kagwa, *Customs*, 148

²⁰⁹Wrigley intriguingly asserts that "The trade in dried fish made a major contribution to Buganda's diet and perhaps also to its political evolution": Wrigley, *Kingship and State*, 62

²¹⁰Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 391

²¹¹*ibid.*, 398

²¹²*ibid.*, 391-2

common practice for the Baganda, when travelling by canoe, to rob traps as they passed them; but the fishermen did not play such tricks upon one another; they feared the curses and imprecations of their robbed companions, and also the wrath of the god [Mukasa]"²¹³.

To some extent this collective consciousness stemmed from deference to Mukasa, the 'spirit of the lake' and the most powerful deity in Buganda²¹⁴. Kagwa suggests that inland or river fishermen did not share the taboos of their lacustrine counterparts, and were known as *abasamba*²¹⁵. Regular festivals were held in Mukasa's honour, in which the *kabaka* would offer to Mukasa slaves and livestock. This was reciprocated in another festival, during which Mukasa sent to the *kabaka* a wide range of edible fish. In what was a veritable celebration of Buganda's maritime culture, this fish-offering was conveyed to the *kabaka* by men singing songs and performing the motions of canoe travel²¹⁶. This may have been the ceremony described by Speke, who drew attention to the regular celebrations of Buganda's natural produce at the royal court, during which fishermen brought samples of their catches before the *kabaka*²¹⁷.

The Ganda hauled a wide variety of fish from Lake Victoria. Speke described a fish called by his men 'Samaki Kambari': the Luganda term is unclear²¹⁸. Stanley mentioned the 'Sama-Moa', which he claimed was the local term, and, more importantly, the 'Ngogo fish'²¹⁹. The *ngege*, resembling the carp, was perhaps the most important fish in Buganda, and is still widely eaten today. Otherwise known as

²¹³ibid., 398

²¹⁴See M.Kenny, 'The Powers of Lake Victoria', *Anthropos*, 72 (1977) 717-733

²¹⁵Kagwa, *Customs*, 150

²¹⁶Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 298-300

²¹⁷Speke, *Journal*, 259, 297

²¹⁸ibid., 306-7

²¹⁹Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I [1890 ed.] 269, 325

'tilapia', it was noted for the quality of its flesh. Other widely-eaten fish included lung-fish, barbels, cat-fish and the type known to Europeans as 'Nile perch'²²⁰.

Fishermen employed a number of traps, depending on environment and quarry. Dragnets, floating lines hung with iron hooks and variously-sized basket traps were among the equipment in use by the late nineteenth century²²¹. Basket traps were made of cane, or else stiff reeds commonly found along the lake shore²²², while ropes were made from *buyanja*, a type of grass which grew near the water²²³. The waters off Kyagwe were noted as being particularly rich fishing-grounds, and by the early eighteenth century the long-established markets along the Kyagwe shore were renowned throughout the kingdom. The Mawokota shoreline economy was also heavily reliant on fishing²²⁴. The Sesse in particular were experts in the use of a line and hook. By the 1880s, many were employing their fishing skills on long-distance journeys. The missionary Giraud wrote in 1885: "When we arrived at the place of encampment, the Wasese took their vicious lines hung with iron hooks in the shape of fish-hooks and returned with ample provisions". The Sesse also hunted crocodiles, apparently for their flesh²²⁵. Giraud claimed that the Sesse steered clear of hippopotami, but other evidence suggests that these were hunted on the Sesse islands, by means of placing traps in forests near the water's edge²²⁶. Ashe claimed that the Sesse ate both crocodile and hippopotamus meat, but that the Ganda would not touch either²²⁷. In his youth, Mutesa himself was a keen hunter of hippopotami, apparently for sport²²⁸.

²²⁰See Thomas & Scott, *Uganda*, 192-3

²²¹These are well documented in Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 394-7

²²²*ibid.*, 412

²²³Kagwa, *Customs*, 149

²²⁴*ibid.*, 164

²²⁵White Fathers: C14/167 Giraud to Bridoux 24.7.85

²²⁶White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 3/28.9.86

²²⁷Ashe, *Two Kings*, 302-6

²²⁸Speke, *Journal*, 394

River fishing was impeded in many parts of Buganda by *kifuuyi* or sudd, a mass of floating vegetation obstructing the course of a river. This was the case particularly on stretches of the Kagera and Katonga rivers, and often river fishing involved wading into the water equipped with nets or spears, or standing on the bank. Kagwa tells us that Singo was the most important *ssaza* for river fishing, particularly on the Nabakazi, Bimbye and Kitumbi rivers²²⁹: these relatively minor rivers lie north and west of Lake Wamala. But it was on the Nile between modern-day Jinja and Bulondoganyi that both Ganda and Soga river fishing flourished. On reaching the 'Ripon Falls' in 1862, Speke observed that a number of the larger islets in the middle of the river were "occupied by fishermen's huts"²³⁰. The drawing accompanying Speke's text depicts a number of fishermen, either squatting on the rocks in mid-stream, at the river's edge or in canoes. Both spears and rods can be seen²³¹. Moving north along the river bank, Speke discovered that dried fish was a common commodity²³². The explorer described "the thousands of passenger-fish, leaping at the falls with all their might, the Wasoga and Waganda fishermen coming out in boats and taking post on all the rocks with rod and hook"²³³. He later wrote:

In addition to the rod-and-line fishing, a number of men, armed with long heavy poles with two iron spikes, tied prong fashion to one end, rushed to a place over a break in the falls, which tired fish seemed to use as a baiting-room, dashed in their forks, holding on by the shaft, and sent men down to disengage the pinned fish and relieve their spears. The shot they make in this manner is a blind one - only on the chance of fish being there - and therefore always doubtful in its result.²³⁴

There may have been more skill in this operation than Speke appreciated. Inland fishermen also used herbs, *muluku*, which they sprinkled in the water in order to

²²⁹Kagwa, *Customs*, 162

²³⁰Speke, *Journal*, 459

²³¹*ibid.*, opp.466

²³²*ibid.*, 464, 472; also Chaillé-Long, *Central Africa*, 160ff

²³³Speke, *Journal*, 467

²³⁴*ibid.*, 470

poison the fish, which were then picked off the surface of the water²³⁵. It is likely that many Ganda practised river fishing from time to time, unlike the shoreline communities for whom fishing was a way of life. It may be flimsy evidence, but Stanley noted that iron hooks were common in the 'average Muganda's hut'²³⁶: these may have been used for occasional fishing trips to local streams. In northern Buganda, Grant observed that fishing was an important feature of the local economy and 'that basket-traps "were constantly found in the houses of the people". Here, trenches were dug into swamps in order to create a network of artificial streams, and at various intersections "the baskets were laid on their sides, and the fish driven into them". There was, however, something of a dearth when Grant was passing in mid-1862: he complained that there were no fish to be had in the area²³⁷.

*

In this chapter we have examined the principal occupations of the Ganda in the context of agriculture and husbandry, and the ways in which these had changed by the late nineteenth century. It is clear that the organisation of crop production was critical to the growth of the modern Ganda state, in terms of both land usage and labour. Intensive production in the southern *ssazas* of the kingdom in general permitted the growth of a relatively dense population situated in relatively stable settlements. Yet we have also seen that intermittent crop failures led to food shortages in the nineteenth century and probably earlier. Such failures took on a greater significance in the late nineteenth century, particularly in the 1880s, when they combined with livestock disease to seriously undermine Buganda's productive base. The diversification in crop production engendered by Arab merchants at the capital from the 1860s onward failed to offset these problems. Food shortages and cattle disease formed part of the great concatenation of events, which served to

²³⁵Kagwa, *Customs*, 150

²³⁶Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 384

²³⁷Grant, *A Walk*, 241

weaken Buganda in the years leading up to the establishment of the Protectorate. As we shall see in Chapters 6, 7 and 8 below, these problems worsened at a time when the Ganda army was decline, when there were heightening political and social tensions at the capital, and when the *kabaka* himself was dying. At the same time, dwindling ivory reserves threatened commercial disaster for Buganda, as well as ecological crisis; as is examined below, Mutesa and Mwanga were forced to rely on tribute or violence or both to ensure the continued supply of ivory. Yet Buganda's ability to prosecute successful military campaigns was not what it had been, while tributary relationships were found to be less than reliable.

The quest for both fertile agricultural land and fine pastures was almost certainly a motivating factor in Ganda expansion. In this regard, the annexation of Buddu was of great significance, as it is in the context of the following chapter. The importance of cattle for the Ganda economy is surely reflected in Buganda's interest in the lands to the west. This interest frequently led to the dispatch of armies, but, as we shall see in Chapter 5, military operations were not the only means by which such valued commodities were acquired: commerce was probably more important still both in the development of the Ganda economy and in the definition of Buganda's relations with its neighbours. Indeed, the importance of trade within Buganda has already been suggested. The production of many of the articles and goods described in this chapter is clearly only half the story: Buganda's economic strength and social cohesion lay in the exchange system through which passed foodstuffs, cattle and other livestock, skins and the produce of the lake and rivers. This is perhaps even more true of the industries described in the following chapter: these were industries which not only generated wealth in the market-place but, in the case of iron, produced the tools of violence which were necessary when commercial channels failed.

CHAPTER 4

The History of Ganda Production # 2: Crafts

In the last chapter, we examined the agricultural and pastoral economy of Buganda, as well as the key activities of fishing and hunting. The present chapter continues the general theme of Ganda production, and is concerned with the material basis of the Ganda economy. We focus on two main spheres of economic activity: the making of barkcloth, and metal-working.

Barkcloth Production

Manufacturing barkcloth was the first among 'peasant' industries, a source of income (not to mention clothing) open to virtually anyone with a plot of land. During the nineteenth century it came to be seen as a symbol of Buganda, and it survived the arrival of imported cloths for several decades. The barkcloth of the Ganda was renowned throughout the region. Worn by everyone in Buganda itself, it was often the cloth of royalty in neighbouring societies, being imported by the wealthier traders of Karagwe, Bunyoro and, to a lesser extent, Busoga¹. By the late 1870s, imported cotton cloth was becoming more fashionable and attainable at the royal court, but barkcloth remained prevalent among the majority of Ganda and retained its cultural importance everywhere.

The cloth was derived from bark stripped from various kinds of fig trees, which were located throughout the kingdom. The bark was repeatedly beaten until thin and flexible, and then left to dry. The process generally took several days. Although, as we shall see, a number of different mallets were used throughout the operation, many

¹One contemporary report suggested that Ganda barkcloth even found its way as far as Rwanda, and it is possible that during the nineteenth century it was traded on the eastern shore of the lake: G. Schweinfurth *et al* (eds.), *Emin Pasha in Central Africa* (London, 1888) 119-20. The commerce in barkcloth is more closely examined in the following chapter.

were grooved, giving the cloth an appearance similar to corduroy. Quality was by no means uniform, and varied according to the type of tree stripped and the number of times the tree had previously been used. The superior kinds were greatly sought-after, such as those on the Sesse islands. Occasionally, the cloth was dyed, although the Ganda appear not to have done this as often as, for example, the Soga². Generally, it was the role of women to strip the bark from the trees, but the actual manufacture of the cloth seems to have been wholly a male preserve³. Barkcloth was mainly used for clothing, but it also provided bedding and partitions within huts, and was used to wrap up goods for transporting⁴. The trees were usually to be found within a peasant's plantation. Emin described the scene thus:

There are no trees in the banana groves except several varieties of the fig, which are used for the manufacture of cloth . . . The bark may be employed for this purpose until the tree is two and a half to three years old, but as a rule the same tree is only stripped twice. The first time it produces a thick coarse cloth, the second time a uniformly finer one . . .⁵

Although this account underestimates the life span of the tree, it indicates the complexities of barkcloth production.

The list of trees from which barkcloth might be produced is almost endless. There may have been up to nineteen kinds in Buddu alone, while in Bulemezi, which had a relatively poor barkcloth industry, there were perhaps eight. According to Roscoe, it might take two years before a tree was sufficiently mature to produce a worthy bark⁶. As with plantain trees, the planting of fig trees was essential to the prosperity of a homestead. The first bark removed was generally of the poorest quality: this was known as *kitenregere*, literally meaning the rough bark, and was used for burials and

²F.Lugard, 'Travels from the East Coast to Uganda', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, 14 (1892) 823, 831

³Schweinfurth, *Emin Pasha in Central Africa*, 517-8

⁴*ibid.*, 37

⁵*ibid.*, 39-40

⁶J.Roscoe. *The Baganda* (London. 1911) 405

on other occasions when finery was unnecessary. Certain trees - known as *kkookoowe* - yielded this kind of bark continually. The first stripping of bark was beaten with the mallet *nsaasi*, which had particularly large grooves. The mallet was critical in the process which actually produced the cloth. *Nsera* referred to a mallet with medium grooves, while toward the end of the process the mallet known as *nzituzo* was used for patterning and had very fine grooves. Roscoe wrote:

Barkcloths that were intended for use on beds were left much thicker than those intended for wear. Different trees yielded different textures and qualities and also different colours. The common barkcloth, when beaten and dried, was a light brown, but the better sorts, when exposed to the sun for drying, became a rich terracotta. Peasants commonly wore the light brown barkcloths, but they had darker cloths of finer quality for use when paying visits . . . The best barkcloth trees did not grow freely in any district except Budu, and in that district the best trees were grown at Sango. For the King a species of tree was grown, which gave a white barkcloth; this was used at the coronation, but seldom at other times . . .⁷

Sango, in southern Buddu just north of the Kagera river, was renowned for barkcloth production. The missionary Girault mentioned the region on his way to Buganda by canoe in 1879: "We passed around midday the mouth of the river [Kagera] which marks the boundary between Ouganda and the country of Ohaia [=Buhaya]. Here there is the tree called mbougo, the bark of which the Waganda make into cloth"⁸. The area even gave its name to a particular type of cloth, *ssango*, a fine red-coloured barkcloth.

Cloths might be dyed or patterned according to market demand. One colonial official observed in 1895 that some cloths were stained using "water taken from a certain spring near Mengo, which contained some chemical which left a permanent black

⁷ibid., 406

⁸White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 0/13.6.79

mark"⁹. Trowell suggested that 'black stamp-patterns' were symbols of royalty or authority¹⁰. It is unclear how common dyeing was: barkcloths were often naturally coloured to some extent, such as *ndogo* which was comparatively dark. With regard to dyeing generally, Roscoe states that red dye was produced from a crimson-coloured deposit found in streams where there were traces of iron in the clay; the deposit was mixed with ashes and water. Black dye was obtained by boiling a herb which Roscoe calls 'mzugizi'¹¹.

The Expansion of Barkcloth Production

We cannot with any certainty date the introduction of barkcloth in Buganda's economic history. It is said to have been used in royal burials but rarely is any indication given of its age. One tradition states, predictably enough, that the art was brought to Buganda by Kintu, but as Roscoe pointed out, this is contradicted by another tradition suggesting that it was taught to the Ganda by the Nyoro. The latter tradition is problematic insofar as Bunyoro, certainly by the nineteenth century, was wealthy in neither the skills nor the natural resources. According to the somewhat garbled version of the story told to Speke, barkcloth was supplied by the lake-shore peoples to their Nyoro masters when Buganda was little more than a tiny affiliation of descent groups¹². Gideon Were has noted that the mysterious Chwezi are associated with the introduction of barkcloth to the region, which is to some extent consistent with Speke's findings¹³.

The *ngonge* clan trace the 'discovery' of barkcloth to one of their sub-chiefs during the reign of Kimera, a form of dating which surely suggests an impossibly distant point in time. The sub-chief in question made the discovery quite by accident, hammering a

⁹T. Ternan, *Some Experiences of an Old Bromsgovian* (Birmingham, 1930) 156-7

¹⁰M. Trowell & K. Wachsmann, *Tribal Crafts of Uganda* (London, 1953) 182

¹¹Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 371

¹²J. H. Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (Edinburgh & London, 1863) 251-2

¹³G. S. Were, 'The Western Bantu Peoples from A.D. 1300 to 1800', in B. A. Ogot & J. A. Kieran (eds.), *Zamani: a survey of East African history* (Nairobi, 1968) 179

piece of bark he found particularly attractive in order to break it up. He found that the bark simply expanded rather than cracked. The resultant material was fortuitously noticed by a princess, a daughter of Kimera, who was greatly taken with it: the rest, indeed, is history. Much of the story is clearly mythical, but barkcloth was worthy of such an elaborate myth: the telling of the story in such detail, undoubtedly a centrepiece in the history of the *ngonge* clan, was a way of honouring the perceived 'event' and underlining the importance of the 'discovery'. Such tales are monuments to the past. Kagwa wrote:

At the start, there were not many bark cloths but the amount increased very much especially during the reign of Semakokiro. This is the honour of the Ngonge clan; they are in charge of manufacturing the bark clothes of the Kabaka. This has been so since the reign of Kimera up to now, because they were the founder of the way to make barkclothes . . .¹⁴

It is unlikely, however, that any one clan had a monopoly on royal barkcloth production. Kagwa also mentioned Kasumba of the *kasimba* clan, largely based in the *ssaza* of Mawokota, who was the *kabaka's* barkcloth maker. This particular post was created by Junju in the late eighteenth century: Kasumba, originally from the Bujaju district of Buddu, came to Junju's notice following the annexation of that barkcloth-rich region¹⁵. The *nnamunnoona* clan in Buddu (who, significantly, claimed to have come with Kintu but moved south into Buddu) were also renowned for their cloth-making: in the late eighteenth century, they saw many of their villages being given over to Junju's brothers and sisters, who acquired their barkcloth from there up until the 1890s¹⁶. The *mpindi* clan had a somewhat less glamorous claim: they were noted for making rough barkcloths for the *kabaka's* women¹⁷.

¹⁴A.Kagwa [tr.J.Wamala], 'A Book of Clans of Buganda' [c.1972] 8-9

¹⁵*ibid.*, 63

¹⁶*ibid.*, 108

¹⁷*ibid.*, 103

The commonness of the cloth before 1800 is not clear. It may have been the garb of royalty, as it was in other societies in the nineteenth century. Certainly, by the end of the sixteenth century, the *kabaka* was being robed in barkcloth, possibly as part of the coronation rites¹⁸. There is, however, little doubt that the modern history of the cloth begins in the second half of the eighteenth century under *Kabaka* Semakokiro. The exact details of what might be termed his 'barkcloth policy' are unclear, but the implication is that up until his reign barkcloth and the trees from which it was made were royal property. The commonest type of clothing in the kingdom had been skins. Semakokiro, however, decreed that the country at large should grow the trees in their plantations and that everyone should wear barkcloth, apparently, Roscoe tells us, under the threat of death¹⁹.

This may simply have been the foible of a fashion-conscious ruler, but even this 'simple' explanation implies that the trees were not as common in the eighteenth century as they were in the nineteenth, implying in turn that there would have been the enormous operation of cultivating them throughout the country. Alternatively, the trees may have been common enough but not put to use, and Semakokiro may have sought to compel his subjects to tap this under-utilised resource. However, it is worth bearing in mind that Buddu, a region extraordinarily rich in barkcloth trees, had come under Ganda control only a few years before, under Semakokiro's brother Junju. The consequent rise in Ganda barkcloth production may have opened up opportunities in other parts of the country: for example, if royalty favoured, as it did, the Sango cloths of Buddu, restrictions on tree plantations in other parts of the kingdom may have been lifted. The import of cotton and calico via Karagwe, which had begun by this time, may also have influenced the popularisation of barkcloth under Semakokiro. It might be argued that as early as the 1780s, chiefs and royalty perceived these imported cloths as greatly superior, particularly in terms of prestige, to anything available

¹⁸A.Kagwa [tr.E.B.Kalibala, ed.M.M.Edel], *Customs of the Baganda* (New York, 1934) 17

¹⁹Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 403; A.Kagwa [tr.&ed.M.S.M.Kiwanuka], *The Kings of Buganda* (Nairobi, 1971) 99

locally. Restrictions on the widespread production of barkcloth were therefore eased, and it became, if not overnight, then certainly with some rapidity, something of a nation-wide industry. The *kabaka* now had less interest in tightly controlling production. A further possibility is that barkcloth production expanded enormously from the end of the eighteenth century in direct competition with imported cloths: this theory, however, seems doubtful, as it exaggerates the volume of imported cloths at this time. Clearly, the process of popularisation did not exclude the political and social elite: as we have already noted, barkcloth was worn by both royalty and chiefs through most of the nineteenth century. Yet a gradual shift had begun in the 1780s, culminating in the almost total abandonment of indigenous fabrics by the early 1900s.

Nonetheless, in the early 1860s, bundles of barkcloth were still being presented regularly to the *kabaka*²⁰. In the early 1890s, barkcloth remained prevalent. Lugard noted that "[e]very man and woman is dressed in an mbugu, or large piece of bark-cloth, except those big chiefs who can afford fine white linen"²¹. In 1893, the missionary Fisher observed a group of Mwangi's women "robed in Royal bark cloth made from the wild fig trees"²². Ashe asserted that barkcloth was made "by slaves and the poorer class of peasants"²³, but the value of the cloth was such that it remained a common medium of taxation²⁴. Yet the widespread disturbances of this period took their toll on production, as they did in most areas of the economy. Lourdel noted in 1890 the extent to which the barkcloths of the displaced population were "nearly all worn out" because production had ceased²⁵; this gives some idea of the regularity with which new cloths were normally made. Decline set in after 1900. Lucy Mair wrote in the early 1930s that "European stuffs are popular and barkcloths [are] made for sale by not more than three or four men in each village"²⁶. Iliffe is

²⁰Speke, *Journal*, 297

²¹Lugard, 'Travels', 831

²²C.M.S. Acc.84 F3/1 Book 3, 14

²³R.P.Ashe, *Two Kings of Uganda* (London, 1889) 300

²⁴J.R.MacDonald, *Soldiering and Surveying in British East Africa* (London, 1897) 139

²⁵White Fathers: C14/192 Lourdel to Supérieur-Général 25.1.90

²⁶L.Mair, *An African People in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1934) 95

right to assert that "imported cloth destroyed most of eastern Africa's textile production"²⁷.

It is clear that certain regions were noted for their barkcloth production above others: Bulemezi, for example, 'imported' much of its cloth from Busiro and Mawokota, as the trees themselves did not greatly prosper in the hotter, drier climate of that *ssaza*. Busiro, Mawokota and, in particular, Buddu were noted as the best areas for barkcloth; in Buddu, again, those cloths made at Sango and at Bujaju were especially noted²⁸. Renowned centres of production were also found on the Sesse islands²⁹. In any discussion of the origins and development of barkcloth production, therefore, account must be taken of these regional differences. It has already been suggested that the acquisition of Buddu may have represented a significant boost to the industry. Likewise, parts of Mawokota which were gradually brought under Ganda control had an effect. The problems lies in whether one assumes that the Ganda exported their skills from the core area to these newly-acquired regions, or that the population of Buddu, for example, was already well-acquainted with the manufacture of barkcloth. Perhaps it is fair to assume both. It certainly seem like too much of a coincidence that by the nineteenth century the Ganda should be so renowned in this sphere among their neighbours. It may well be that Bunyoro actually lost its 'international share' of the barkcloth economy once it lost control of parts of Mawokota and, more importantly, Buddu in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This would mean that by the 1800s, Buganda was in fact a relatively recent beneficiary of the barkcloth industry, its position as producer of the finest cloths in the region based on what it had managed to wrest from others. Barkcloth was undoubtedly one of the biggest prizes to be gained from regional control, as perhaps other 'empires' had discovered several centuries earlier.

²⁷J. Iliffe, *Africans: the history of a continent* (Cambridge, 1995) 185

²⁸Kagwa, *Customs*, 165

²⁹Speke, *Journal*, 399

The Development of Metal-working

Metal technology was essential to the growth of the Ganda state, and foreign and military policy was powerfully driven by the need for iron in particular. The desire for access to areas where both skills in iron-working and natural resources were located was certainly a key factor in expansion: once again, Buddu is the prime example. It seems likely, however, that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the bulk of Buganda's iron came from outside the kingdom's borders. Often it was Buganda's preferred system of 'informal empire' which guaranteed the supply of this prized metal: perhaps the best example of this was Koki, south-west of Buddu, which in a loosely tributary position regularly supplied the Ganda with iron hoes and other implements, such as knives, from at least the second half of the eighteenth century. In the mid-1890s, iron was still being brought in bulk from Koki in the form of tribute³⁰. It is possible, too, that a number of smiths travelled from Koki to Buganda, perhaps on a regular basis, either to sell their implements or to teach the profession itself. Roscoe was left in no doubt that iron and iron-workers had existed in Koki and the surrounding area long before the reign of the mythical Kintu³¹. Certainly, as we shall see in the following chapter, the trade in iron implements was as critical as it was extensive.

It is difficult to assess the extent to which iron was actually mined in Buganda; it is clear, however, that an extensive branch of the industry was involved in the smelting and re-working of iron brought in from outside. By the early 1890s, for example, iron which was mined in Kavirondo was carried west in an unworked form to Busoga and Buganda where it was made into hoes³². A contemporary report describes a market in Busoga where iron from Kavirondo was exchanged for bananas and fowls³³. Hoes of a harder iron are mentioned as having come from Busoga in 1894³⁴. Earlier, in 1879,

³⁰U.N.A. A4/1 Wilson to Jackson 5.1.95

³¹Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 379

³²U.N.A. A2/1 Owen to Rhodes 29.3.93

³³G.F.Scott Elliot, *A Naturalist in Mid-Africa* (London, 1896) 38

³⁴U.N.A. A2/3 Anson to Colvile 5.10.94

Mutesa reportedly sent a lump of unworked iron to the White Fathers' mission, requesting that they make bullets from it³⁵. It may be that in this regard Buganda's material and technological culture was markedly inferior to that of many of its less celebrated neighbours³⁶. Possibly it was a source of potential weakness that Buganda was compelled to rely heavily on imported metal; yet Ganda history is to some extent characterised by the ability to absorb 'foreign' ideas, skills and raw materials. The case for arguing that Buganda was materially or technologically inferior in the context of the iron industry could only be made if it was shown that the kingdom was itself an insular one. This it assuredly was not: a vibrant, dynamic society, Buganda drew on the wealth and skills of its neighbours and thus guaranteed not merely survival but rapid growth in industries such as iron-working.

This is not intended, however, to convey the impression that the Ganda mined no iron of their own. Much of Buganda was covered with lateritic ironstone, otherwise known as murrum³⁷, from which it was possible to extract iron ore. Emin Pasha considered that iron in Buganda was derived from two main sources: bog iron ore in low-lying ground and, more commonly, 'clay ironstone' found lying upon granite on higher ground³⁸. Granite is certainly found in the western parts of Buddu and Singo³⁹, which goes some way toward verifying Emin's remarks. Iron was extracted from deposits in southern Kyagwe, some of which, apparently, were close to the *Sekibobo's* main enclosure⁴⁰. Mining was also a common activity in western Buganda, particularly in western Buddu, where the *ngabi* clan had a long history of ore extraction. More generally, mining on a small - i.e. family unit-based - scale probably occurred throughout the kingdom. The availability of wood for charcoal, clearly

³⁵White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 1/19.8.79

³⁶This was suggested, rather indignantly, to the author by a member of staff at the History Department of Makerere University, Kampala.

³⁷H.B.Thomas & R.Scott, *Uganda* (London, 1935) 59. Lateritic ironstone was less common in Buganda than in Bunyoro and to the west, however, despite Mackay's assertion that in Buganda "every stone is iron": A.Mackay [ed. by his sister], *Pioneer Missionary in Uganda* (London, 1890) 107-8

³⁸Schweinfurth, *Emin Pasha in Central Africa*, 122

³⁹Thomas & Scott, *Uganda*, map between pp.44 & 45

⁴⁰Scott Elliot, *A Naturalist in Mid-Africa*, 39

critical for both mining and smelting, provides some clues to the commonness of the activity. Roscoe states that "[t]he fuel used for smelting was charcoal made from two kinds of wood". He does not name these wood-types, but describes them as "dry papyrus stems" or, if these were unavailable, "dry, strong, coarse grass"⁴¹. Specifically, *musasa* was the term for a forest-edge tree producing a hard wood which was used for making charcoal. *Musasa* was common in many regions of Buganda, particularly Buddu, the Sesse islands, Kyagwe and Singo⁴². Kagwa also names 'misesse', as well as the Lutoro word for this wood-type, 'emizanvuma' or *masanvuma*, and *nongo* as the types of 'coal' used in mining and smelting⁴³. *Nongo* was found in many of the same districts as *musasa*⁴⁴.

Mining and smelting can be traced as far back as Buganda itself, a fact reflected in a number of clan histories. For example, Kisawo of the *ngeye* clan appears to have been an early metal-worker, whose job it was to fit ornaments on the arms of the wives of *basekabaka* or deceased kings⁴⁵. These ornaments, however, are likely to have been copper, the metal most commonly used for ornamental purposes: the Luganda term *kikomo* means both copper and bracelet. The arrival of copper in Buganda is difficult to date. By the second half of the eighteenth century, copper wire had made its way from the coast to the lake region, but it is possible that copper had arrived earlier from the south-west, i.e. Katanga, where copper had been mined for several centuries. There is little concrete evidence for commerce of this kind before 1800, although the Nyamwezi were trading with Katanga by the 1820s⁴⁶.

⁴¹Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 379

⁴²W.J.Eggeling, *The Indigenous Trees of the Uganda Protectorate* (Entebbe, 1940) 140

⁴³Kagwa, *Customs*, 160

⁴⁴Eggeling, *Indigenous Trees*, 220, 222. Thomas and Scott, who provide a less thorough survey of 'forests and timbers', name *nongo* only in a Nyoro context; *musisi*, as they called it, was found in the Minziro forest of central Buddu and the Mabira forest of southern Kyagwe: Thomas & Scott, *Uganda*, 534-5

⁴⁵Kagwa, 'Clans', 4

⁴⁶H.Waller (ed.), *The Last Journals of David Livingstone in Central Africa* (London, 1874) II, 180. See A.D.Roberts, 'The Nyamwezi', in A.D.Roberts (ed.), *Tanzania before 1900* (Nairobi, 1968) 125

Kabaka Kimera is supposed to have named his enclosure *Kanyakasasa*, which conveyed the meaning 'just as the blacksmith's shop has coal burning all the time yet no ashes accumulate, so it is with the king who always kills people and yet they go to him'⁴⁷. This early reference to smithing is significant. Kagwa records that "the knowledge of smelting was acquired originally from the Banyoro and the Banabudu"⁴⁸. These areas are closely linked with the Chwezi, who, again, have been credited with the introduction of iron-working⁴⁹. The Nyoro seem to have been influential in the development of iron technology, and traditions relating to Kimera himself point toward the importance of this influence. The early influx of iron implements and expertise is to some extent personified by Kimera, who is supposed to have spent time in Bunyoro before becoming *kabaka*, from whence he brought the first tools and weapons. Roscoe wrote:

When [Kimera] had fled from Wunyi's court in Bunyoro because of his undue familiarity with Wunyi's wife, he attached himself to a smith, and remained with him for some time, learning his work; after a time, when he had mastered the art of smithing, he sent hoes and weapons to Uganda . . .⁵⁰

Kagwa suggests that it was in fact Mulanga, a son of Kintu and supposedly living some time before Kimera, who "learnt to work in iron"⁵¹; indeed, it was apparently under Chwa that iron spear-heads were first made, as we shall see below. Whatever the truth behind these tangled traditions⁵², it is surely significant that the most common basic term for iron ore in Buganda is *matale*, which is Lunyoro.

Great honour was attached to smiths, particularly those in royal service or living within the compounds of major chiefs. Although precise details of his occupation are not provided, the fact that Kisawo is mentioned at all in the *ngeye* clan history is a

⁴⁷Kagwa, *Customs*, 20

⁴⁸*ibid.*, 160

⁴⁹Were, 'The Western Bantu Peoples'. 179

⁵⁰Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 379

⁵¹Kagwa, *Kings*, 6

⁵²For a refreshingly open approach to the myth and half-truth surrounding Kimera's origins, see C.C. Wrigley, *Kingship and State: the Buganda dynasty* (Cambridge, 1996) 194-6

measure of his importance. Similarly, Mubiru of the *mamba* clan was a renowned smith, and, as Kagwa tells us, "the stone on which he carried out his craft was called Mpijja - the saying Mubiru Wenkaja was derived from the fact that he spent most of his time smithing"⁵³. He was, by implication, a professional blacksmith, although scarcely an ordinary one. One of his ceremonial duties was providing the ornaments for the *Gabunga*, the head of the clan, an act which "installed [the *Gabunga*] judge of the whole clan": in effect, Mubiru "handed that clan over to [the *Gabunga*]"⁵⁴. Although his importance may in part have been derived from another unconnected position, his role as a worker of metals undoubtedly enhanced his standing.

The *kkobe* clan also had an early history in metal-working: one of the sub-chiefs of this clan, Lwabiriza, was a noted metal-worker under Kintu. Although again the nature of his occupation is unclear, Lwabiriza was successful enough to be given several villages in Busiro by Kintu as reward⁵⁵. This underlines the fact that political favour might be granted to the economically successful, and the metal-working industry was a sphere in which favour might be expected⁵⁶. Lwabiriza did not represent the *kkobe* clan's only prowess in the development of metal-working. Magere was in charge of Kintu's spears, which were originally made of wood. Magere, Kagwa tells us, held this position "up to Kabaka Chwa Nabale and it was under him that iron spears were made. Magere's grandsons fixed their handles and sharpened them"⁵⁷. There seems little doubt that this, though typically understated by Kagwa, represented a revolution of the profoundest importance. This was true in military terms, as we shall see in Chapter 6, as well as in terms of the metal-working

⁵³Kagwa, 'Clans', 37-8

⁵⁴*ibid.*, 37-8

⁵⁵*ibid.*, 78

⁵⁶It is clear that political patronage was not only a response to social sycophancy or military prowess. Economic activity was also encouraged and nurtured by the political establishment. Indeed, it is tempting to suggest that early chieftainships handed out on merit by the *kabaka* tended to be rewards for economic endeavour: in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the power of the *kabaka* was still restricted by the clan-heads, and *bataka* rather than *batongole* were dominant. In other words, the *kabaka* had not yet been able to erode the authority of the clan-heads through the creation of royally-appointed chieftainships.

⁵⁷Kagwa, 'Clans', 79

industry itself. With the replacement of wooden spearheads by iron ones, the smithing industry took on a new and vital dimension. That this technological breakthrough should be credited to the reign of Chwa - in other words, Buganda in its infancy - is significant. Although it would be another two hundred years before the Ganda were a formidable force on the battlefield, the superiority of the iron blade would have been clear to them, as would the need to search for new sources of iron, although wooden spears were never completely obsolete.

The next watershed in the history of smithing came during the reign of Nakibinge in the early or mid-sixteenth century. This was perhaps the first time that Buganda's 'recently' acquired military technology was tested to the full: one indigenous account tells us that Nakibinge greatly prized his blacksmiths "because they made deadly arrows and spears which helped to conquer the enemies with which he was surrounded on all sides"⁵⁸. Nakibinge may have been the first ruler to clearly identify the link between iron technology and war, and to recognise that the successful prosecution of warfare was heavily dependent upon economic conditions at home. Ultimately, Nakibinge himself was unsuccessful: Buganda was all but crushed by the Nyoro and Nakibinge died in the fighting. But the lesson was driven home. A major factor behind the Ganda army's defeat was the limited reserve of iron upon which it could draw for weaponry: "all the iron for weapons", Kagwa records, "was exhausted"⁵⁹. Buganda's subsequent gradual expansion was at least in part inspired by the need to secure raw materials, the most important of which was iron. The importance of iron in warfare by the mid-nineteenth century is succinctly conveyed by the story of Suna's war against Kiziba, as told to Stanley:

[Suna] commanded his Katekiro to make up 300 man-loads of hoes and old iron and to send them to Kytawa, and to say to him, 'Suna sends these hoes and iron to you, for it may be that you are short of spears, arrow-heads, and

⁵⁸Kagwa, *Customs*, 160

⁵⁹*ibid.*, 160

hatchets. Make war weapons for your people in abundance during three months, and prepare for war' . . .⁶⁰

The Ganda were never complacent about the search for iron, as well as the skills necessary to utilise it efficiently. In the early eighteenth century, *Kabaka* Mawanda employed a Nyoro smith named Kongonge and provided him with an estate in Kyagwe, a *ssaza* in which, as we have seen, certain areas near the lake shore were ore-bearing. Some thirty or forty years later, Junju, having annexed Buddu, brought to the capital and employed a number of blacksmiths from that region⁶¹. 'Foreign' expertise was clearly still coveted. We have already noted the role of the *ngabi* clan in Buddu smithing: they were based in the south and west of the *ssaza*, particularly in the areas bordering Koki⁶². In addition, the *nite* clan in Buddu were known as prodigious iron-workers, and according to Kagwa "became the best blacksmiths because they knew how to extract the iron from the ores"⁶³: the wording of this suggests that the knowledge of extraction was not as widespread as the actual working of the metal.

The *kasimba* clan contained within its number a certain Walukaga, regarded as the head of all blacksmiths in Buganda. Moreover, each *ssaza* had a head smith, indicating that although certain regions were more important than others in this sphere, forges were scattered throughout the kingdom⁶⁴. In one sense the problem with the indigenous sources is that mention is only made of important blacksmiths: what might be called 'country smiths' rarely appear. When the missionary Mackay constructed the coffin in which Mutesa was to be buried, some four hundred local

⁶⁰H.M. Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent* (London, 1878) I, 376

⁶¹Kagwa, *Customs*, 160

⁶²Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 379

⁶³Kagwa, *Customs*, 160

⁶⁴*ibid.*, 160. Walukaga's main enclosure was in Butambala; examples of regional 'chief iron-workers' include Serugoti of Busiro and Mutagubya of Buddu. The *kasimba* clan history states that "Walukagga was the chief person in charge of making the king's spears and other implements": Kagwa, 'Clans', 63

blacksmiths turned up to assist⁶⁵. If we assume that even half this number came from the capital or its environs, some idea is conveyed concerning the commonness of the profession, at least by the late nineteenth century. Indeed, it seems likely that the nineteenth century witnessed a large-scale expansion in iron-working among the broader populace, due to the increasing availability of the metal itself. At the height of its territorial power, Buganda derived iron from many sources, including tribute, for example from Koki; moreover, coastal merchants by the 1870s and 1880s were bringing iron to Buganda in considerable quantities for sale, as we shall see below. Livinhac noted in 1879 that axes, knives, and hoes of coastal or European manufacture were greatly in demand among the Ganda⁶⁶. The regional iron trade in the last decades of the nineteenth century also guaranteed a constant movement of the material into the kingdom.

The expansion of the industry - which, by the nature of the acquisition of iron, largely consisted of melting and reworking - did not, however, represent a dismantling of the traditional hierarchy of the profession. Writing of the 1880s, Zimbe mentions Walukaga, the "chief of the smiths in the Kingdom, a very honoured man"⁶⁷. The existence of such a figure underlines the disciplined and structured approach of the Ganda toward their key professions; it was, moreover, an honour implicitly bestowed on every blacksmith in the country, being a recognition of the importance of the industry to Buganda's development. We cannot know how provincial smiths viewed Walukaga, assuming they had even heard of him, or what role he was perceived to perform with regard to the profession as a whole; nonetheless, detailed accounts of metal-working itself suggest a deep-rooted pride in the activity, and an implicit understanding on the worker's part of his importance in the history and culture of his own society.

⁶⁵B.M.Zimbe [tr.F.Kamoga], 'Buganda ne Kabaka' [c.1939] 94

⁶⁶White Fathers: C13/7 Livinhac to Deguerry 6.11.79

⁶⁷Zimbe, 'Buganda', 146

Metal-working was seen as a dignified and honourable profession. Smiths would have been well aware of the esteem in which they were held, not least because they were exempt from arbitrary arrest: hammers were carried as proof of status. Yet, according to Kagwa, it was not a particularly profitable profession, and smiths did not generally lead affluent lives:

The trouble lay in the low rates received for the conversion of metal tools into others. The manufacture of some objects paid rather well, fifty cowry shells being the price of a hoe, axe, spear, or large knife, but a small knife or razor would bring only one or two cowry shells . . .⁶⁸

Yet those who actually extracted ore were at an economic advantage. Roscoe elaborated on the marketing side of the industry:

When the smelting was finished, the iron was bought by the villagers or by other smiths who were not able to smelt, but were willing to pay a good price for the rough metal. Rough iron was worked and reworked and finally made into hoes, knives, spears, needles, fish-hooks, bells, and axes . . . The King had his own smiths, who made the implements required for the royal household, and each important chief had his own smiths upon his estate. These smiths worked for the poorer people, and sold their wares in the market-place, in addition to what they did for their masters . . . These smiths also learned to work copper and brass wire, and to make the armlets and bracelets so common among the Baganda people . . . All the knives, axes, and bill-hooks were made on common patterns. Copper and brass were imported, and were worked up again by the smiths into wire bracelets or the heavier kinds of bracelets . . .⁶⁹

Copper, because of its relative rarity, or the prestige placed on it due to its having come a greater distance, was normally symbolic of wealth and authority in a way that iron never was. It was much less useful than iron. The symbolic force of copper was

⁶⁸Kagwa, *Customs*, 161

⁶⁹Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 382-3

exemplified by the head of the *nseene* clan, Mugalula, based in Gomba, who possessed large amounts of the metal. He was said to have sat upon a copper throne, while his milk container, the clan being of pastoral origin, was also made of copper. Most impressive of all were the copper spears he possessed, in many ways the most potent symbols of deep-seated power: these suggested both military prowess, and the ability to accumulate and control great material wealth. Mugalula, indeed, was said never to set eyes on the *kabaka*, so powerful did he believe himself to be⁷⁰. Naturally, Mutesa also possessed copper spears: Speke mentions these in the context of a military review in 1862⁷¹. The missionary Felkin, travelling through what was probably Bulemezi in 1879, observed that all *ssaza* chiefs possessed, "as a mark of honour", copper-headed spears⁷². A fine example of the material symbols of authority can be seen in the 'badge of office' of the *Pokino*, governor of Buddu: Speke noted that he owned "an iron hatchet, inlaid with copper and handled with ivory"⁷³. Nonetheless, it is clear from Roscoe's account that copper and brass wire was common enough by the second half of the nineteenth century; indeed, the diversity of product is striking, as is the differentiation in status between particular smiths.

By the 1880s, the blacksmith was to a considerable degree the linchpin of Ganda material culture, and most economic activities were dependent to some extent on the iron-worker. Hunters, fishermen, carpenters, cultivators, traders (insofar as implements forged in Buganda were exchanged both within and without the kingdom) and, of course, warriors all had a common link in their local forge. A new and specialised branch of iron-working had also developed by the late nineteenth century, namely firearm repair and the making of crude ammunition for guns. As early as 1862, Mutesa obtained from Speke some samples of shot and ordered "his iron-smiths to make some like them"⁷⁴. The Ganda, Lugard wrote in 1892,

⁷⁰Kagwa, 'Clans', 13

⁷¹Speke, *Journal*, 406

⁷²C.M.S. CA6/010/48 Felkin's Journal 7.2.79

⁷³Speke, *Journal*, 429

⁷⁴*ibid.*, 337

will construct you a new stock to a rifle which you will hardly detect from that made by a London gun-maker. The Fundi Kisule, who learnt his art from Mackay, is an accomplished blacksmith and gunsmith, and will make a new spring or repair any damaged rifle with admirable workmanship. Their folding stools of rod iron, and their beautifully-turned-out spears, attest their ability as blacksmiths . . .⁷⁵

The practical significance of guns, and thus of the ability to repair them, is highly questionable, as we shall see. Yet it was a valued skill in Buganda in the 1870s and 1880s. The missionary Ashe reported in 1886 that while Walukaga, the head blacksmith, was executed for professing Christianity, another principal iron-worker of a similar persuasion was spared "solely on account of his being able to mend guns"⁷⁶. Ashe also suggested that by the late 1880s, Ganda iron-working was being influenced by coastal imports and techniques. Files and instruments for boring had been introduced by Arab traders, as had the arts of brazing and tinning⁷⁷.

Pre-Colonial Pottery Culture

Buganda was unusual in that pottery was a specialised profession, to which great economic and cultural importance was attached. Despite the gradual influx of coastal and European utensils from the late eighteenth century onward, the role of the indigenous potter was not seriously undermined until well after the establishment of the Protectorate. One indigenous account suggests that pottery was one of the oldest industries in Buganda. Sekayala was the 'first potter', appointed by Kintu who subsequently created the post of 'Sedagala' in his honour⁷⁸. The position of 'Sedagala' - apparently a royal potter, although *mujoona* is the term for a potter in the service of the *kabaka*⁷⁹ - was recognised up until the reign of Kamanya in the late eighteenth or

⁷⁵Lugard, 'Travels', 828

⁷⁶C.M.S. G3 A5/0 1886/308 Ashe to Wigram ? 5.86. It seems likely that smiths based at the capital were particularly prone to 'conversion': many were drawn to both Anglican and Catholic missions, intrigued by European smithing technology: for example, White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 1/23.10.79

⁷⁷Ashe, *Two Kings*, 311

⁷⁸Kagwa, *Customs*, 159

⁷⁹Zimbe, 'Buganda', 428

early nineteenth century. Under Kamanya, a powerful Nyoro influence was brought to bear on pottery at the capital, perhaps reflecting a similar influence in the country as a whole. A Nyoro war-captive so impressed Kamanya with his pottery skills that he became potter to the *kabaka*, being given his own village near the royal enclosure. 'Sedagala', it seems, remained the nominal head of the profession, but his position was undermined somewhat⁸⁰. The precise nature of this Nyoro influence is unclear, and although, ironically, a number of European observers in the 1870s regarded Ganda pottery as superior to that of Bunyoro, this was probably less to do with pottery *per se* than the general perception of Ganda superiority to Bunyoro in political and social terms. In 1935, Thomas and Scott wrote that "[p]articular mention may be made of the Banyoro craftsmen who manufacture a thin, black earthenware which, although brittle, is much superior to the usual manufactures in red clay"⁸¹. Red clay, as noted below, was prevalent in Buganda. In the mid-1850s, Burton reported that Ganda pottery was renowned throughout the region⁸², but there is little doubt that the Ganda also imported earthenware. In 1901, for example, a colonial official wrote of Buvuma: "Pottery is their greatest industry, and they are really very clever in this line". Vuma pots were frequently traded for foodstuffs with the Ganda⁸³.

Throughout much of central and east Africa, pottery was usually associated with female labour. There is some disagreement among contemporary Europeans concerning the existence of such a sexual division of labour in Buganda. Emin Pasha asserted that pottery was almost wholly a male preserve⁸⁴, while the missionary Felkin suggested that both men and women might be potters⁸⁵. It is difficult to resolve this question, although the social position often associated with the making of

⁸⁰Kagwa, *Customs*, 159

⁸¹Thomas & Scott, *Uganda*, 285-6

⁸²R.F.Burton, 'The lake regions of Equatorial Africa', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, 29 (1859) 384

⁸³U.N.A. A8/1 Tomkins to Comm., 8.11.01

⁸⁴Schweinfurth, *Emin Pasha in Central Africa*, 88

⁸⁵R.W.Felkin, 'Notes on the Waganda tribe of Central Africa', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, 13 (1885-6) 726

pottery suggests that men were more prominent in the industry. Potters in general enjoyed a relatively privileged position in Ganda society: like iron-workers, for example, they were exempt from arbitrary arrest. The fruits of their labour were looked upon symbolically as sources of food and, as such, life-sustaining⁸⁶. The honour bestowed on certain pots and other receptacles appears to have been common throughout the region: even invading armies, while they might make use of the pots in a conquered village, would never destroy or steal them⁸⁷. Roscoe asserted that potters were a "distinct class of workmen, who lived with their families in communities apart from other people". Those in the service of the *kabaka* or a chief received their own land in return for the handing over of a proportion of their productions⁸⁸.

Pottery was produced in most parts of Buganda, as long as enough *bbumba* or clay could be found. Felkin wrote:

Boys and girls are at an early age initiated into the art. Two kinds of pottery, a coarse and a fine variety, are manufactured. Vessels for carrying water and for cooking are made of the coarse kind . . . Drinking cups and tobacco pipes are made of the finer clay. They are very thin and beautifully worked, but all the pottery is easily broken, as no flux or glaze is used. The fine clay . . . is procured from the beds of streams . . . The most usual patterns employed are circular dots, elliptical punch marks, bands, parallel incised lines, chequer concentric rings, guilloche, spiral pattern, and basketwork . . . Drinking bowls and both kinds of pipes are sometimes coloured with red oxide of iron or with white colour . . .⁸⁹

⁸⁶Kagwa, *Customs*, 159

⁸⁷*ibid.*, 160

⁸⁸Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 399

⁸⁹Felkin, 'Notes', 726-7. Felkin's description suggests a broad range of pottery-styles, although in general terms, the pottery of the lake region has come to be known as 'dimple-based' ware among historians and archaeologists. This is distinct, although similar, to Kwale ware nearer the coast and the 'channelled' ware of Zambia and Zimbabwe: see J. Sutton, 'The Settlement of East Africa', in B.A. Ogot & J.A. Kieran (eds.), *Zamani: a survey of East African history* (Nairobi, 1968) 91-2, and more recently, D.W. Phillipson, *African Archaeology* (Cambridge, 1985) 172-5

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Lloyd described a 'pottery village' near the capital:

Pottery also, among the Waganda, is quite a fine art. Very near to Mengo there is a whole village of pottery workers; large cooking-pots and water-pitchers, basins and cups of all shapes are made . . . The pottery is burnt after it is moulded to shape - huge fires of wood are made, a quantity of fine dried grass being mixed with it, and into the hot ash the pots are placed for an hour or two. Smoking being almost universal in Uganda, pipes are therefore made by the potter; a finer kind of clay is used, and they are coloured black, with a glazed shiny surface . . .⁹⁰

It seems, then, that various qualities of clay were used in the manufacture of different implements. Emin noted that the "red soil is covered by a layer of grey compact clay only in the hollows and on the declivities; the lowest stratum of this clay is free from vegetable detritus, and yields an excellent material for pottery". He noted the existence of both red and grey clay north of the capital⁹¹. Felkin remarked that "[t]he upper strata of land, for the depth of 2 or 3 feet, is a rich black alluvial soil, under which is a bed of red sandy clay averaging about 30 feet in thickness, and lower still in many places is a layer of tolerably pure porcelain earth"⁹².

Pottery was thus a significant industry both economically and culturally, and one which seems to have been regarded as superior to basketwork and weaving. These were common household activities: baskets were generally made with the young leaves of the wild palm or with banana and plantain fibres⁹³. Basketwork was a largely female industry, and may have been associated with the poorer sections of the community. Roscoe asserted that the making of baskets "was a means by which poor

⁹⁰A.B.Lloyd, *In Dwarf Land and Cannibal Country* (London, 1900) 133

⁹¹Schweinfurth, *Emin Pasha in Central Africa*, 125, 129-30

⁹²Felkin, 'Notes', 700

⁹³J.Roscoe, *Twenty-five Years in East Africa* (London, 1921) 221

women were able to obtain the many little things which otherwise they would not have procured"⁹⁴.

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The industries described here were critical to Ganda economic and, in the case of iron, military development. The production of barkcloth was open to anyone with a plot of land; its expansion from the end of the eighteenth century, possibly linked to the acquisition of Buddu, represented a new era of Ganda economic dominance in the region. As we shall see in the following chapter, this is particularly true of Buganda's commercial relations with its neighbours. The more specialised metal-working and pottery industries offer the best examples of how economic endeavour was rewarded with social, and often political, position. Much of Ganda culture was in fact a celebration of material culture. More tangibly, however, the textile and metal-working industries placed Buganda at the centre of a thriving regional commercial system, and it is to this system that we now turn our attention.

⁹⁴ibid., 222

CHAPTER 5

Developments in Commerce

In Chapters 3 and 4, the existence of complex trading systems in particular goods has already been alluded to. In this chapter, we examine more thoroughly the development and operation of these systems, and the ways in which the Ganda derived considerable wealth thereby. Trade was critical to Buganda. In the late nineteenth century, and indeed through much of the twentieth century, there was a profoundly mistaken view among European observers that before the arrival of the coastal merchants there was little commercial activity worthy of the name. This view undervalued extant domestic and regional¹ trade networks. As we shall see in the section on long-distance trade, the spread of goods from the coast and the inland entrepôts such as Unyanyembe was facilitated by much older local trade networks and markets. We shall therefore begin by examining domestic trade within Buganda, and local trade between Buganda and its neighbours. In this sense, the first section develops some of the themes explored, if only partially, by Tosh a quarter of a century ago². We will see how long-distance trade goods such as particular types of metal were freely exchanged alongside local produce. For Buganda as a whole, commerce was a source of strength as well as prosperity, the best example of this being the lucrative regional arms trade. Private traders valued highly their ability to sell their

¹It is by no means clear that the Ganda themselves distinguished 'domestic' trade, meaning trade within Buganda, from 'regional', meaning trade between Buganda and its neighbours. The ensuing discussion focuses primarily on regional and 'long-distance' commerce, usually trade between the Ganda and the agents of the coastal economy, who were based either at the coast or at Unyanyembe. Distinctions of this kind were first suggested by Jan Vansina: see J.Vansina, 'Long-Distance Trade-Routes in Central Africa', *Journal of African History*, 3:3 (1962) 375-390. Nonetheless, I have taken on board the criticisms of this approach made by Richard Gray and David Birmingham, who suggested, quite rightly, that such geographical distinctions frequently become blurred: they argued, for example, that there is "remarkably little evidence to suggest that 'local trade from village to village within a given population' was restricted to local products". See R.Gray & D.Birmingham, 'Some Economic and Political Consequences of Trade in Central and Eastern Africa in the Pre-Colonial Period', in R.Gray & D.Birmingham (eds.), *Pre-Colonial African Trade* (London, 1970) 1-23

²J.Tosh, 'The Northern Interlacustrine Region', in Gray & Birmingham, *African Trade*, 103-118

wares not just at local markets, but at those in neighbouring societies such as Bunyoro and Ankole.

The Growth of Domestic and Regional Trade

By the mid-nineteenth century, certain markets had become established as the most important in the interlacustrine region. In 1876-7 Emin Pasha identified 'Werhanje' in Karagwe, 'Mpara Nyamoga' in Bunyoro, and Rubaga, then the capital of Buganda, as the major regional markets. At Kabarega's capital³ he found an exciting and cosmopolitan atmosphere in which anything and everything was brought for sale. He noted the "restless, talkative Waganda, draped in neat tan-coloured bark cloth", who had "brought for barter the handsome soft mats of Uganda, together with bark cloths and thick copper wire"⁴. This is a fine example of the way in which regional and long-distance lines of commerce merged: the Ganda brought with them to Bunyoro both the fruits of their own industry and goods which were (probably) ultimately coastal in origin.

Barkcloth was probably Buganda's single most important regional export. It was highly valued throughout the region: Emin suggests that barkcloth "constitutes the ordinary clothing in Uganda, and that of the better classes in Karagwa, Ruhanda, Unyoro, and Usoga"⁵. This was probably a nineteenth-century phenomenon⁶. Prices varied "considerably", depending on colour, pattern and general quality: the quality of barkcloth was dependent upon the age of the tree from which the original bark was taken, as this influenced both texture and durability⁷. But age was not the only determinant of market value. Dyed cloths - produced throughout Buganda but most likely to have been from Buddu - were more expensive, Emin estimating their

³For a pioneering analysis of the Nyoro commercial system, see G.N.Uzoigwe, 'Pre-Colonial Markets in Bunyoro-Kitara', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 14:4 (1972) 422-455

⁴G.Schweinfurth *et al* (eds.), *Emin Pasha in Central Africa* (London, 1888) 112

⁵*ibid.*, 119

⁶See Chapter 4 for the discussion of the expansion of barkcloth production under Semakokiro in the late eighteenth century.

⁷Schweinfurth, *Emin Pasha*, 119. See also Chapter 4 above.

exchange value at two or three cows a piece in the mid-1870s. Cloth sold in its more 'natural' state was "considerably cheaper" and could be "purchased in the markets for 300 or 400 cowries"⁸. Seemingly inferior types of clothing were also traded by the Ganda, Emin mentioning the sale of several goatskins "previously scraped down as thin as paper" and sewn together. This was apparently neither as attractive nor as durable as barkcloth, but the Ganda sold it "at a high price" outside Buganda⁹. Some years later the price of these garments had decreased somewhat. Lugard observed in 1891 that skins which were "scraped very thin" were "very cheap", being sold for "half-a-yard of merikani [imported cloth]"¹⁰. Based on Lugard's pricing estimates, however, this was equal to about 250 cowries, significantly more than the 100 cowries which Grant claimed was the price of a goat-skin in 1862¹¹. It may have been that Grant and Lugard were quoting the domestic prices for such commodities; it seems probable, in view of Emin's testimony, that the Ganda raised their prices substantially when trading outside Buganda.

The export of barkcloth was a great source of revenue to many Ganda, particularly in Buddu. The trade between Buddu and Ankole was especially important in this regard. The full extent of this commerce is revealed through early colonial reports, particularly after Ganda traders were required to carry passes to enable them to travel to markets some distance away. One official at Masaka, Buddu, wrote in 1901 that "as many as fifty to sixty traders' passes have been issued at this station in one day, the bulk of the applicants proceeding to Ankole with bark cloths as their article of trade". Mats were also traded by the Buddu merchants, but barkcloth was the prized commodity among the Nyankole, to the extent that the latter were often permitted to pay their hut-tax in sheets of barkcloth¹². The true value of this trade is further indicated by the apparently impoverishing effects of the cessation of commerce with

⁸Schweinfurth, *Emin Pasha*, 120

⁹*ibid.*, 120-1

¹⁰U.N.A. A26/4 Lugard to Admin.-Gen., IBEAC 13.8.91

¹¹J. A. Grant, *A Walk Across Africa* (Edinburgh & London, 1864) 229

¹²U.N.A. A8/1 Prendergast to Jackson 3.9.01

Ankole at the beginning of 1904. The instigator of this prohibition was a European agent at Mbarara, who, according to a local British official,

appears to have vetoed the sale of bark cloth in his district, for exchange for cattle . . . The natives [in Buddu] inform me that they are not allowed to sell bark cloth in exchange for cattle in Ankole. Bark cloth being the one and only stock in trade of the people of Buddu, trade and consequently monetary prosperity have come to a standstill . . .¹³

This report surely exaggerates the extent to which trade in the area had collapsed, as iron remained an important trade commodity, being both extracted from deposits within Buddu and traded around Koki¹⁴. But the Ganda traders' abrupt loss of access to the lucrative markets for barkcloth in Ankole was clearly a bitter blow.

Buddu provides perhaps the best example of how particular regions were noted for their trade in certain commodities, but there are others. The district of Bugangadzi, for example, which formed part of pre-colonial Bunyoro west of Singo, was noted in 1905 for its exports to Buganda of salt, skins, ivory, hoes, tobacco and dried fish¹⁵. The trade in dried fish between Buganda and Bunyoro was particularly lucrative. The Ganda carried dried fish to Buruli, north of Bulemezi, where there was a market of some renown, as one British official discovered:

The fish market at Kisalizi, Buruli, is well patronized by the Waganda especially by those with small means as they can make a very good living out of it. I have been told by the traders themselves that out of one rupee worth of fish they make between five and six rupees profit . . .¹⁶

Fish were of course brought inland from both Lake Kyoga and Lake Victoria, but river-fishing also played a part in this trade. Speke noted a river-borne trade in 1862

¹³U.N.A. A8/4 Anderson to Sub.Comm. 6.1.04. The reference to a 'German agent' at Mbarara is puzzling, although it is clear that trade restrictions between German and British territories had been imposed.

¹⁴See Chapter 4 above.

¹⁵U.N.A. A8/7 Paske-Smith to Sub.Comm. 3.12.05

¹⁶U.N.A. A8/7 Manara [?] to Sub.Comm. 3.11.05

between the Nyoro and the Soga, the canoes of the former being stuffed with such goods as barkcloth, fried fish, raw and cooked plantains, and beer¹⁷. There seems little reason to doubt that the Ganda were also involved in this commerce, particularly along the Nile. It seems likely that there was also a regular trade in basic foodstuffs between Buganda and Bunyoro. One report from 1894 mentions the regularity with which the Nyoro sold food to the Ganda, and although the latter were attached to the British garrison at Fort Grant, it seems unlikely that the colonial presence provided any impetus to such trade which was not already there¹⁸.

At the market in Kabarega's capital, Emin also noted the trade in services as well as that in actual commodities. Although Nyoro smiths were more than capable of working "iron, copper, and brass" into spear-heads, knives and various kinds of jewellery, Ganda smiths travelled to Bunyoro 'periodically' to repair guns. Indeed, according to Emin these smiths charged 'exorbitant' rates, demanding, for example, "a female slave in exchange for a gun-cock"¹⁹. It is clear that this would have been, even in 1877, a highly specialised profession²⁰, but its very existence on a regional scale is significant. It also hints at the existence of a commerce in ideas and expertise which almost certainly pre-dated the arrival of firearms. Much of Buganda's pre-1800 development in iron-working was facilitated by knowledge brought from Bunyoro: the repairing of firearms in the market-place by the Ganda represented this kind of commerce in skills and know-how in a late nineteenth-century setting.

It is clear that metals both in a raw state and in the form of ready-made implements were critical trade commodities throughout the nineteenth century. Brass and copper wire²¹ were everyday objects of exchange, although they were in rapid decline in

¹⁷J.H. Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (Edinburgh & London, 1863) 476

¹⁸U.N.A. A2/3 Owen to Colvile 16.11.94

¹⁹Schweinfurth, *Emin Pasha*, 81

²⁰See Chapter 4 above for the development of this new branch of metal-working.

²¹As discussed in Chapter 4, the origins of copper in Buganda are obscure; it may have first arrived from Katanga, but during the nineteenth century it was most likely to have been brought from the coast.

Buganda by the late nineteenth century. Iron, however, was the most important. Buganda derived a certain amount of its iron through tribute, but most of its imports of this material were accounted for by trade. Iron in an unworked state was carried from Kavirondo to the west, for example, and was converted into hoes once it reached the forges of Buganda²². Ready-made hoes were also imported. One British official remarked in 1894 how he "bought some native [Ganda] hoes the other day but they have got rapidly ruined with digging the hard road, cutting down ant-hills etc"; however, hoes "of a different pattern but of much harder iron" had been brought for these purposes from Busoga²³. Hoes were regularly imported from Bunyoro, and could be found, according to Roscoe, in the numerous small marts along the frontier areas between Buganda and Bunyoro²⁴. Indeed, Speke describes how, when pushing north into Bunyoro, he was surrounded by a number of Nyoro who sought "to hawk ivory ornaments, brass and copper twisted wristlets, tobacco, and salt, which they exchanged for cowries, with which they purchase cows from the Waganda"²⁵. Metals were also traded in the form of weaponry: indeed the regional arms trade was particularly vibrant. Again on the border areas between Buganda and Bunyoro, Nyoro traders sold spear-blades to the Ganda: in 1862, according to Grant, these could fetch five hundred cowries each, while "one cow would buy ten, or bark cloth would be taken in exchange"²⁶. From the dimensions given by Grant, these blades were probably destined for use in war rather than hunting. They were "two spans long", or around forty centimetres, and "two inches at their greatest breadth"; spear-blades for hunting were similar in length but usually much wider at the socket²⁷. Weapons were also brought up from Karagwe to be traded in the frontier areas of Buganda and Bunyoro, and the Ganda in particular were keen buyers. Grant noted that "[e]xcellent spear-heads are hawked for sale in the southern borders [of Bunyoro], but the

²²U.N.A. A2/1 Owen to Rhodes 29.3.93

²³U.N.A. A2/3 Ansorge to Colville 5.10.94

²⁴J. Roscoe, *The Baganda* (London, 1911) 456

²⁵Speke, *Journal*, 487

²⁶Grant, *A Walk*, 271

²⁷ibid. See also M. Trowell & K. Wachsmann, *Tribal Crafts of Uganda* (London, 1953) 235

Waganda, a richer people, buy them up"²⁸. This commercial activity took place in small local markets, away from any centralised royal control.

Another of the most important articles of trade in the region was salt, trade in which was as old as - indeed older than - the societies involved. The Ganda produced a certain amount of their own salt, but this was too low in quantity and quality to free them from relying heavily on imported salt²⁹. The major source of salt in the region was Kibiro, on the shore of Lake Albert in Bunyoro; salt had been produced there for several centuries³⁰. The Ganda often travelled to Bunyoro to obtain it, but Nyoro traders also carried it to Buganda³¹. Emin tells us that the salt came to the market "wrapped in banana leaves, in long packets containing four to eight pounds each". Salt was highly valued, and this was reflected in the prices paid for it. Emin asserted that "[i]n contrast to all other goods, salt, with very rare exceptions, is sold in Uganda for cash only, that is to say, for cowries"³². Kibiro was not the only source of Buganda's salt. The Ganda also travelled by canoe to the north-east corner of Lake Victoria - apparently to the bay now known as Winam Gulf - where they obtained salt³³. This trade was first mentioned by Speke, and was still thriving in 1898 when a British official observed that both the Ganda and the Soga regularly made voyages there. The salt was exchanged for "trade goods, cloth, Masai beads, white, red, and pink [beads]"³⁴. Salt was also brought from the direction of Toro, or more precisely

²⁸Grant, *A Walk*, 293

²⁹Poor quality salt was extracted from vegetable debris, and occasionally from livestock urine.

³⁰For the results of recent excavations at Kibiro, see for example G.Connah, E.Kamuhangire and A.Piper, 'Salt Production at Kibiro', *Azania*, 25 (1990) 27-39. Also J.Sutton, 'The Antecedents of the Interlacustrine Kingdoms', *Journal of African History*, 34:1 (1993) 33-64

³¹Schweinfurth, *Emin Pasha*, 74

³²*ibid.*, 121-2

³³Speke, *Journal*, 428-9, 434, 467; also J.H.Speke, *What Led to the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (1864; new edition London, 1967) 318. Intriguingly, the Ganda apparently called this area 'Bahari Ngo', which bears a striking resemblance to 'Baringo', about 130 miles to the east of Lake Victoria. Chaillé-Long also wrote that from a hill near Murchison Creek, "in the distance a small creek may be seen, like a silver stream winding through the country northward, here called 'Bahr Rionga': C.Chaillé-Long, *Central Africa* (London, 1876) 109

³⁴U.N.A. A4/13 MacAllister to Berkeley 12.9.98. This particular commerce has been highlighted by Michael Kenny, who seemed nonetheless diffident about its existence, adding that "for Ganda and Soga traders, the Lake route would surely have been more expedient, barring the political difficulties which were characteristic of the Ganda relationship to Buvuma and Busoga". As is so often the case, the

from the salt lake at Katwe. In 1901, salt caravans were reported as coming from this area to Buganda³⁵, and although it is not clear that the 'salt caravan' itself was pre-colonial in origin, the trade almost certainly was. Lugard also noted the existence of a salt trade from Toro in 1891³⁶.

Although it is clear that there were a few major markets in the region, one of which was in the Ganda capital itself, there seems little doubt that smaller markets were scattered throughout Buganda. Although within the capital, the *kabaka* exercised a certain amount of control over commercial interaction - most obviously in the restrictions placed on certain imported goods³⁷ - there appear to have been few such restrictions placed on local markets outside the capital. Local traders did, however, have to work within regulations, and Roscoe suggests that even markets in the outlying districts were closely supervised by political authority. Fees, for example, were levied on all articles brought for sale. In the capital itself, and possibly beyond, markets were under the supervision of a 'special chief' appointed by the *kabaka*, one of whose duties was to collect the market dues which "amounted to ten per cent. of the value of each article sold or bought"³⁸. It is difficult to assess how much of this represented pre-colonial innovation, but it does seem likely that a 'special chief' was indeed appointed by the *kabaka* to oversee trade in the capital, if only those transactions made with coastal merchants. In Buganda there exist terms for an official in charge of a market - *ssentala* - and a fee imposed on sellers of goods in a market - *kituza* - but it is unclear how far back these can be traced.

militaristic interpretation of Buganda's dealings with its neighbours is seen to be more compelling than any other. See M.Kenny, 'Salt trading in Eastern Lake Victoria', *Azania*, 9 (1974) 225-28

³⁵U.N.A. A8/1 Tomkins to Comm. 3.10.01

³⁶U.N.A. A26/4 Lugard to Admin.-Gen., IBEAC 13.8.91. See also M.Perham (ed.), *The Diaries of Lord Lugard* (London, 1959) II, 248

³⁷As we shall see below, however, the effectiveness and indeed the range of these restrictions should not be exaggerated.

³⁸Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 452

Similar commercial overseers may also have existed throughout the kingdom. One British official wrote in 1902:

I am of opinion that five per cent is a fair due to be collected not being too severe on the natives and further one which has been charged from time immemorial in this country by the native chiefs who formerly controlled their own markets thereby giving a precedent which has become a custom.³⁹

This suggests that not only did such tolls, and presumably toll-collectors or market-overseers, exist, but that markets outside the capital were responsible not to any central authority but to the chief on whose land the market was located. It seems likely that this was less to do with political control than with the maximisation of profit. Chiefs could draw considerable wealth from local markets. Roscoe suggests that the location of markets was closely monitored, apparently for this reason. Markets could not be opened at random: special permission had to be sought from a local chief, probably the *ssaza* governor. Technically, then, such markets were the property of the landowner. Under a system which was clearly designed to benefit chiefs economically, heavy fines were levied on those would-be traders who attempted to avoid market dues by trading outside recognised market places; they might also expect to have their wares confiscated⁴⁰.

Clearly these restrictions could be applied only to relatively large-scale commercial centres, for example extended villages which might be centred around the enclosure of a prominent local chief, or the crossroads formed by the meeting of two major highways⁴¹. Private, one-to-one trading or even itinerant 'hawking' doubtless went on unchecked in more remote areas and at the edges of the kingdom. The domestic market system in Buganda was thus remarkably decentralised; it seems likely that

³⁹U.N.A. A8/1 Prendergast to Comm. 18.2.02

⁴⁰Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 452, 456

⁴¹Harry Johnston observed that "[t]he Uganda town is a series of villa residences surrounded by luxuriant gardens. Occasionally there is an open square formed by the meeting of two broad roadways, and this may be the site of a market or a place of reunion for the people": H.H. Johnston, *The Uganda Protectorate* (London, 1902) II, 656

chiefs would have been only too happy to have a mart established in their domains as it represented a useful source of income and had the potential to draw people from a considerable distance away. An example of this is provided by a British official in 1902, who noted soon after his arrival in Buddu that the 'market master' in Masaka, which would have been the largest market in the *ssaza*, was appointed by the *Pokino*⁴². The same official later wrote of eastern Kyagwe that "at present market dues . . . are collected by Chiefs on whose land markets have been established"⁴³.

At the main market in the capital, which the missionary O'Flaherty described as the *kabaka's* own 'private' market, the *kabaka* apparently drew considerable personal revenue, as it was here that both Arabs and Ganda traded. O'Flaherty, who depicted a jealously guarded commerce at the capital, suggested that the collectors took between 15 and 20 per cent of market dues, although notably he expressed doubt as to whether Mutesa was aware of this⁴⁴. Indeed it seems likely that in 1882 Mutesa attempted to tighten his control of the main mart in the capital⁴⁵. The missionary Girault noted in early 1882 Mutesa's declaration that no-one was now permitted to buy or sell outside the main market. The *kabaka* himself would organise the collection of dues, and Girault was in no doubt that Mutesa "has established this market because of the ivory of which he wants to have a monopoly"⁴⁶. This seems highly likely. It is also worth bearing in mind that the market at the capital was thus quite unlike any other mart in the kingdom. Apparently as a result of the *kabaka's* orders, the cost of day-to-day provisions immediately increased, and Girault complained that such goods could no longer be bought casually around the capital, as they had been previously⁴⁷. Lugard observed in the early 1890s:

⁴²U.N.A. A8/1 Grant to Jackson 1.3.02

⁴³U.N.A. A8/1 Grant to Jackson 16.3.02

⁴⁴C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1882/56 O'Flaherty to Wigram 15.3.82

⁴⁵As we shall see in Chapter 8, this initiative to strengthen royal control extended to the lake ports, and in particular Entebbe which was considered too distant for the *kabaka* to effectively control customs duty there.

⁴⁶White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 2/31.1.82, 2.2.82, 26.2.82

⁴⁷*ibid.*

At the capital there are two regular markets, with officers to control them, collectors of the king: taxes on all produce which changes hands, viz., a small percentage on the cowrie value. Produce brought in from the country is sold here, and oxen slaughtered and sold retail, as in our butchers' shops . . .⁴⁸

It is not clear what kind of distances were covered by those traders travelling to buy or sell at markets in the capital, but given limitations on transport, it is likely that such distances were not vast. Among the oldest markets mentioned in the indigenous sources were those on the shore of Kyagwe, which dated from at least the reign of Mawanda in the early eighteenth century. A Ganda author wrote:

There used to be the major markets namely, Bagegere, Bale and Nsonga. The people of Buvuma too used to sail to the shores near Kyagwe for the sale of their goods in these markets. These markets were open three times a week and men used to take advantage of them . . .⁴⁹

Nineteenth-Century Currencies

It is clear from the various accounts of both regional and domestic commerce that barter co-existed with monetary exchange; buyers and sellers were flexible in this regard, although as we have seen the salt traders from Kibiro demanded cowries alone. By the second half of the nineteenth century, cowries were probably most used for the purchase of cheaper, smaller articles - foodstuffs, for example - while larger, more expensive articles were obtained by barter. But it is also clear that certain currencies changed in value during the nineteenth century. The most marked decline in a standard of exchange in Buganda was that in beads. Beads had been current for perhaps several centuries. In the early part of Mutesa's reign, they were still relatively

⁴⁸F. Lugard, 'Travels from the East Coast to Uganda', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, 14 (1892) 831. Two maps of the capital appear in Lugard's published diaries, and only one market - that to the north of the royal enclosure - is shown in each. The White Fathers' map of the capital, however, depicts two markets, that shown on Lugard's sketches, and another in the north-east of the capital called 'marché des Basoga'. See Perham, *Diaries of Lord Lugard*, II, 27 & III, 32; White Fathers Archive, contained in C14 'Correspondence of Lourdel'.

⁴⁹Ebye Buganda: Entabalo za Sekabaka Mawanda', *Munno* (1921) 10-11.

common in local commercial interaction, but by the late 1870s their value had plummeted: Emin wrote in 1877 that glass beads were no longer sought after by Ganda traders⁵⁰. It is true that Emin was mostly dealing with a powerful commercial elite at the capital, but he also had experience of smaller-scale commerce. Moreover, changing values among the elite were usually shadowed by similar changes among the broader populace.

By the late nineteenth century, beads were rarely mentioned in reports relating to desirable trade goods in Buganda, while they were clearly still prevalent in Busoga and Bunyoro. Perhaps one conclusion to draw from this is that the Ganda had faster-changing needs and wants with regard to imported goods, and a more volatile commercial value system. The precise origins of several types of beads are unclear, but their usage and significance varied widely throughout the region. The Soga and other groups east of the Nile, for example, attached great symbolic importance to blue glass beads, while, as Trowell found in the early 1950s, "a certain type of blue bead has an almost sacred value" in this area⁵¹. Glass beads were common throughout East Africa, and were brought in increasing bulk from Europe, and in particular from Amsterdam and Venice, from the end of the seventeenth century onward⁵². They have been found at a great number of archaeological sites in eastern, central and southern Africa, including the east coast and Great Zimbabwe⁵³. In particular, glass beads have been unearthed at Ntusi which may date back as early as the fourteenth century⁵⁴. In Buganda, however, the commercial value of beads had declined,

⁵⁰G. Schweitzer (ed.), *Emin Pasha: His Life and Work* (London, 1898) I, 39

⁵¹Trowell & Wachsmann, *Tribal Crafts*, 212-3

⁵²For example, see M. Carey, *Beads and Beadwork of East and South Africa* (Aylesbury, 1986)

⁵³G. Connah, *African Civilizations - Precolonial cities and states in tropical Africa: an archaeological perspective* (Cambridge, 1987) Chaps. 7 & 8. The archaeological evidence suggests that glass beads reached the interior via the trading entrepôts on the east coast, where beads themselves were also made. Some may also have reached the interlacustrine region along the Nile via Nubia.

⁵⁴J. Iliffe, *Africans: the history of a continent* (Cambridge, 1995) 107. These findings certainly lend credence to Miti's assertion that: "Kintu, as also his brother Rukedi in Bunyoro, were the first persons to import and make use of beads or other neck ornaments in this country, and by making presents of such articles to the local people Kintu won their friendship and confidence": J. Miti, 'A History of Buganda' [c.1938] I, 13-14

possibly as a result of more novel, highly prized imports, such as foreign cloth, although this does not account for the resilience of cowries.

Cloth became increasingly accessible, and the old restrictions increasingly inoperative, particularly after the upheavals of the late 1880s. To some extent it represented a new currency. The complexity of the cloth-pricing system reflects in turn the sophistication of Ganda market valuation, and as such it is worthy of note, even though it developed in a colonial rather than pre-colonial environment. Pure white cloth had a reasonably stable value in the late 1890s, while one official complained that coloured cloths "may consist of pieces containing 5 cloths each . . . In many cases in making a payment an Officer may have to deal with as many as 8 or 9 different cloths all at different prices"⁵⁵. Lugard was also struck by the changing economic situation in 1891:

The first essential in Uganda is cloth, especially strong, useful calico (merikani) and finer cloths, such as bafta, joho, vitambi, & c. . . . The coloured prints, red bandera, and the cheap thin calicoes (ulaiti, satini, gumpti, & c.), though useful for food purchase (especially the latter), are not much sought after. Beads, and brass and iron wire, trumpery hardware, and looking-glasses, & c., are not wanted at all . . . In Busoga beads and wire and trumpery goods are accepted, as also in Ankole, Unyoro, and the countries to the west.⁵⁶

Elsewhere Lugard reaffirms that certain 'coloured prints' were "practically useless" in Buganda. By the early 1890s, imported cloth was measured by the *ddooti*, a coastal term, which was the equivalent to about four yards; Lugard estimated in 1891 that one *ddooti* of 'merikani', a standard trade cloth, was valued at a little over two thousand cowries⁵⁷.

⁵⁵U.N.A. A4/13 Smith to Comm. 7.11.98

⁵⁶U.N.A. A26/4 Lugard to Admin.-Gen., IBEAC 13.8.91

⁵⁷ibid.

While cloth became more current, cowries had devalued gradually to the point of impracticality. By the late 1890s, a single act of exchange might involve the transfer of thousands of shells, and although the *kyasa* - a string of some hundred shells - was doubtless introduced in an attempt to overcome this inflation, they became increasingly unwieldy to use. This was clearly one of the factors behind the colonial authorities' decision to introduce the rupee to the region. Even so, it was several years before the British received anything other than cowries in the payment of tax, an indication of the extent to which the cowry shell had become a staple of the local economy⁵⁸.

The Growth of Long-Distance Commerce

The year 1844 was unquestionably a landmark in Buganda's history in many respects, not least economically. It was the year in which the first coastal merchants arrived at the court of *Kabaka Suna*, thus heralding a new era in the kingdom's long history of trade⁵⁹. The role of these traders over the ensuing half-century is examined more closely below, but in this section we shall see that the importance which one places on the 'events' of 1844 is dependent upon two main considerations. Firstly, there is the problem of assessing the extent to which the fruits of this new direct commercial contact were shared among the Ganda, and not restricted to a political elite at the capital. In other words, attention must be paid to the role played not just by luxury items, but by goods which had a genuine material impact on the Ganda economy. This is more closely examined below. Secondly, the arrival of coastal merchants in person at Suna's capital can to some extent be viewed as representing the extension of a commercial network of some centuries' standing. The year 1844 can perhaps be understood better in terms of continuity rather than discontinuity. The trade routes themselves which the Arabs had used to reach Buganda had a long history and were African in origin. Moreover, Buganda had been dealing with the coast indirectly for

⁵⁸U.N.A. A4/13 Smith to Comm. 7.11.98

⁵⁹J.M.Gray, 'Ahmed bin Ibrahim - the first Arab to reach Buganda', *Uganda Journal*, 11:2 (1947) 80-97

perhaps a century before 1844. It can surely have come as no surprise when the agents of that culture finally arrived at the gates of Suna's *kibuga*.

It is difficult to say when Buganda became involved in an 'international' trade network, but it seems likely that the cowry shell is a good indicator. Roscoe suggested that cowries were first introduced during the reign of Semakokiro in the second half of the eighteenth century⁶⁰, but in all probability he assumed this to be the case as so many other trade goods had first appeared at that time. Tosh has suggested that while Semakokiro acquired a number of shells, they did not become in any way current until after the mid-nineteenth century⁶¹. The ubiquitous shell had almost certainly been around for considerably longer than he suggests. Whether it was first introduced to the East African interior by Arab merchants or by coastal Africans is unclear. Certainly, large numbers of cowry shells were gathered at coastal settlements before the thirteenth century⁶², and indeed shells had reached Sanga, west of Lake Tanganyika, by the tenth century, which appears to suggest indirect commercial contact with the coast⁶³. More importantly for Buganda, sea-shell beads have been found at Ntusi and may date back to the thirteenth or fourteenth century: as Iliffe has suggested, these findings "may - the point is disputed - be the earliest evidence of contact between the Great Lakes region and the Indian Ocean coast"⁶⁴.

One of the earliest references to cowries in Buganda's indigenous accounts is during the reign of an early seventeenth-century *kabaka*, Kateregga: upon his death, his jawbone was placed in a wooden bowl along with a number of shells. Kagwa commented that Kateregga "had received these shells from the chiefs whenever they

⁶⁰Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 457

⁶¹Tosh, 'The Northern Interlacustrine Region', 116

⁶²Connah, *African Civilizations*, 180

⁶³Iliffe, *Africans*, 103

⁶⁴*ibid.*, 107. There was also some uncertainty among Africans themselves about the origin of cowries. For example, Speke wrote in 1861: "A man of Ruanda now informed us that the cowrie-shells, so plentiful in that country, come there from the other or western side, but he could not tell whence they were originally obtained": Speke, *Journal*, 238. At face value this appears to suggest commerce with societies in the Zaire basin.

pay homage to him"⁶⁵. This would seem to have been common practice. Later on, Kagwa explained the significance of the ritual with reference to a late seventeenth-century *kabaka*, Tebandeke:

When chiefs died their successors, whether sons or brothers, had to take cowrie shells (with holes in them) and put them on the royal cushion. This was done as often as they went to homage to the king . . . If large quantities of cowrie shells and beads had been stored, the people would say, 'King so-and-so was popular'.⁶⁶

It is not made clear if cowries were used in commercial transactions at this time, but it seems reasonably likely. They certainly possessed a recognised value. As such it is noteworthy that the *kabaka* appears not to have exercised any central controls over the shells; rather, at a time when rulers were striving to create a political system in which loyalty to them came above all else, they used cowries as a measurement of both wealth and popularity.

It may be that all this can be taken as evidence of indirect trade with the coast at least as early as c.1600, although Iliffe's caution is surely well-founded. It is likely, however, that as indirect contacts with the coast expanded over the ensuing centuries, the shell itself was gradually devalued. Eighteenth-century rulers and chiefs would have had access to considerably greater numbers of shells than their seventeenth-century predecessors. Importantly, too, this early long-distance contact seem to have been without restrictions as to who participated. Details concerning the methods of accumulation are impossible to come by, but chiefs appear to have gathered cowries on their own account, most likely through trade. What they traded in return is a matter of speculation. Slaves may have been a regionally-based export, although ivory is likely to have been more important in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Still, there is every reason to suppose that smaller-scale transactions were

⁶⁵A.Kagwa [tr.&ed.M.S.M.Kiwanuka], *The Kings of Buganda* (Nairobi, 1971) 42-3

⁶⁶*ibid.*, 57

carried out using local crafts, hoes and other implements, and possibly weaponry for both hunting and war. We have already seen this kind of trade as it developed in the nineteenth century. These domestic and regional commercial networks were essential to the importation and dispersal of such commodities as cowries, brass and copper wire, and, eventually, cloth among both chiefs and the broader populace.

As we have noted, pre-colonial Buganda never developed a purely monetary economy, and even during the later nineteenth century barter was an important method of exchange, existing alongside a cowry currency. Nevertheless, the information we have on nineteenth-century prices suggests that virtually everything had at least a nominal cowry value. Moreover, other currencies existed alongside cowries, and some undoubtedly pre-dated the latter. Roscoe mentions a "small ivory disc" which he terms 'sanga', *ssanga* being the Luganda term for either a tusk or ivory in general. This, Roscoe claimed, was one of the earliest forms of money in Buganda; although clearly indigenous and probably much older than the cowry shell, it also had a cowry value. One disc was apparently worth one hundred shells⁶⁷. Ivory played a dual role insofar as it was on the one hand a commodity valued for its own sake, and on the other a standard medium of exchange. The former role gradually took precedence over the latter, as demand for ivory from the coast increased, so that as the nineteenth century progressed, ivory as money all but disappeared.

There appear to have been tighter controls over ivory discs than over cowries. Roscoe wrote:

Small ivory discs were used as currency before the introduction of cowry-shells; the ivory-worker made them for the King, though the latter had not the monopoly of making them; any skilled workman who could obtain the ivory was allowed to make discs without let or hindrance. The King, however, retained the most skilled ivory-workers in his service, and they dared not make

⁶⁷Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 457

bracelets or other ornaments without permission. The fact that most of the ivory belonged to the King also placed a restriction upon the making of discs by other people . . .⁶⁸

Thus, while the *kabaka* did not in theory have any control over the making of currency, he did have certain rights over the materials themselves and the skills from which the discs were made. Nevertheless, all a 'skilled workman' had to do was to get hold of the ivory in the first place, and one suspects that this would not have been as difficult as Roscoe suggests. In the course of hunting expeditions, ivory was distributed in numerous directions before any of it actually reached the *kabaka*. This is demonstrated by evidence from the late nineteenth century, when early colonial administrators, in their attempts to clamp down on the illicit ivory trade, frequently uncovered the methods and channels which chiefs and sub-chiefs used to acquire ivory for themselves. Once ivory found its way to district level, it was almost certain to be dispersed locally, either as payment for the rendering of services or as a trade good. It was in practice impossible for the *kabaka* to control every portion of ivory brought in from a hunt or raid, although as we have seen in Chapter 3, tribute became one of the most important means by which ivory was procured in the later nineteenth century, and this was easier for the *kabaka* to monopolise. Even so, it is likely that there were far more 'currency-producers' in pre-1800 Buganda than Roscoe suggests.

A third pre-cowry currency has already been mentioned, namely the blue bead, and as we have also already noted, examples of beads have been excavated at Ntusi. From such archaeological evidence, it is possible to suggest that beads may be the oldest currency in the region. According to Roscoe, the blue bead "was very rough and badly made, but . . . was considered to be of great value"⁶⁹. It was known as *lusinda* in Buganda, a term which is clearly distinct from *nsimbi*, broadly meaning money, while *ensimbi ennanda* specifically referred to cowries. Up until the middle of the

⁶⁸ibid., 412-3

⁶⁹ibid., 457

nineteenth century, blue beads were a common form of currency in Buganda and throughout the region.

It was in the middle of the eighteenth century that trade with the coast entered a more intense phase. *Kabaka* Kyabaggu is noted as having been the "first king to buy cups and plates", possibly during the 1750s or 1760s⁷⁰. The notion of 'cups and plates' is probably symbolic as much as anything else, but clearly reflects the kind of luxury commodities which were finding their way to the Ganda court at this time⁷¹. By the end of the eighteenth century, ivory discs had almost certainly all but disappeared as a form of currency, but the demand for ivory in its natural form from the south had begun to increase significantly. Semakokiro, who is supposed to have been notably wealthy in ivory, had begun to send his own traders further south to meet this demand: Kagwa mentions Mangagala, who was "the royal salesman" and whose job it was "to sell the royal ivory". Such traders were carrying ivory as far as Kiziba, south of the Kagera river, by the late eighteenth century⁷². It is therefore surely no coincidence that Semakokiro was also the first *kabaka* "to buy cotton cloth from Karagwe"⁷³. Clearly, the Ganda were still relying solely on trade with other Africans, in the first instance the merchants of Karagwe; indeed, the 'middleman period' of East Africa's commercial history never really ended, although the penetration of the Arabs into the interior in the early nineteenth century was in part an attempt to avoid having to rely on African suppliers.

⁷⁰Kagwa, *Kings*, 99. Wrigley places this 'event' in the 1780s: C.C.Wrigley, *Kingship and State: the Buganda dynasty* (Cambridge, 1996) 232

⁷¹Wrigley suggests that the arrival of such goods was 'incidental' and not especially important. But it seems that he underplays the significance of the commodities for the longer-term development of long-distance commercial contacts. The novelty of cups and plates is clear enough, but Wrigley seems, for once, to be taking an 'oral tradition' at face value: Wrigley, *Kingship and State*, 232-3

⁷²Kagwa, *Kings*, 100-1. The Kagera river, of course, had only recently become Buganda's southernmost frontier. Semakokiro's wealth in ivory may not have been unconnected to the fact that he "was also the one who saved the country from being devastated by elephants, as he used to organise hunting expeditions": Kagwa, *Kings*, 99

⁷³*ibid.*, 99

What is notable about the surge in long-distance commerce under Kyabaggu and Semakokiro is the apparent increase in luxury items which now came to characterise the trade. These goods were possibly designed to appeal to the governing rather than the governed of the interior; but whether by design or not, the novelty goods and finery from the coast excited the avarice of African elites and marked a shift from trade between small-scale indigenous merchants to trade aimed at the heart of political establishments. In Buganda, successive rulers sought to gain control of such goods with an intensity which does not appear to have been characteristic of the earlier period of indirect contact. It would be more than a hundred years before cotton cloth was anything like a common commodity in the kingdom⁷⁴. In the late eighteenth century, such long-distance commerce entered a rather more exclusive phase: comparatively great wealth and, perhaps more importantly, political position were required in order to participate. This was not always the case: it is likely that this kind of commerce continued to affect and involve smaller-scale Ganda traders. But it was in general more elitist than previously. Cotton cloth⁷⁵ provides a good example of this process. It remained relatively uncommon on the one hand for a very practical reason, namely the fact that it was several decades before the coastal merchants were carrying much to Buganda. On the other hand, it is clear that successive rulers perceived ownership of the cloth as a useful way of accentuating their wealth, power and privilege, in much the same way that certain skins - notably that of the leopard - were emblems of royalty. Cloth was a prestige good, and the *kabaka* made strenuous efforts to control not only its importation, but its subsequent distribution.

⁷⁴As we noted in Chapter 4, it may be no coincidence that the same Semakokiro who was so impressed by cotton garments presided over what appears to have been a large-scale escalation of barkcloth production.

⁷⁵The term is used generically here, but there were clearly distinctions between types of cloth, some of which we have already noted. For example, *bafuta* was a kind of thin cotton cloth, while *amerikaani* was a hard, glossy, unbleached calico; *bugibugi* and *kafiifi* were cheaper cuts; and *kaniki* was a dark blue calico or cotton cloth.

The arrival of the first Arab traders in Buganda in 1844 further intensified this process. This initial visit was probably in large part a diplomatic mission, an attempt on the part of the coastal merchants to gauge the kind of society with which they were dealing in order to further commercial links. They would already have been able to learn a good deal about Buganda. Coastal traders had certainly reached the Nyamwezi by the 1830s, and they were doubtless drawn north by reports of prosperous trading activity between the Nyamwezi and Karagwe, and between Karagwe and Buganda itself. The goods brought by the initial party included many luxury items, such as cotton cloth, mirrors and musical instruments⁷⁶. Ganda and Arabs were doubtless mutually impressed. Suna, we are told, was struck by the beauty of the goods offered, but in particular by the guns carried by the merchants, which not long after he was able to use in a military campaign. For their part, the Arabs must have been taken aback at the size and strength of this state, which was quite unlike anything they had had to deal with before. Their experience among the Nyamwezi and other groups had suggested that they might expect small-scale, often acephalous, societies which were prepared to permit them positions of political influence.

Several more visits and almost a decade passed before the first detailed account of this early direct commercial interaction emerged. Richard Burton did not visit Buganda himself, but at Tabora in 1858 frequently talked to Arabs who had. One such was Snay bin Amir, who travelled to Suna's court in 1852. Suna gave the greatest encouragement to the traders, bestowing generous gifts on them, often "without expecting any but the humblest return"⁷⁷. Of course, a 'humble return' in the eyes of a coastal merchant was probably a considerable bounty to the *kabaka*. Snay bin Amir received a warm and elaborate welcome, being provided with specially-built quarters. Any reader of Tippu Tip's autobiography will recognise the manner in

⁷⁶Kagwa, *Kings*, 120

⁷⁷R.F.Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa* (London, 1860) II, 193

which Arabs, no less than Europeans, often grossly exaggerated their own importance within African societies⁷⁸; nonetheless, the welcome which Snay bin Amir describes undoubtedly reflects the relative novelty of coastal merchants at Suna's court, and perhaps the zeal which the *kabaka* expressed concerning the development of relations with the coast. But Snay's visit was not all pomp and ceremony. At a second meeting with Suna,

Snay presented his blackmail, which consisted of ten cotton cloths, and one hundred fundo of coral, and other porcelain beads. The return was an offering of two ivories and a pair of serviles; every day, moreover, flesh and grain, fruit and milk were supplied without charge . . .⁷⁹

Cloth, not guns, was here the main commodity being offered by the Arab, in addition to beads, while slaves and ivory were Buganda's most lucrative exports. It is not clear whether we can date the export of slaves from this time; there is no evidence to suggest that slaves were exported any earlier than the middle of the nineteenth century, although we cannot definitely say that they were not. Zimbe tells us that Suna "would never allow the sale of any of his subjects to foreigners. All that could be sold was cows and goats"⁸⁰. Indeed, the Ganda sold other Ganda only in exceptional circumstances⁸¹, but the implication of Zimbe's remarks is that slaves in general were not on offer. This may have been the case initially, but it did not take long before the Ganda realised that they could tailor their existing system of slave-gathering in war, as well as the existing institution of slavery itself, to meet the demands of the coastal traders. It seems likely that the Ganda had always traded their slaves with neighbouring peoples, but not on such a large and organised scale as that with which they were to export them south. Slaves were, as much as anything else,

⁷⁸Tippu Tip [tr. W.H. Whiteley], *Maisha ya Hamed bin Muhammed el Murjebi yaani Tippu Tip* (Nairobi, 1966)

⁷⁹Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, 194-5

⁸⁰B.M. Zimbe [tr. F. Kamoga], 'Buganda ne Kabaka' [c. 1939] 79

⁸¹See Chapter 10 for a fuller discussion.

commodities to be bought and sold, and there is every reason to suppose that this was carried out within both regional and domestic markets.

Snay's visit in 1852, like those before it and many after it, was important in other ways. The merchant discussed with Suna the possibilities of a "closer alliance" with the then Sultan of Zanzibar, Seyyid Said, an alliance for which Suna expressed much enthusiasm. Indeed, the *kabaka* wanted to send back with Snay "several loads of elephants' tusks as presents to H.H.the Sayyid", although this offer seems to have been refused on the grounds that the route would be too dangerous⁸². There is no doubt that Suna perceived the advantages of closer links with the coast. Symptomatic of this is the fact that he refused permission, as did both Mutesa and Mwanga, with varying success, for the Arabs to travel further north; moreover, it was suggested to Burton that Suna considered the visits of the Arabs as "personal honours paid to himself"⁸³. Indeed, the determination to restrict the advantages of long-distance trade to Buganda was a theme running through the foreign and military policies of Suna, Mutesa and Mwanga.

At some point during the 1850s, however, the Arab traders departed from Buganda and apparently did not return for several years. The main evidence for this is provided by Speke, who wrote, in the context of the late 1850s, that "[t]he Uganda station has since been broken up by order of the king, as the Arabs were interfering too much with his subjects"⁸⁴. The precise meaning of this is unclear. Some years

⁸²Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, 195

⁸³*ibid.*

⁸⁴Speke, *What Led . . .* 259. Elsewhere, Speke offers a different story, or perhaps a different version of the same story, relating to the supposed expulsion of Arab traders from Ganda territory. Having crossed the Kagera into Buddu, he "was shown by Nasib a village called Ngandu, which was the farthest trading depot of the Zanzibar ivory-merchants. It was established by Musa Mzuri, by the permission of Rumanika; for, as I shall have presently to mention, Sunna, after annexing this part of Uddu to Uganda, gave Rumanika certain bands of territory in it as a means of security against the possibility of its being wrested out of his hands again by the future kings of Unyoro. Following on Musa's wake, many Arabs also came here to trade; but they were so oppressive to the Waganda that they were recalled by Rumanika, and obliged to locate themselves at Kufro": Speke, *Journal*, 265. Grant also mentioned "an old ivory depot" in the same area: Grant, *A Walk*, 193

ago, D.A.Low asserted that the Arabs had been thus expelled in 1852⁸⁵. It is remarkable that Burton, who was in much closer contact with the Arab merchants than Speke, never mentioned this supposed expulsion; this is particularly surprising in view of the fact that Burton described in detail a successful visit to Buganda by a trader in 1852. Equally striking is the fact that Speke himself, a little earlier in the same publication, had mentioned the coastal trader Musa, who "had recently visited Kibuga [the Ganda capital], and had lived with Sultan Mtesa, the present reigning monarch in place of Sunna"⁸⁶. Some light is shed by the following passage, also written by Speke:

. . . shortly after the late king of Uganda, Sunna, died, and before Mtesa had been selected by the officers of the country to be their king, an Arab caravan came across the Masai as far as Usoga, and begged for permission to enter Uganda; but as the country was disturbed by the elections, the officers of the state advised the Arabs to wait, or come again when the king was elected . . .⁸⁷

It therefore seems likely that the Arabs were never expelled, but had been refused entry due to the temporary interregnum in the late 1850s: this has also been effectively argued by John Rowe⁸⁸. Certainly, merchants had returned by 1860 at the latest. The idea that foreigners should not be allowed in while the kingdom was politically vulnerable may also account for the fact that Suna's Zanzibari bodyguard⁸⁹ felt obliged to leave the country upon his master's death. Speke's assertion that the Arabs had 'interfered' can probably be taken to mean that the Ganda feared the potential for outside interference if the ostensibly powerful strangers from the coast were permitted residence during such a tense period.

⁸⁵D.A.Low, 'The Northern Interior 1840-1884', in R.Oliver & G.Mathew (eds.), *History of East Africa* (Oxford, 1963) I, 334

⁸⁶Speke, *What Led . . .* 258

⁸⁷Speke, *Journal*, 187

⁸⁸J.A.Rowe, 'Revolution in Buganda 1856-1900: Part One, the reign of Kabaka Mukabya Mutesa 1856-1884', Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin 1966, 50

⁸⁹See Chapter 7 below.

The case of Burton's 'Isa bin Hosayn' reveals how coastal traders or their agents could individually take advantage of Buganda's relatively open society. Speke also mentions a trader named 'Eseau' who had penetrated into East Africa with much merchandise, representing the Sultan of Zanzibar, but had lost the bulk of this as a result of heavy local taxes on the way to Buganda. Fearing to return to the coast, he "instead made great friends with the late King Sunna, who took an especial fancy to him because he had a very large beard, and raised him to the rank of Mkungu". He sounds strikingly similar to the character described by Burton, who was also known as 'the hairy one'. 'Eseau' lived in Buddu, not at the capital, and Speke makes no mention of his having to flee Buganda upon Suna's death. Instead, "Eseau died, and left all his family and property to a slave named Uledi, who now, in consequence, is the border officer"⁹⁰. The merchant had actually attained political position and considerable wealth. Miti's account would seem to suggest that the characters described by Burton and Speke were indeed the same person: Miti wrote that 'Isa bin Ushen' "is said to have found much favour with the king. It is said that, as a mark of special affection, the king gave Isa bin Ushen charge of a whole village, called Kituntu, in the district of Buddu"⁹¹. Later examples of coastal traders settling in Buganda and reaching similar heights can be cited: Toli and Idi in the late 1870s and 1880s, for example, both led military campaigns and were given political offices⁹².

Yet the fortunes of the Arab community varied. Once the novelty had worn off and the visits of coastal merchants became more commonplace, respect for them declined. Mutesa appears to have been markedly more contemptuous toward them than his father. The merchants told Speke in 1862 that "from fear they had always complied with the manners of the court"; in the immediate context, this involved being made to sit in the scorching sun for hours before being admitted to an audience with Mutesa⁹³.

⁹⁰Speke, *Journal*, 276

⁹¹Miti, 'History of Buganda', I, 124

⁹²Kagwa, *Kings*, 173-4, 177-8

⁹³Speke, *Journal*, 288

By this time, their quarters had been moved to an unhealthy and disregarded area of the capital⁹⁴. Even the supply of provisions was often problematic. In early 1878, Emin Pasha complained that the "people are all afraid to offer us anything for sale. Mtesa sends absolutely nothing, and without his orders no one may do anything". Moreover, "even the Arabs, although I have repeatedly entreated them, cannot procure anything more"⁹⁵. This is a far cry indeed from the late 1840s and early 1850s, when ample food was supplied courtesy of the *kabaka*.

By the late 1880s, Mwangi's attitude toward the coastal traders was increasingly volatile. In early 1888, he went as far as suspending all commercial operations, and prohibited the sale of food, water and other provisions to the Arabs, accusing them of having sold weapons to Kabarega⁹⁶. Mwangi, like Suna and Mutesa before him, clearly feared the wealth and power which the coastal traders might pass on to his enemies. Attitudes toward the merchants were also shaped by their perceived sharp practice in the market-place. Tellingly, the *Katikiro* reportedly described Europeans as 'men of truth' because, in Mackay's words,

our bolts of calico measured exactly as labelled; a box of gunpowder contained always the right number of tins, while no sand was to be found mixed with the powder; our guns did not explode and kill them when firing, nor did caps refuse to fire . . .⁹⁷

Yet the underlying strength of the Arab position, insofar as they had become indispensable to the exchange economy, is clear. The diversification of local food production and trade was both a cause and effect of this strength. As in Unyanyembe, for example, the coastal merchants had introduced a number of crops to the capital, and although there is little evidence to suggest that these crops spread throughout the kingdom, many were important. Onions were among the new crops⁹⁸, while the

⁹⁴ibid., 303

⁹⁵Schweitzer, *Life and Work*, I, 60

⁹⁶C.M.S. G3 A5/0 1888/244 Gordon to Parker 6.3.88

⁹⁷C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1885/98 Mackay to Wigram 7.5.85

⁹⁸Schweitzer, *Life and Work*, I, 35

missionary Tucker observed that the Arabs had introduced to Buganda "[w]heat, rice, guavas, pomegranates, paupaws, mangoes, and other fruits"⁹⁹.

The restrictions on imported cloth which had been in place since the late eighteenth century were strengthened once the merchants themselves actually turned up in Buganda. Burton was told that "sumptuary laws impede the free traffic of cloth into Uganda", suggesting that the Arabs were prohibited from selling it to anyone other than Suna or his representatives¹⁰⁰. But although this particular commodity was the subject of stringent regulation, "the imports [brought by the Arabs] are represented chiefly by beads, cowries, and brass and copper wires"¹⁰¹. The implication seems to be that these goods were purchased freely by private Ganda traders. This impression was later confirmed by Speke, who wrote that

[b]eads and brass wire, exchanged for ivory or slaves, are the only articles of foreign manufacture any Mganda can hold in his possession. Should anything else be seen in his house - for instance, cloth - his property would be confiscated and his life taken . . .¹⁰²

Private or small-scale Ganda traders at the capital, then, did have access to the coastal merchants. In addition to ivory and, perhaps more commonly, slaves, these local traders may also have exchanged foodstuffs, a situation for which there were precedents at Unyanyembe and Ujiji on Lake Tanganyika. Although the early coastal merchants were provided with sustenance by the *kabaka*, apparently free of charge, this was not the case in later years; moreover, while the Arab community did begin to produce for itself, it is likely that the bulk of their provisions came from local gardens.

⁹⁹A. Tucker, *Eighteen Years in Uganda and East Africa* (London, 1908) I, 88; see also Chapter 3 above.

¹⁰⁰Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, 196

¹⁰¹*ibid.*

¹⁰²Speke, *Journal*, 345

The capital appears to have been the only meeting point between Ganda and coastal merchants, the latter in general being restricted to the markets here. On the whole, this suited the Arabs themselves well enough, for it was at the capital that they could exchange their goods for large numbers of slaves and ivory in bulk. However, Speke mentions an Arab trader named Saim, whom he met in Buzinza and who claimed that "he had lived ten years in Uganda, had crossed the Nile, and traded eastward as far as the Masai country"¹⁰³. Saim had clearly been permitted to carry his merchandise past Jinja and among the Soga. It is possible that successive Ganda rulers were in fact more concerned to control the north-bound trade - that is, toward Bunyoro - than that to the east. In any case, Mutesa himself was apparently keen to open a trade route to the east which by-passed the lake and represented a more direct route to the coast. In various sources, however, much is made of the supposedly 'traditional' Ganda fear of an invasion from the east, which prompted them to close off that route to all enterprise. According to Zimbe, this prohibition dated from the reign of Suna¹⁰⁴. If accepted, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that it was related not to the threat of attack but to the control of long-distance commerce, which could be more properly effected if the Arabs were compelled to use the more circuitous lake route. This was indeed the single most important factor behind the development of the Ganda navy¹⁰⁵.

Prior to the impetus provided by the IBEAC in the 1890s, however, the eastern trade route was never fully developed, for reasons beyond Mutesa's control. Central Kenya was commercially important throughout the nineteenth century, and was especially noted for its exports of ivory, but until the 1870s or 1880s, long-distance trade in this region remained in the hands of African middlemen, particularly Kamba merchants. The penetration of Swahili traders was a much slower process than in Tanzania¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰³ibid., 154-5

¹⁰⁴Zimbe, *Buganda*, 126

¹⁰⁵This is more fully examined in Chapter 8 below.

¹⁰⁶See I.N.Kimambo, 'The Economic History of the Kamba 1850-1950', in B.A.Ogot (ed.), *Hadith 2* (Nairobi, 1970) 82-3; K.Jackson, 'The Dimensions of Kamba Pre-Colonial History', in B.A.Ogot (ed.), *Kenya Before 1900* (Nairobi, 1976) 217; C.H.Ambler, *Kenyan Communities in the Age of Imperialism* (New Haven & London, 1988) 67-73

By the middle of the nineteenth century, indeed, the coastal merchants themselves had already invested too much in such entrepôts as Tabora and Ujiji to disregard them. Nonetheless, the intricate domestic trade network in Buganda ensured that the coastal goods acquired by the Ganda at the capital would swiftly find their way into the outlying provinces. It is possible, too, that the goods brought by Arab merchants found their way into the hands of the broader populace as a result of small-scale, regional redistribution. Local chiefs may have handed out such goods to their tenants in return for the normal services, namely war, labour, or provision of foodstuffs. But it is still true that such goods, even if originally derived from a redistributive process, would have retained their value as goods which could be exchanged in local markets.

An instructive comparison to draw, perhaps, is that with Dahomey in West Africa, as has been done by Waller¹⁰⁷. Like Buganda, Dahomey was a relatively centralised state, and has been depicted as a society strictly organised around kingship. The Dahomean king appointed officials to oversee commerce with European traders, although this seems often to have been ineffective as large numbers of Africans still managed to acquire wealth through involvement in the slave trade. To some extent this situation is paralleled in Buganda, as we shall see below. But here the similarities appear to end. A cardinal feature of the Dahomean economy was the redistributive ceremonies regularly enacted by the monarch. These ceremonies were to a large extent a form of conspicuous consumption on the part of the ruler, but they were also the means by which a large proportion of the population came to possess articles obtained by trade with Europeans. In Buganda, the *kabaka* exercised a form of redistribution, but this seems to have been limited in scope to the upper echelons of Ganda political society. Imported cloths, for example, were distributed among chiefs who had displayed particular courage in war. The bulk of the population was

¹⁰⁷Waller offers a rather complex comparison between Buganda and Dahomey, based largely on the writings of Polanyi and Sahlins: R. Waller, 'The Traditional Economy of Buganda', M.A. Dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1971, 6ff. For an excellent study of Dahomey and the operation of its commercial system, see R.C.C. Law, *The Slave Coast of West Africa 1550-1750* (Oxford, 1991)

excluded from such a system, and acquired their share of trade goods by actively participating in commercial activity, even though, as we have seen, only a small number of private and small-scale Ganda traders were actually able to engage directly with the Arab merchants.

The fact that trade in certain goods - most notably cotton cloth and, later, firearms - was restricted by the *kabaka*, and that the Arabs were generally forbidden from venturing beyond the capital, should not be taken as indicating some all-embracing control which the *kabaka* exercised over commerce among the Ganda. Similarly, the fact that local producers were often forbidden from selling provisions to Speke and Grant suggests only that the *kabaka* wished to impress the Europeans with his ability to supply them with all their needs and is indicative of his jealous desire to keep them to himself¹⁰⁸. Indeed, even in these objectives Mutesa was often unsuccessful: Grant was swift to point out that beads could be secretly used to "purchase sufficient provisions for ourselves and men"¹⁰⁹, suggesting Mutesa's inability to suppress local trade. As with the coastal merchants, this attitude toward Europeans wore off in time, so that by the late 1870s it was commonplace for missionaries to regularly purchase their own provisions from local producers. It is clear that commercial restrictions were exceptional rather than normal. It is also true, however, that commercial life at the capital was not typical of that elsewhere in Buganda. Mutesa did on occasion impose bans on the sale of foodstuffs, but he would have been quite powerless to do so beyond the capital: outside the *kibuga*, economic and commercial activity went on regardless of any centralised royal control, and people could enjoy the fruits of long-distance trade without the occasional impediments experienced at the capital.

International trade was not all one-way, and the Ganda did not simply wait for the next coastal caravan to arrive. Although less frequently than in earlier times, the

¹⁰⁸See for example Speke, *Journal*, 268; Grant, *A Walk*, 229

¹⁰⁹Grant, *A Walk*, 229

Ganda did travel south on missions of both a diplomatic and commercial nature. During the 1850s, if not later, Speke records, "the kings of Uganda were in the habit of sending men to Karague when they heard that Arabs wished to visit them - even as many as two hundred at a time - to carry their kit"¹¹⁰. Livingstone noted the arrival at Tabora in 1872 of a force of Ganda escorting slaves to be traded¹¹¹. In late 1878, a band of 'Mutesa's soldiers' was reported to be returning from a mission to Zanzibar itself¹¹². Perhaps more importantly, the Ganda exercised varying degrees of control over the main trading depots to the west of the lake. In particular, Speke mentions "the Arab depot at Kufro, on the direct line to Uganda", and the trading post of Ngandu, alluded to above, which appears to have been jointly controlled by Rumanika, ruler of Karagwe, and Suna¹¹³. But the most dramatic example of Buganda's attempt to control the trade and deal with the coastal merchants on their own terms is the development of a navy capable of travelling the full length of Lake Victoria. In the 1870s and 1880s, the enormous canoes of Buganda featured prominently in the organisation of long-distance commerce, and indeed rendered almost redundant the older land routes to the west of the lake. This is more fully examined in Chapter 8 below.

In examining long-distance or 'international' commerce, we have focused on trade with the coast. There is little direct evidence to suggest that trade from the direction of the Egyptian Sudan, which was the other gateway to a wider world, had any real impact on Buganda. There was probably a restricted level of commercial interaction in this area, mostly indirect - that is, goods obtained by the Nyoro being traded south - but in the pre-colonial era such activity appears to have been neither regular nor substantial enough to have had a major influence. Speke heard that "a salt lake, which was called N'yanza, though not the great Victoria N'yanza, lay on the other side

¹¹⁰Speke, *Journal*, 188

¹¹¹H. Waller (ed.), *The Last Journals of David Livingstone in Central Africa* (London, 1874) II, 226

¹¹²White Fathers: C13/282 Livinhac to Lavigerie 20.11.78

¹¹³Speke, *Journal*, 201, 264

of Unyoro, from which direction Rumanika, king of Karague, sometimes got beads forwarded to him by Kamurasi, king of Unyoro, of a different sort from any brought from Zanzibar"¹¹⁴. The 'salt lake' is a reference to Lake Albert, or more specifically, to the salt production centre at Kibiro. It may safely be assumed that beads of this kind also reached Buganda, but in what quantities, and to what effect, is unclear¹¹⁵. In the early 1880s, the missionary Wilson wrote: "There was formerly a small trade with the Soudan, coffee, tobacco, mbugu, and cattle being exchanged for fezes, calico, and red slippers. But since the evacuation of Mruli by the Egyptian troops all communication with the North is at an end"¹¹⁶. The links were always tenuous, and Sudan-based commerce remained restricted for three main reasons. Firstly, the Nyoro themselves, the most obvious middlemen along such a trade route, were consistently hostile to the Sudanese so close to their kingdom. Both Kamurasi and his successor Kabarega had numerous skirmishes with the agents of the Egyptian Sudan, naturally limiting the opportunities for peaceful commerce. Secondly, Mutesa's own attitude toward the north was characterised by suspicion and, indeed, deep fear; when his attention was drawn in this direction, he perceived the potential for military confrontation rather than for commercial interaction. And thirdly, when any Sudanese did travel to Buganda, for example Nur Aga and his party in 1876, they did so as soldiers, not traders, which not only severely limited the opportunity to establish trade links, but also confirmed in Mutesa's mind the fact that they represented a military threat.

Commercial Change in the Late Nineteenth Century

In this section, we will examine more closely what seem to have been the most important developments for Ganda commerce in the last few decades of the nineteenth century. Among these was the growth of the slave trade, which has been

¹¹⁴*ibid.*, 89

¹¹⁵As we have already noted, certain beads highly valued by the Soga and their eastern neighbours may have come from the north via the Middle Nile.

¹¹⁶C.T.Wilson & R.W.Felkin, *Uganda and the Egyptian Soudan* (London, 1882) I, 191

mentioned briefly above but which warrants separate analysis. Slavery as an institution in Buganda is examined in greater detail in Chapter 10: here, the export of slaves - and indeed the regional trade in slaves, so far as one can be discerned - is the focus of our attention. The 'northern' section of the East African slave trade has been relatively neglected by historians in favour of studies of the trade in southern Tanzania and northern Mozambique. This may be partly to do with the fact that the systematic export of slaves from Buganda came about relatively late. In the mid-1850s, slaves appear to have been secondary to ivory, which for several decades was Buganda's primary international export. Nonetheless, even then slaves were a significant 'product'. Burton was told that slaves were often sold for "ten fundo of beads, and the same sum will purchase the Wasoga and Wanyoro captives from whom [Suna] derives a considerable portion of his revenues"¹¹⁷. As far as the Arab community at Unyanyembe was concerned, slaves brought from the northern kingdoms were increasingly important by the late 1850s. Burton suggested that the Nyamwezi themselves used slaves brought from Buganda, Bunyoro and Karagwe¹¹⁸.

In the early 1860s, it was noted that slaves transported from Buganda were regarded in Unyanyembe as being the best available, particularly the Hima women who were also brought from Karagwe¹¹⁹. The export of slaves increased steadily through the 1860s and 1870s, reaching a peak in the 1880s, during which decade thousands may have been exported annually. After c.1890, Buganda's part in the slave trade was virtually at an end, and even the small-scale illicit trade which continued through the 1890s in the interlacustrine region appears to have involved very few Ganda. Two points are clear from this. Firstly and self-evidently, Buganda's participation in the East African slave trade was relatively brief, spanning only four decades, although it became intense in its latter stages. Secondly, Buganda's exports peaked at a time

¹¹⁷Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, 196

¹¹⁸R.F.Burton, 'The lake regions of Equatorial Africa', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, 29 (1859) 205

¹¹⁹Grant, *A Walk*, 48

when the East African slave trade in general was actually in decline, a decline due in large part to the anti-slave trade treaty signed by the Sultan of Zanzibar in 1873. Buganda's anomalous position seems to have been due to the fact that, as Paul Lovejoy has pointed out, the slaves exported from the Lake Victoria region rarely reached the coast, and were thus relatively unconnected to the slave-based plantation economy on the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba¹²⁰. The precise destinations of slaves bought in Buganda are unclear, but impulses from Arab communities within the interior, rather than directly from the coast, seem to have been at work on the north end of Lake Victoria. Certainly most slaves were sent to Unyanyembe, at least initially¹²¹.

Slavery in Buganda had existed for centuries, the Ganda having retained for domestic, economic and political purposes serviles mostly foreign in origin, virtually since the foundation of the kingdom. Ganda themselves were occasionally enslaved by their compatriots, usually as a result of falling on hard times, but these seem to have been traded outside the kingdom only in exceptional circumstances¹²². The vast majority of exported slaves were foreigners. Slaves, then, were an important by-product of war, and before c.1850 foreign captives were mostly retained by their captors and effectively incorporated into Ganda society. As one British officer commented on the eve of a campaign in 1893, the Ganda welcomed "the opportunity of . . . replenishing their harems and slave establishments"¹²³. The tone of this suggests that warfare was the natural means by which the Ganda slave population, both male and female, was sustained, and it is clear that this remained the situation in the early 1890s. In the second half of the nineteenth century, however, slaves for export were drawn from this broad band: this meant either that more Ganda had to be enslaved to sustain the

¹²⁰P. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery* (Cambridge, 1983) 151-2

¹²¹For example, C.M.S. CA6/010/13 Felkin to Wright 1.11.78

¹²²This became more common, however, as the slave trade reached its height from the late 1870s onward. Again, see Chapter 10 for a fuller discussion of these issues.

¹²³A.B. Thurston, *African Incidents* (London, 1900) 129

indigenous slave population¹²⁴, or that more foreign captives had to be brought in specifically for export. What actually happened appears to have been a combination of these developments, but the latter was unquestionably the more important and dramatic.

This did not necessarily mean that the Ganda fought more wars, or carried out more slave-raiding expeditions, during this period to meet demand. Michael Twaddle, for example, has talked of a "spiral of violence", a situation in which the Ganda made a conscious decision to "intensify external predation in order to meet the merchants' demands for slaves as well as their own continuing need for them"¹²⁵. There is little direct evidence for this. Wars continued to be fought, as they had been before the external demand for slaves; it seems more probable that the gathering of foreign captives became more widespread and more systematic during military expeditions than had been the case before the 1850s. On the face of it, there thus occurred something of a change in motivation behind the waging of wars; but the scale of this change should not be exaggerated. The Ganda had always waged war for economic reasons, not least, significantly in this context, because of the perceived need to maintain an enslaved under-class at home performing a broad range of tasks, for example in the agriculture. For the Ganda to seize slaves abroad who were earmarked for export did not represent a major adjustment of extant principles.

Moreover, the notion of a trade in slaves was already well-established before the development of an external, long-distance demand. The British officer MacDonald hinted at the existence of a domestic trade when he described Buganda as a country

¹²⁴The missionary Robert Felkin wrote that "[t]he slave population is diminishing, and the Waganda are beginning to feel that the exportation of slaves must cease, for if not, they will be compelled to do manual labour work themselves, which work they strongly object to": R.W.Felkin, 'Notes on the Waganda tribe of Central Africa', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, 13 (1885-6) 746. This somewhat amusing exaggeration undoubtedly reflected a genuine concern among many Ganda: this is returned to below.

¹²⁵M. Twaddle, 'The Ending of Slavery in Buganda', in S.Miers & R.Roberts (eds.), *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Wisconsin, 1988) 119, 122

"where a man's life was rated at the price of an ox, and a woman was an article of barter"¹²⁶. Women in particular were commonly traded as serviles within Buganda. In the early 1860s, Grant observed how a Ganda in his party had 'kidnapped' two women, intending to sell them at 'Karee', a village in northern Singo. The price he received for these two women was ten cows, while at the capital, Grant was told, he would only have received five¹²⁷. The commonness of a trade in female slaves is thus suggested. The Ganda may also have traded female slaves as far north as Mruli, although by the end of the 1870s, as we have already noted, this commerce appears to have dried up¹²⁸. The existence of 'slave markets', as far as the term is understood in a Zanzibari context, is not so clear. Roscoe, for example, suggested that slaves were commonly sold "by private arrangement"¹²⁹. As we shall see below, however, within or near the capital there were compounds for recently-captured slaves which the coastal merchants visited before making their purchases. Hima women were in demand both domestically and externally as slaves. They were often bought or seized as concubines for chiefs or to be sold to the coastal traders, and were regarded as being exceptionally beautiful¹³⁰. The comparatively high price paid for Hima women reflected the value placed on them: the missionary Girault observed that a Hima woman might fetch anything between five and fifty cows in the domestic market, while a Ganda woman in the same position was worth only one¹³¹. There existed a tax on the domestic sale of slaves: a female goat was the tax on the sale of a woman, while according to Kagwa "for a [male] servant one male goat"¹³².

By the early 1880s, anything from a thousand slaves were probably being exported annually. Precise figures for the East African slave trade generally are impossible to

¹²⁶J.R.MacDonald, *Soldiering and Surveying in British East Africa* (London, 1897) 143

¹²⁷Grant, *A Walk*, 258

¹²⁸Wilson & Felkin, *Uganda*, II, 32

¹²⁹Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 456

¹³⁰For example, C.Peters [tr.H.W.Dulcken], *New Light on Dark Africa* (London, 1891) 402; W.Junker [tr.A.H.Keane], *Travels in Africa during the years 1882-1886* (London, 1892) 550

¹³¹White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 1/18.1.80

¹³²A.Kagwa [tr.E.B.Kalibala, ed.M.M.Edel], *Customs of the Baganda* (New York, 1934) 130

come by, particularly for the entrepôts of the interior. But to put the Buganda figure into some kind of comparative context, some 20,000 slaves may have been sold annually during the 1860s at Zanzibar¹³³. Lovejoy has suggested that the coast retained some 188,000 slaves during the 1870s. Yet he also points out that by the late 1860s 95 per cent of Zanzibar's slaves came through Kilwa to the south, which clearly had nothing to do with the northern interlacustrine trade¹³⁴. So it is extremely difficult to contextualise figures for Buganda, however tentative. Having said this, in light of Lovejoy's calculations it seems likely that Buganda's exports in the early 1880s were actually substantial in the context of the northern interlacustrine region.

Alexander Mackay stated unequivocally that "[t]he demand for slaves in Uganda itself is very great, it being only the surplus which is carried off by the Arabs. Every year some 2,000 slaves, as nearly as I can estimate, are purchased by Arabs, and conveyed by water from Uganda to Usukuma"¹³⁵. One cannot be sure of Mackay's methods of calculation, but he was in a position to regularly observe slave transactions both north and south of the lake. It is also significant that his figure was based solely on the lake route, although in late 1879 it was reported that the land route was virtually closed, and that all caravans bound for Buganda went directly to Kagehyi on the south shore of the lake¹³⁶. Another missionary estimated that by 1880 around a thousand slaves left Buganda by the lake route alone, regardless of any being transported through Karagwe¹³⁷. Breaking down this sample figure, which was more conservative than that offered by Mackay, an average of 80 slaves per month were being exported across the lake, and the slave canoe observed by the same missionary crossing the lake with 200 slaves would have taken around 10 weeks to fill. Comparative figures

¹³³A. Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar* (London, 1987) 60, 224-30

¹³⁴Lovejoy, *Transformations*, 151-2

¹³⁵A. Mackay [ed. by his sister], *Pioneer Missionary in Uganda* (London, 1890) 435. It is interesting to note that according to Mackay only the 'surplus' was sold to the Arabs. This goes some way to contradict Mackay's 'official line' as a bitter opponent of the slave trade that slave-raiding was carried on virtually at the behest of the Arabs themselves; indeed, it was supposedly the Arabs who supplied the Ganda with the firepower to do so: see *Pioneer Missionary*, 438

¹³⁶C.M.S. CA6/016/42 Mackay to Wright 2.11.79

¹³⁷Wilson & Felkin, *Uganda*, I, 189-91

for the land route are unavailable, but of course the reality of slave accumulation at the lake shore was probably quite different, coastal merchants often having to wait months for fresh slaves to arrive from the interior. In 1883, Mackay noted that "[t]here have been three Arabs waiting for months at Buganga [on the lake shore] with some two hundred tusks and as yet they have only ten canoes"¹³⁸. On another occasion, in early 1880, the Arabs were refused permission to gather up canoes because the god of the lake, Mukasa, was about to visit the capital. An interesting ideological struggle ensued between Mutesa and several leading chiefs, the former demanding that commerce should be allowed to continue, the latter pleading respect for Mukasa. It seems that the chiefs' arguments held sway¹³⁹.

By the early 1880s, groups of slaves consisted of boys, young men, and comparatively smaller numbers of young girls. Generally, mature females were originally retained in Buganda and served to bolster harems of varying sizes across the kingdom. The missionary Felkin suggested that the price of slaves had risen four-fold between 1870 and 1880¹⁴⁰. Emin Pasha corroborates this to some extent, stating that "in the year 1876 a girl of ten to twelve years was exchanged for thirty to forty ells [=almost two feet] of madapolam [=foreign cloth] of the ordinary kind, two years later the price had risen to nearly as much again; but since then it seems to have remained almost stationary". It would appear that female slaves in particular had become more expensive, largely because of the increased preference for these among coastal traders¹⁴¹. In general, slave prices in Buganda are extremely difficult to assess. Contemporary Europeans provide a bewildering array of prices in their accounts, and it seems likely that slaves were exchanged for a wide range of commodities. Cloth has already been mentioned, although even in the early 1880s this was still confined to a relatively small elite. Increasingly, guns and ammunition were required by

¹³⁸C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1883/120 Mackay's Journal 29.6.83

¹³⁹C.M.S. CA6/016/43 Mackay to Wright 7.1.80

¹⁴⁰Felkin, 'Notes', 746

¹⁴¹Schweinfurth, *Emin Pasha*, 117

smaller-scale traders. On the whole, however, it is clear that by the early 1880s female slaves were fetching the best prices. Girls and slightly older women, the latter being increasingly exported rather than retained for the domestic market, were in general more expensive than their male counterparts¹⁴². It is important to note the coastal merchants' demand for females. Females of any age appear to have been more valuable because they were not only of use in the sphere of manual labour, but could also perform sexual services. Concubinage, indeed, was a major motivating factor, and had a much greater significance for the external East African slave trade than for that of West Africa. Crucially, circumstances in Buganda lent themselves to the meeting of this demand. The generally subordinate role of women in society¹⁴³ meant that the Arabs were tapping a ready-made system of inequality and domination, while the already-fluid domestic trade in female slaves made the task of both buying and selling much easier.

Two missionaries were of the belief that by the 1880s more slaves were being exported than were being retained for domestic use in Buganda. The Ganda apparently bemoaned the fact that ivory was becoming increasingly scarce, and so their desire for foreign goods - most notably cloth and guns - was leading them to sell their slaves. As a result, the slave population was actually in decline¹⁴⁴. This is certainly possible, and although such testimony is not in itself wholly satisfactory, Livinhac also observed in 1879 that demand was exceeding supply and that slaves were in fact something of a scarce commodity¹⁴⁵. Several years later, in 1886, Lourdel noted that slaves were much easier to procure¹⁴⁶; nevertheless, it is possible that increasingly the Ganda were struggling to meet demand and in the process selling more domestic slaves than would otherwise have been the case. What the evidence does suggest, moreover, is that ever greater numbers of Ganda were participating in

¹⁴²Felkin, 'Notes', 753-4

¹⁴³This, along with the appropriate qualifications, is more fully explored in Chapters 9 and 10 below.

¹⁴⁴Felkin, 'Notes', 746; Wilson & Felkin, *Uganda*, I, 190

¹⁴⁵White Fathers: C13/5 Livinhac to Lavigerie 24.9.79

¹⁴⁶White Fathers: C14/139 Lourdel to his brother 15.10.86

the trade, albeit often on a small scale, perhaps selling one or two slaves at a time to coastal merchants eager to fill their caravans or canoes quickly. There is little doubt that the majority of slaves carried away by the Arabs were bought in bulk, but smaller, individual transactions undoubtedly took place. The French missionaries, who made it their policy to buy slaves with a view to 'liberating' them, quickly discovered that local slave-owners were only too willing to exchange their serviles for guns and other sundry goods¹⁴⁷.

Social perceptions of slave-selling and wealth-accumulation at the capital are to some extent revealed in an incident related by Lourdel. It involved the condemning to death of two youths at the *kabaka's* court, the punishment for selling a young slave belonging to the *Katikiro* to the Arabs. The youths had decided to seize and sell the slave in return for "the luxury of several lengths of white cloth". Significantly, Lourdel suggested that this kind of behaviour was not uncommon¹⁴⁸. Indeed, the expansion of the slave trade in the 1870s and early 1880s seems to have prompted a wave of lawlessness around the capital. Slave-stealing and kidnapping increased, Lourdel noting that "some people seize the unfortunate slaves by force and immediately afterwards go to sell them at the Wangouanas' [=coastal merchants] place or guard them until their master has replaced them"¹⁴⁹. The Arabs themselves appear not to have been overly fussy about the origins of the slaves thus acquired.

The excitement generated by the arrival of a new batch of slaves at the capital is clear from contemporary missionary accounts, with both Arab and Ganda traders examining and discussing the best specimens, haggling over prices, and selling and re-selling their captives. The figure of the *kabaka* often seems to have been relegated almost to a background role, simply taking his pick of the new slaves and distributing

¹⁴⁷White Fathers: C13/1 Livinhac to Lavigerie 2.7.79

¹⁴⁸White Fathers: C14/185 Lourdel to Directeur 1.6.88

¹⁴⁹White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 2/12.8.81

or selling them to the Arabs as he saw fit, and leaving the merchants to carry on¹⁵⁰. The apparent rise in lawlessness was symptomatic of the relative freedom accorded to the commercial arena. As we have seen in the context of the market-place, Mutesa did attempt to impose restrictions on exchange at the capital, but it seems likely that this was a desperate measure by an ailing *kabaka* to use political force to secure personal interests. Moreover, he did so in a sphere of Ganda life which was traditionally free from political constraint, excepting the restrictions on imported cloth first imposed in the late eighteenth century, which might explain why he was only marginally successful. In any case, the policy of monopolising the ivory trade, which we have already noted, was the only area in which Mutesa could hope to have some success. All in all, the *kabaka* by the early 1880s was little more than the most powerful and important of a great many Ganda traders eager to do business with the coastal merchants. Although cloth was becoming increasingly widespread through the 1880s, firearms were the main goods demanded by African sellers of slaves. In 1880, Mackay observed that a "host of traders who arrived in Buganda shortly before I left, brought almost no barter goods, but an immense supply of guns and powder", while at Kagehyi on the southern shore of the lake he wrote that "[e]ight canoes arrived last week, and the chief refused to take any of our goods to Buganda, but took the traders with as much of their guns & c. as the canoes could carry"¹⁵¹.

The mortality rate must have been a significant factor in the transport of slaves, and it was presumably a factor which was allowed for, among both the Ganda who escorted slaves from the war-zones to the trading areas, and the Arabs who supervised their transport south. The lake route in particular was hazardous, while conditions on board the great slave canoes themselves were markedly unhygienic: Lourdel noted that slaves were piled virtually one on top of the other to maximise space¹⁵². On the overland route, rather more care was taken to insure against escape than against

¹⁵⁰White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 1/16-17.7.80

¹⁵¹C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1881/9 Mackay to Wright 24.9.80

¹⁵²White Fathers: C14/185 Lourdel to Directeur 1.6.88

death, captives being joined by the neck with long wooden forks. Many were also made to carry baggage¹⁵³. One missionary described how, with a campaign in Busoga having recently ended, the slaves were assembled and selected:

Three large courtyards were full of old women, and women with children, some of them in the most shocking condition . . . Three or four coast men were there bargaining . . . On going in the shamba I met a troop of boys, about thirty, not more than four years of age, lean, lank, & hungry looking, some mere skeletons. They were being led out by one of the king's own men whom I have often seen at the palace. When I had finished my business here, I went on to the palace and saw this same troop of boys coming out from being inspected by M'tesa. These were part of the captives made in Usoga, and what about the men and younger women [sic]. It was said that wives were very cheap in Uganda now!¹⁵⁴

Almost a year later, the same missionary witnessed the arrival of another batch of Soga slaves:

I saw the remains of the King's share of women going to the palace, over three hundred wretched creatures . . . There ought to have been five hundred but death by hunger and fatigue had so reduced them. It is stated that one thousand captives died on their way here . . . All the best of the women were taken by the chiefs. The number taken must have been great. The Arabs are in full feather [?] and great slave buying is going on . . .¹⁵⁵

The coastal traders took great risks on the lake itself, as shown by the fact that in 1887 numerous slaves and considerable quantities of ivory were lost in a storm which wrecked the traders' canoes¹⁵⁶. In light of this information, it seems that the conservative figure of one thousand slaves being exported per annum during the 1880s must represent no more than half of the slaves actually involved in Ganda

¹⁵³ibid.

¹⁵⁴C.M.S. CA6/019/13 Pearson to Wright 29.9.79

¹⁵⁵C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1881/22 Pearson to Mackay 29.7.80

¹⁵⁶C.M.S. G3 A5/0 1887/141 Gordon to Mackay 14.11.87

slave-gathering and marketing. This estimate clearly excludes those killed during the military operations themselves, deaths *en route* to Buganda, and fatalities on the lake, not to mention those slaves retained in Buganda for domestic use.

It is likely that the wars of the late 1880s further multiplied the ways in which slaves were acquired, while the fighting itself generated new sources of slaves. *Kabaka* Kiwewa, who reigned briefly following Mwanga's deposition, promised an end to the duty imposed on coastal merchants¹⁵⁷. The coastal merchants themselves may well have taken advantage of the political turmoil by helping themselves to local slave supplies, perhaps even carrying out their own raids. In 1889, Lourdel noted the arrival at the south end of the lake of a group of Ganda who had been enslaved by the Arabs¹⁵⁸. The idea of the Arabs actually enslaving anyone was certainly novel - in Buganda they had occupied the position of buyers only - but even more striking is the fact that these slaves were described as Ganda, rather than Soga or Nyoro as was usual. Less conclusive, but also suggestive of the confusion in the region at the end of the 1880s, is Lourdel's remark that not all slaves were being sent south: rather, "an ever greater number have been driven north, into Bunyoro, where they are exchanged for ivory"¹⁵⁹. Coastal merchants may again have been taking advantage of political upheaval by plying their trade more directly with the Nyoro, who were by this time the biggest suppliers of ivory in the region, and who represented a market to which the Arabs had previously been allowed only relatively limited access. The coups of 1888-9 clearly had important economic dimensions. On the African side, the coastal traders represented the promise of the firepower which had become so highly valued¹⁶⁰. The Arabs themselves welcomed the opportunity of at last influencing political conditions as they had elsewhere in East Africa, with a view to establishing more favourable terms of trade.

¹⁵⁷C.M.S. G3 A5/0 1889/62 Mackay to Ashe 11.11.88

¹⁵⁸White Fathers: C14/190 Lourdel to Supérieur-Général 8.6.89

¹⁵⁹ibid.

¹⁶⁰See Chapter 7 below.

Much of this activity, however, represented something of a last throw for organised slave-trading. By March 1890, Mwanga, recently reinstated, had announced the abolition of the slave trade, if not of the institution of slavery itself¹⁶¹. The declaration had little immediate impact, and six months later there were reports of slaves for export being brought down from the border areas of Bunyoro, generated by the on-going war in that region¹⁶². It was, however, the beginning of the end, and the increasing British presence in Buganda effectively precluded the majority of Ganda from participating even in the smuggling of slaves.

In more normal circumstances, it is difficult to see how any *kabaka* could have ended Buganda's participation in the trade, so critical was it to many Ganda, including the *kabaka* himself, of course. Both domestically and internationally, the slave trade was a dominant feature of economic life. Mutesa allegedly once declared: 'If the Queen of England would help me as she helps Sayyid Barghash of Zanzibar, certainly I would abolish slavery. But the power of my chiefs and my people depends on this traffic and I have no right to hinder it'. He also, again allegedly, put it another way: 'I could easily prevent the Arabs from coming here or expel them when they arrive; but who then will supply us with foreign goods, who will satisfy the aspirations which have risen in the hearts of my chiefs and my people?'¹⁶³. The *kabaka* is also supposed to have said to O'Flaherty in 1883, with regard to the slave trade, 'What can I do? . . . Those cursed slave dealers really rule my people. This I myself formerly encouraged, but it has assumed such dimensions that it cannot I fear be stopped'¹⁶⁴. This may be

¹⁶¹White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 4/12-16.3.90

¹⁶²White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 4/4-9.8.90

¹⁶³Reported in *Les Missions Catholiques* 14 (1882) 89-90. At about the same time, the Anglican missionaries reported similar remarks: C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1881/75 O'Flaherty to Hutchinson 12.7.81

¹⁶⁴C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1883/71 O'Flaherty to Wigram 28.2.83. There are several examples of such sentiments being expressed by nineteenth-century African rulers, a fact which lends Mutesa's remarks further credibility. In 1886 the Lozi king Lewanika was reportedly deeply disturbed by the heavy reliance of his people on the ivory trade: see A.D.Roberts, *A History of Zambia* (London, 1976) 172. Even more pertinent is the example of Gezo, king of Dahomey, who told a British envoy in 1848 that he could not possibly give up the slave trade: the army had to be kept active, and if Gezo tried to alter "the sentiments of a whole people", Dahomey would be thrown into anarchy and revolution which "would

evidence of a certain amount of political manoeuvring, but one suspects that Mutesa was not merely posturing here. It was an unashamed admission as to the importance of the coastal merchants to the kingdom's economy; Buganda had become involved in international commerce and could not now withdraw from it. The ability of the people to sell their slaves was critical to the functioning of the local economy. This was increasingly the case as ivory became more scarce and as most Ganda no longer had ready access to it. Nor were the Ganda purely the victims of the international market. Long before the arrival of the coastal traders, the ability to own and sell slaves meant social and economic power, and reinforced critical ideas of domination, particularly, although not exclusively, along lines of gender and ethnicity¹⁶⁵. The injection of long-distance commercial impulses served to strengthen these ideas, and indeed made the selling of slaves even more lucrative, particularly in the two decades before the colonial period.

As we have noted, ivory was becoming harder to procure. By the end of the 1870s, most of Buganda's supplies were coming from Bunyoro and Busoga, some of it in the form of tribute, or as a result of regional commerce, or as war booty. As far as most Ganda were concerned, ivory was thus increasingly scarce as a trade good. One missionary noted in 1879 that Mutesa sold his ivory to the Arabs at inflated prices¹⁶⁶, probably precisely because he had a virtual monopoly on its supply, although it was a monopoly largely by default. Later on, as we have noted, he attempted to establish closer control over its supply, but by this time the supply was so irregular that slaves had become the primary export anyway. Years earlier, when ivory was more abundant, such a monopolistic policy had been rather more difficult to implement, as we have seen. In the last years of Mutesa's reign, as Felkin observed, ivory supplies were "coming fast to an end", with greater effort made and greater distances travelled

deprive him of his throne": B.Cruikshank, 'Report of his Mission to the King of Dahomey', in 'Missions to the Kings of Ashanti & Dahomey: Dispatches from the Lieutenant-Governor of the Gold Coast', *British Parliamentary Papers - Colonies (Africa)* Vol.50, 17 (reprinted by Irish Universities Press)

¹⁶⁵This is further explored in Chapters 6 and 10 below.

¹⁶⁶C.M.S. CA6/010/48 Felkin's Journal 17.3.79

for their collection¹⁶⁷. Even so, one Arab merchant boasted privately to the missionary O'Flaherty that he sold his guns to Mutesa "at more than 20 times their value" and received in return "ivory less than 20 times its value"¹⁶⁸. Indeed, in general the prices paid for ivory in Buganda were as little as a tenth of that which might be paid at the coast¹⁶⁹.

Yet, according to Mackay, supply problems meant that "Mutesa always keeps the Arabs waiting a year or two before he pays them their ivory"¹⁷⁰. Mwanga was faced with similar problems in 1885:

. . . there were many Arabs crying out for their ivory, due them before Mutesa's death, and Mwanga had promised to pay them when Wakoli, king of half of Busoga, arrived with his yearly tribute of tusks. Wakoli however did not come, either with or without ivory, to render his homage to the new king.¹⁷¹

Mwanga was also unable to pay ivory owed to the missionaries, a debt which partly went back to Mutesa's reign: it was eventually paid in part in cowries¹⁷². Regular tribute as a source of ivory was increasingly important by the early 1880s, and thus Mutesa was ever more dependent on Busoga. In early 1880, for example, a supposedly tributary Soga chief was condemned to death for refusing to pay ivory to the *kabaka*, who appointed the chief's son in his place. A missionary remarked that the new chief immediately "set about furnishing his Majesty with hundreds of elephant tusks"¹⁷³. Still, at the end of that year, Livinhac observed that "the Arabs do not stop asking for their ivory. His Majesty promises and never gives"¹⁷⁴. Inability to compete in the international ivory trade meant that by the beginning of the colonial

¹⁶⁷ibid.

¹⁶⁸C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1881/70 O'Flaherty to Hutchinson 18.4.81

¹⁶⁹C.M.S. G3 A5/0 1887/367 Mackay's Journal 25.6.87

¹⁷⁰C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1884/55 Mackay's Log 5.1.84

¹⁷¹C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1885/98 Mackay to Wigram ? 5.85

¹⁷²C.M.S. G3 A5/0 1886/99 Mackay to Lang 10.12.85

¹⁷³White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 1/2.4.80

¹⁷⁴White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 1/29.10.80

period Buganda was increasingly sidelined. One British official wrote in 1893 that "there has been quite a rush of traders from Tabora for Unyoro via Karagwe". One such trader had recently returned from Bunyoro "with forty frasala of ivory, as the proceeds of thirty loads taken from Tabora"¹⁷⁵. Indeed, by the early 1890s the Ganda themselves were trading guns for ivory in Busoga¹⁷⁶.

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The complexity and vitality of commerce, both regional and domestic, is clear. The importance of trade to the pre-colonial Ganda economy is beyond question. It is equally clear that the growth of long-distance trade from the late eighteenth century onward transformed commercial relations both within Buganda and between the Ganda and their neighbours. The kind of commodities demanded - chiefly slaves and ivory - brought great wealth to a number of Ganda. Yet Buganda also found itself in a potentially precarious position: the struggle to secure ivory was increasingly difficult as elephants were driven beyond the kingdom's frontiers. Moreover, ever greater numbers of slaves were required for export at a time when Buganda's military strength was being sapped by tensions and misjudgements at the centre, as we shall see in the following chapter. At the same time, Buganda had to strike the delicate balance between the export of slaves and the retention of war captives within the kingdom: this is more fully examined in Chapter 10 below. Indeed, the slave trade, in which the Ganda were enthusiastic participants, threatened long-term economic doom, as it had for a number of African societies in the pre-colonial period, a fact implicitly recognised by Mutesa himself. The threat was only effectively removed with the establishment of the Protectorate.

¹⁷⁵U.N.A. A2/1 Munworthy to Williams 1.2.93

¹⁷⁶U.N.A. A2/1 Memo by Williams 1.3.93

Examination of the development of commerce also shows that the *kabaka* did not exercise all-pervasive control over the economic lives of his subjects. Indeed, relatively free and unhindered trade was essential to a large number of ordinary Ganda producers, and in this sense Buganda had developed, by the nineteenth century, a remarkably exchange-oriented economy. This situation probably precluded the need for what might be termed 'professional traders'. We have seen, in Chapters 3 and 4, how politics and economics might be closely connected; but in the context of trade, economics and politics were almost entirely separate. As we have noted above, the *kabaka* was to some extent only the most powerful and privileged Ganda trader at the capital in the last decades of the nineteenth century. It is true that in the early 1880s Mutesa did attempt to exercise some control over local markets; by this time, too, a royal monopoly in ivory had been effected. Yet such controls achieved only very limited success, while the ivory monopoly had come about largely by default. The capital was indeed the most important centre in the kingdom, not because it was the seat of an omnipotent ruler, but because it was a commercial gateway to exciting new horizons.

It is clear, however, that war and commerce were indelibly interwoven. The failure of commercial relations often prompted military action, while military expansion could open up commercial opportunities. The attempt to control trade, and to impose favourable trading conditions, itself often led to conflict. Most obviously, the slave trade could scarcely have flourished as it did in Buganda without the military operations to fund it. In the next three chapters, we examine military developments in Buganda: it will be seen how economic or commercial considerations almost always played a significant part in Ganda expansion, whether the annexation of Buddu, or the development of a powerful canoe fleet, or expeditions south of the Kagera river. Yet this is not to ignore the importance of war which, by itself, was a critical activity in the growth of the Ganda state.

CHAPTER 6

Ganda Military Growth and Decline

War and militarism have been studied, in passing if not for their own sake, with regard to a number of pre-colonial African societies. In the southern part of the continent, the Zulu have been seen as epitomising a society organised around militaristic principles, using warfare to effect change both internally and externally. In East Africa, Mirambo and Nyungu-ya-Mawe have received similar treatment. Comparison between these societies and Buganda help shed light on the latter. Among the Zulu, or more correctly among the Mthethwa under Dingiswayo, the creation of 'age regiments' ensured that war was a way of life rather than an occasional occupation. A standing army put the Zulu on a permanent war-footing. This was not the case among the Ganda, who despite having developed an intricately-structured army never went as far as establishing permanent regiments. At the same time, the Ganda and the Zulu shared a certain parasitic character: the latter incorporated conquered peoples into their army and fleeced their districts of cattle, while the former used cattle, slaves, women and ivory as the rewards for military success and, in a more long-term context, actively sought to exploit the natural economic resources of conquered or tributary regions. As with the Ganda, indeed, the Zulu army cannot be studied in isolation: social, economic and ecological factors are critical to understanding the wars in southern Africa in the nineteenth century, and this has been persuasively argued by historians such as Guy, Cobbing and Maylam¹.

¹J.Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom* (London, 1979); J.Cobbing, 'The Mfecane as alibi: thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolompo', *Journal of African History*, 29:3 (1988) 487-519; P.Maylam, *A History of the African Peoples of South Africa* (London, 1986)

It is, however, a historian of West Africa, Robert Smith, who has written most comprehensively on pre-colonial African warfare in its many facets². Many of the questions he poses have been influential in the writing of this chapter. Smith highlighted the difficulties of analysing pre-colonial tactics, particularly with regard to the role of firearms. Guns had a longer and somewhat more varied history among the Yoruba than among the Ganda, but clearly applicable to the latter is Smith's assertion that "[t]he use of firearms influenced not only decisions on the battlefield but also, and perhaps to a greater extent, the political course of events"³. Smith also sought to clarify the terminology of war: "Skirmishes, battles, and even campaigns, are not wars but incidents comprised within a war. A war may, though rarely, be decided by a single battle, but that battle is something less than the total state of hostility within which it takes place"⁴. He also had difficulty with the fact that "European observers have often used such limited terms as 'raid', 'expedition', or 'campaign' to describe the wars of West Africa"⁵. I have used all of these terms in this chapter, as well as 'war' itself. They are, of course, terms of convenience, but I do not see that 'war' must have such a limited definition. Usually I have used 'expedition' and 'campaign' because within the context I believe they most aptly describe the nature of the attack being mounted; I would not then suggest that because I have used these expressions, the Ganda did not practise 'war'. There is, I think, some validity in Smith's assertion that "a state of general hostility between adversaries might indeed last, though with only intermittent action, for several years"⁶. I would suggest, though cautiously, that this might be applied to the relations between Buganda and Bunyoro at various stages in their histories. The question of terminology does, however, lead to one of motivation, which is why I have tried to avoid the word 'raid' as much as

²R. Smith, *Warfare and Diplomacy in Pre-Colonial West Africa* (London, 1989); R. Smith & J.F. Ade Ajayi, *Yoruba Warfare in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1971). There are also some excellent essays in T. Falola & R. Law (eds.), *Warfare and Diplomacy in Pre-Colonial Nigeria* (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1992).

³Smith & Ajayi, *Yoruba Warfare*, 20

⁴Smith, *Warfare and Diplomacy*, 41

⁵*ibid.*, 41-2

⁶*ibid.*, 42

possible, which I believe implies a more 'short-term-gain' approach to Ganda warfare than was normally the case. Nonetheless, as we shall see, the Ganda fought wars for a number of reasons, both selfish and otherwise, with both short and long-term gain in mind. The mistake must not be made of assuming that the immediate and tangible yield of a battle - for example, cattle, women and slaves - represents the final desired result, although such booty was clearly important. This was particularly true in the later nineteenth century, with the increased demand for slaves among the coastal merchants, although the argument that the Ganda fought more wars at this time to fulfil this demand is unconvincing and unsubstantiated.

Military Ethos and Motivation

The Ganda clearly incorporated a strong strand of militarism into their culture. The use of arms played an important part in the foundation myths of the kingdom, while participation in military campaigns was, by the nineteenth century, a fundamental part of male life. The extent to which war was a masculine activity is suggested by the fact that cowards or deserters were made to dress in the manner of pregnant women, or were forced to undertake work usually performed by women in the service of braver, more honoured warriors⁷. War was instrumental in Buganda's historical development. With a carefully-structured army, Buganda was able to expand steadily, taking advantage of Bunyoro's difficulties. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Buganda was the most powerful kingdom in the lacustrine region, and the Ganda had recorded their military history in various forms of martial celebration⁸.

The symbols and regalia of war played a critical role in Ganda culture. The decision to wage war was itself taken amid elaborate ceremony. One of the most important pieces of ceremonial equipment, and which also served a very practical function, was the drum *mujaguzo*. This enormous drum was beaten primarily to announce an

⁷A. Kagwa [tr. E. B. Kalibala, ed. M. M. Edel], *Customs of the Baganda* (New York, 1934) 93

⁸The militaristic overtones of the *kabaka's* coronation provide the best example of this. Newly-appointed rulers swore, for example, to fight and die for the kingdom in the event of invasion.

imminent war, and thus probably served to attract a number of warriors from the vicinity of the capital at least. Significantly, it was a general public declaration, reflecting the extent to which the Ganda regarded war as a communal activity. This in itself probably stemmed from a time in Buganda's early history when war affected ordinary people far more profoundly than it did, perhaps, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Notably, however, one indigenous source suggests that *mujaguzo* is not, relatively speaking, particularly old, dating back to the reign of *Kabaka* Mutebi in the middle of the seventeenth century⁹. It seems highly likely that drums of a similar kind existed before this time, and that Mutebi simply 'institutionalised' the practice. *Mujaguzo* was also used to announce events of national importance, such as the coronation of a new *kabaka*, or the death of an old one. It seems likely that the name *mujaguzo* was actually applied not to one drum but to a large set; one recent lexicographer defined *mujaguzo* as consisting of 93 drums, all under royal control¹⁰. The *kabaka* alone owned the means of public address, it would seem, although *ssaza* chiefs doubtless owned similar drums to convey information on a national scale. During war, drums were sources of inspiration around which soldiers could rally. On the battlefield, the drumbeat often set the tempo of the fighting. Moreover, Burton was told that the army engaged the enemy for as long as the drums which had been brought on campaign were sounded; once the drums stopped, the soldiers withdrew from the action¹¹.

The *kabaka* came to be seen as being necessarily a worthy military leader. The historical and cultural importance of this is reflected in the fact that long after military leadership had ceased to be a practical function of the *kabakaship*, rulers were nonetheless surrounded by a militaristic aura. Zimbe describes how Mutesa, toward the end of his reign, took the young Mwanga under his protection and began to

⁹B.M.Zimbe [tr.F.Kamoga], 'Buganda ne Kabaka' [c.1939] 19

¹⁰See J.D.Murphy, *Luganda-English Dictionary* (Washington, 1972) 357. The word itself comes from the verb stem *jaguzza*, to rejoice or celebrate.

¹¹R.F.Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa* (London, 1860) II, 189. Clearly, testimony of this nature should be treated with caution, Burton's information being second-hand.

promote him as his successor. Mutesa asked his chiefs, "Can't he lead an army successfully?" The chiefs answered, 'Yes, Your Lord, he certainly can do so'. The chiefs, of course, had as little idea as Mutesa himself about Mwanga's military skills, but this was irrelevant. A statement concerning Mwanga's military prowess needed to be made to indicate the young prince's suitability to succeed his father. It was a metaphor for what it meant to rule the kingdom of Buganda¹². Mwanga also had to participate in a mock battle, the *Katikiro* urging him to "Fight your enemies and conquer Buganda', for a Kingdom is always conquered not succeeded to"¹³. Later on in the ceremonies, the young *kabaka* was told to "always be brave in fighting for your country"¹⁴. Nonetheless, Mwanga was probably the first ruler not to lead an army of foreign invasion in any sense at all: even Mutesa had been known to set up camp at military headquarters and direct the campaign locally, if at a safe distance¹⁵. But the symbolism of war has continued into the twentieth century. The coronation in 1993 of *Kabaka* Mutebi II was accordingly replete with militaristic regalia and the echoes of battles past, as the commemorative booklet shows¹⁶.

There was also a spiritual dimension which bound myth and symbol together and which provided the kingdom's military adventures with a more profound, indeed extra-terrestrial, justification. In Buganda there were two gods associated with war. The more famous, and the one to which appeals for advice and assistance were more regularly made, was Kibuka. This deity apparently oversaw campaigns to the west of Buganda and against Bunyoro. Nende, believed to be the son of the lake god Mukasa, was approached on the eve of wars to the east - chiefly Busoga¹⁷ - and accordingly his temple was in Kyagwe. It is striking that the Ganda thus made a clear distinction

¹²Zimbe, 'Buganda', 83

¹³*ibid.*, 107

¹⁴*ibid.*, 109

¹⁵H.M. Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent* (London, 1878) I, Chap. XII

¹⁶See the *Coronation Special Souvenir* (Kampala, 1993)

¹⁷It should be pointed out that to talk of 'Busoga' in this context is something of a misnomer. Strictly-speaking, 'Busoga' was to a large extent a colonial invention. In a pre-colonial context, the territory east of the Nile was divided between a number of political entities, many only loosely affiliated to one another. To some degree, 'Soga' was in fact a generic term.

between, in effect, wars against Bunyoro and those against Busoga. Although the belief system was the same, two separate deities were required to deal with the needs of the different war zones¹⁸. The advice rendered by the gods was very often taken seriously and even heeded. However, there seems little doubt that often the spirit-mediums, perhaps being in touch with the kingdom's military needs and strengths, or with feelings among the kabaka and chiefs at the royal court, would tailor their celestial messages accordingly. The gods often told the chiefs what they wanted to hear, followed the prevailing wisdom, or simply pronounced common sense.

Such counsel, although usually sought, was not always followed. In 1884, for example, while leading a disastrous campaign to the east against Budama, the commander of the army was told by Nende to retreat to Buganda. The commander, not apparently noted for his strength of character, was all too keen to heed this advice, but several other chiefs in positions of command refused to countenance such an idea. As Zimbe wrote, "nobody would agree to the recommendation of returning without battle. It is impossible to do such a thing. How can the men of victorious Mutesa return at night? What shall we say if we are asked about the war? We had better be buried rather than run away"¹⁹. The god Nende had actually advised a course of action which ran contrary to the military ethos of the Ganda. The commander may well have elicited from the spirit-medium the desired response. Nevertheless, rather than expounding and upholding Buganda's military ethos, the god was seen by implication to have done a disservice to the brave warriors proud to be fighting under the colours of Mutesa. An example is thus provided of how spirit-mediums were capable of giving advice so partial and tailored to suit particular commanders that no self-respecting Ganda soldier could possibly follow it. What is also striking about this illustration is the fact that Nende's message caused such deliberation among the commanders; the gods clearly still had a certain amount of influence in the mid-

¹⁸Zimbe, 'Buganda', 84

¹⁹ibid., 85

1880s, and their counsel could not easily be dismissed. On this occasion, the problem was possibly made more complex by the fact that the overall commander favoured Nende's proclamations. Eventually, the commander did in fact flee, leaving behind a number of Ganda soldiers and chiefs. When next the enemy force attacked, the divided and severely-depleted Ganda force was badly beaten with heavy casualties inflicted. The moral dilemma had, perhaps, been the army's downfall. For the soldiers who remained, their loyalty to the kabaka and to their perceived military tradition overrode all else, including deities with dubious counsel. Mutesa later judged these men to have taken the righteous path. As Zimbe explained, the commander caused "because of his timidity, the death of so many people", and accordingly, "was fined 40 women for the Kabaka by the Katikiro Mukasa while others who had fled with him were fined a total of 200 women"²⁰. The fact that the commander could claim to have merely been following higher orders was clearly seen as irrelevant. Counsel obtained through spirit-mediums was important only insofar as it upheld Buganda's military pride and dignity.

Gods were consulted throughout the campaign and not only at its outset. Spiritual matters were probably most important on the eve of a war, but spirit-mediums were an indispensable part of the commander's entourage, and were consulted regularly on the feelings and advice of whichever god was represented as the war progressed. In addition to Kibuka and Nende, Mirim, supposedly another son of Mukasa, was of some importance. Kagwa wrote:

Mirim went to the front himself in time of war. He would go into the camp of the enemy at night and steal a warrior's spear and bring it back saying, 'Here is an enemy's weapon. I give it to you as a sign that you will win the battle tomorrow'. If he failed to steal anything, the warriors were all very much depressed and were therefore easily defeated . . .²¹

²⁰ibid., 85-6

²¹Kagwa, *Customs*, 121

The question of morale was clearly important and often connected to religion. The passage quoted here indicates how an army's performance in the field was seen to be influenced by apparently small but vital acts of considerable portent. Of course it is virtually impossible to judge to what extent this was, in practice, true; one suspects that while these acts may have frequently been performed, the relevance attached to them varied between individual warriors. This was probably particularly the case in the late nineteenth century, by which time 'traditional' or indigenous belief-systems had been thrown into flux somewhat by the arrival of new religions (although doubtless Christianity and Islam were themselves adapted by individual Ganda to meet the needs of warfare).

It is probably true, indeed, that the bonds between warfare and religion had been gradually weakened over several centuries. As Buganda became more powerful, a more pragmatic cynicism may have dictated military conduct; in all probability, the idea developed that sound strategy and superior weaponry, not the propitiation of particular gods, made for successful war-making. Religion and spiritual observances continued to play a role, but by the nineteenth century this role had declined in importance. Early in Buganda's history, there had been a clear connection between religion and war in that certain hills, scattered throughout the kingdom, had been both places of worship - where the shrines to certain deities were located - and places of sanctuary in time of foreign attack. A great many of these hills were located in Singo and Bulemezi, for several centuries the front-line *ssazas* in the intermittent struggle between Buganda and Bunyoro; but they were also found in the more central areas of Busiro, Kyadondo and Kyagwe²². It is unlikely that it was mere coincidence that these important local shrines were also last points of defence. However, as Buganda grew stronger and less prone to serious attack from without, the significance of these religious and military sanctuaries declined, although their spiritual relevance may

²²ibid., 123-4

have been relatively unaffected. Certainly the dual importance of such hills lessened over time.

The motivation behind war and indeed its very nature changed over time. Motivation is often difficult to analyse; actions are not always true indicators of motive, although they are often all that is available for close examination. Confusion concerning the motivation behind warfare is evident from some late nineteenth-century writings. John Roscoe felt qualified to declare that "[t]he hope of spoil made every man anxious to be sent on a punitive expedition"²³. Yet he was also keen - doubtless from his position as missionary - to promote the idea that all military campaigns were initiated by the kingdom's deities:

A messenger sent from the War-god to the King advocating a punitive expedition was often the first step in preparation for war. Chiefs were then sent by the King with presents to the gods, to ask their advice as to the conduct of the war and the choice of a leader. The gods would name the person who was to be chosen as general, and would send their blessing, and also some fetish by the hands of representatives who were to accompany the army; these representatives had charge of the special emblems from the temples, by which to divine, when necessary²⁴.

This may indeed have been the 'officially-espoused' system by which decisions were reached, but it is most unlikely that it had much practical significance. It is difficult to conceive of a situation in which a military organisation as structurally advanced as that of Buganda in the nineteenth century would have relied on such a whimsical method of reaching such vital decisions. Again, this is not to dismiss out of hand the role of religion but merely to place it in its proper context. Roscoe's assertion concerning the economic motive of the average soldier almost certainly has a solid

²³J. Roscoe, *The Baganda* (London, 1911) 346

²⁴*ibid.*, 348

basis in fact. Economic gain in general was an enormously influential factor in waging war, and warriors could certainly expect to reap some form of material reward for their part in a campaign, as is illustrated below. Yet material gain represents only part of the story. As we have seen from the example above concerning the disastrous war of 1884 - probably the last of Mutesa's reign - there were deeper, less tangible motivations for soldiers in the field. This was true among chiefs, and there seems little reason to doubt that the same applied among lowly 'peasant-soldiers'. Wars are rarely fought without some economic motive, of course, and this is examined in due course. It is equally rare to discover a war devoid of passion and pride. As for the Ganda who was keen to be sent on a military expedition because it meant the gathering of war booty, it is surely impossible to find a soldier who will fight for nothing. Romance, tradition and glory do not manage farms, feed children and pay rents. Some distinction should also be made between individual and collective motivation.

Recorded tradition suggests that from the earliest times Buganda faced a territorial struggle. The dominance of Bunyoro through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries meant that if Buganda was to expand, even survive, military confrontation was inevitable. Herein lay the origins of the 'modern' Ganda army, with an essentially defensive ethos: an army was required if the society was to flourish. This is, of course, simplistic: armies also have social and political roles to play. For example, soldiers may bind their loyalty to the political *status quo* or to the ruler himself, which has profound implications for the development of the society. Yet primarily, the army exists for the protection of that society; in the case of Buganda, it was born out of what might be called 'aggressive defensiveness'. At some point in Buganda's history, this defensiveness became aggression. The need to wage war was at least equalled by the desirability of doing so. During the nineteenth century, by which time Buganda had reached its greatest extent, war was still 'necessary' to maintain regional hegemony, although as we shall see there is evidence of military decline by this time.

Possibly, military activity was motivated more by political, social and economic factors in this later period; nonetheless, the need to express the military ethos, which was as old as the kingdom itself, remained.

The Expansion of Buganda's Military Power Before c.1800

One of the most important wars in Buganda's early history was that with Bunyoro under Nakibinge in the sixteenth century. In the course of the crushing defeat inflicted by the Nyoro, the Kibuka cult was born; moreover, as we have seen in Chapter 4, Ganda weapon production entered a new phase. Nakibinge is remembered as reigning through 'great' events, and one of the most important - perhaps, indeed, seminal - periods in Buganda's history. Economic and military processes were set in motion at this time which would lead to Buganda usurping Bunyoro's position as the most powerful kingdom in the northern lake region. The profound importance of Nakibinge's conflict with Bunyoro is underlined by the accession ceremonies undertaken by Mwanga in 1884. According to Zimbe, the *Mugema*, the governing chief of Busiro *ssaza*, handed to the new *kabaka* a bow and arrow, a weapon known to, but not used by, the Ganda²⁵. Mwanga was then required to stab a young Nyoro male in the chest. Zimbe explained:

This taboo has two significant points. By this the Kabaka is paying back the Banyoro who fought and killed Sekabaka Nakibinge; the new Kabaka won't fail to fight and defeat the Banyoro. The bow and arrow used were those Sekabaka Nakibinge fought with. The second aim was to encourage the Kabaka by showing he was now a grown up man who could even kill a man.²⁶

The great struggle to which Nakibinge gave his life had lodged itself in Buganda's collective memory, while the Nyoro had been identified as the 'old enemy', as it were, although it is also possible that 'Banyoro' was used as a generic term, encompassing all enemies of Buganda. The 'Banyoro' were, in any case, the *sine qua non* of Ganda

²⁵The apparent absence of the bow and arrow, and Ganda weaponry in general, is examined in Chapter 7 below.

²⁶Zimbe, 'Buganda', 111-2

militarism. It is striking too that Nakibinge is supposed to have used made use of a bow and arrow, although no other source mentions this. Some confusion may have developed over the ensuing centuries as to what the bow and arrow actually represented. Perhaps the Nyoro themselves used the weapon; it also seems likely that Kibuka and his fellow Sesse warriors may have brought bows and arrows with them in aiding Buganda²⁷.

It is probably from around 1700 that we can safely date Buganda's modern military ascendancy. The reasons for this ascendancy are not always easy to define, but certain key themes can be identified. Buganda's position in 1700 was markedly different from that in 1500. We have already noted how the kingdom gradually built up a position of relative strength. The lessons of Nakibinge's reign had clearly been learnt. One was the need for an efficient, well-organised and readily-collected army. The Ganda had also recognised the need for adequate raw materials in successfully prosecuting large-scale campaigns. Iron was clearly among the most important of these, while certain types of wood were also seen to be of great significance in the construction of spear-shafts, shields and, later, war-canoes. By the early eighteenth century, Buganda had succeeded in extending its reach toward these resources. It produced, indeed, a snowball effect: the increased accessibility of these resources fuelled military success, which in turn led, in the second half of the eighteenth century, to the capture and annexation of Buddu. Buddu contributed enormously to Buganda's war resources, and indeed its domestic economy generally.

During the eighteenth century, as Kiwanuka has argued, the *kabaka* increased his authority by expanding the *ssaza* system and by creating the *batongole* or royally-appointed chiefs²⁸. It is clear that these chiefs also had a growing military role.

²⁷Kibuka was supposedly sent by the ruler of Sesse, Wanema, to help Buganda against Bunyoro: see for example A.Kagwa [tr.&ed.M.S.M.Kiwanuka], *The Kings of Buganda* (Nairobi, 1971) 27; A.Kagwa [tr.J.Wamala], 'A Book of Clans of Buganda' [c.1972] 9-10; Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 349-50

²⁸M.S.M.Kiwanuka, *A History of Buganda* (London, 1971) 112ff

Under Mawanda in the early eighteenth century, Buganda expanded to the east, securing much of Kyagwe; Ganda influence was also strengthened to the south and south-west, particularly in Buddu. It was *kabaka* Junju, however, who capitalised on gains made in Buddu in the earlier part of the century. Again, the leading character in the Buddu drama was Luzige of the *diga* or sheep clan²⁹. He was sent to wage war "against all the people of Buddu county", and was apparently successful, as he "defeated them wholly"³⁰. Junju consolidated his control over Buddu by distributing various villages, mostly famed for their manufacture of fine barkcloth, to several of his brothers and sisters³¹.

He had planned, moreover, to link his seizure of Buddu with an annexation of Mawogola to the west, hence incorporating a huge area formerly under the sway of Bunyoro. In this, however, he was no more successful than his predecessors. Although the extension of Ganda power throughout Buddu probably placed Mawogola in some form of tributary position, formal rule - which seems to have been Junju's objective - could not be achieved. Buganda's power was thus checked in the west, and remained so until the second half of the nineteenth century when Mutesa achieved some military success against the peoples bordering Buddu³². The mass attack organised by Junju to capture the whole of Buddu was also felt much further afield. Doubtless as part of his intention to impose Buganda's authority throughout the region, Junju sent raiding parties across the Kagera river into Kiziba, and out past Mawogola against Busongora³³. Following these military operations, which probably lasted several months, Junju was able to concentrate on developing the administration of Buddu, and, more importantly, the economic exploitation of the *ssaza*. It can be seen that the incorporation of Buddu into Buganda, while largely attributed to Junju, was a gradual process spanning several decades. Nonetheless, it provides us with

²⁹'Luzige' was the title of a chief of this clan, with estates in both Butambala and Kyagwe.

³⁰Kagwa, 'Clans', 71

³¹*ibid.*, 108

³²Zimbe, 'Buganda', 16

³³Kagwa, *Kings*, 91

perhaps the most dramatic example of the expansion of Ganda power during the eighteenth century; the kingdom would not acquire so much territory so fast until the capture of the 'lost counties' under the British at the end of the nineteenth century.

As seems to have been the pattern through much of Buganda's history, the reign of a particularly aggressive *kabaka* was followed by that of a consolidator: thus, Junju was succeeded by his brother Semakokiro. Semakokiro, however, had to contend with a series of counterattacks by Bunyoro, probably in response to the recent losses of ground that kingdom had suffered at the hands of Junju. This sequence of wars would have been particularly galling for Semakokiro as they were largely instigated by his rebellious son Kakungulu. The latter fled to Bunyoro following insurrectionary activity in Buganda, and was given charge of a large army by the *mukama* of Bunyoro with which to invade Buganda. In the first of these attacks, the Nyoro penetrated much of Singo before the *Mukwenda*, as governor of that *ssaza*, could muster an army. In the initial clash, the Ganda were heavily beaten; it seems that Kakungulu's army came uncomfortably close to Buganda's core area before it was finally repulsed³⁴. Kakungulu was largely staved off for the remainder of Semakokiro's reign, although, as is shown below, he was still active during the reign of Kamanya.

Semakokiro's attention was also drawn to the south where, possibly for the first time in Buganda's history, a military expedition was dispatched in order to protect commercial interests along the increasingly active and lucrative trade routes west of Lake Victoria. (Indeed, Junju's movements in this direction may well have been connected to the same development.) When Mangagala, a trader whom Kagwa describes as the *kabaka's* 'salesman', was killed by local traders in Kiziba who had suspected him of 'cheating' in their commercial dealings, Semakokiro sent an army to the area, presumably to persuade the locals of Buganda's omnipotence. The plundering of slaves and cattle, as so often, was a by-product of the attack.

³⁴ibid., 97-8

Semakokiro had recognised the importance of importance of defending Buganda's economic interests even in areas in which he had no direct control³⁵. Among Semakokiro's other military endeavours was an attack on the area north of Bulondoganyi, which seems to have been in effect an invasion of Bugerere, a region divided roughly between Bunyoro, Busoga and Bukedi which was eventually marked as a *ssaza* of Buganda by the British. The invasion was, however, swiftly abandoned³⁶.

Although it is clearly chronologically convenient to draw a line under the reign of Semakokiro, the bulk of Kamanya's reign lying in the nineteenth rather than the eighteenth century, it is also true that with the close of the eighteenth century, a discernible 'middle period' in Buganda's history came to an end. During the preceding three centuries, Buganda achieved considerable territorial expansion. Although, as is shown in the following section, Kamanya was a warrior-*kabaka* of some repute, much of Buganda's military history during the nineteenth century is characterised by consolidation and an attempt to maintain the *status quo*. Between the reigns of Nakibinge and Semakokiro, the Ganda had developed a dynamic military policy aimed specifically at the expansion of their borders, in search of both security and economic wealth, and at replacing Bunyoro as the dominant power in the interlacustrine region. By 1800, this had largely been achieved, although Bunyoro and a host of smaller enemies were still very much present. During the nineteenth century, however, Buganda's military position gradually became less secure; the determination with which the Ganda defended their earlier gains was increasingly undermined by complacency and changes in the balance of political and military power.

³⁵*ibid.*, 100

³⁶Kagwa, 'Clans', 52

Stability and Decline in the Nineteenth Century

Because there is a relative profusion of data on Mutesa, and thus on the glorification of militarism so closely observed, it might seem as though Mutesa was one of the most militarily successful rulers in Buganda's history. He undoubtedly had many talents³⁷, but it seems unlikely that military leadership was prominent among them. He was, rather, a custodian of earlier gains, and while he appears to have fulfilled this role reasonably well, there is evidence to suggest that Buganda by the early 1880s had entered something of a military decline. In the nineteenth century, the ruler who was most successful on the battlefield was *Kabaka* Kamanya (reigned c.1790s-c.1820s); he was certainly the last of the kingdom's great 'warrior-kings'. Kamanya's reign was noted for the feats of the army, and Ganda power, if not territorial extent, may have reached its peak during this period. Kamanya's evident appetite for military adventures probably stemmed from his own struggle for power following the death of his father Semakokiro. His eventual success in what appears to have been a grim and protracted civil war was due in large part to the high pedigree of military chiefs who had supported his colours. The *Mukwenda*, a veteran of numerous campaigns, among which was the defence of Singo against Kakungulu, was one such supporter, while Kagwa also mentions Kasujju Wakayamba of the *mamba* clan as being among the 'bravest chiefs'. Kamanya's 'regiments' "also contained men who were renowned fighters". Once the civil war was won, Kamanya, recognising both his debt to these soldiers and the need for a loyal army, groomed and developed Buganda's military organisation³⁸.

Under Kamanya, there were a number of campaigns against the Soga, the *kabaka* clearly seeking to make secure, or even to advance, Buganda's eastern frontier. During this series of wars, Kamanya moved to crush both disloyalty and cowardice in the army. When a relatively junior chief, Sewankambo, brought allegations of

³⁷These talents, however, do not always lend themselves to comparison with those of earlier rulers, so different were the circumstances in which Mutesa ruled.

³⁸Kagwa, *Kings*, 103

cowardice and corruption against his commander, the *Sekibobo*, the latter was summarily dismissed and executed by an enraged Kamanya³⁹. Sewankambo was the beneficiary of the affair, as indeed he may have anticipated, and was promptly promoted to lead an army against Busongora⁴⁰. This campaign was, however, ill-timed: not long after the army's departure to the west, Kakungulu, Kamanya's brother and the scourge of Semakokiro's reign, appeared on the horizon once more at the head of a Nyoro army. Before the Ganda could mobilise, Kakungulu had pillaged a district of the kingdom and withdrawn safely⁴¹. He later repeated this success, attacking and pillaging an area of Bulondoganyi, killing a number of Ganda in the process. Again, the Ganda army arrived on the scene too late. Kamanya's response was to strengthen the river port of Bulondoganyi by establishing *batongole* there. The precise role of this garrison is unclear, although in the context it appears to have been of a primarily military nature. This seems to be the earliest reference to a *kabaka* setting up a permanent military post, and suggests that the process of military reform during the nineteenth century was initiated by Kamanya.

Notably, Kamanya did not launch a retaliatory attack on Bunyoro but instead dispatched Sewankambo, who had by this time established himself as Buganda's premier military commander, to attack the Soga. This campaign was clearly regarded as being of great urgency: there was "a concerted campaign throughout the country to recruit as many people for the war as possible". This was most likely to have been during the early or mid-1820s: we are told that a young prince named Suna participated in some way⁴². A prolonged and bitter conflict, it concluded with the defeat of the Ganda, the latter suffering the ultimate humiliation of having their war

³⁹ibid., 104

⁴⁰ibid., 105

⁴¹ibid., 105

⁴²ibid., 105. It is conceivable that the Soga were in league with Kakungulu and the Nyoro at this stage; as is shown below, we know that they were allied to Kakungulu later on. Kamanya may have therefore attacked to the east in the belief that the Soga were softer targets than the Nyoro. See also D.W.Cohen, *Womunafu's Bunafu: a study of authority in a nineteenth-century African community* (Princeton, 1977) 75-7

regalia stolen. Kamanya was soon on the offensive again, however, and once more Sewankambo led an apparently enormous army, being described by Kagwa as consisting of the 'whole of Buganda', or *Obuganda bwonna*. The scale of the conscription was clearly unusual, and suggests the importance attached by the Ganda to the threat posed by the Nyoro-Soga alliance. On this occasion the Ganda were successful, the Soga capitulating to Sewankambo's forces. Once more we are told in Kagwa's *Kings* that this marked the end of Soga resistance, but this was clearly not the case, as subsequent events were to prove; rather, the Soga chiefs periodically agreed to acknowledge Buganda's hegemony and pay tribute, but this may be seen as a short-term measure to provide relief from Ganda incursions. The Ganda, moreover, seemed content to accept these limited overtures⁴³. Buganda's inability to impose a long-term settlement on the Soga was clear by the early nineteenth century; even as Kamanya was building Ganda military power to its zenith, it was plain that there were limits to that power.

Shortly after the events described above, the Soga were on the war-path again, this time allying themselves to the roving Kakungulu. Although Kamanya sent scouts to ascertain the positions of the enemy forces, he declined to launch an attack, perhaps indicating that he did not take the so-called 'rebellion' very seriously; it certainly seem as though Kamanya was reluctant to pursue his wayward brother⁴⁴. However, a number of campaigns were later fought against the Soga, and against Buruli, bordering Lake Kyoga. There then ensued what Kagwa describes as "many peaceful years", during which Kamanya presumably sought to consolidate his successes. His last major military outing was probably against Buruli once more, and Bukedi or Lango. During this war, canoes were carried in pieces northward to Lake Kyoga, an aspect of Ganda warfare more fully examined below⁴⁵. The Ganda were ultimately

⁴³Kagwa, *Kings*, 106

⁴⁴*ibid.*, 106-7

⁴⁵See Chapter 8.

highly successful⁴⁶. There was an interesting aftermath to this war in that Sewankambo, the veteran army commander, faced popular outrage because he had ordered canoes to be dragged overland, thus breaking the back of the *lubaale* Mukasa. Kamanya withdrew favour from Sewankambo, who was plundered of his war-spoils, thus ending an illustrious career which had spanned much of Kamanya's reign⁴⁷.

Kagwa offers what seems to be an apt summary of Kamanya's reign:

[Kamanya] was a brave man and desired to expand his kingdom. He therefore organised several expeditions which followed one another in rapid succession so that the men were always in the field. He himself did not take part in the fighting. His wars came to be known as 'restless warfare', because the men were not permitted to rest and even children of fourteen were required to carry each his two spears and shield to war. By this means he widened the bounds of his kingdom, which was pressed in by the Banyoro . . .⁴⁸

Kamanya's reign, like that of Nakibinge some three hundred years earlier, witnessed something of a military watershed. This was a period in which the Ganda shifted from having to fight wars to survive to fighting them aggressively and on their own terms. 'Restless warfare' did not involve the establishment of a standing army, but clearly an army was permanently active for a substantial part of Kamanya's reign. The stress laid upon 'restless warfare' by Kagwa suggests its novelty in the early nineteenth century; the youth of many of the combatants was also probably without precedent. It can therefore be argued that Kamanya established Buganda as the major military power in the region, building on the territorial achievements of his eighteenth-century predecessors and in effect ensuring that the kingdom would never again be seriously threatened by invasion. When an undeniably superior military presence made itself felt in the approach of Europeans, Buganda, while attempting to take control of the new technology, ultimately adapted itself in other ways to ensure

⁴⁶Kagwa, *Kings*, 109-10

⁴⁷*ibid.*, 110-11

⁴⁸Kagwa, *Customs*. 43

that it would not be conquered by armed force. This in itself was a revolutionary approach to external circumstances, and is in fact a different story altogether. Yet it symbolised the kingdom's absolute determination to secure its position: Kamanya may be seen as the embodiment of this spirit.

Kamanya's son and successor Suna was less of a warrior. One indigenous account describes him as being "a peaceful and able ruler", and though also courageous, "he was excessively interested in women"⁴⁹. 'Peaceful' is, of course, a relative term, and wars were regularly fought under Suna, most frequently against the Soga⁵⁰. Another account lists campaigns against Gambalagala (the Luganda term for the area around the foothills of the Ruwenzoris, and thus a long-distance campaign), Bukedi and Busongora⁵¹. Like Kamanya, Suna faced the perceived or real problem of cowardice in the army in the early part of his reign. During the war against Busongora, cowardice was deemed to be rife among the chiefs; the accused were forced to drink doctored beer, though the details of the test are unclear. Those who failed it, however, were condemned as cowards⁵².

Suna's reign was important in a military sense in that it witnessed the introduction of two new types of weaponry⁵³. The first was indigenous or at least African in origin, namely the small, light spear which appears to have been standard equipment from around the 1830s onward. It first appeared during preparations for an attack on Busagala, and was a great success during that campaign⁵⁴. Its influence on Ganda warfare is unclear, but by its very nature it probably facilitated closer, hand-to-hand combat, and may have been used in following up an initial assault. The weapon sounds strikingly similar to the Zulu stabbing spear which had so forceful an impact

⁴⁹ibid., 50-1

⁵⁰ibid., 51

⁵¹Kagwa, *Kings*, 115-6

⁵²ibid., 116

⁵³See also Chapter 7 below.

⁵⁴Kagwa, *Kings*, 117

on south-eastern Africa in the 1830s and 1840s, but it seems doubtful that such an influence would have reached the Ganda so early. The missionary Ashe recorded that "after a Baganda army had been annihilated by the naked Bakede, who only use the assegai or light throwing spear, of which they carry several, the Baganda set to work to make spears like those of the Bakede"⁵⁵. This is intriguing, though uncorroborated, testimony; in any case, the weapon described by Ashe sounds quite different from that mentioned by Kagwa. The second weapon - the firearm - was to have a much more profound long-term effect. It was probably introduced by coastal merchants in 1844. Within a short time, at least three of these early merchants - Kagwa names them as Muina, Lukabya and Sitokisi - participated in a campaign against Bunyoro, having four guns between them. It is unclear whether they volunteered their services, or whether Suna requested their assistance, but the potential power of the gun was clearly demonstrated. The campaign was successful: the Nyoro were heavily defeated and much booty was seized, and Kagwa states that this was accomplished "with the aid of their four guns"⁵⁶. As we shall see, the acquaintance of the Ganda with the firearm was to transform, slowly but irrevocably, their military organisation, and not for the better.

Another military innovation under Suna which coincided approximately with, and was initially unconnected to, the introduction of the firearm was the creation of new *batongole*⁵⁷. The two developments were later to become closely linked. Suna is credited with the establishment of a number of new *batongole*, or chieftaincies directly answerable to the *kabaka*. The nature of these posts is not made entirely clear in the indigenous sources, but in addition to their civil and political functions, they appear to have had a military dimension⁵⁸. While it is again unlikely that this represented the establishment of a standing army, it clearly increased the manpower

⁵⁵R. Ashe, *Two Kings of Uganda* (London, 1889) 297-8

⁵⁶Kagwa, *Kings*, 123

⁵⁷For the conventional analysis of this development, see for example M. Southwold, *Bureaucracy and Chiefship in Buganda* (Kampala, 1961)

⁵⁸Kagwa, *Kings*, 124

which the *kabaka* had at his disposal. Suna may well have created these chieftaincies to enlarge the pool of potential soldiers, but the most immediate outcome was the growth of a class of chiefs who regarded themselves as potentially powerful military figures. During one campaign against the Soga, the men of the *Ekitongole Ekisigula* raided a small island without the *kabaka's* prior knowledge. Suna was enraged by this unsanctioned act of plunder and executed many of those involved, thereafter launching his own attack on the same island⁵⁹. This episode indicates the military nature of these new offices. It also suggests that Suna had created chiefs who were either more powerful than he had intended, or at least believed themselves to be to some extent independent of royal authority.

There appears to have been a period of relative peace, possibly in the late 1840s, after which, and in the latter years of his reign, Suna undertook some of his more notable military expeditions. Among the minor campaigns were attacks on Sesse and several of the islands just off the shores of Buganda and Busoga. It was no coincidence that these were carried out by a *kabaka* noted for his interest in developing the Ganda navy and, simultaneously, long-distance lake trade routes. These themes are dealt with below⁶⁰: here it is sufficient to state that with the arrival of the first coastal merchants in Buganda and their increasing presence south of the lake, the 1840s saw the beginning of a period in which water-borne communications took on a particular importance. Suna recognised this, and his campaigns along and off Buganda's lake shore reflected a concerted effort to secure Ganda control of the north end of the lake and, thereby, of lake traffic. These campaigns, taken as a whole, are a good example of how war was expected to bring both short and long-term gain: as slaves and other booty were acquired, the Ganda were attempting to improve their overall economic and strategic position. During the latter stages of his reign, Suna was increasingly preoccupied with taking advantage of the south-bound trade routes, and, like

⁵⁹*ibid.*, 128

⁶⁰See Chapter 8.

Semakokiro against the Ziba half a century earlier, was prepared to use military force to secure Buganda's interests. One such expedition was against Koki, where commercial interests were of the utmost importance. Suna apparently led the army in person. The campaign yielded much livestock⁶¹, but undoubtedly its primary function was to remind the peoples of the western shore of the lake that Buganda aimed to be paramount in the region and that the *kabaka* was capable of punishing anyone who appeared to forget this.

Another significant campaign, in the mid-1850s, was motivated ostensibly by sheer avarice. A report reached the capital "that a Muzong'ola called Kataba had a palace with all the porches made of copper". Suna dispatched an army - actually to Kiziba, on the south bank of the Kagera river, and not, as one might assume, to Busongora - apparently against the advice of his chiefs who feared the effects of famine and disease which were then prevalent in the kingdom. Indeed, the attack failed, according to Kagwa, largely, it seems, because of the soldiers' hunger⁶². Stanley's version is somewhat different: he relates that "Kytawa, the mighty king of Uzongora" was eventually defeated by Suna⁶³. Kagwa's telling of the tale is clearly allegorical. Copper may be seen as a symbol of coastal trade, the effects of which had clearly begun to be felt among the states west of Lake Victoria, such as Kiziba. Suna's attack may have been an attempt either to warn the Ziba not to partake in the commercial system which he himself sought to control, or at least to demonstrate to the agents of coastal commerce that it would be better for all concerned if they dealt only with him. Successive Ganda rulers could not rid themselves of the fear that this new imported wealth might be shared between weak and strong.

⁶¹Kagwa, *Kings*, 131-2

⁶²*ibid.*, 134-5. The incidence of famine is noteworthy in itself, and clearly illustrates the obvious point that the success of the army was as dependent on an ample harvest in the soldiers' homesteads as on the quality of their weaponry or fighting spirit.

⁶³Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 375-6. It is unclear why Kiziba and Busongora are confused in these accounts: see for example Kiwanuka's notes in Kagwa, *Kings*, 100

Suna died during or shortly after this campaign, and it fell to Mutesa to ensure that Buganda's interests were protected in the context of the new world advancing from the south and, to a lesser extent, from the north. As we have already noted, many more military encounters are recorded for Mutesa's reign than for any reign previously. It is possible that this accounts for the higher proportion of wars between the 1860s and 1880s which seem to have ended in failure, but this phenomenon is nevertheless difficult to ignore. Mutesa undoubtedly conducted enough successful campaigns to maintain Buganda's position in the region: in the early years of his reign, these included wars with Bunyoro, Buruli and Busoga. Yet the number of failed expeditions suggests that Buganda was beginning to overreach itself. Early in Mutesa's reign, he dispatched an army to aid the ruler of Karagwe, Rumanika, in fighting a rebellion. The details are obscure, and Rumanika was clearly ultimately victorious as he ruled Karagwe until 1878, but not before the Ganda force was defeated and ejected from the country⁶⁴. In the mid-1860s, the Ganda also suffered a series of defeats at the hands of the Soga, although in the last of these campaigns the former achieved some success⁶⁵.

Over the next few years, Mutesa did have more success, notably in an attack on Busagala, reportedly led by the *kabaka* himself⁶⁶, and his intervention in the Nyoro civil war, in which he backed the winning side led by Kabarega⁶⁷. Yet two wars in the 1870s appear to tell a different story. The first can be seen in the context of Mutesa's recurrent attacks on Koki and his attempt to secure influence in Karagwe: these represented an on-going effort to strengthen Buganda's control of trade routes both on the lake and to the west of it. An expedition was planned against Buzinza, at the south end of the lake. The army, however, "stopped on the way because it was too large and therefore it could not get enough food to eat"⁶⁸. There were clearly

⁶⁴Kagwa, *Kings*, 153

⁶⁵*ibid.*, 156

⁶⁶*ibid.*, 158

⁶⁷*ibid.*, 159

⁶⁸*ibid.*, 163

immense logistical problems in the movement of large numbers of soldiers over long distances. They must have been particularly galling to Mutesa who, desperate to extend Buganda's control over an ever larger and more lucrative area, was repeatedly frustrated. The development of the navy, examined in greater detail below⁶⁹, represented an attempt to compensate for military failure on land.

The second war was that so dramatically described by Stanley, against the island of Buvuma in 1875. The explorer's account was written with literary effect in mind, but even taken as a rough impression, it makes sorry reading from Buganda's standpoint. Here was a war personally overseen by Mutesa, involving at the most conservative estimate several thousand Ganda warriors, which ended in ignominy for the most powerful state in the region. While it is true that Buvuma did eventually offer to pay tribute, the manner in which this was done suggests that they were by no means a beaten people. The Vuma, over a period of several weeks, successfully repelled wave after wave of well-armed Ganda, the latter led by some of the most prominent military chiefs in the kingdom⁷⁰. Mutesa's reaction to continued failure, even allowing for Stanley's dramatic style of reporting, betrays an angry and almost resigned frustration, in a speech redolent with poignant rhetoric:

'Wherein have I been unkind to you, that you will not fight for me, for my slaves who were sent to Usoga have returned saying there was not a man but either had joined me or had already joined the Wavuma? Who gave you those clothes that you wear? Who gave you those guns you have? Was it not I? Did Suna my father give his chiefs such fine things as I give? No; yet they fought for him . . . Am I not Kabaka? Is this not Uganda, as well as my capital? Have I not my army here? And you, Katekiro, were you not a peasant before I dressed you and set you up as chief of Uddu? And you, Chambarango, who made you a chief? And you, Mkwenda, and you, Kimbugwe, Kitunzi,

⁶⁹The navy and its limitations are examined in Chapter 8.

⁷⁰Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 304ff

Kaeema, Kangau, Kagu, speak, was it not Mtesa who made you chiefs? Were you princes, that you came to be made chiefs, or peasants whom it was my pleasure to make chiefs? . . .⁷¹

This is a telling oration. It may be that Buganda's inability to overwhelm Buvuma was not, in the grand scheme of things, very important, but the island continued to be a thorn in Buganda's side through the 1870s and 1880s. Moreover, it is clear that there were limitations to Buganda's military potency. As noted above, these limitations had been realised several decades before, when the Soga blocked further advance to the east, but in the second half of the nineteenth century they were particularly relevant and, indeed, more obvious. The tactics of blending defensiveness with sporadic guerrilla activity which characterised Buvuma's soldiery in 1875 and on other occasions in which the Vuma clashed with the Ganda lead one to ask questions about Buganda's own tactics and military organisation. The Ganda army may have become, in a sense, *too* well-organised, burdened by hierarchy and obsessed with structural detail. It is certainly surprising that a mightily regimented army could not defeat a comparatively tiny force consisting, essentially, of fishermen. A less cumbersome Ganda army might have succeeded. Similarly, the army sent to attack Buzinza was the product of an ambitious plan, but the plan failed to some extent because of the army's unwieldiness. It is worth noting that in Mirambo and his force of Nyamwezi, we have an example of a smaller army, well-structured but operating in smaller units, covering an arguably far wider area than Buganda ever managed to do. The same might be said of Mirambo's contemporary, Nyungu ya Mawe⁷².

It is true that the Ganda continued to achieve success with smaller armies and, possibly, in more prolonged campaigns, although they were also skilled in swift

⁷¹ibid., 330

⁷²See A.D.Roberts, 'The Nyamwezi' and A.Shorter, 'The Kimbu', in A.D.Roberts (ed.), *Tanzania Before 1900* (Nairobi, 1968) 96-116, 117-150

strikes. The war against Busoga and Buvuma in 1879 appears to have involved at the most some ten thousand soldiers - considerably lower than Stanley's estimate for the 1875 war of from one to two hundred thousand - and lasted at least six months, during which slaves were sent back from the battle area⁷³. Indeed, the events of 1879 prompted the French missionary Livinhac to declare that hardly a week went by without an army returning with the spoils of war⁷⁴.

The successes of the late 1870s - the campaigns against Busoga, and the 'strike force' sent to Ukerewe - spurred Mutesa on once more to greater things. The army returned from Busoga in September 1879. Within four months, another force had been dispatched, this time apparently to Rwanda⁷⁵, an expedition which in terms of distance alone was a major undertaking. It involved "large quantities of warriors" and its purpose, according to the missionary Pearson, was "to bring back cattle", although it seems there had been a diplomatic dispute between the two kingdoms⁷⁶. Two months later, Pearson reported news "of the utter rout of the Waganda and that the remnant of the army was on its way back despoiled rather than bringing back cattle & slaves"⁷⁷. It is unclear whether the Ganda actually reached Rwanda; indeed, few wars between Buganda and Rwanda are recorded⁷⁸. Yet this was clearly an ambitious and long-distance campaign which had failed miserably. As news of the calamity filtered in, Pearson was moved to write that "the prestige of Waganda warfare has begun to fade"⁷⁹. It would have been clear to Mutesa that Buganda had again overreached itself.

⁷³C.M.S. CA6/010/48 Felkin's Journal 14.2.79 & 22.4.79; CA6/019/14 Pearson to Wright 10.3.79; CA6/019/15 Pearson to Wright 29.9.79

⁷⁴White Fathers: C13/1 Livinhac to Lavigerie 2.7.79

⁷⁵C.M.S. CA6/019/18 Pearson to Wright 7.1.80

⁷⁶ibid.

⁷⁷C.M.S. CA6/019/19 Pearson to Wright 5.3.80

⁷⁸The attack by the Ganda in 1880 is not mentioned in the major works on Rwanda: see A.Kagame, *Les Milices du Rwanda Précolonial* (Brussels, 1963); J.Vansina, *L'Evolution du Royaume Rwanda des Origines à 1900* (Tervuren, 1962)

⁷⁹As note 95.

These set-backs did not, however, slow down the frequency of military expeditions during the early 1880s. Indeed, the ailing *kabaka*, in the twilight of his reign, may have actually increased the number of campaigns in search of popularity and, perhaps, security at home. Zimbe attests to this:

[Mutesa] understood people were tired of him and therefore that it was possible to assassinate him. He saw that there were many people, that the princes could form an army, that the men in the homes of his chiefs could do so too. To decrease these numbers he decided to wage several wars and in this way put off the hatred they bore him by providing them with an occupation. Thus, 5 wars were carried out against Ankole, Bunyoro, Busoga, Bukedi, Toro and Kalagwe . . .⁸⁰

Zimbe suggests that this policy proved unsuccessful as "his men were always victorious and returned without loss of numbers". The veracity of this last assertion is open to serious doubt: missionary accounts suggest that in the early 1880s, the Ganda met with extreme difficulties in their intervention in the politics of Karagwe, while heavy defeat was inflicted by the Nyoro⁸¹. But Zimbe's earlier comments are telling. Mutesa was faced with increasing failure abroad; the resultant restlessness at the royal court may also have been connected to the *kabaka's* prolonged illness and his perceived inability to take control of the new influences penetrating his kingdom. He was not only trying to divert attention and energies away from home; he was making an increasingly desperate search for some great success abroad which would rekindle respect for and loyalty to the *kabaka*.

Mutesa feared what were perceived to be growing pockets of alternative authority, in the form of ambitious young men armed with guns, the weapon which symbolised power, freedom, adventure and escape from inhibiting tradition. Guns did not have much practical influence before c. 1890, but on another level they may be seen to have

⁸⁰Zimbe, 'Buganda', 82

⁸¹C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1883/104 O'Flaherty to Wigram 19.6.83

had only a detrimental effect on Buganda's military performance. Ironically, perhaps, soldiers armed with spears and shields had rarely been anything other than loyal to the *kabaka*; by the early 1880s, many younger chiefs, if not ordinary 'peasant-soldiers', were acquiring firearms. Ownership of guns, originally the result of royal favour, bred arrogance and a lack of regard for traditional authority. Moreover, the traits of personal courage and reputation as a warrior were being increasingly ignored in the 1880s. The men who formed the military elite now had guns rather than spears; yet this 'elite' had acquired their weaponry through court intrigue, patronage, as well as through commerce, not through proving their valour and worth in the tradition of Kibuka, previously the essence of the Ganda military ethos. This trend undoubtedly weakened the calibre of the Ganda army, quite apart from the fact that few knew how to use the gun efficiently, and that the guns themselves were often sub-standard⁸².

The proposed attack on Mirambo clearly shows that Buganda's projects were now greater than its ability to carry them out. The plan was stimulated by the perceived need for ever greater control of East Africa's trade network. The missionary Mackay, who also spent time among the Nyamwezi, believed that such an attack would probably come to grief: Mutesa's soldiers were acquainted neither with the territory south of the lake, nor the strength of Mirambo's forces. Undoubtedly, these were among the considerations which ultimately led Mutesa to abandon the plan. In July 1880, Pearson learnt that an expedition against Mirambo was "in active preparation", and that the *Katikiro* had been appointed to lead it, joined by "all the great chiefs". The East African Arab community was also to play a major role. A mammoth operation was envisaged, with the Ganda in league with the Arabs of Unyanyembe, the latter intending to attack Mirambo from the south and east⁸³. Antipathy toward Mirambo among both the Ganda and the Arabs stemmed from his stranglehold on key trade routes between Karagwe and the coast. Ill-feeling dated back to 1871, when the

⁸²See Chapter 7 below.

⁸³C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1881/22 Pearson to Mackay 29.7.80

Nyamwezi warlord had made his presence felt west of Unyanyembe. There is no evidence to suggest that an attack on the scale of that proposed in 1880 was envisaged nearly ten years earlier, but in 1872 Livingstone, who was then at Tabora, recorded that soldiers had arrived from Buganda to aid the Arabs against Mirambo⁸⁴. Reports of similar activity reached the coast, prompting one official to write that "the King of Uganda is dispatching a force of 17,000 men to assist in carrying on the war against Mirambo"⁸⁵. But the grand assault planned in 1880-1 proved to be little more than bellicose rhetoric. Mutesa could take comfort from the fact that Mirambo had made strenuous efforts to placate him. Several years earlier, Stanley had witnessed Mirambo's ambassadors "kneel and tender their allegiance" to the *kabaka*⁸⁶, while towards the end of 1881 it was reported that the Nyamwezi leader "was willing to accept Mutesa's Brotherhood"⁸⁷. This did not disguise the fact that the proposed attack on Mirambo ended up looking like a gigantic bluff. Buganda was no more capable of subduing Mirambo's power than that of Rwanda.

It may seem apt, therefore, that Mutesa's last major campaign ended in a rout. The *kabaka*, close to death, sent out an army against the 'Kedi'⁸⁸, beyond Lake Kyoga, although the army itself was bitterly divided over the predictions of the spirit mediums that the campaign would end in disaster. While a number of warriors remained loyal to the *kabaka*, the commander and several other chiefs abandoned the attack, severely depleting the force. The Kedi attacked and killed a large number of Ganda, including several of the remaining chiefs, and the expedition collapsed in failure⁸⁹. In the middle of 1884, the missionary Ashe, presumably describing the

⁸⁴H. Waller (ed.), *The Last Journals of David Livingstone in Central Africa* (London, 1874) II, 226-9

⁸⁵*British Parliamentary Papers relating to the Slave Trade* (reprinted by Irish Universities Press) Vol. 54 First Section. Prideaux to Derby 21.5.74

⁸⁶R. Stanley & A. Neame (eds.), *The Exploration Diaries of H.M. Stanley* (London, 1961) 71

⁸⁷C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1882/14 O'Flaherty to Wigram 25.12.81

⁸⁸The term 'Kedi' probably refers to the people of either Lango or Teso. As Kiwanuka points out, the Ganda tended to use descriptions such as 'Bakedi', 'Basoga' and 'Banyoro' indiscriminately: see Kiwanuka's notes in Kagwa, *Kings*, 98

⁸⁹Zimbe, 'Buganda', 85-6

same conflict, reported that a Ganda war party had been "cut to pieces"⁹⁰. This is confirmed by O'Flaherty's description of a campaign in July 1884, in which a "large army" was sent in support of the Soga chief Wakoli "to pillage the Basoga & the Bakedi not subject to him", an occurrence apparently not uncommon. Initially successful, the Ganda were attacked on the way back, laden "with much spoil & slaves", by a Kedi force. The result was that "[s]ix chiefs & 46 subchiefs & many, many of the King's pages & innumerable Bakopi or peasants were killed". O'Flaherty was happy to announce that he had dissuaded Mutesa from launching a revenge attack on Christian grounds⁹¹; the *kabaka* was probably even happier to use the *muzungu's* arguments as an excuse. Mutesa lived long enough to punish the commander for his 'timidity'; but, as Zimbe tells us, "[t]his was the last war of Mutesa the conqueror for his illness became worse and soon he died"⁹². The description used by Zimbe is certainly a misnomer. Mutesa had presided over a decline, albeit gradual and often almost imperceptible; but Buganda's position was weaker in 1884 than it had been in 1857, the year Mutesa had succeeded Suna. Miti was closer to the mark than Zimbe when he wrote: "There were also a number of military expeditions in [Mutesa's] last years, not all of which were victories, though in the main they sustained Buganda's authority among surrounding territories"⁹³.

A notable aspect of Mutesa's reign was the relative infrequency of military engagements between Buganda and Bunyoro. Since the latter years of Suna's reign, Buganda's military preoccupations had drifted southward, despite the presence of the Egyptians to the north. Out of 25 references to wars by missionaries between 1878 and 1883, for example, only three relate to Bunyoro. This is in stark contrast to Kagwa's writings, which are replete with references to wars with Bunyoro during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This comparison is purely impressionistic,

⁹⁰C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1884/111 Ashe to Lang ? 6.84

⁹¹C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1884/115 O'Flaherty to Wigram ? 7.84

⁹²Zimbe, 'Buganda', 86

⁹³J.Miti, 'A History of Buganda' [c.1938] I, 224

but it does further suggest that Buganda was attempting to assert itself to the south as long-distance commerce expanded. Relations between the two kingdoms were, however, in perpetual flux during the 1870s and 1880s, largely because of the shared fear of the foreign power approaching from the north. At the end of 1879, Mutesa had declared himself ready to stand alongside Kabarega in order to expel the Sudanese from Mruli⁹⁴, although in the end Kabarega appears to have achieved this by himself. Within a few months in 1880, Kabarega had wanted to launch a massive attack on Buganda, then had requested Buganda's assistance and even shelter, which Mutesa had promised to provide. Mutesa had long feared the armed presence of the Egyptians and Sudanese to the north, even though, in true Machiavellian style, he had employed a number of them as drill-instructors. In 1882, reports abounded that the route north to Lado was closed due to the 'constant wars' between the Nyoro and the Sudanese⁹⁵; Mutesa must have listened to these reports with growing apprehension.

From the end of Mutesa's reign onward, however, there appears to have been a resurgence of conflict with Bunyoro: Kabarega may have detected that Buganda was weaker than it had been for several decades, while taking advantage of the fact that a young and inexperienced *kabaka* had just taken power. During the 1886-88 period, a number of particularly bloody encounters with Bunyoro were reported; for the Ganda, these were at best often inconclusive. In 1886, Lourdel, who received his information from the 'readers' who frequently participated in these wars, noted that Bunyoro was becoming more powerful and would soon be able to hold its own against Buganda⁹⁶. This betrays, perhaps, the fears of the soldiers themselves. In mid-1887, there were rumours that Mwanga was considering proposing an alliance with Kabarega, with the intention of attacking Stanley who was then leading the expedition to 'rescue' Emin Pasha⁹⁷. It is difficult to know whether there was any

⁹⁴White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 1/19.12.79

⁹⁵White Fathers: C14/130 Lourdel to his brother 4.5.82

⁹⁶White Fathers: C14/64 Lourdel to Levesque 28.6.86

⁹⁷White Fathers: C14/178 Lourdel to Supérieur-Général 1.7.87

truth behind these rumours and counter-rumours. Joint action never materialised, however, and Kabarega himself vacillated for some time during the Ganda 'religious wars' before finally deciding to send armed support to Kalema, the *kabaka* installed by the 'Muslim' party of Buganda, in 1890. This was a reversion to the pre-colonial device of supporting one side against another in a neighbouring kingdom's internal strife, as Mutesa had done when Kabarega himself was fighting for power 20 years earlier⁹⁸.

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Suna's policy of creating military chieftainships may have in time led to tensions within the autocratic structure. A system which had been devised to strengthen the position of the *kabaka* actually served to challenge it. Mutesa and Mwanga both favoured the 'militarisation' of court pages; the approval lavished on these young men, and the fact that they were equipped with guns, led to the creation of a class of military chiefs who considered their own authority to be paramount. To some extent this system can be seen to have reached its logical conclusion under Mwanga, who in the late 1880s found himself caught between several well-armed chiefs and their followings who happened to be divided along religious lines. This is examined in greater detail in the following chapter. We also now turn our attention to the ways in which the army was broadly organised, and how these altered during the second half of the nineteenth century. One of the most important influences for change was the firearm, but indigenous forms of weaponry remained common: this too needs to be examined.

⁹⁸White Fathers: C14/192 Lourdel to Supérieur-Général 25.1.90

CHAPTER 7

Developments in Organisation, Tactics and Weaponry

In the previous chapter, I have attempted to outline a basic chronology in terms of key wars and general trends. This chapter is an examination of the structure of the army, its tactics and weaponry, and the ways in which it was recruited. I also return to several themes alluded to above, for example the development of a class of chiefs and pages equipped with firearms who came to be seen as the 'new elite', and who can also be studied in the context of the growth of a royal bodyguard. These themes, as well as the impact of the firearm, are critical to our understanding of Ganda military development in the nineteenth century. Other aspects of military organisation lend themselves less easily to the charting of change over time, due to the silence of the relevant sources, most of which tend to depict the army's structure as static.

The basic mechanism of recruitment through regional chiefs probably dates back to the kingdom's foundation. It seems logical, then, that as the *kabaka* assumed ever greater political control, the concept of a 'supraregional' army, marching under the colours of regional chiefs but with the *kabaka* at its head, developed accordingly. Regions within the *ssaza* system remained the basic units of military organisation, but the increasing authority of the *kabaka* ensured coherence and unity of purpose. This system had reached a peak of efficiency by the middle of the nineteenth century. It is possible that at one time the *kabaka* commanded his own 'private' army; a royal bodyguard had certainly existed since before 1800. During the nineteenth century, this bodyguard was developed by both Mutesa and Mwanga and seems to have been merged with the growing number of 'armed pages' prevalent at the capital. It is important to see these men as distinct from the military chiefs who, in times of peace, held major political positions, often as *ssaza* governors. These belonged to the longer-standing military establishment. The increasing preoccupation with firearms;

the lavish favour poured upon young and usually militarily-inexperienced pages; and the consequent rivalry between them and the more professional war chiefs were factors in Buganda's declining military competence immediately prior to the colonial period. The *kabaka's* ability to appoint chiefs who would be loyal to him seems to have served Buganda well in the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Ironically, this system would ultimately serve to weaken the kingdom's military constitution as loyalty to the *kabaka* was increasingly lauded above military professionalism.

There was no standing army in pre-colonial Buganda¹, and thus the size of armies varied considerably. Depending on the scale of the expedition, they usually numbered several thousand, although contemporary reports often offer more extravagant estimates. In the mid-1850s, for example, Burton was told by his Arab informants that the Ganda army numbered "at least 300,000 men"². Buganda's population could in theory have yielded such a figure, but it is extremely unlikely that an army of this size ever operated. Stanley was told that Mutesa had once sent 100,000 men against Busongora to the west³. This again sounds exaggerated, although the idea that the Ganda army was relatively large in an interlacustrine context is effectively conveyed. The largest first-hand estimate was made, again, by Stanley who, on the eve of the war against Buvuma in August 1875, reckoned that Mutesa had mustered a force of 150,000 men⁴. The desire for dramatic effect undoubtedly prompted Stanley to suggest such an improbable figure. It was estimated, however, that Mutesa's army of 125,000 had been bolstered by "quotas furnished by Karagwe, Uzongora, Ukedi, Usoga, Sesse, and the islands of the lake", these totalling around 25,000 men⁵. The extent to which Ganda armies were

¹This is true at least in terms of the 'rank and file', although the growing number of armed pages based in and around the capital in the later nineteenth century might be considered as such.

²R.F.Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa* (London, 1860) II, 189

³N.R.Bennett (ed.), *Stanley's Despatches to the 'New York Herald'* (Boston, 1970) 266, 271

⁴H.M.Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent* (London, 1878) I, 304

⁵*ibid.*, 306

strengthened by 'foreign battalions' is unclear; it may have been a common enough practice, although the collaboration of some of the states mentioned by Stanley seems unlikely.

The soldiers based at the capital, whose primary role was the defence of the *kabaka*, were distinct from the fighting army. A royal bodyguard had probably existed since the Kintu period, and the importance and size of the bodyguard undoubtedly grew as the *kabaka's* authority increased. During the nineteenth century a police force of sorts developed from the bodyguard, its role being defined to some extent by external influences. Burton mentions the reported presence of "2000 guards armed only with staves" surrounding the hall in which the coastal merchant Snay bin Amir met Suna in 1852⁶. These probably took no part in military campaigns. Burton also claims to have been told by the Arabs that "guards in hundreds attend [Suna's enclosure] at all hours. They are commanded by four chiefs, who are relieved every second day"⁷. Mention was also made of the "Sakibobo or commander-in-chief, who has power over the Sawaganzi, the life-guards and slaves, the warriors and builders of the palace"⁸. This description seems somewhat muddled. The *Sekibobo*, the governor of Kyagwe *ssaza*, may at that time have been a noted military leader; possibly, such men were periodically required to command the bodyguard. The reference to 'the Sawaganzi' is puzzling: the *Sabaganzi* was the title of the eldest brother of the *kabaka's* mother, apparently established by Suna himself, and a figure of some authority⁹. It may be that Suna created the title with his bodyguard in mind. It is clear, in any case, that the royal bodyguard was well-regimented, with a command structure of its own, and was permanently on duty.

⁶Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, 194

⁷*ibid.*, 188

⁸*ibid.*, 192

⁹J.D.Murphy, *Luganda-English Dictionary* (Washington, 1972) 512. *Muganzi* means a favourite person.

Almost twenty years later, the number of "personal guards" surrounding the *kabaka* had increased, Stanley noting some three thousand in the presence of Mutesa, although it is clear that not all of these were military personnel¹⁰. This armed corps was open to foreigners. An inner corps of the bodyguard, apparently some 200 strong, included "renegades from Baker's expedition", Zanzibari deserters and disillusioned coastmen, and "the elect of Uganda"¹¹. By the mid-1870s, ownership of a firearm, and indeed some skill in using it, was a sufficient qualification for entry. The precedent had been set by Suna, who, as we have seen, favoured a coastal merchant and placed him in a position of some authority¹².

The lack of a standing army meant that there was no title denoting overall military command. Instead, chiefs, often the governors of *ssazas*, were appointed on merit to lead campaigns; it is clear that particular chiefs built up reputations as warriors and leaders of men. In the mid-1850s, the *Sekibobo* had such a reputation. In the early 1860s, a chief whom Grant names "Kamaraviona" was noted as a military commander¹³. This is a corruption of the title *kamalabyonna*, a variation of *Katikiro*¹⁴.

Stanley's description of the war against Buvuma in 1875 provides some valuable data on the organisation of the army at war. In the mass parade which preceded hostilities, Stanley noted the contingent commanded by the *Mukwenda*, who guarded "the frontier between the Katonga valley and Willimiesi against the Wanyoro"¹⁵. 'Willimiesi' is a corruption of Bulemezi, the neighbouring province to that of the *Mukwenda*, Singo. The *Mukwenda* is described as being "accomplished with the spear" and as having "much experience in wars", and was clearly a respected military

¹⁰Bennett, *Despatches*, 219; Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 193

¹¹Bennett, *Despatches*, 221; Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 198

¹²Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, 193. See also Chapter 5 above.

¹³J.A. Grant, *A Walk Across Africa* (London & Edinburgh, 1864) 220, 231

¹⁴*Kamalabyonna*: lit., 'finishes-all-things'. See Murphy, *Luganda-English Dictionary*, 150

¹⁵Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 306

figure. Any 'civil' chief or *ssaza* governor could also be an army commander, and indeed it is likely that many attained political importance as a result of their exploits on the battlefield. The selection of command was based on merit and personal courage; this may have been true, to some extent, of the lower ranks as well. Stanley also mentioned the "old general Kangau" whose normal military brief was the defence of Bulemezi¹⁶. In 1862 Speke also wrote of "Congow, a young general, who once led an army into Unyoro"¹⁷, while in 1874 Chaillé-Long described "Kongowee" as the "General-in-Chief of the army"¹⁸. It would seem, however, that several men held the post of *Kangawo* during this time¹⁹.

It is significant that the governors of Singo and Bulemezi should be described to Stanley, not as the pillars of government which they undoubtedly were, but as military commanders in charge of certain stretches of frontier. This is likely to have been a form of 'war-speak': in wartime, the *Kangawo* was not only the chief of Bulemezi *ssaza* but also the defender of the kingdom along the border covered by his province. His position underwent 'militarisation'. While this was generally the case, however, it is clear that in 1875 both the *Mukwenda* and the *Kangawo* were particularly honoured military leaders. While the description of regional chiefs as 'defenders of frontiers' may indeed have reflected their skills in war, it may equally have reflected only their theoretical responsibility for the military operations and recruitment within a particular district. Regional chiefs probably had, at the very least, administrative duties in wartime. The position of commander itself was highly coveted, largely because it carried the potential for great financial reward and the opportunity for political promotion based on the prestige of a successful campaign. Direct royal command was, in the nineteenth century at least, relatively rare.

¹⁶ibid., 306

¹⁷J.H. Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (London & Edinburgh, 1863) 359

¹⁸C. Chaillé-Long, *Central Africa* (London, 1876) 102, 128

¹⁹Kagwa states that Mutesa had five *Bakangawo* during his reign: A. Kagwa [tr. & ed. M.S.M. Kiwanuka], *The Kings of Buganda* (Nairobi, 1971) 185

In his description of the war against Buvuma, Stanley noted that just about every major provincial chief held a position of command. Besides the *Kangawo* and the *Mukwenda*, mention is made of the *Pokino* (who at this time also held the post of *Katikiro*), the *Kaima*, the *Kitunzi*, the *Kasujju*, the *Kago*, the *Kimbugwe* and the *Katambala*. Even Mutesa's mother and uncle were represented, having placed forces in the field²⁰. Roscoe claimed that the *Katikiro* and the *Kimbugwe* had additional responsibilities in that they were consulted by the *kabaka* from the outset as to the number of soldiers required, and also on the choice of commander²¹, although it is likely that the *kabaka* himself had the final say in this matter. What Stanley appears to describe, then, is a truly 'national' army, but this may not always have been the case. Armies may often have consisted of soldiers from only a few districts. It may even be that Mutesa laid on this great military display purely for the benefit of his European guest.

It was the stress on merit that made Buganda such an effective military power at its zenith; conversely, it was the gradual disregard for merit that contributed to the downturn in the kingdom's military fortunes. As with the hierarchy of command, so it was with the ordinary soldiers: Stanley noted "about 2000 chosen warriors". The presence of warriors ranked higher than others on the basis of their specific abilities on the battlefield would seem to suggest a level of professionalism. Indigenous histories are replete with tales of individual derring-do by men who raised themselves to prominence through military endeavour²².

²⁰Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 305

²¹J. Roscoe, *The Baganda* (London, 1911) 348

²²Often these men are described as having phenomenal physical strength, able single-handedly to fight off thousands of enemy soldiers. Kibuka is the most celebrated example of this. Another notable instance is provided by Stanley, who was told of the achievements of Kasindula. Although Kasindula was a 'sub-chief' in Kyagwe, he "had neither pride of birth nor riches to boast of"; determined to demonstrate his loyalty to Suna, he gathered a small army and defeated the Soga in a series of battles. Returning to Suna's capital with his booty, he is credited with a stirring speech: 'My dear Lord, Namujurilwa and Setuba are great chiefs, and stand in your presence daily, but I am only a Mtongoleh under Sekebobo. I have neither farm nor house, wife nor child, and my only wealth consists of my spear and my shield, and my only cloth is this rotten mbugu. Namujurilwa and Setuba brought slaves and cattle by hundreds, but the kopi Kasindula brings his thousands to Suna. Behold where they stand! Kasindula gives them all to Suna . . .' See Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 372-5

Rank and file soldiers took up the colours of their local chief and offered their services for the forthcoming campaign. This apparently simple procedure was multifaceted. Soldierly was one of the most important services offered by a tenant to a patron. There was a risk of death, of course, but for the farmer as much as the chief, war was an economic adventure, and even a semi-successful campaign would yield some form of booty, as we have noted in the previous chapter. The fact that a tax was often levied on those who stayed at home was an additional, though negative, economic incentive to participation²³. The possibility of social advancement has already been noted. These spurs to fight, however, seem to some extent to apply only to a society in full control of external circumstances. In Buganda up to the reign of Kamanya, armies were raised to defend the kingdom from outside attack, a very different form of motivation. For some three hundred years, war was a means to survival for the Ganda, and for much of that time they were militarily inferior to Bunyoro. By 1800, however, military organisation had become a means not only to the extension of national power, but to the accumulation of wealth and the maintenance of a favourable external *status quo*. War in the nineteenth century became increasingly a reaction to impulses within the state rather than threats from without. Buganda's military decline, which was apparent particularly after 1850, did not alter this. This is shown, for example, by the wars fought in the last years of Mutesa's reign, which we have noted in the previous chapter. To a large extent this can be applied to both individual and collective motivation, although there is a point at which the two must be seen as distinct phenomena. It is possible that as the kingdom itself became more secure, the individual was increasingly motivated by self and, of course, by social and political obligation. Binding all of this together, loosely and ineffably, was the philosophy of masculinity: ultimately, men and war were as naturally bound as women and the bearing of children.

²³A.Kagwa [tr.E.B.Kalibala, ed.M.M.Edel], *Customs of the Baganda* (New York, 1934) 94

Roscoe drew a firm distinction between actual warriors - who are depicted as being 'professional', single-minded and, above all, honourable specimens of manhood - and the general rabble who accompanied the former to war but who had a somewhat lower status. He states: "Though warriors were armed with spears and shields, peasants who joined them as bearers or as followers had only clubs or heavy sticks; these men were the looters, who robbed the dead and the wounded of their clothing, and plundered the houses in conquered districts"²⁴. These men are clearly depicted as the 'dirty underside' of the military machine, although they were also critical to the overall success of a campaign. The distinction between warrior and follower is not explained; men who were probably social equals became differentiated in the bearing of arms. Clearly, however, from among the enormous social group termed *bakopi*, there were men who were known to their local chiefs as being particularly skilled or courageous in war. Perhaps they belonged to branches of clans with a tradition of military glory. These were the men who owned fine spears and shields, weapons which "were always kept in good condition"²⁵, and who were presumably called upon by the local chief when he himself was required to provide a contingent for the army. This was a measure of specialisation which probably remained unchanged over several centuries; by the 1880s, however, the 'peasant-warrior' had been to a large degree supplanted by the ambitious musketeer at the capital.

We have already noted some of the logistical problems experienced by Ganda armies during the nineteenth century. Paucity of evidence for before 1800 prevents a comparison between the size of armies in that period and those in the nineteenth century, but it is clear that large armies after 1800 were often cumbersome and difficult to feed. Food provision for an army on the move, while still in friendly territory, was in the hands of the locals, and was undoubtedly a burden on regional resources. We have noted Roscoe's assertion that a section of the force was

²⁴Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 352-3

²⁵*ibid.*, 353

responsible for the gathering of food. In enemy territory, this involved plunder. According to Roscoe, who relied on a variety of Ganda informants, the commander of the army would arrange for different chiefs to use separate roads in advancing toward the point of rendezvous, so as not to drain completely the food resources of one area. Once in enemy territory, the ordinary soldiers were supplied through plunder, while chiefs usually had their own supply carried with them, often by their wives²⁶. Typically, a period of several days was allowed for the army to gather in or near enemy territory, during which time reconnaissance missions were dispatched to collect information regarding the enemy's preparedness, military concentrations, and so on. As the attack was initiated, the commander was positioned at a vantage point from which he could survey the action and send reinforcements where they were needed. The first line of the force would attack, then withdraw to the main body, while a second line attack attacked, and so on. Each 'regimental' chief had men who carried reserve weaponry. When long-distance missiles - i.e. spears - were exhausted, hand-to-hand fighting ensued. In a successful battle, the warriors would pursue the fleeing enemy while club-wielding auxiliaries rounded up women, cattle and various other forms of booty. To some extent, the collection of such spoil was the standard by which success was measured, for it was only when the commander "thought that he had as much spoil as was possible to obtain, he beat his drums, recalled his forces, waited for the various parties that had been sent out to loot, and began his march back". Throughout the engagement, the *kabaka* would have been kept informed, by means of runners of athletic renown, of developments concerning the course of the war and the spoil being accumulated²⁷. These runners or messengers were identified in 1880 as *bakayungirizi* by the missionary Livinhac. They were trained from an

²⁶ibid., 351

²⁷ibid., 355-9. It is clear that Roscoe is describing a single battle, which was often what a war might amount to, but just as often wars comprised several such engagements. Moreover, the importance attached to booty would have depended on the circumstances in which the war was fought. As we have noted, graver issues were often at stake.

early age in prolonged, rapid marches, moving night and day with only short breaks; Mutesa had a number in his service²⁸.

Further information on Ganda tactics is provided by first-hand European accounts dating from the 1890s. Although during this period the nature of Ganda warfare was clearly in flux, certain aspects of organisation were plainly rooted in the pre-colonial era. Lugard suggests, for example, that the Ganda only waged war at particular times of the year. In April 1891, his army encountered almost impassable rivers and swamps flooded by recent rains, while food for the expedition was difficult to come by as the crops "were only just springing up"²⁹. In what was probably south-west Singo, Lugard wrote:

The Waganda called a council of war . . . but only came to the resolution that they would halt the next day and discuss it, being completely at a loss what to do. My suggestions of endeavouring to effect a crossing at several points simultaneously was opposed, on the grounds that they dare not divide their force, even into two parties; that it is the custom of the Waganda to fight en masse only; and that if one party were driven in they would never rally, but would be utterly dispersed, and never stop running until they reached their homes . . .

Lugard's plan to advance to Kabarega's capital also met opposition, and even he had to bow to the superior knowledge and experience of the region among the Ganda:

They informed me that there were three very large swamps, one they said absolutely impassable at this season; and they had news that the enemy had prearranged to make a stand there if defeated in the first battle. They also said that there was no food whatsoever . . .³⁰

²⁸White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 1/27.6.80

²⁹U.N.A. A26/4 Lugard to Admin.-Gen., IBEAC 13.8.91

³⁰ibid. These accounts appear to relate to Lugard's advance through Singo in April-May 1891, a time of year when rainfall is both regular and heavy: see also M.Perham (ed.), *The Diaries of Lord Lugard* (London, 1959) II, 144ff. Kabarega's capital was close to present-day Hoima.

Firearms had little direct or practical influence on combat before the 1870s. But it is clear that during the 1890s guns had begun to have an effect on Ganda tactics. The following account by MacDonald relates to 1893-4:

They were drawn up in a number of parallel columns, each headed by its chief, and the front rank of which contained the best armed men, while behind them followed the spearmen. The attack was most impetuous, but, as they did not understand the use of supports or reserves, anything more than a temporary check was likely to involve the retreat of the whole force, until they had time to reform . . .³¹

Other evidence suggests that the Ganda understood very well the use of reserves; moreover, a force which allowed itself time to fall back and reform could hardly be described as impetuous. It is striking, however, how tactics and formation had altered. Spearmen waiting for those with guns to win the battle were unquestionably a recent development. At one time the spearmen had been at the forefront of the attack and were served by lowlier peasants with clubs; now the riflemen were perceived as the main assault soldiers and were served by the spearmen. But it is insufficient to suggest simply that one technology had been replaced by another. There were many more spearmen in the 1850s than there were riflemen in the 1890s, and any one of the former was likely have been a more accomplished warrior than his 1890s counterpart. The technology had become more sophisticated, but the potency of the Ganda army had been undermined and, to a large extent, the military ethos cheapened. Technological complexity was not sufficient in itself to maintain the march of 'progress', although many Ganda were understandably impressed by it. But as we shall see below from the comments made by one Ganda warrior in 1887, guns were not universally seen as 'a good thing'. Nevertheless, although spears remained the predominant form of weaponry even after 1890, both the ideological and the tactical emphasis had begun to rest on the firearm from the 1870s onward. Kiwanuka, who rightly cautions historians not to exaggerate the importance of the

³¹J.R.MacDonald. *Soldiering and Surveying in British East Africa* (London, 1897) 142-3

firearm, misses this critical point, suggesting that "the spear and other traditional weapons remained the masters of the battlefield until the 1890s"³².

One of the most important developments in military organisation during the nineteenth century was the growth of a 'new elite' of gun-wielding young men in the service of the *kabaka*. This royal 'regiment' had several functions: it was a branch of the army, a police force and a bodyguard. As we have already noted, it may have originated under Suna, whose *batongole* appear to have taken on increasingly military dimensions. That this development occurred at all, however, is not universally accepted. Low wrote of "Suna's and Mutesa's reforms of the military system, with the creation of the Mujasi and his professional subordinates", as evidence of Buganda's "commitment to war"³³. Kiwanuka, however, later wrote: "One finds . . . writer after writer repeating that Kings Suna II and Mutesa I organized the army and created a special force under the Mujasi. Yet nowhere in Kaggwa's *Basekabaka be Buganda*, our best source, is it said that there was a reorganization of the army"³⁴. Elsewhere, Kiwanuka asserted that the foundation of the *Ekitongole Ekijaasi* had been misunderstood, that it had "nothing to do with the reform of the military service as there was none during the reign of Mutesa" and that, in any case, the *Mujasi* rarely commanded military expeditions³⁵. A third writer, Kottak, who considered Mutesa's reign "to be a culmination of the Ganda state", asserted that Mutesa "reinforced the traditional military authority by the creation of a standing army and the allocation of estates to warriors as a regular reward in lieu of pay in money or kind"³⁶.

³²M.S.M.Kiwanuka, *Muteesa of Uganda* (Nairobi, 1967) 72. Moreover, Kiwanuka contradicts himself by implicitly conceding that it was precisely because the Ganda used guns that they were often unsuccessful in the second half of the nineteenth century. He asserts, for example, that "Muteesa's failure to subdue the Bavuma remains one of the classic examples of how the mere possession of firearms without training in using them had little advantage over the traditional weapons and methods of warfare": M.S.M.Kiwanuka, *A History of Buganda* (London, 1971) 145

³³D.A.Low, 'The Northern Interior 1840-84', in R.Oliver & G.Mathew (eds.), *History of East Africa* (Oxford, 1963) I, 335

³⁴Kiwanuka's 'Preface' to Kaggwa, *Kings*, i-ii

³⁵Kiwanuka, *Muteesa of Uganda*, 73

³⁶C.P.Kottak, 'Ecological Variables in the Origin and Evolution of African States: the Buganda Example', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 14:3 (1972) 376

All these arguments are valid up to a point. Kottak, however, overstates the extent to which the army in its entirety was reorganised, while virtually ignoring the non-military functions of the new force at the capital. The evidence suggests that a multi-faceted 'new elite' had emerged by the 1870s, but, as Kiwanuka rightly points out, the description of this force as a standing army is exaggerated. Michael Wright is among those who suggest that a 'standing army' was created, yet his argument that the force grew out of a royal bodyguard is surely sound³⁷. Kiwanuka himself ignores the evidence for, and thus the relevance of, this development and its longer-term implications for the army as a whole which remained essentially unchanged. Kagwa's failure to make it *explicit* that such changes were taking place in his *Basekabaka be Buganda* is scarcely reason to dismiss the entire argument. Kagwa fails to mention many events and developments which we know from other evidence took place.

By the 1880s, the *kabaka* had established enclosures throughout the kingdom which were occupied solely by what might be termed 'royal soldiers' and which were virtually independent of the *ssazas* in which they were located. The head of this increasingly nation-wide force carried the title of *Mujasi* who was often mistaken by contemporary observers as the commander of the army. He was, rather, the head of a royal army with an apparently omnipotent brief and a close relationship with the *kabaka* himself³⁸. The position was established by Mutesa in the early stages of his reign. According to Kagwa, there was up until the 1850s a post which has been translated as that of 'Lieutenant General', or the *Kalabalaba*. Literally translated, this meant 'the one who sees sharply', and this high-ranking 'scout' marched to the right of the commander himself. The title "was conferred upon a favourite by the king himself". The *Kalabalaba* was also a bodyguard of sorts. The post was, however, abolished by Mutesa who instead created - or at least upgraded - the title of *Mujasi*,

³⁷M. Wright, *Buganda in the Heroic Age* (London, 1971) 25

³⁸U.N.A. A1/1 IBEAC Report 1891-2

previously the 'chief of police' (to use the translation of Kagwa's phrase), to permanently occupy the role³⁹. The title clearly carried explicitly military responsibilities but although the *Mujasi* did take part in campaigns, it was not an especially high-ranking position. The *Mujasi's* importance lay in his role on the 'general staff', as it were, but it would probably be more appropriate to describe him as a kind of 'political commissar'. Mackay described the *Mujasi* as "the captain of the bodyguard"⁴⁰, while Lourdel used the phrase "one of the chiefs of the king's soldiers"⁴¹.

There is little first-hand evidence relating to these 'royal soldiers' outside the capital, but in and around the royal enclosure they were well observed. They were a permanent feature at the capital by the time British and French missionaries had arrived in the late 1870s. They were distinct from the bulk of the Ganda army in that they were armed with guns; they were also dressed in a 'uniform' of sorts which appears to have been influenced by both coastal and Western military culture, betraying the admiration Mutesa had for the latter in particular. Foreign influence was also apparent in the formation of these soldiers: they were usually drawn up in lines in Western fashion, not in the indigenous manner of parade and salute which involved waves of warriors approaching the *kabaka* and waving their spears in his direction as a sign of undying loyalty. The soldiers were, perhaps, most distinguishable from the bulk of the army in terms of attitude. The missionary Gordon, for example, noted the "saucy young recruits who form the body guard", observing that they were "only too ready for the opportunity of mischief & the sport of firing off their guns"⁴². The immediate context of this observation was the

³⁹Kagwa, *Customs*, 90. Murphy lists 'bodyguard', alongside 'best man at a wedding', among possible interpretations of *Kalabalaba*: Murphy, *Luganda-English Dictionary*, 143. Michael Twaddle suggests that the *Kalabalaba* was the second-in-command during a campaign, and "took control when the commander became indisposed": M. Twaddle, *Kakungulu and the Creation of Uganda* (London, 1993) 51

⁴⁰C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1885/98 Mackay to Wigram ? .5.85

⁴¹White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 2/14.5.81

⁴²C.M.S. G3 A5/0 1888/241 Gordon to Mackay 31.12.87

confiscation of a wayward chief's property, suggesting that these young men were as much an increasingly self-governing police force as a military elite. There can be little doubt, however, that they were much better at 'firing off their guns' in sport and internal pillage than at fighting external enemies.

Mackay describes how he and fellow missionary Robert Ashe were set upon by a small force commanded by the *Mujasi* at a time when Mwangi's anti-Christian policy was gaining momentum. The *Mujasi*'s role as commander of a 'civil police' is clear. Mackay also mentions that in 1885 the *Mujasi* was sent "far off to the borders of Bunyoro to plunder a chief who had been arrested for appropriating some of the king's cattle"⁴³. This was plainly less of a military operation than a political matter, a punitive expedition within the kingdom's boundaries. Nonetheless, it is clear that increasingly the *Mujasi* and his men formed the spearhead of military expeditions. Lourdel described one prominent member of the 'basarosaros', as the White Fathers called them, as having distinguished himself in a war with Bunyoro⁴⁴. The *Mujasi* himself was often a 'divisional' commander, and on one occasion when he was called to the royal enclosure to relate his personal feats, it was noted in the Rubaga Diary that his name alone as 'chief of police' inspired great fear⁴⁵.

The rivalry between the favoured young men and the older chiefs representative of the 'military establishment' grew as the former were accorded greater responsibility in campaigns. Zimbe states that "[w]hen after a war the old chiefs came back defeated, the bitongole of the young men jeered them very much. The Kabaka always appointed young men to distribute what booty the old chiefs had brought back and he always gave them power to jeer them"⁴⁶. It is clear that this revolution at the centre had a detrimental influence on Ganda military performance during the last few

⁴³See note 39.

⁴⁴White Fathers: C14/182 Lourdel to Supérieur-Général 12.9.87

⁴⁵White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 3/7.4.86, 28.4.86, 30.4.86

⁴⁶B.M.Zimbe [tr.F.Kamoga], 'Buganda ne Kabaka' [c.1939] 174

decades of the pre-colonial era. The attraction of guns and European battle-dress had proved stronger than the desire to maintain an effective rank-and-file army. It may be that after c.1850 Buganda's rulers became increasingly complacent as to the kingdom's invincibility. This complacency is particularly apparent in the last years of Mutesa's reign and virtually the whole of Mwangwa's. Mutesa and Mwangwa were both increasingly preoccupied with power struggles and loyalty at the court, and with displays of armed strength rather than the exercise of it.

Weaponry and the role of firearms

The most basic early development which can be identified in the context of weaponry is the transition from wood to iron. It was apparently during the Kintu period that a chief of the *kkobe* clan, Magere, began to make wooden spears for the *kabaka*. This in itself appears to have been an innovation. During the reign of Kintu's supposed successor, Chwa, iron spears were first manufactured⁴⁷. At some point, the position of weapon-maker to the *kabaka* was transferred from Magere to Walukaga of the *kasimba* clan⁴⁸. Walukaga is elsewhere noted as having been the head of all blacksmiths in Buganda. Ganda spears, along with drums, were among the great standards of material culture: the admiring descriptions of European observers suggest that spears were not always constructed with warfare in mind. We have already seen that the reign of Nakibinge in the early sixteenth century represented a watershed in Buganda's military history, and it seems that this was also true with regard to weaponry. The disastrous war against Bunyoro at this time drove home, perhaps for the first time, the need for an ample supply of iron for the manufacture of weapons. It is recounted how, following the death of Nakibinge in battle, the *kabaka's* chief wife Nanono supervised the sharpening of reeds to be used as spears⁴⁹. This last-ditch innovation appears to have saved Buganda from complete annihilation, but it is clear that the technical revolution begun during the Chwa period was not yet

⁴⁷A.Kagwa [tr.J.Wamala], 'A Book of Clans of Buganda' [c.1972] 78-9

⁴⁸*ibid.*, 63

⁴⁹*ibid.*, 63

complete. From Mulondo's reign onward, Buganda actively sought to secure sources of iron.

By the 1850s, when the first contemporary report emerged, weaponry for the ordinary Ganda warrior included at least one long spear, two lighter spears, a dagger and a shield⁵⁰. Spare weapons were carried on longer expeditions. As noted in Chapter 6, the lighter, smaller spears mentioned by Burton had only very recently been introduced. Kagwa suggests that Suna, probably in the 1830s, "started to make small spears in preparation for a campaign against Busagala"⁵¹. This appears to have been something of an innovation in established weaponry; the inspiration behind it is, however, obscure. As though to test the new weapons, Suna plundered an estate in Bulemezi; apparently satisfied, he appointed the *Pokino* to lead an army against Busagara. The campaign was successful, and the small spear became standard equipment⁵². By the nineteenth century, most spears were constructed of wooden shafts and iron blades, but some were still made wholly from wood, with the sharpened end hardened in the fire. The local name for this was *maguma*⁵³.

The bow and arrow, though relatively widespread in pre-colonial Africa, was not used by the Ganda in either war or, as we have seen, hunting⁵⁴. Its absence is not easily explained, and the sources are regrettably silent regarding Ganda views on the subject. It is clear, however, that although arrows may be cheaper missiles than spears, they are not necessarily more efficient. Often, bows and arrows require more rigid attack formations, while, depending on size, they can only efficiently be used from a motionless position⁵⁵. Spears can offer greater flexibility of movement, and allow the carrying of a heavy shield, which was also a standard piece of Ganda

⁵⁰Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, 189

⁵¹Kagwa, *Kings*, 117

⁵²*ibid.*, 117

⁵³A. Mackay [ed. by his sister], *Pioneer Missionary in Uganda* (London, 1890) 222. This is probably derived from the Luganda verb stem *guma*, to be solid or firm.

⁵⁴See Chapter 3 above.

⁵⁵For example, see J. Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (London, 1993) 162-3

military equipment. Moreover, as Smith has shown in a West African context, spears are often cultural symbols, or standards of office and honour⁵⁶. This was undoubtedly true of Buganda, where the spear and shield were, as Speke put it, "the Uganda cognisance"⁵⁷.

The bow and arrow may have been used by pastoralist communities, but only during Nakibinge's war with Bunyoro does it seem to have figured with any importance. The Sesse warrior Kibuka used bows and arrows during this conflict, and the weapon consequently took on a symbolic significance. During Mwang'a's accession ceremonies, the new *kabaka* was required to go through the motions of killing a Nyoro youth with a bow and arrow; the weapon was held to be that used by Nakibinge himself⁵⁸. Although the weapon was not standard Ganda army equipment, in 1862 Speke described Mutesa and several attendants holding archery practice, each taking turns shooting arrows at a shield. Speke, a professional soldier, exclaimed that "they were such bad shots that they hardly ever hit it"⁵⁹. Archery may have been regarded as sport; in any case, proficiency in the use of the bow and arrow was perhaps not such as to warrant their widespread adoption in warfare. According to Speke, Mutesa then "ordered sixteen shields to be placed before him, one in front of the other, and with one shot from Whitworth [rifle] pierced the whole of them, the bullet passing through the bosses of nearly every one". This feat prompted the *kabaka* to gesture triumphantly towards the rifle and declare to his chiefs, 'What is the use of spears and bows? I shall never fight with anything but guns in future'⁶⁰. Whether Mutesa ever uttered these words is doubtful, but the sentiments were probably

⁵⁶Smith suggests that the spear "was a symbol of honour and office as well as a weapon of war, being carried into battle as a standard, while spears handed down from ancestors, or symbolic representations of these, more decorative than useful, form part of the regalia of kings and chiefs": R. Smith, *Warfare and Diplomacy in Pre-Colonial West Africa* (London, 1989) 68

⁵⁷Speke, *Journal*, 255, 291

⁵⁸Zimbe, 'Buganda', 111

⁵⁹Speke, *Journal*, 397

⁶⁰*ibid.*

expressed. Yet Mutesa's obsession with the firearm was one thing; the widespread adoption of guns and the complete retraining of the army was another.

As we have already noted, assessing the impact of firearms is problematic⁶¹. Guns were never imported in sufficient numbers to be widely used by the Ganda army, but by the 1870s they were numerous enough to influence the nature of warfare. Their symbolic importance was immense; indeed, the overall influence of the gun was grossly out of proportion to its successful utilisation. As Michael Twaddle has suggested, guns, even by the 1880s, "were still used as much for psychological effect as for actual destruction"⁶². In practical terms, there were clear limitations to the effectiveness of firearms in battle, as is shown below. The gradual 'firearm revolution' can be said to have begun in the mid-1840s with the arrival in Buganda of the first coastal merchants. It seems likely that small groups of Arab traders participated in military campaigns alongside the Ganda during the reigns of both Suna and Mutesa, although the nature and frequency of their involvement is less clear. Arab participation was certainly prevalent during the 1880s, and Kabarega himself is supposed to have complained that coastal merchants were allying themselves to Ganda expeditionary armies. Presumably both Mutesa and Mwanga would have welcomed armed support from traders who were more skilled in handling firearms than the Ganda. During a campaign against Bunyoro in the early months of 1886, three Arabs were apparently killed; these probably belonged to a larger detachment of merchants linked to the Ganda army⁶³. The motives behind such involvement, with its attendant risk of death, are not clear, but economic incentives are likely to have been important: traders might expect to receive a share of the spoil, for example. It would also have been an effective way of currying favour with the *kabaka* himself. However, before the religious wars, the military role of the Arabs

⁶¹Indeed, it is a problem which has been addressed with regard to much of nineteenth-century Africa. See for example Smith, *Warfare and Diplomacy*, 80-6; A.D.Roberts, 'Firearms in north-eastern Zambia before 1900', *Transafrican Journal of History*, 1:2 (1971) 3-21

⁶²Twaddle, *Kakungulu*, 9

⁶³White Fathers: C14/61 Lourdel to Bridoux 6.4.86

was markedly less dramatic than it was among the Nyamwezi, for example, where the loosely-defined 'state' allowed the powerful strangers to take advantage of fissures in the polity.

By the time Speke arrived in Buganda in early 1862, guns, though still novel, were clearly becoming more common. Even so, just south of Karagwe in late 1861, Speke was met by Mutesa's emissary, Irungu, to whom the former offered a rifle to take to the *kabaka* as a gift. Irungu refused, "lest his master, who had never seen such a wonderful weapon before, should think he had brought him a malign charm"⁶⁴. Rumanika, the ruler of Karagwe, also later told Speke that Mutesa might be frightened by the gun, "considering it a charm of evil quality, reject us as bad magicians, and close his gates on us"⁶⁵. This is somewhat mystifying, but it was probably less to do with the fact that Speke wanted to send Mutesa a gun than that he himself was a stranger and, moreover, a *muzungu*. Paradoxically, Speke later wrote: "At Rumanika's request I then gave Mutesa's pages some ammunition to hurry on with to the great king of Uganda, as his majesty had ordered them to bring him as quickly as possible, some strengthening powder, and also some powder for his gun"⁶⁶. Firearms were already established at the Ganda capital, if not exactly commonplace.

The demand for guns in Buganda was insatiable in the second half of the nineteenth century. The value placed on them by the Ganda matched that in other parts of the continent. In terms of the volume of guns arriving in Buganda, exact figures are impossible to come by. In 1880 Mackay was of the opinion that ten thousand guns per annum were being brought from the coast to Unyanyembe⁶⁷. From Unyanyembe these guns travelled in several directions but, from Mackay's estimate, it seems unlikely that less than two or three thousand guns thus found their way to Buganda, or

⁶⁴Speke, *Journal*, 187

⁶⁵*ibid.*, 215

⁶⁶*ibid.*, 245

⁶⁷C.M.S. CA6/016(a)/46 Mackay to Hutchinson 11.6.80

at least the lake region⁶⁸. Certainly Buganda must have been the single most important market for the Arabs' trade guns, particularly after they had frozen sales to Mirambo, although the latter retained control over sections of the critical trade routes south of the lake⁶⁹. In early 1887, Mackay reported that coastal traders tended to carry with them more guns than cloth for exchange: "Within the last month . . . a great number of loads of breech loading rifles have come into Buganda alone!" A smaller number of repeating rifles, more advanced and more reliable, were also being brought by coastal merchants⁷⁰. The Arab traders themselves recognised the importance which Mutesa placed on these relations. In 1881, a merchant arrived in Buganda with some 400 guns, 300 of which he claimed were a gift from Sultan Barghash to persuade Mutesa to join him in fighting Mirambo. Lourdel was able to reveal, however, that the Arab bore neither gift nor message, but was in fact a private trader⁷¹.

During the 1870s, guns became an established feature of life at the capital, and had begun to influence the development of a new military elitism. In 1872, Samuel Baker was told by traders that Mutesa "had a regiment armed with a thousand guns, in addition to the numerous forces at his disposal"⁷². The distinction between the newly-armed 'regiment' and the bulk of the Ganda army is critical. By the end of the 1870s, the royal bodyguard probably numbered around two thousand fusiliers. They were mostly located in the capital. The extent to which firearms found their way into districts is unclear, although important chiefs may have had their own stocks at regional estates. The gun had become a great object of desire, and small-scale commercial transactions with both Europeans and Arabs were probably common: Lourdel, for example, recorded that he was able to acquire three child slaves for a

⁶⁸It is true, however, that Mackay had every reason to exaggerate his figure: the gun was for him the root of all evil in Africa.

⁶⁹C.M.S. CA6/018/6 O'Neill to Wright ? 10.77

⁷⁰C.M.S. G3 A5/0 1888/194 Mackay to Ashe 17.4.87

⁷¹White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 2/1.1.81, 3.1.81, 14.1.81

⁷²S. Baker, *Ismailia* (London, 1874) II, 98

rusty and antiquated gun⁷³. By the time of Mwanga's accession in 1884, according to Zimbe "there were about 4000 people in the palace all of whom had guns"⁷⁴. Even so, guns were too few in number to have an impact on the rank and file of the army; it is likely that the vast majority of soldiers who made up Ganda armies in the 1870s and 1880s had barely heard of firearms.

Yet the formation of Ganda armies was increasingly based around the select few who possessed guns. This was to the detriment of the army as a whole. The firearms which arrived in Buganda were usually archaic and often downright dangerous; many probably did not work at all. This was the case in many African societies during the nineteenth century and earlier. It was of course safer (and more profitable) for traders to hand over to unsuspecting indigenous buyers outdated and unreliable models. But this trickery was not wholly by design: clearly as new types of guns were constantly being produced in Europe, many older models became surplus to requirement, and in Africa there was a ready market for these weapons. At the beginning of the 1890s, most firearms in Buganda were still muzzle-loaders, less reliable and often more dangerous than breech-loaders, which were increasingly common after 1890⁷⁵. It was the muzzle-loader that Lugard labelled the 'curse of Africa'; it was readily available via the trade routes of Ankole and Buddu and, later, the lake route. These older firearms often failed to work at all, or might explode in the user's hands. Moreover, in 1877 one missionary noted the predominance of flintlocks among the palace guard⁷⁶. By this time the flintlock was also an outmoded weapon: a spark struck from a flint in the stock of the gun lit the gunpowder, and thus the gun was fired. At best it was unreliable, at worst it could maim the gunman. Not much better was the

⁷³White Fathers: Rubaga Diary [Annex Lourdel 12.6.79]

⁷⁴Zimbe, 'Buganda', 100

⁷⁵U.N.A. A26/4 Lugard to Admin.-Gen., IBEAC 13.8.91. Breech-loading rifles, which fired more rapidly than any gun previously, were developed in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century, and were particularly associated with the Prussian Army in their defeats of Austria (1866) and France (1870).

⁷⁶C.M.S. CA6/025/8 Wilson to Wright 6.7.77

matchlock rifle, current in Buganda even in the late nineteenth century⁷⁷. With this model, a match had to be struck and applied to the powder, a potentially disastrous operation, especially if the gun itself was several decades old. In addition, the efficacy of these weapons was heavily dependent on climate. During the wet season, gunpowder was often rendered useless, and would similarly have affected the operation of the spark or the creation of an open flame from matches. Throughout the 1880s, incidents were recorded in which stocks of powder or ammunition at the capital exploded as a result of lightning striking storage huts and starting fires. Many guns and crates of powder were lost in this way⁷⁸.

The frequent shortages of both bullets and powder also contributed to the ineffectiveness of firearms in the hands of the Ganda. We have already noted Mutesa's eagerness to acquire powder from Speke. Much later, Lugard was compelled to supply the *Katikiro* with "thirty kegs of powder" with which to load his guns⁷⁹, despite the fact that powder for muzzle-loaders was apparently stored in "enormous quantities" by the chiefs of Buganda⁸⁰. Michael Wright has suggested that ammunition was sometimes made locally "by cutting iron rods into lengths in imitation of rifle bullets"⁸¹. To some extent, ammunition and powder were centrally controlled, but by the 1880s efforts by the *kabaka* to this end were clearly less successful; the *kabaka* did, however, possess a substantial personal supply⁸². Guns could be acquired by chiefs and appear not to have been royally controlled, although as an individual trader the *kabaka* had a clear advantage in bargaining power. In 1880, Girault recorded that a number of chiefs were eager to acquire firearms and ammunition from Europeans and coastal traders in the capital, as they were preparing

⁷⁷Matchlock weapons were in use among European armies by the end of the fifteenth century: Keegan, *History of Warfare*. 329

⁷⁸e.g., White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 3/23.2.86

⁷⁹U.N.A. A26/4 Lugard to Admin.-Gen., IBEAC 13.8.91

⁸⁰ibid. Lugard indicates that many chiefs actually traded their surplus powder for ivory.

⁸¹Wright, *Buganda in the Heroic Age*, 67

⁸²C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1885/98 Mackay to Wigram ? 5.85

for a military campaign⁸³. How successful they were in their quest is unclear; in any case, for this campaign Mutesa handed out guns and ammunition from his own stocks⁸⁴, suggesting that although in theory anyone could trade for guns on their own account, the *kabaka* tried to ensure that his was the lion's share.

It is clear that the Ganda scarcely knew how to use guns properly, compounding the problems discussed above. It is true that a new branch of the iron-working industry developed around firearms. As we have seen, blacksmiths, at least at the capital, became gunsmiths⁸⁵. The fact that a number of Ganda could now repair firearms went some way to ensure that the weapons continued to function. However, the effective utilisation of any firearm requires training: in Buganda, as elsewhere in Africa at this time, this did not exist in any real form⁸⁶. In the last years of Mutesa's reign, it was common to hear guns being fired into the air as a rallying call, or as a noisy accompaniment to a celebration. It was relatively easy to parade guns around the royal enclosure; as Zimbe tellingly wrote, the royal bodyguard "all appeared very nice to look at"⁸⁷. It was a different matter to load, aim and fire repeatedly in the heat of battle.

By the late 1870s, a detachment of Sudanese or 'Nubians' were serving, according to Zimbe, as "the instructors of the Kabaka's soldiers", as they were "experts in the gun exercises"⁸⁸. Indeed, they appear to have attached themselves to the *kabaka's* entourage, probably at the invitation of Mutesa himself who clearly valued, and probably feared, their technical knowledge and military background. The impact of this foreign assistance was minimal, although Zimbe tells us that one of the officers

⁸³White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 1/3.3.80

⁸⁴White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 1/16.3.80

⁸⁵F.Lugard, 'Travels from the East Coast to Uganda', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, 14 (1892) 828. See also Chapter 4 above.

⁸⁶See, however, M.Legassick, 'Firearms, horses and Samorian army organisation 1870-1898', *Journal of African History*, 7:1 (1966) 95-115

⁸⁷Zimbe, 'Buganda', 45

⁸⁸*ibid.*, 45

of the royal bodyguard, Kapagala, was "very skilled in gun exercises". What these 'exercises' actually entailed is unclear, but they appear to have consisted of nothing more useful than marching up and down, blowing trumpets and shouldering arms. Still, the Ganda took them very seriously. While soldiers of lower rank wore cartridge belts, those of more responsible station were equipped with swords as well⁸⁹. Kiwanuka has argued that the "real aim" in developing these 'regiments' "was to have trained men who could march, play drums and blow trumpets and present arms"; the new *Ekitongole* was "in fact a collection of bandsmen designed to impress foreign guests rather than a special armed force"⁹⁰. Yet it seems that Mutesa intended much more than this. The pomp and ceremony at court conceals the fact that these soldiers were being used to fight, and that their role was fundamentally altering the nature - and the outcome - of Ganda warfare.

It is clear that Mutesa regarded guns as critical to Buganda's military development. A deputation sent by him to Kabarega in 1879 was deliberately equipped with firearms in what amounted to a show of strength⁹¹, although by this time guns were also reaching the Nyoro in increasing numbers⁹². By the 1870s, then, a few men were carrying guns into battle as part of a larger army. The prominence given to firearms in the army's formation actually served to impede the fluency of the attack. The interests of the larger force were not served by even a partial reliance on weapons which were ill-used and untrustworthy. Mutesa was not alone in his enthusiasm for guns: clearly many Ganda were only too keen to discard indigenous weaponry and take up less effective but superficially more impressive technology, and the army's overall performance suffered as a result.

⁸⁹ibid., 45-7. Swords were purely decorative; though highly prized as a trade good, they were never used in battle.

⁹⁰Kiwanuka, *Mutesa of Uganda*. 73

⁹¹Zimbe, 'Buganda', 49

⁹²A.R.Dunbar, *A History of Bunyoro-Kitara* (Nairobi, 1968) 42; A.R.Dunbar, 'Emin Pasha and Bunyoro-Kitara, 1877-1889', *Uganda Journal*, 24:1 (1960) 73. On Nyoro military organisation more generally, see for example J.Beattie, *The Nyoro State* (London, 1971) 128, 253

Nonetheless, even the gun-enthusiasts must have had their doubts about the efficiency of their weapons in certain situations. The deputation to Bunyoro mentioned above, which apparently amounted to a small army, fought with the Kedi on its return, using not its guns but 'sticks'. Zimbe, who claims to have been present, explains that "we fought the Bakedi using our sticks, because amongst us there were two very brave people in fighting with sticks namely Somera and Mbazira"⁹³. People who were 'very brave' in fighting with guns had presumably yet to emerge. Ironically, when the deputation arrived safely back at the capital, Mutesa distributed rewards of guns and bullets⁹⁴. The distribution of firearms to favoured young chiefs and pages at the royal court was increased by Mwanga who did so with the intention of empowering his army and winning the loyalty of these ambitious and increasingly powerful men. Regardless of the practical functions of the gun itself, it became a symbol of autonomy and authority. The new technology came to represent to those who owned guns their widening opportunities in the fluid society at the capital which characterised the 1870s and 1880s. The original motives of Mutesa and Mwanga can be understood, but the plan was to backfire on the latter. The firepower of the new elite may have been more symbolic than real, but events were to prove this irrelevant⁹⁵.

Some had misgivings about the ways in which firearms were altering warfare. By the mid-1880s, as the Nyoro brought their guns to bear on Ganda armies, bullet wounds had become common among returning soldiers. Yet the Nyoro seem to have relied less on guns than the Ganda, perhaps because they possessed considerably fewer; at any rate their military organisation appears not to have experienced anything like the 'crisis of adaptation' of the Ganda. In 1887, a French missionary recorded the unease expressed by one of Buganda's most prominent war heroes of the time, a chief known

⁹³Zimbe, 'Buganda', 51

⁹⁴ibid., 52

⁹⁵e.g., ibid., 165, 174. For an excellent account of the political and religious backgrounds to the subsequent *coups* at the capital, see M. Twaddle, 'The emergence of politico-religious groupings in late nineteenth century Buganda', *Journal of African History*, 29:1 (1988) 81-92

as the *Kyambalango*⁹⁶. The year before, he had been involved in a particularly bloody campaign against Bunyoro in which he had sustained two bullet wounds. In an account of the war made before the royal court, the *Kyambalango* claimed to have told the *Katikiro* on the eve of his departure for battle that the Ganda were no longer in the era of man-to-man combat, where the warrior could rely upon his own strength, his bravery in battle, and his skill in handling his weapons. They had entered "a new *genre* of battle", in which the hand of a coward hidden in the bushes could put an end to the most courageous soldier. Thus, he declared, they were going to fight with the gun, "since the gun is the fashion"⁹⁷. A military revolution was underway, a revolution that was not only undesirable but was undermining the great Ganda warrior tradition. Guns were in fact incompatible with indigenous methods of fighting, but they had become necessary; their adoption, indeed, was inevitable⁹⁸. The *Kyambalango* - who was, it would seem, a relatively young man and not a veteran in whom opposition to change might have been more natural - went on to describe his own injuries from Nyoro gunfire. The Nyoro may have had fewer guns than the Ganda, but they appear to have possessed better models which they were able to put to more effective use. Nonetheless, according to the *Kyambalango*, the Ganda felled many Nyoro with their own steady fire⁹⁹.

By the 1890s, the number of guns in Buganda was increasing rapidly, despite the efforts of a fledgling British administration to control the flow. In 1893, for example,

⁹⁶It seems to have been a title of some importance, although details are difficult to come by. On first arriving in Buganda in 1875, Stanley counted 'Chambarango' among the eminent chiefs of the kingdom. The "tall and handsome Chambarango" played a major part in the war against Buvuma that year; he was, indeed, a 'general', while Stanley also described him as 'Chief of Usiro', meaning that he probably commanded soldiers from that *ssaza*, although he may also have been the *Mugema* or chief of Busiro: Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 189, 302, 305. After 1894, the *Kyambalango* was made chief of Buyaga *ssaza*, one of the districts wrested from Bunyoro and incorporated into Buganda by the British.

⁹⁷White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 3/21.3.87

⁹⁸An almost identical situation had provoked the 'warrior crisis' of sixteenth-century Europe. The biographer of the sixteenth-century warrior Louis de la Tremouille wrote: "What is the use, any more, of the skill-at-arms of the knight, their strength, their hardihood, their discipline and their desire for honour when such [gunpowder] weapons may be used in war?": quoted in Keegan, *History of Warfare*, 333

⁹⁹White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 3/21.3.87

it was reported that individual Ganda were exchanging firearms, probably for ivory, with the Soga, suggesting the extent to which guns had begun to be common currency¹⁰⁰. A British-led force in 1894 consisted of around one thousand soldiers with guns out of a total of a little over five thousand¹⁰¹. Zimbe asserted that by 1890 there were around ten thousand firearms in the kingdom¹⁰²; Lugard was somewhat more conservative, estimating in 1891 that there was a total of 5,700¹⁰³. Still, there were more guns in Buganda than in any other state in the region, and Lugard remarked that "the large number of guns [the Ganda] possessed . . . rendered them invincible to their enemies"¹⁰⁴. We have seen how, if anything, the opposite was true.

Nevertheless, the balance of guns became of critical importance during the political and religious upheavals of the late 1880s and early 1890s, as Twaddle has demonstrated¹⁰⁵. In 1889, the forces gathered around Kalema reportedly possessed around two thousand guns, while Mwanga's dispersed and depleted forces could muster barely three hundred and suffered from a severe shortage of powder. Mwanga was at a disadvantage in that the agents of the firearm trade, the coastal merchants, were ranged against him¹⁰⁶. By the end of the year, however, Mwanga's forces had recouped somewhat and boasted around two thousand guns. Spears and shields were still, of course, the predominant form of weaponry, but Mwanga had been able to take control of firearm supply routes¹⁰⁷. Yet the 'Muslim' army remained a force to be reckoned with. The missionary Livinhac reported that Karema commanded five thousand guns, with a substantial reserve of ammunition, as a direct result of his alliance with "the merchants of Zanzibar"¹⁰⁸. It is ironic that the coastal merchants

¹⁰⁰U.N.A. A2/1 Memo by Williams 1.3.93

¹⁰¹U.N.A. A2/2 Diary of expedition to Mruli 29.4.94

¹⁰²Zimbe, 'Buganda', 287

¹⁰³U.N.A. A26/4 Lugard to Admin.-Gen., IBEAC 13.8.91

¹⁰⁴U.N.A. A26/4 Lugard to Admin.-Gen., IBEAC 24.12.90

¹⁰⁵Twaddle, *Kakungulu*, 35-6

¹⁰⁶White Fathers: C14/191 Lourdel to Supérieur-Général 18.9.89

¹⁰⁷ibid.

¹⁰⁸White Fathers: C13/117 Livinhac to Lavigerie 12.12.89

found themselves in a position to challenge the authority of the *kabaka*, considering that Mutesa had perceived his kingdom's military development to be directly linked to the firearm, and that the acquisition of guns was to a very large degree dependent on the Arab community at Unyanyembe and, ultimately, Zanzibar.

*

Although in general the methods of organisation and recruitment appear to have remained fairly constant during the nineteenth century, we have seen how changes were made at the top end of the military structure. This is mirrored by the fact that although indigenous weapons remained predominant, guns - in all their variety - were seen to represent 'a new *genre* of battle'. Both changes were seriously detrimental to Buganda's fighting capacity. We have also seen how military decline coincided with the expansion of long-distance trade and the lure of commerce with coastal merchants. The Ganda believed that wealth and, therefore, strength could be derived from such commercial interaction. Yet, as noted in Chapter 5, the slave trade had no long-term future, while the firearms which were among the most prized goods sought by Ganda traders were themselves weakening the kingdom's military performance and, indirectly, its political structures. Nevertheless, both Suna and Mutesa believed that Buganda needed to innovate: firstly, in order to reap the greatest possible benefits from the coastal traders, preferably by controlling the routes and the traders themselves; and secondly, to overcome the stagnation, and later the actual decline, experienced by Ganda armies 'abroad'.

The answer, it seemed, lay in the development of the Ganda navy. If the Ganda could harness their advantageous lakeside position with their renowned military prowess, the lake might be controlled and Ganda influence extended far beyond the confines imposed by land warfare. Moreover, the same canoes which carried soldiers to the battle zone might be used to carry traders and their goods huge distances, giving the

Ganda maximum control of lucrative long-distance commerce. These aims were perfectly complementary: in securing the lake by force, the Ganda would make it safe for commerce, at least on their terms. As we shall see in the following chapter, the development of a canoe fleet was indeed an innovation, but the policy behind it was consistent with earlier phases of expansion: continuity, rather than discontinuity, is the key theme. As we shall also see, however, naval expansion met obstacles of its own.

CHAPTER 8

The Canoe in Ganda History

Attention has been drawn in two previous chapters to the development of a water-borne commerce and the use of canoes in war. In this chapter, I will expand on the enormous significance of Buganda's lakeside location, examining both the broader economic importance of canoes, and more particularly the development and organisation of the Ganda navy itself. It is clear, moreover, that the history of the Ganda canoe in the nineteenth century is inextricably linked to key developments already discussed: the growth of long-distance trade from the 1840s onward, and Buganda's military stagnation. Canoes became critical in the attempts both to control the former and to overcome the latter.

Few pre-colonial societies south of the Sahara possessed a more developed naval organisation than that of the Ganda. Navies, indeed, are not readily associated with African civilisation, for a number of reasons, not least the fact that Africa's strikingly regular coastline allowed for few natural protected ports. Yet several historians have shown water transport to have been important in a number of regions, usually inland. In West Africa, canoes were vital for commerce on Lake Chad, sections of the Volta river, and along the more sheltered estuaries and lagoons of the coast, while the middle section of the Niger was, according to Tony Hopkins, "one of the great centres of pre-colonial trade in Africa", thanks to the canoe¹. Fishing in canoes along the Zaire river and its major tributaries was a key economic activity in the area, while trade in canoes also flourished². Again in West Africa, naval warfare was also practised, along the protected lagoons, in the Niger delta as well as further up the

¹A.G.Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (London, 1973) 72-3

²J.Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforests* (London, 1990) 91, 94. See also R.W.Harms, *River of Wealth, River of Sorrow: the Central Zaire Basin in the era of the slave and ivory trade, 1500-1891* (New Haven & London, 1981)

river, and on Lake Chad. As Robert Smith has shown, canoes were used both for transporting and supplying armies on distant campaigns, and as vehicles of war in themselves³. In Buganda, fishing, transport and war were activities in which canoes of varying sizes were vital. The lake was a critical part of Ganda life and culture, offering a livelihood in the form of fishing to shoreline communities; it was also the home of Buganda's most potent deity, Mukasa. In military terms, the Ganda were able to extend their hegemony by using the lake; at the height of its naval power, Buganda was suffering a series of setbacks on land which signified a military decline. This only served to underline the importance of the navy, for the lake represented, to Mutesa in particular, the only remaining route by which Buganda could extend its control beyond the extant empire.

Canoe Construction

By the second half of the nineteenth century, a wide variety of canoes were being built along the Ganda lake shore and on the islands. Many of the canoe types had been in use for several centuries, while others were of more recent origin. The Ganda employed a correspondingly broad range of wood-types in construction, and while particular regions were noted for their abundance of materials, Buganda was in general extremely well-wooded. The Sesse islands, for example, were described by a missionary as being "splendidly timbered"⁴. Specifically, *mpewere* was widely used; this was found around the Katonga valley, in northern Buddu and Mawokota⁵. Roscoe noted the prevalence in canoe-building of *muwule*, which was comparable to mahogany in that it hardened in water. This wood was resistant to termite attack and is a useful substitute for teak⁶. *Muwule* was indigenous throughout the lake region: according to colonial forestry surveys, it was common in Bunyoro, Ankole and Busoga⁷. It was found in most wooded districts in Buganda⁸.

³R.S.Smith, *Warfare and Diplomacy in Pre-Colonial West Africa* (London, 1989) 51-2

⁴C.M.S. CA6/025/17 Wilson to Wright 19.4.78

⁵H.B.Thomas & R.Scott, *Uganda* (London, 1935) 160

⁶J.Roscoe, *The Baganda* (London, 1911) 385

⁷Thomas & Scott, *Uganda*, 163ff

The *mmanvu*, or dugout canoe, was clearly distinct from the larger vessels constructed from planks. In the case of the *mmanvu*, an entire tree might be dug up, roots and all, apparently to minimise the risk of splitting the wood. The required length and diameter were measured and the tree was cut accordingly. Kagwa suggests that the inside of this canoe was on average between ten and fifteen feet in length. The trunk was hollowed, the ends tapered, and the bottom flattened, whereupon the canoe was rolled on logs to the shore: clearly the closer the materials were to the water, the better⁹. Dug-out canoes were used for short trips, as ferries across the inland arms of the lake, for shallow-water fishing both along the lake-shore and on rivers further inland, as well as on Lake Wamala in southern Singo. They could be anything up to twenty feet in length and four feet wide, while many contained flattened floors to facilitate the transport of cattle across rivers or shallow bays off the lake¹⁰. This type of vessel was not unique to Buganda: the Vuma also built canoes capable of carrying livestock between the island and the mainland¹¹. Chaillé-Long, travelling in such canoes along the Nile from Bulondoganyi, opined that river canoes were decidedly inferior to those on the lake¹². Perhaps, given the contrast in the elements each had to face, this was inevitable. In addition to canoes, the Ganda also built the *kadyeri* or small raft; this was made by lashing together palm-leaf stems, and was used for fishing short distances off shore or laying traps in shallow water¹³. Both the *mmanvu* and the *kadyeri* were probably older and commoner than the larger vessel built from planks, which was known to contemporary Europeans as the 'Uganda canoe'. The latter was clearly used for warfare and much longer-distance expeditions¹⁴.

⁸W.J.Eggeling, *The Indigenous Trees of the Uganda Protectorate* (Entebbe, 1940) 234-7

⁹A.Kagwa [tr.E.B.Kalibala, ed.M.M.Edel], *Customs of the Baganda* (New York, 1934) 151

¹⁰Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 385-6

¹¹U.N.A. A4/8 Report on the Caravan Route from Mombasa to Kampala, by Hobart 15.7.97

¹²C.Chaillé-Long, *Central Africa* (London, 1876) 155

¹³Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 391

¹⁴*ibid.*, 386. Michael Kenny suggests that the 'sewn-canoe' was found among the Kerebe and the Soga, as well as the Ganda: M.Kenny, 'Pre-Colonial Trade in Eastern Lake Victoria', *Azania*, 14 (1979) 99

With regard to canoes made from planks, or the vessels which strictly-speaking made up the Ganda *mpingu* or navy, Kagwa suggests that the wood-types *emiyoru* and *nkoba* were preferred for the sides of the vessel, being hard and thus resistant to violent weather and leakage¹⁵. The Minziro forest system in central and southern Buddu contained *nkoba*, which was also located in abundance in the Mabira forest of southern Kyagwe, quite close to the lake. The term *emiyoru* used by Kagwa is more commonly interpreted as *miovu*, which was also found in the forests of Kyagwe¹⁶. Use was made too of *musisi*, a wood common to Buddu but again also found in Kyagwe¹⁷. Drawing tentative conclusions, it seems likely that up until the second half of the eighteenth century the Ganda relied heavily on Kyagwe for wood for canoes. The acquisition of Buddu, as in so many other spheres, opened up considerably the range of suitable wood-types for canoe construction.

There is relatively little evidence relating to the impact of canoe construction on local environments. Ecological damage may have resulted in a number of areas, especially in the last decades of the nineteenth century as canoes were built ever larger and at an escalating rate. A colonial report in 1901 suggested that "during the last few years", meaning since the early 1890s, some ten thousand canoes had been built by the Ganda. Many of these vessels each required three trees, "as only two planks are got from one tree". As a result, the author of the report surmised, anything up to 30,000 trees had been felled¹⁸. While this is probably exaggerated, it does suggest that some forest areas may have been seriously depleted.

Emphasising the time-honoured skills involved in canoe building, Kagwa wrote that "[t]he King's boats and some of the others were constructed by experts who were trained in the trade from childhood. Different parts required different experts . . .

¹⁵Kagwa, *Customs*, 151

¹⁶Thomas & Scott, *Uganda*, 160-1, 534

¹⁷U.N.A. A8/1 Prendergast to ? 2.7.00

¹⁸U.N.A. A8/1 Tomkins to Comm. 13.11.01

Special tools belonged to each of these¹⁹. These divisions of labour serve to accentuate the complexity involved in canoe-construction, and stress the exclusivity of the profession and of shoreline communities in general. It is likely that there was a class of skilled men whose reputations went before them; many of these would have been engaged by the *kabaka* to construct the best vessels. The construction of larger canoes in the late nineteenth century was clearly the most recent branch of the industry; the industry itself was the preserve of families long settled along the shore or on the islands.

A high degree of competence in carpentry is evident from Kagwa's descriptions of the exact measurement and weighing of the various boards and planks needed for the larger canoes. Planks were held together by pegs or skin thread, pulled through holes made by hot spikes²⁰, while a kind of creeper was also sometimes used for stitching, which was in turn covered with a finer creeper for protection. The stitching itself was caulked with tree fibre²¹. The canoe was often covered with a dye derived from red clay, found in the surface soil around iron-formations; this, mixed with oil or beer, hardened and served to protect joints and seams²². Among the final touches, particularly to the larger vessels, was the fixing of animal horns to the prow, which was supposed to symbolise strength²³. In 1862, Speke described a flotilla of canoes thus: "They were all painted with red clay, and averaged ten to thirty paddles, with long prows standing out like the neck of a syphon or swan, decorated on the head with the horns of the Nsunnu (*lencotis*) antelope, between which was stuck upright a tuft of feathers exactly like a grenadier's plume"²⁴. Many of the larger vessels were fitted

¹⁹One such expert was Omutusa, who possessed particular kinds of axes and knives for his work: Kagwa, *Customs*, 151

²⁰*ibid.*, 152

²¹Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 388-9

²²*ibid.*, 390. It is unclear whether oil was a pre-colonial ingredient, although 'castor-oil' plants did grow in Buganda.

²³Kagwa, *Customs*, 152

²⁴J.H. Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (London & Edinburgh, 1863) 390-1. The *nsumu*, or more commonly *mpala*, is the Uganda kob, a large antelope.

with what was effectively a battering ram, protruding up to five feet in front²⁵. The launch of a canoe was quite an affair, being an occasion of great excitement attended by the builders and their wives²⁶. When not in use, canoes would have been pulled onto dry land; strenuous efforts were made to conceal them, and if not on land, they might be sunk with large stones²⁷, presumably as a precaution against robbery.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, the size of canoes varied enormously. Roscoe recorded that larger canoes could carry "twelve to fourteen loads each", while smaller vessels managed on average four loads; a 'load' was generally from sixty to seventy pounds in weight²⁸. The largest vessel recorded seems to have been that described by the missionary Mackay in 1883, which was apparently 80 feet long and five feet wide²⁹. Stanley noted a canoe which was 72 feet in length, over seven feet wide and four feet deep³⁰. At the south end of the lake, Stanley also observed fourteen large Ganda canoes, "with ample storage room, and all the goods, ammunition, and asses, and all the timid, men, women, and children, and Wanyamwezi, were placed in these"³¹. These magnificent vessels were clearly built with long-distance transport in mind, but would also have served as war canoes on distant campaigns. Other canoes described by Stanley during the war with Buvuma in 1875 were between 50 and 70 feet in length, others again between 30 and 50 feet. The smallest war canoe on this occasion was 18 feet in length³².

Naval Developments c.1700-c.1840

Smaller-scale naval activity had existed prior to the nineteenth century. In commercial terms, the salt trade centred around the north-east corner of the lake,

²⁵Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 386

²⁶Kagwa, *Customs*, 152

²⁷Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 391. Kagwa claims that anchors were attached, but this seems unlikely in most cases: Kagwa, *Customs*, 152

²⁸J. Roscoe, *Twenty-five Years in East Africa* (London, 1921) 64

²⁹C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1883/120 Mackay's Journal 6.7.83

³⁰H.M. Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent* (London, 1878) I, 314

³¹*ibid.*, 293

³²*ibid.*, 314

mentioned in Chapter 5, is just one example of a canoe-based exchange system which doubtless existed before naval expansion in the second half of the nineteenth century³³. The Ganda also used canoes in warfare before Mutesa's reign, in both a lacustrine and riverine context. *Kabaka* Mawanda, probably in the 1720s or 1730s, used a "fleet of canoes" to fight the people of Bugerere, north of Kyagwe. A prince named Namatiwa led the fleet into enemy waters, probably via the Nile, and on this occasion Bugerere was defeated³⁴. It may indeed be possible to date the origins of Ganda naval power from the reign of Mawanda, who is credited with the complete subjugation not only of Kyagwe "[from] the shores up to the limit of Bugerere", but also of the critical river port of Bulondoganyi and the surrounding district, at or near the modern site of Nabuganyi³⁵. Bulondoganyi was of great importance throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and its supposed capture by Mawanda would have been a major boost to Ganda naval and commercial strength in the region³⁶. Moreover, we have already noted the importance of Kyagwe in supplying wood for the building of canoes. The extension of Ganda power into this region would have transformed canoe construction.

Around 1800, a military campaign involving canoes was undertaken by Kamanya against the Kedi. This war was noted for its ferocity, and according to the version told to Stanley, Kamanya became so exasperated at his inability to overcome the enemy that a grand council was held to discuss tactics. Significantly, the geography of the enemy territory was daunting to the Ganda, the land being intersected by "broad

³³It is more than likely that salt was only one among many commodities traded by canoe, although lack of concrete evidence renders this purely speculative. Stanley, for example, noted that at Musira Island, off the western lake shore south of the Kagera river, "we found four or five canoes from Kamiru's country loaded with coffee and butter". The Ganda may also have been involved in such commerce: Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 218

³⁴Emmamba ye Namukuma: Kabaka Mawanda awangula e Kyagwe', *Munno* (1913) 111

³⁵Ebye Buganda: Entabalo za Sekabaka Mawanda', *Munno* (1921) 10-11. See also Chapter 6 above.

³⁶Village ports along this stretch of the Nile had probably been in existence for centuries. One of the earliest references to Bulondoganyi in this regard is in a mid-seventeenth century context: A.Kagwa [ed. & tr. M.S.M.Kiwanuka], *The Kings of Buganda* (Nairobi, 1971) 50

rivers" and the eastern arms of Lake Kyoga. The use of canoes as instruments of war was clearly seen as being unconventional:

Stimulated by large rewards, the chiefs proposed various tactics for retaliating upon the enemy; but it was the plan of the grandfather of Sabadu the historian [who told Stanley this and many other stories] that was deemed the best. This person advised Kamanya to command 100 canoes to proceed by water to Jinja, where they might be taken to pieces and conveyed overland through Usoga to the Nagombwa river, whence, after reconstruction, they could proceed to attack the Wakedi in the rear, while the king himself could proceed with his army to Urongani, along the western bank of the Victoria Nile, and menace Ukedi from that side. This wise counsel was loudly applauded and at once adopted, the charge of the canoes being given to Sabadu's grandfather himself³⁷.

The battle which ensued was eventually if not easily won. Kagwa's version does not differ substantially, although one or two details are worth noting. Although the *Gabunga* was ordered to "build canoes" rather than simply collect them, it was Sewankambo the *Sekibobo* who was given command of them. In terms of organisation, this is worthy of note, as we shall see below. Moreover, the canoes were used for ferrying the soldiers and were not directly involved in the fighting³⁸.

The next naval campaign which appears in the sources took place during Suna's reign, and was directed against the Soga who had fled to Kitente island in the Buvuma channel and established themselves there in defiance of Ganda authority. It is clear from accounts of this conflict that the Ganda frequently relied on friendly islands to supply them with vessels and crews: the Vuma offered up one hundred canoes, manned by crews from nearby islets, while several other islands, Sesse included, supplied two hundred. Out of a force of some five hundred canoes, the remainder

³⁷Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 361

³⁸Kagwa, *Kings*, 109-10

came from the Ganda mainland shore. The Soga, aided by other island allies, managed to muster an equal number. According to Stanley's version, however, the Ganda were at a distinct disadvantage insofar as they were unaccustomed and unwilling to fight on water. It was not yet universally accepted that canoes and warfare were naturally compatible. The fact that Ganda soldiers were willing to fight on water at all, of course, suggests a degree of versatility and a core motivation which lent a particular potency to Buganda's military effort; even so, this was scarcely a substitute for competence. For one month the Ganda were unable either to overwhelm the Soga canoes, or to land on the island itself. Suna then decided to besiege the island with canoes, preventing the Soga from obtaining supplies from the mainland. The conflict lasted a further two months until, on the verge of starvation, the Soga capitulated³⁹. The idea of a 'naval blockade' may not have been entirely novel, but on this occasion it was carried out to great effect; it showed the versatility of the canoe as a vehicle of war, particularly as many Ganda did not feel confident about actually fighting in canoes.

Around forty years after this clash, Mutesa found himself in a similar position, attempting to overcome the Vuma using a large and well-structured naval force. Indeed, Mutesa was continuing the struggle begun by Suna to completely pacify the northern shore of the lake: it was a struggle which ended in failure. The details of the 1875 war are examined below; it is sufficient to note here that the outcome was at best inconclusive. The Vuma, of course, were no novices to water-borne activity; even in the late 1890s, the size of their canoes and the skill with which they were used were noted by Europeans⁴⁰. Yet something of a paradox remains. The Ganda had used canoes in warfare from at least the early eighteenth century; yet even in the 1870s comparatively few Ganda appear to have been adept at water-based military activities. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the Ganda were capable of

³⁹Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 365-7

⁴⁰U.N.A. A4/8 Report on the Caravan Route from Mombasa to Kampala, by Hobart 15.7.97

building vessels which could travel the length of Lake Victoria, but they were unable to use such technology to overcome small local islands.

Buganda's canoe technology developed unevenly. After c.1700, the Ganda gradually attempted to forge together two separate spheres of activity: military expansion, and fishing, for which the Ganda had long made use of canoes. Efforts to use the skills of fishing communities for military expansion met with variable success. Even in the late nineteenth century, it was often an uncomfortable pairing, using experts among the Sesse islanders who had little experience of transporting large numbers of men in battle conditions, and soldiers who, like the majority of Ganda, had little direct experience of the lake and even less of fighting on water.

The development of Ganda naval power was closely linked to the Sesse islands, in terms of their strategic location and the expertise and raw materials in which Sesse was rich. The historical relationship between the islands and the mainland is not very clear. It is not obvious that Buganda ever formally extended its rule over Sesse, although Kiwanuka suggests that this 'probably' occurred in the sixteenth century⁴¹. We have seen, however, that in the early sixteenth century Nakibinge was forced to seek military aid from the islands, which indicates their political independence. Even during Mutesa's reign, the Ganda were in the habit of launching 'war expeditions' in the direction of Sesse⁴². It seems likely that before the British intervened, Sesse retained a degree of political, and certainly cultural, autonomy from the mainland. Perhaps it was an island temperament which as much as anything else engendered the entrenched feelings of separateness among the Sesse people. Roscoe tells us that up until the late nineteenth century, many Sesse had never visited the mainland, while a journey to the capital amounted to the trip of a lifetime⁴³.

⁴¹Kiwanuka's notes in Kagwa, *Kings*, 8

⁴²ibid., 160-1

⁴³Roscoe, *Twenty-five Years*, 61-2

The islands had probably been brought into some form of tributary relationship with Buganda by the middle of the eighteenth century. The impulse behind the development of canoe transport did not come from Sesse, although the economic and professional benefits of closer union between mainland and islands undoubtedly stimulated the rapid growth of the navy in the nineteenth century. Roscoe noted the tradition that the principal canoe-builders of Buganda arrived during the Kintu period "from the north of the lake". As a geographical expression this is unhelpful, but these early canoe-builders and oarsmen were apparently the forefathers of the *mamba* clan and were from the Kintu period onward the most important representatives of the profession on the mainland. Moreover, it was from their ranks that the *Gabunga*, roughly meaning the 'chief of canoes', was always taken⁴⁴. According to Zimbe, Kintu crossed Lake Kyoga by way of a port named 'Podyo', implying that a canoe culture had already emerged in the region⁴⁵. Nonetheless, developing links with the Sesse islands represented an on-going investment for the Ganda. Roscoe gathered that the Sesse people led their field as "experts in canoe building, while as sailors they also possess an accurate knowledge of the geography and physical features of the lake"⁴⁶. Had not Sesse skills and natural resources been harnessed by the Ganda, it is unlikely that the latter would have been able to develop the naval power which they did in the nineteenth century. Sesse labour facilitated the extension of Ganda influence toward the southern end of the lake. The skill of the Sesse in canoe construction was to some extent rivalled by that of the Vuma and the Soga, who also enjoyed a relative abundance of high-quality timber which was lacking on the other shores of the lake⁴⁷. But only the Sesse and Ganda managed to build vessels capable of moving considerable distances from their territorial waters.

⁴⁴Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 383

⁴⁵B.M.Zimbe [tr.F.Kamoga], 'Buganda ne Kabaka' [c.1939] 9

⁴⁶Roscoe, *Twenty-five Years*, 61

⁴⁷*ibid.*, 62

The Growth of Naval Power in the Late Nineteenth Century

Canoes were seldom used in war before c.1850, and it was only in the later nineteenth century that attempts were made to use them to extend Ganda military power over long distances. The building and manning of canoes in the nineteenth century were still specialised professions. However, from the 1840s onward, there was an enormous increase in both the number of canoes constructed and the scale of the vessels themselves. The canoe became a more overt instrument in the extension of state power. There were two main reasons for this surge: the expansion of long-distance commerce following the arrival of coastal merchants in Buganda in 1844; and the gradually declining success rate of the Ganda army on land. It might also be suggested, as Hartwig does, that the control exerted by Mirambo over the Unyanyembe-Karagwe route forced Mutesa to rely increasingly on water-borne transport during the 1870s⁴⁸.

The growth of long-distance trade clearly prompted the increasing use of the lake as a trade route. The exact origins of longer-distance canoe journeys remain unclear, but it seems likely that such commerce was developed by Suna as a direct response to the arrival of the first coastal traders at his court in 1844. Suna is credited with the establishment of a naval force capable of launching attacks against the Soga and even further east; he also seems to have sent canoes as far south as Umara and perhaps Ukerewe⁴⁹. It is clear that we can ignore Stanley's claim to have prompted Mutesa to open trade links with the south end of the lake⁵⁰. The second half of the nineteenth

⁴⁸G.Hartwig, 'The Victoria Nyanza as a trade route in the nineteenth century', *Journal of African History*, 11:4 (1970) 552. Hartwig later enlarged on some of the themes discussed in this article: see G.Hartwig, *The Art of Survival in East Africa: the Kerebe and Long-Distance Trade 1800-1895* (New York & London, 1976)

⁴⁹Hartwig, 'The Victoria Nyanza', 542. Grant was told that Suna sent canoes "to the country of Umara, east of Uganda and near to the Masai": J.Grant, 'Summary of observations on the geography, climate, and natural history of the lake region of Equatorial Africa', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, 42 (1872) 267. Burton wrote: "The merchants have heard that Suna, the late despot of Uganda, built matumbi, or undecked vessels, capable of containing forty or fifty men, in order to attack his enemies, the Wasoga, upon the creeks which indent the western shores of the Nyanza": R.F.Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa* (London, 1860) II, 212

⁵⁰Hartwig, 'The Victoria Nyanza'. 536

century saw a remarkable increase in the use of the lake as a trade route, so much so that in 1871 Mutesa even sent a mission to Zanzibar requesting, among other things, that the Sultan send ship-building experts to Buganda to help him navigate the lake⁵¹. By the 1880s, coastal merchants were commonly choosing water-borne transport - normally in the form of Ganda canoes, although occasionally their own dhows - rather than the land route through Karagwe. The first Arab dhow appeared on the lake in 1881 and belonged to the trader Said ibn Seif⁵².

As we have noted in Chapter 5, slaves and ivory were the primary commodities exported from Buganda by canoe. The journey from Buganda to Mwanza took on average around three or four weeks, the canoes hugging the western shore; proximity to land was essential in order to acquire supplies and to avoid storms which might loom on the horizon. The advantages of the lake route included lower portage costs, minimal risk of slaves escaping, and, perhaps most importantly, avoidance of the increasingly unstable land route controlled by Mirambo. Arab traders also had to pay considerably less in local *hongo* or customs duty. As we have noted, the importance of the land route had dwindled by the end of the 1870s, and some 2,000 slaves a year may have been transported by canoe during the 1880s⁵³. However, as we have also seen, the lake route had perils of its own: storms could appear on the lake with terrifying abruptness in certain seasons. On the Buddu coast, for example, winds were calm to moderate during February-March and September-October; at other times of the year, NNE winds would die down in the early morning to be replaced by SSE trade winds which could reach gale force during the day⁵⁴.

Prompted by repeated military failure on land and by ever greater commercial rewards, the Ganda navy was at its most powerful in the 1870s and 1880s. The war

⁵¹Grant, 'Summary of observations'. 165-6

⁵²Hartwig, 'The Victoria Nyanza'. 546

⁵³See Chapter 5 above.

⁵⁴C.W.Chorley, 'Winds and Storms of Lake Victoria', *Uganda Journal*, 8:2 (1941) 77

against Buvuma in 1875 is perhaps the most famous, and certainly the best-documented, example of how the navy was used as an instrument of military power⁵⁵. On this occasion, canoes of varying sizes were deployed against the Vuma, but the most important vessels were those which, according to Stanley, could carry between 60 and 100 soldiers, exclusive of their crews. These were formed into 'squadrons' of between 50 and 100 vessels each, each squadron under the command of a prominent military chief. The groupings then advanced *en masse* across the channel dividing Buganda and Buvuma, the oarsmen squatting at the sides of the canoes, and the soldiers upright and wielding spears and shields. In military terms, the campaign against Buvuma was inconclusive; although the Vuma agreed at length to pay tribute to Mutesa, their smaller and quicker vessels had repeatedly dodged the more cumbersome Ganda canoes, enabling them to launch lightning attacks and then to swiftly withdraw⁵⁶.

To some extent, Mutesa was able to offset the limitations imposed by land warfare by adopting a policy of 'informal empire'. Perhaps the best instance of this is the influence exerted over Lukonge, the ruler of Ukerewe. The attack made by a Ganda fleet in that direction in 1878 - ostensibly an outraged response to the killing of two European missionaries - was actually in reply to Lukonge's request for assistance against his rebellious brother. The insurrection was put down and the Ganda returned, the *status quo* maintained and Buganda's still-mighty reputation kept intact⁵⁷. At the same time, naval strength led the Ganda to respond positively, even violently, to commercial impulses. In 1878, a missionary noted that Ganda canoes had been 'prowling' off the southern shore of the lake, near the creek known as 'Jordan's Nullah', capturing people along the shore and selling them as slaves to the Arab trader Songoro⁵⁸.

⁵⁵See also Chapter 6 above.

⁵⁶Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 304-41

⁵⁷Kagwa, *Kings*, 174

⁵⁸C.M.S. CA6/01 [Letters from the Foreign Office] 3A Kirk to Derby 1.4.78

In 1883, Mackay noted that a great many of the smaller islands down the western side of the lake had been 'devastated' by the Ganda and were now deserted⁵⁹: to be sure, these were soft targets, but they were nonetheless moribund reminders of Buganda's naval power. That year, there were also reports of large-scale naval expeditions led, unusually, by the *Gabunga*. According to Ashe, one of these was against 'Kutahala' and 'Kunyagga'⁶⁰: the precise direction of this attack is unclear. Yet it was often the mercenary dimension to their activities, as in the case of Ukerewe, which lent the Ganda their naval potency. Requests for Ganda assistance in local conflicts went some way to ensuring Ganda hegemony. In 1883 a chief named Roma or Rouma, on the south-west shore of the lake, hearing of an impending attack by a Ganda fleet, hastily dispatched a placatory gift of ivory. He also requested the assistance of the Ganda in reducing a rebellious island under his suzerainty. The Ganda obliged, were successful, and returned home⁶¹. By this means, Mutesa was able to extend influence over areas which would otherwise have remained outside Buganda's reach.

Yet it seems likely that Mutesa was frustrated by his inability to strengthen his control over the southern part of the lake, particularly the mainland. Contemporary Europeans, relying on Ganda informants, tended to exaggerate the extent to which various peoples around the lake owed allegiance to Buganda. The French missionary Livinhac noted in 1882 that Mutesa regarded the ruler of Karagwe as tributary to him⁶². The White Fathers were also given the impression that the rulers of Mwanza and Sukuma were tributary to Buganda⁶³. There may have been a grain of truth in this, but Karagwe, and especially Mwanza and Sukuma, were considerably more independent than Mutesa was prepared to admit.

⁵⁹C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1883/120 Mackay's Journal 15.7.83

⁶⁰C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1884/38 Ashe to Lang ? .11.83

⁶¹C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1883/120 Mackay's Journal 4.9.83

⁶²White Fathers: C13/37 Livinhac to Lavigerie 30.4.82

⁶³White Fathers: C14/38 Lourdel to Supérieur-Général 24.3.84

'The helots of Uganda': The Sesse and Ganda Naval Expansion

By the 1870s, the Sesse islands were a crucial pool of both canoe-builders and sailors⁶⁴, yet their importance to Ganda naval development contrasted with the economic and cultural gulf which existed between the mainland and the islands. Stanley wrote that the islanders, "because of their coal-black colour, timidity, superstition, and general uncleanly life, are regarded as the helots of Uganda"⁶⁵. While undoubtedly exaggerated, this does suggest something of the relationship between the Ganda and Sesse. Kenny reminds us that mainlanders regarded islanders with deep suspicion, and that the Sesse were considered cannibals⁶⁶. The sense of separateness was probably intensified by the roles fulfilled during naval campaigns: the Sesse were oarsmen, the Ganda were warriors and, of course, mostly landlubbers. It is likely that the arrogance inherent in the Ganda military ethos led many soldiers to look down upon the Sesse who more often than not were merely their means of transport. The Sesse did not normally participate in the fighting. Perhaps because of this, the Sesse also had a reputation for abject cowardice. Livinhac wrote in 1889: "The oarsmen, inhabitants of the Sese islands, whose cowardice is proverbial, terrified by the gun-shots threw themselves into beating a retreat. In order to retain them, Gabriel was forced to have recourse to the most terrible threats"⁶⁷. Whether deserved or not, this reputation is revealing of Ganda attitudes.

At the end of the nineteenth century, tensions between the islands and the mainland persisted, and indeed the nascent colonial presence offered the Sesse an opportunity to voice their dissatisfaction. In 1898 a number of Sesse chiefs presented a list of grievances to the British agent Wilson, among which was the fact that "the Island race is regarded in Uganda as being inferior and subordinate to that country". Moreover,

⁶⁴Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 212-4

⁶⁵*ibid.*, 214

⁶⁶M.Kenny, 'The Powers of Lake Victoria', *Anthropos*, 72 (1977) 721

⁶⁷White Fathers: C13/115 Livinhac to Lavigerie 3.11.89. This reputation for cowardice is all the more perplexing when one considers that the Ganda god of war, Kibuka, came from the Sesse islands.

canoe-building had temporarily ground to a halt because of the "severe strain upon the Island labour resources". This discontent was considered "so serious as to endanger the existence of the canoe service, now so essential with the increasing demands on the Victoria Nyanza lake transport". The fact that local taxation often took the form of canoe labour reflected the pre-colonial relationship between the Sesse and their mainland overseers⁶⁸. By 1900, according to a contemporary report, a number of Sesse had 'emigrated' to the mainland,

where they find . . . more freedom from the power of the Chiefs than they have on the islands, where they are constantly called, by the Ba Ganda chiefs, to man canoes for transport of Government and other loads . . . [Such work] takes them from their homes, I believe, as long as seven to eight months in the year . . .⁶⁹

These grievances had clearly been festering for some time. The precise relationship between chiefs and canoeists is unclear, but many of the contemporary accounts suggest that the Sesse oarsmen were miserable and subservient, with virtually no rights over their own labour, and little recourse to the freedoms enjoyed by the *bakopi* on mainland Buganda. Mackay wrote in 1881: "The canoes are all built by the Basese who are the very slaves of slaves. At the point of the spear, on Mutesa's orders, they are obliged to leave their homes and paddle all the way to Usukuma & back, receiving no pay and no food for any journey . . ."⁷⁰. Similarly, the missionary Giraud suggested that on long voyages they were expected to provide their own food, could anticipate little payment, and above all had no choice in undertaking the journey itself. In sum, "the Msese must feel greatly honoured and must give thanks for performing free the work of the king!"⁷¹.

⁶⁸U.N.A. A4/12 Wilson to Berkeley 4.9.98

⁶⁹U.N.A. A8/1 Pordage to Acting Dep.Comm. 14.8.00

⁷⁰C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1881/66 Mackay to Hutchinson 20.4.81

⁷¹White Fathers: C14/167 Giraud to Bridoux 24.7.85

By the late nineteenth century, long-established fishing communities remained largely separate from the blossoming profession that was long-distance lake travel. Even so, it is likely that in the case of the Sesse islands, the constant drafting of professional oarsmen had an adverse effect on the local fishing economy. The drain on Sesse labour would clearly have interfered with the local economic infrastructure. Worse, the men were often absent for at least two or three months, while the labour itself received little remuneration. It might be suggested that the islands in the second half of the nineteenth century represent a classic case of underdevelopment: the islanders themselves were closely involved in the expanding cycle of long-distance commerce which was itself seen to be bringing 'economic advancement' to Buganda, but they were receiving none of the benefits associated with either.

Ports

Canoes, particularly the larger vessels, needed ports, or areas for landing, collection and, indeed, construction. Before the second half of the nineteenth century, there were few ports between the Nile and the Kagera river, the latter approximately representing Buganda's southern extremity. There existed, rather, numerous smaller landing stages which were used according to season. Many of the shoreline fish markets - notably those in Kyagwe - were probably located in villages which stretched to the water's edge and contained landing areas for fishing canoes. These were also probably centres of construction, at least for smaller vessels. In some areas, flooding may have prevented the establishment of permanent ports. Emin Pasha believed that regular rises in the level of the lake could produce flooding for up to two or three miles inland, creating marshy ground amid the low hills which in some areas stretched virtually up to the water's edge⁷². This made the landing of canoes extremely difficult. In other areas, steeper shores prevented flooding and made possible the establishment of landing areas.

⁷²G.Schweinfurth *et al* (eds.), *Emin Pasha in Central Africa* (London, 1888) 126. Of the shoreline of southern Buddu, Speke wrote: "Indeed, it appeared to me as if the N'yanza must have once washed the foot of these hills, but had since shrunk away from its original margin": Speke, *Journal*, 265-6

In the late 1870s, Emin observed a point along the shore which he called Usavara where the incline to the water was relatively steep and where there was a shelf "which for about forty feet is absolutely bare of vegetation". This allowed "the boats to come right up to the landing-stage, and hence Usavara is the usual starting-place for voyages on the lake"⁷³. Usavara probably lay close to Entebbe, then beginning to emerge as a long-distance port. While the shelf itself was natural, it was probably cleared of vegetation by hand. In 1875, Stanley asserted that Usavara, which he described as "the Kabaka's hunting village", was located on the east side of Murchison Bay. It was here that Stanley first landed in Buganda and it was clearly a relatively large settlement. The drawing accompanying Stanley's text plainly illustrates the cleared landing area described by Emin. The broad, neat approach to the water, the huts depicted to the left of the landing area, and the fact that the forest is shown to be some distance away, suggest that Usavara was an important collection point for canoes⁷⁴. Further south, there may have been an important port at Buganga, at the mouth of the Katonga, although this lay close to marshy ground liable to flooding during the wet season⁷⁵. Canoes were ordinarily collected here to transport men and livestock across the Katonga itself⁷⁶. As well as being a port, it may also have been an important centre of canoe construction. Lugard wrote of the 'Buganga promontory' in 1891, "there is here a land-locked harbour, and the opposite shore of Bunjako is the main timber supply of this part, from whence came most of the large forest trees used for making canoes and planks"⁷⁷. Passing through the 'Katonga valley' in 1862, Speke also wrote of the "magnificent trees" which "towered up just as so many great pillars, and then spread out their high branches like a canopy over us"⁷⁸.

⁷³Schweinfurth, *Central Africa*, 126

⁷⁴Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 186-8

⁷⁵U.N.A. A4/8 Hobart to Comm. 15.7.97

⁷⁶U.N.A. A6/9 Cunningham to Comm. 24.9.94

⁷⁷U.N.A. A26/4 Lugard to Admin.-Gen., IBEAC 13.8.91. Lugard drew attention to the abundance of construction wood in Buddu generally, and implied that the only other *ssaza* which was as rich in this respect was Kyagwe.

⁷⁸Notably, Speke and his party waded across the Katonga instead of using canoes. He wrote that "instead of finding a magnificent broad sheet of water, as I had been led to expect by the Arabs' account

By the late nineteenth century, the port of Munyonyo had also become established on the eastward-facing shore between modern-day Entebbe and Kampala. The origins of this port are unclear, but it first came to prominence in the late 1860s when Mutesa established one of his 'capitals' there. For several years the *kabaka* regularly travelled to this spot to observe Ramadan⁷⁹. Speke may have been describing Munyonyo when in 1862 he accompanied Mutesa to "the royal yachting establishment, the Cowes of Uganda", apparently located "down the west flank of Murchison Creek"⁸⁰. In 1875, Stanley mentioned 'Monyono Bay' as being the location of the *kabaka's* 'favourite canoes'⁸¹. Twenty years later, British officials were also impressed with the site as a port. Ternan noted a "good approachable foreshore for boats and steamers", the fact that the ground was "well raised above the level of the lake - a very gentle slope", and the ready availability of timber nearby⁸². In the later nineteenth century, Munyonyo became noted primarily as the base for the *kabaka's* 'pleasure trips' on the lake. Roscoe noted that the *kabaka* kept a number of large canoes at the 'King's port' - almost certainly Munyonyo - enabling him "to go at pleasure to the lake and spend some time in the water"⁸³. The tradition of royal pleasure-boating at Munyonyo remains strong. The recent souvenir book celebrating Mutebi II's coronation alleges that a 'canoe regatta' was founded by Mwanga in the late 1880s. There is no evidence for this; it is more likely to have originated under Mutesa. Throughout the twentieth century such events have been closely associated with the *kabaka*, while in 1993 a regatta took place amid much publicity⁸⁴. Munyonyo, however, had an additional, less frivolous, function: royal canoes were maintained here which in the event of an

of it, I found I had to wade through a succession of rush-drains divided one from the other by islands". He did, however, use canoes to cross the Kagera: Speke, *Journal*, 263, 277-8

⁷⁹Kagwa, *Kings*, 158, 161

⁸⁰Speke, *Journal*, 389, 391

⁸¹Stanley, *Dark Continent*, 1, 186

⁸²U.N.A. A4/5 Ternan to Berkeley 19.8.96

⁸³Roscoe, *Twenty-five Years*, 62-3

⁸⁴*Coronation Special Souvenir* (Kampala, 1993) 25. A copy of this entertaining and often informative booklet is held by the author.

emergency - namely rebellion or foreign invasion - could facilitate the *kabaka's* hasty departure⁸⁵. The port itself may have existed for this purpose since before 1800.

The origins of Entebbe are, again, unclear, although there can be little doubt that a fishing settlement had existed near present-day Entebbe for several centuries. Kagwa offers one of the earliest references to Entebbe when he suggests that *Kabaka* Kiggala, perhaps in the mid-fifteenth century, sought sanctuary there upon hearing of his brother's rebellion⁸⁶. Little mention is made of Entebbe in any source as a major port until the late nineteenth century, and its development was probably directly linked to the growth of long-distance canoe travel. Even then it seems to have been, for several years, less important than Munyonyo or Usavara. A French missionary described it thus in 1879: "The port of Mteve is large and very well-sheltered; on the shore there are no more than three or four poor houses for travellers; the village of Mteve is some distance from there"⁸⁷. Mutesa seemed reluctant to lend his support to the development of Entebbe as the main arrival point of coastal merchants. The missionary Girault suggested in 1882 that the *kabaka* was anxious to control customs duty on the incoming traders, and that Entebbe was regarded as being too distant from the capital for this to be done effectively⁸⁸. Nonetheless, Entebbe also had the major advantage of being well served by local timber⁸⁹. Other ports were under the command of local 'naval commanders'. Stanley, for example, described a journey to 'Jumba's Cove': the *Jumba*, as is examined below, was a 'vice-admiral' and was in charge of the district of 'Unjaku' which was "a headland abutting on the left or north bank of the Katonga river"⁹⁰.

⁸⁵Roscoe, *Twenty-five Years*, 89

⁸⁶Kagwa, *Kings*, 20

⁸⁷White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 0/17.6.79

⁸⁸White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 2/17.2.82. Mutesa appears to have favoured, for a while at least, a point closer to Lweza, about which little is known. In 1875, Mutesa apparently went to Lweza "to consult the god Wannema": Kagwa, *Kings*, 166

⁸⁹U.N.A. A4/19 Whyte to Ternan 26.7.99

⁹⁰Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 212

The Organisation of the Ganda Navy

In theory at least, the *Gabunga* - generally regarded as the head of the *mamba* clan and the 'chief of canoes' - was at the apex of Buganda's naval hierarchy. In practice, the *Gabunga's* authority was limited, and probably did not usually extend beyond control over the *kabaka's* favourite vessels. His responsibilities depended on current circumstances. It seems likely, for example, that his position was gradually undermined during the age of long-distance travel after the 1840s. This was largely because the uses to which naval technology was put at this time demanded either commercial or military expertise, and there is little evidence to suggest that the *Gabunga* was expected to have either. In the 1870s and 1880s, it may have been his job to look after the *bazungu* or Europeans on the lake, overseeing the arrival of missionaries and their goods. Increasingly, however, it was a largely honorary position, and the importance of the holder should not be exaggerated. One of the problems in analysing his role is the extent to which he was able to organise large concentrations of canoes. His main enclosure was in Busiro *ssaza*, where, according to Roscoe, he was virtually as important as the *ssaza* chief, the *Mugema*. In theory, he "controlled all the traffic on the lake"; again in theory, a great many chiefs were under his authority, as were hundreds of canoes as a result. Thus, he was "often called upon to furnish the means of transport for troops on their way to attack [the south end of the lake]". His authority in peacetime is suggested by the fact that he "also provided canoes for people who wished to visit the more remote parts of the mainland, which could be reached more easily by water than by making a long over-land journey"⁹¹. Roscoe may well have been describing the duties of the *Gabunga* in a past era rather than those of the later nineteenth century.

The fishing and canoe industries were traditionally linked with the *mamba* clan, whose foundation was supposedly contemporaneous with the arrival of Kintu. The *Gabunga* is generally regarded as the head of the clan, although his claim is disputed

⁹¹Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 254

by the chief *Nankere*. According to one version, Kintu asked the *Gabunga* where in Buganda he wanted to settle, to which the latter replied 'near the lake'. Thus, as Kagwa wrote, "[t]he main function of the Mamba clan was to construct Kabaka's canoes and Gabunga took sole charge of all the canoes that were on the lake"⁹². Theoretically this may have been true, but there was little evidence of it by the nineteenth century. As we have noted, the position of the *Gabunga* was probably undermined by the linking of maritime culture to warfare and commerce. Yet as early as the mid-seventeenth century, the *Gabunga* was experiencing political vicissitudes. At this time, according to one indigenous account, *Kabaka* Kayemba favoured Lugumba, a sub-chief of the *nvubu* clan, and gave him "the leadership of the canoes"⁹³. It is not clear how long this appointment lasted, or indeed what exactly it entailed. The *Gabunga* had presumably re-established his position by the end of the eighteenth century, when he took a limited part in Kamanya's war against Bukedi, mentioned above.

Moreover, while the *mamba* clan may have had an older claim to naval responsibility, they did not have a monopoly on it, nor on water-based activities generally. The *nvuma* or *katinvuma* clan also stress the importance of canoes in their heritage. The sub-chief Munyagwa appears to have been in charge of canoes at Bulondoganyi on the Nile, a responsibility which would have increased in importance as Bulondoganyi itself grew in significance and as Ganda control in the area was consolidated. In addition, Munyagwa "was also in charge of transporting the Basoga from that side to Buganda and likewise he transported Baganda who left to fight in Busoga. His canoe is claimed to have been very large"⁹⁴. It is impossible to place these duties in a historical context, but their relevance is clear. Members of the same clan had also come to the attention of Nakibinge in the early sixteenth century because "they

⁹²A. Kagwa [tr.J.Wamala], 'A Book of Clans of Buganda' [c.1972] 34-8

⁹³ibid., 85

⁹⁴ibid., 58

protected him to and from Ssesse⁹⁵. Their 'canoe heritage' embraced both riverine and lacustrine transport. A chief of the *kasimba* clan, Kabazzi or Kabuzi, claimed to be in charge of the *kabaka's* canoe *Nakawungu* (many vessels had names) of which he was the chief rower⁹⁶. The fox clan were also closely associated with maritime culture, having supposedly come from an island off the mainland and settling originally along the Kyagwe shore⁹⁷. Finally, the *nkejje* clan established their naval prowess in the early eighteenth century under *Kabaka* Mawanda. The case of the *nkejje* is striking because it explicitly makes the link between fishing and naval warfare. Mayemba, the clan head, "was an expert at sailing and he constructed two canoes Nalubugo and Nalugo both of which he used for fishing". But he was able to apply these skills to fighting when Mawanda decided to make war on Busoga. Mayemba distinguished himself - indeed conquered the Soga army single-handed, according to the clan history - and Mawanda rewarded him with a copper paddle. After the Soga campaign, Mayemba built a number of canoes at Namukuma in Kyagwe and was apparently greatly favoured by the *kabaka*⁹⁸. It is significant that these events occurred during the reign of Mawanda, who, as we have noted, was probably the first *kabaka* to encourage the development of naval power as an extension of military strength.

While the *Gabunga* might be described as the senior naval commander, many other chiefs were in charge of local fleets. Chiefs whose estates bordered the lake would have had such responsibility. It was most likely these men in whom real naval authority was vested. Early colonial officials clearly felt little need to use the *Gabunga* to collect canoes for them. In 1896, one official, wanting 20 canoes to travel by river to Mruli, "called the principal chiefs together, and explained to them the nature of the undertaking required of them. They at once issued orders for 20

⁹⁵ibid., 58

⁹⁶ibid., 63

⁹⁷ibid., 87

⁹⁸ibid., 106

canoes to be at Fouiira in 24 days"⁹⁹. Kagwa suggests that there were around one hundred specially-made, or 'state-service', canoes, each with its own name and 'captain', belonging to a particular clan and stationed at its own dock. These were the pride and joy of the Ganda navy, which when launched in full, and inclusive of "all the additional vessels of the chiefs and the fishermen", probably numbered thousands of canoes¹⁰⁰. To talk of a Ganda navy numbering thousands of vessels is, however, surely mistaken. It is highly unlikely that any such number of canoes ever acted in concert. Nor is it clear that fishing vessels were regularly 'called up' for military service, although this seems to have been the case in 1875, when Stanley noted among the assembled fleet small vessels carrying from three to six men¹⁰¹. Nonetheless, canoe-builders, oarsmen and actual canoes may have been pooled for naval campaigns in much the same way that large-scale armies were: the question is whether these vessels and their owners were actually ear-marked for such service, or whether this was their sole function. The navy had numerous vessels at its disposal between the mainland and the islands, and a flotilla of "a hundred strong could easily be collected in two or three days"¹⁰². Chiefs based on the islands were obliged to have ready at all times a number of canoes for use in the service of the state - military campaigns, or long-distance commercial expeditions - and punishment could be expected if such canoes were not in good condition¹⁰³.

In 1862, a chief named the *Jumba* was placed in charge of organising canoes to take Speke east to the Nile. Speke described him as "the fleet admiral", while a junior chief named Kasoro, who was "a lieutenant of Jumba's", was ordered to provide the European with canoes at Bulondoganyi¹⁰⁴. Stanley later mentioned the *Jumba*, whom he described as "the hereditary title of one of the junior admirals in command of a

⁹⁹U.N.A. A4/6 Wilson to Comm. 17.9.96

¹⁰⁰Kagwa, *Customs*, 153-6. Kagwa's figure of 'ten thousand' is presumably notional.

¹⁰¹Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 314

¹⁰²Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 384

¹⁰³*ibid.*, 384-5

¹⁰⁴Speke, *Journal*, 446, 449, 453.

section of the imperial canoe fleet", based in the district of 'Unjaku' on the north bank of the Katonga river¹⁰⁵. The *Jumba* appears to have been an important figure. It was indeed the hereditary title of a chief of the *nkima* clan; the main enclosure associated with the title was in Bunjako in the *ssaza* of Mawokota. According to Kagwa's history of the *nkima* clan, the *Jumba* was historically a very powerful character who "would not see the Kabaka" and who was extraordinarily rich. He was virtually the social equal of the governor of Mawokota, the *Kaima*¹⁰⁶. Notably, the clan history gives no indication of the *Jumba's* naval responsibilities, which may only have been conferred in the nineteenth century. He retained his authority through the 1880s and 1890s, however, and in 1897 was still a prominent naval personage¹⁰⁷. Stanley also mentioned 'Magura', who was "the admiral in charge of the naval yards at Sesse"¹⁰⁸. This man does not appear in any other source, but his responsibility would have been considerable.

Once again, Stanley's account of the war against Buvuma in 1875 is illuminating as it shows the organisation of the navy at war, and the ways in which the army worked in tandem with the fleet. The navy was basically at the army's disposal; it was an extension of the resources utilised by the army, and was not capable, nor was it expected to be, of independent action. In 1875, the *Sekibobo* was in command of both the army and the assembled canoes. Including 150 Ganda canoes, the navy totalled over 300 large and small vessels, of which Stanley reckoned 230 to be "really effective for war". About half were manned by the Sesse, the rest having crews from other islands tributary to Buganda and from the mainland shores. These had apparently been 'hand-picked' by another 'vice-admiral', the *Kikwata*¹⁰⁹. The *Kikwata* was later described by a British official as "the man in charge of the canoes at

¹⁰⁵Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 212-4

¹⁰⁶Kagwa, 'Clans', 19

¹⁰⁷U.N.A. A4/9 Pordage to Wilson 4.9.97

¹⁰⁸Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 212-4

¹⁰⁹*ibid.*, 312-3

Munyonyo"¹¹⁰. The *Jumba* and *Gabunga* had also collected crews from the islands and mainland. The *Gabunga* was indeed the 'Grand Admiral' of the navy, but in a joint action with the army he could not hold a position of supreme command. In wartime, the navy was relegated to a subordinate position within the great hierarchy of responsibility, and it was the *Gabunga's* duty "to convey the orders of the fighting general to his captains and lieutenants". Stanley suggests that the principal reason for this was that the oarsmen rarely fought, except in dire emergency, and thus were denied the glory of fighting rank. There were parallel lines of command, however, and the internal structure of the navy was respected in joint actions: the soldiers transported in each canoe only took orders from their supreme commander - in 1875 this was the *Sekibobo* - while the oarsmen only obeyed the *Gabunga*, who himself, of course, received instructions from the *Sekibobo*¹¹¹.

Co-operation of this kind was made possible by what might be described as the Ganda deference to the ideals of hierarchy. Care may have been taken not to offend prominent naval personages; yet one might contrast this with the haughty disdain directed toward the Sesse oarsmen. Campaigns of a different nature may have afforded the *Gabunga* greater authority, although where a military presence was involved, this was probably rare. Even so, we have already noted the campaigns led by the *Gabunga* in late 1883 and early 1884. The missionary O'Flaherty had seen him on the eve of one of these expeditions, "surrounded by several thousands of his choicest warriors" and being blessed by various priests. The campaigns were apparently successful, although the *Gabunga* himself died on the journey back to Buganda¹¹². In 1875, more junior land-based commanders were given charge of various sections of the naval advance. The *Kyambalango* was in charge of the right flank, consisting of fifty canoes. The centre was under the command of the *Kauta*,

¹¹⁰U.N.A. A9/1 Comm.'s Office to the Collector 30.7.01

¹¹¹Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 313

¹¹²C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1884/79 O'Flaherty to Wigram 1.4.84

who had responsibility for one hundred vessels. The *Mukwenda*, commanding eighty canoes, led the left flank¹¹³.

Estimating that the three categories of larger canoes had on average crews of 20, 40 and 50 respectively, and estimating the total number in each of these categories, Stanley produced the figure of 8,600 as the aggregate number of naval personnel involved in the war against Buvuma¹¹⁴. Stanley implies that the war was indeed one of great importance, but this may reflect his desire to be seen at the centre of great events rather than the reality of the war itself. Bearing this in mind, we should read with caution Stanley's 'calculation' that the Ganda were capable of putting on the water a force of "from between 16,000 to 20,000 . . . for purposes of war", including the soldiers in the canoes¹¹⁵.

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There is little doubt that during the nineteenth century the Ganda developed water transport into an invaluable tool for economic and military expansion. It is equally clear, however, that there were impediments to Buganda's control of the lake. One of the main problems was the fact that the Ganda attempted to convert fishing skills into long-distance navigational skills. There was no ready bridge between the two. The story of Buganda's naval expansion in the nineteenth century is to some extent the story of the struggle to manufacture such a bridge, to link the old with the new, to pull what was perceived to be ready-made labour from among the shoreline communities and place it in a radically different context. It is clear that relatively few Ganda or Sesse islanders were confident about travelling the full length of the lake, even by the end of the 1870s. Travel of this magnitude required considerable stamina and exceptional navigational skills, despite the fact that oarsmen basically followed the

¹¹³Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 331

¹¹⁴*ibid.*, 314

¹¹⁵*ibid.*, 314

line of the western shore. A number of Europeans - Speke and Grant in the early 1860s, Stanley and Chaillé-Long in the mid-1870s - claimed to have experienced considerable difficulty in either getting access to the lake or rounding up sufficient boats and crews to take them on the water. Often the Ganda themselves expressed an uneasy reluctance to have anything to do with the lake¹¹⁶. This suggests that, although Stanley was eventually able to circumnavigate the lake, only a few outstanding oarsmen were capable of such a feat.

The lake continued to be treated with great respect; the Ganda were all too aware of the sudden storms which regularly sprang up on the water. It was essential that Mukasa, the omnipotent god of the lake, be placated, and this deity was feared even in the supposedly religiously-fluid era of the 1870s and 1880s. Among the many missionaries who were conveyed from Sukuma to Buganda by canoe was John Roscoe, and he was keen to point out how fragile Ganda vessels could be on the open lake: he had, after all, lost property and nearly his life in a shipwreck. In 1877, the missionary Wilson was also transported in a canoe from the south to the north end of the lake, and he described how the pilots on two occasions lost their way, mistaking islands for the coast of Buganda¹¹⁷. One should not, perhaps, read too much into this, but it is clear that although the Ganda had the most powerful claim, no-one could describe the lake, as the Romans did the Mediterranean, as *mare nostrum*.

Finally, Buganda's inability to completely pacify the northern shore meant that valuable naval resources were often tied up in struggles with the Soga and the Vuma. Missionaries and coastal traders alike were often stranded at both ends of the lake precisely because of this insecurity¹¹⁸. The failure to overwhelm Buvuma in 1875 typifies this. Ironically, perhaps, the Ganda navy had more solid military success in the southern, more distant, waters of the lake; but here also the Ganda were unable to

¹¹⁶For example, Chaillé-Long, *Central Africa*, 141; Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 214

¹¹⁷C. Wilson & R. W. Felkin, *Uganda and the Egyptian Soudan* (London, 1882) I, 101-2

¹¹⁸For example, C.M.S. CA6/09/6 Copplestone to Wright 24.6.79

impose the authority which Mutesa in particular desired, and of which their technology suggested they were capable.

One of the underlying themes to have emerged in our examination of Ganda naval development, and of military organisation in Chapters 6 and 7, has been related to the ways in which the Ganda state marshalled its human resources. The building and manning of canoes, and the collection of armies, are the clearest examples of the way in which the state channelled labour and manpower in the pursuit of regional hegemony, both commercial and military. In the last two chapters, we examine other examples of social organisation and coercion, namely compulsory state labour and slavery, and the ways in which these either changed or remained constant during the nineteenth century. It is clearly essential to understand the roles which slavery and 'free labour' played in underpinning Ganda economic, social and military development, and the ways in which these reinforced notions of a cohesive and hierarchical polity.

CHAPTER 9

The State and its Human Resources # 1: The Organisation of Labour

In this and the following chapter, we examine the ways in which the Ganda state was organised in terms of its labour, both on a private basis and, more importantly, in a centrally-based and coercive context. We have seen in Chapters 3 to 5 how the evolution of the Ganda state owed a great deal to the individual's relative economic freedom, especially in terms of regional and long-distance commercial activity. But Ganda society tempered these individual liberties through a system of coercive labour: the most extreme expression of this can be seen in the institution of slavery, which we examine in the following chapter. A system of 'taxation' or tribute collection was also in place by the nineteenth century. In this chapter, we look at the organisation of 'free' labour by the state and on a more local - i.e. 'village' - level, as well as at the collection of domestic tribute by the state. It is clear that the themes of 'class' and of obligation are of great importance in analysing how any given society functions, and how it enlists its members as, in the broadest possible sense, a collective economic asset.

A Class-free Society?

Lloyd Fallers asserted that Buganda was a classless society. This, the argument goes, was particularly the case as successive rulers sought to concentrate in their own hands the power of promotion, breeding an open and competitive society in which one could be a *mukopi* or peasant one day and the *Katikiro* the next, and vice versa¹. This is a fair summary as far as it goes, but it appears to be somewhat simplistic. In the United States, an important part of the 'American Dream' is (or was) that everyone has a fair chance of becoming President. As with chieftainship in Buganda, the concept has no

¹L.A.Fallers, 'Despotism, Status, and Social Mobility in an African Kingdom', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 2:1 (1959) 4-32; L.A.Fallers, 'Social Stratification in Traditional Buganda', in L.A.Fallers (ed.), *The Kings Men* (London, 1964) 64-117

basis in reality. Divisions of labour had emerged in Buganda by the nineteenth century, and had both social - in terms of gender especially - and economic bases. People were increasingly identified by their professions². There may have been considerable commercial and entrepreneurial freedom *within* these professions; nonetheless, 'classes', or socio-economic groupings based on a varying range of expectations and aspirations, become perceptible by the nineteenth century. Indeed, this development was probably hastened during the nineteenth century, particularly after c.1840, which can be identified as an age of heightened economic awareness. Particular professions - notably workers in metal and potters - were lauded above others. Certain groups were exempt from the levies of state labour, the system which enabled public works - most significantly in the form of highways - to be undertaken. More importantly, certain professions were more likely to receive political and social favour (see chapters 3 and 4 above)³.

'Taxation' in the Nineteenth Century

The importance of the 'human resources' of the state can be seen not only in what citizens offered by way of physical effort, but also in what they contributed to the government's coffers. Taxation - or, if this term is considered to be applicable to literate societies only, 'domestic tribute' - was the means by which the *kabaka* paid for his administration and maintained his extensive household. To some extent, it

²Certain professions were relatively exclusive, and had been since before 1800 as a result of clan restrictions, for example. Certainly, 'sideways' movement was not so easy that professional distinctions can be overlooked. In the early colonial period, Fisher wrote that in Buganda "crafts cannot be learned - a man must be born of the potter or blacksmith's clan", which seems quite likely: A.B.Fisher, *Twilight Tales of the Black Baganda* (London, 1912) 36

³Walter Rusch has also suggested that there was increasing differentiation within the broad mass of *bakopi*: while the Ganda who relied solely on agriculture were obliged to offer their services and labour to local chiefs, professional craftsmen were often exempt from the 'indignities' of public labour and were given land in return for a proportion of their manufactures. But Rusch's Marxist perspective is both confusing and misleading. Craftsmen, he argues, despite these 'privileges', continued to be tied to the lower class because "they too lacked the independent means of production, except for some tools or implements, and were therefore compelled to enter into a state of dependence". The only genuine differences between various groups of *bakopi* were the ways in which each was 'exploited' by the ruling class. This interpretation of the relationship between specialised professions and chieftainship is extremely unhelpful: W.Rusch, *Klassen und Staat in Buganda vor der Kolonialzeit* (Berlin, 1975) - see English summary, 380

probably also permitted him to trade externally on his own account. Equally important, it was a means of social and political control, insofar as there existed a widely-held belief in the need for individual contributions to the wealth of the collective society, as personified by the *kabaka* himself.

Tribute in both money and kind was often complex in pre-colonial Buganda. While, all things considered, such levies do not appear to have been particularly excessive, the *kabaka's* treasury drew considerable wealth thereby. At the close of the nineteenth century, the missionary Cunningham made a fascinating, if inadvertent, comparison between state labour and tribute, asserting that "[t]he fundamental principle of the state was that all things and persons were the property of the king, and were absolutely at his disposal"⁴. This 'fundamental principle', which was certainly not unique to Buganda, was the core philosophy behind the organisation and legitimisation of state power. It probably should not, however, be taken at face value, and while it may have been, in Buganda as elsewhere, the guiding ideology of political life, it is an over-simplification of the relationship between governed and governing. Nonetheless, as Cunningham implies, it was a principle which applied both to the citizen's 'free time', as it were, and to his material possessions.

The Ganda could be taxed in just about everything they owned or produced. Common articles of tribute included cowry shells, pots, barkcloth, hoes and other metal implements, shields, fish and livestock. Agricultural produce was also demanded by chiefs and *kabaka*, particularly bananas. The regularity of levies is unclear, and probably varied from one reign to another. Cunningham suggested that tribute was not demanded at fixed stages, but only when the *kabaka* - or those in charge of the royal treasury, for example the *Katikiro* - deemed it necessary or appropriate⁵. This was probably true in general. Certain rulers during the nineteenth

⁴J.F.Cunningham, *Uganda and its Peoples* (London, 1905) 232-4

⁵*ibid.* Kagwa tells us that up until the reign of Suna, the *Katikiro* was in charge of the 'royal treasury': during that time, however, the incumbent had shown himself to be financially imprudent, and the

century and earlier were notoriously erratic in their collection of taxes. Bloody sprees, of the kind popular with Mwanga in the mid-1880s, sometimes took the place of peaceful state intervention, but these were probably aberrations. The peaceful collection of tribute was more common; strictly speaking, indeed, internal raids were not collections of tribute but assertions of royal potency, usually symptomatic of tensions at the centre. Moreover, the booty thus gathered rarely consisted of anything other than women and cattle, which were then distributed among the faithful at the capital. It is critical, then, to recognise the distinction between the levying of tribute and plunder: to be sure, the Ganda themselves would have known the difference between the two.

Contemporary accounts provide rich material on taxation. Foremost among these is that of Sir Gerald Portal, the first commissioner of the Uganda Protectorate in 1893, who derived much of his information from conversations with other Europeans - chiefly British and French missionaries - already in Buganda when he arrived⁶. Portal, while aiming to depict an impossibly top-heavy and corrupt 'bureaucracy' which it was the British duty to correct, actually provides us with a fascinating account of the layers of central and local government. This "endless and complicated network" of officials stretched from powerful provincial governors to "the poverty-stricken headman of a miserable village". In between were various levels of sub-chiefs whose importance in the scale was directly related to the number of people who fell under their jurisdiction. The collection of tribute was one of the primary functions of this supraregional network⁷. To a considerable degree, this network was the skeleton of the Ganda state, the system by which its people could be held together

'treasury' was moved to the *kabaka's* own palace: A.Kagwa [tr.E.B.Kalibala, ed.M.M.Edel], *Customs of the Baganda* (New York, 1934) 96. Although the *Katikiro* seems to have retained some responsibility in this department. his position may have been gradually eroded thereafter. Harry Johnston later described the *Mukwenda* as the 'treasurer' of the royal enclosure: H.H.Johnston, *The Uganda Protectorate* (London, 1902) II, 683

⁶G.Portal, *The British Mission to Uganda in 1893* (London, 1894) 197

⁷The term 'bureaucracy' readily springs to mind in this context, but it is a matter of debate whether a non-literate society can reasonably be described as 'bureaucratic'.

and made to attend to the state's needs in terms of physical labour and material wealth (not to mention war: see chapters 6 and 7 above).

Portal suggests that the tribute collection process was begun by the royal court taking a decision as to which province should be made to pay: in other words, only one particular *ssaza* was taxed at any given time. The tribute itself consisted of produce, for example ivory, livestock, barkcloth, and so on⁸. Portal described the process thus:

As soon as the king and council have agreed upon the province . . . the governor is forthwith informed that he had better bestir himself, and produce what is wanted . . . He, nothing loath, for he has probably even intrigued that his province may be the one selected, departs from the capital with many promises and vows of loyalty. On arrival in his district he summons before him all the most important local chiefs, and to each one assigns the amount of the contribution for which he will be held responsible. In this partition the governor is particularly careful to see that the aggregate amount, when brought in, will be more than double of what he has to pay over to the king; the rest will remain in his hands. Away go the sub-chiefs; the whole proceeding is repeated again and again in endless subdivision and gradation, and thus the hard-working peasantry, beaten and persecuted until the very last drop is wrung out of them, have to pay in the end five times, and even ten times, the amount at which their province was assessed.

In this way, Portal asserted, as little as a tenth of total tribute actually reached the royal treasury⁹.

This is an intriguing testimony, albeit one which is not easy to corroborate¹⁰. If accepted, it forces us to re-evaluate the relationship between *kabaka* and chief,

⁸Portal, *British Mission*, 191-3

⁹*ibid.*

¹⁰Portal's fellow officer, MacDonald, asserted: "The taxes were collected from the peasantry, and each chief, as they passed upward, deducted his own recognised percentage": J.R.MacDonald, *Soldiering and Surveying in British East Africa* (London & New York, 1897) 139

between capital and district. It is clear from such evidence that the *kabaka* was not a financially omnipotent monarch upon whom all relied for largesse and redistribution. Rather, chiefs at all levels were capable of looking after their own interests. The *kabaka's* court, one could assume from Portal's account, was distanced and out-of-touch with the realities of wealth-movement in Buganda. This is not to say that the system was 'corrupt' as such: indeed, the system may itself have been sanctioned from the centre, although there is no evidence to suggest this. But it can be argued that the *kabaka* was a much less relevant figure in the control of 'national wealth' than might otherwise be assumed. This may have been the case despite the fact that the initial impetus for tribute collection came from the *kabaka* or at least the centre: in addition to the account provided above, one indigenous source records that Suna appointed a chief named Lumweno, along with the *Mukwenda*, to make levies of tribute, probably in Singo, the *ssaza* of the *Mukwenda*¹¹. In the late 1860s, Mutesa sent the *Kauta*, an important officer based at the royal court, to "collect taxes from those people who had not gone to war"¹².

According to a report compiled by Roscoe and Kagwa, the collection of tribute was also an important duty of the *kitawi* or clan heads¹³. They wrote:

The Sekibobo (of Chagwe) when collecting taxes in his saza to this day orders his mummyuba (2nd in command) to tell the original Kitawi to collect the taxes, but of course the Sekibobo has men of his own from whom he collects direct; similarly the mummyuba would have men of his own among the Batongole & collect direct . . .

Roscoe and Kagwa also offered a more moderate description of the process of tax collection than that of Portal:

¹¹ A. Kagwa [tr. & ed. M. S. M. Kiwanuka], *The Kings of Buganda* (Nairobi, 1971) 118. See also footnote 5 above with regard to the *Mukwenda's* responsibilities.

¹² *ibid.*, 164

¹³ J. Roscoe & A. Kagwa, 'Enquiry into Native Land Tenure in the Uganda Protectorate' (1906), Mss. Afr. s. 17, page 2, Rhodes House, Oxford

The King would send a messenger e.g. to Sekibobo to collect, he would put another man to go to the mummyuba, who puts his mutaba (or messenger) and the three go to the Kitawi; they had to get what they could, they first collected one shell (or in earlier times one seed of the wild plantain) from each hut, upon this the assessment was made. Taxes were collected in kind, hoes, barkcloths, women & c. The collectors could not increase the number of barkcloths ordered, but they would add to the number of the other things composing the taxes in order to make something for themselves . . .¹⁴

In the context of the domestic tribute system, Ganda chieftainship may be seen as having been a precarious occupation. The cliché that 'what goes up must come down' seems to resound in any discussion of the Ganda hierarchy. As Portal observed, a chief had to "exact enough from his district to satisfy not only his own requirements, but also the extortionate and constantly repeated demands of all his superiors"¹⁵. If he failed to produce the goods for those in authority above him, he would not last long in his position; equally, he had to be fair on his 'clients' and retain their loyalty and support, without which his position would become just as untenable. It would seem that to be a chief on any level in nineteenth-century Buganda demanded considerable ability, and that most chiefs in the kingdom were consummate politicians: they needed to be. It is clear, moreover, that the chiefs of Buganda - both at *ssaza* and more local level - were to a very real degree the architects of the kingdom's strength, ensuring that the society functioned as it did. On their shoulders balanced the raw military power with which Buganda fought its external enemies, the loyalty which was an essential component of this, and the economic wealth of the districts under

¹⁴ibid., page 5. Elsewhere Kagwa provides considerable detail on 'taxation', including amounts paid and the kinds of taxes demanded: he mentions, for example, a tax on livestock, on barkcloth production, on imported salt, and, bizarrely enough, on ant-hills. Kagwa states that the tribute itself was redistributed among the *ssaza* chief who had sent it, the *Katikiro*, and a number of chiefs attached to the royal enclosure: Kagwa, *Customs*, 94ff. See also J. Roscoe, *The Baganda* (London, 1911) 244-5

¹⁵Portal, *British Mission*, 196. An interesting case in this context is that of the *Kago*, the governor of Kyadondo *ssaza*. Kagwa wrote: "The county was, however, not a wealthy one, and though the county chief was the highest ranking one in the country he was often surpassed by others in wealth, because he could not raise as much in taxes": Kagwa, *Customs*, 162

them. In all of this, the *kabaka* was almost a marginal figure, and the pomp and glory of the capital merely the gleaming facade of a machine ultimately organised and driven by countless chiefs and sub-chiefs throughout the kingdom.

The Organisation of Public Labour

The origins of state-organised labour are unclear, and may well lie in the foundation of the kingdom itself. Kintu is supposed to have commanded a force of 'twelve young men' in the building of his capital¹⁶. One of the earliest rulers recorded making such large-scale demands is Mawanda in the early eighteenth century. According to Kagwa, Mawanda "called upon the whole country, saying, 'Come and perform duties for me. Cut down also this forest'". It is possible that this event was remembered not because the demands in themselves were unprecedented, but because several of the princes - including three future rulers - refused to obey¹⁷. This was tantamount to outright rebellion. One of these princes, Namugala, who probably reigned in the 1740s or 1750s, apparently instituted the building of artificial lakes, a regular focus of royal labour. Kamanya, around 1800, supposedly executed a number of men at the capital, believing them to be poultry-thieves: they had protested that they "were the workers [abakozi]". Kagwa adds that "some men who used to work in the capital reported for duty"¹⁸. This would seem to suggest that by the reign of Kamanya, a system of state-organised labour had developed, and although it is not made explicit for whom the men in Kagwa's anecdote were working, the implication is that they were in the service of Kamanya himself. Throughout the indigenous accounts, it is made clear that the organisation of labour was one of the key areas of royal authority. On another occasion, Kagwa mentions that Suna "appointed Galabuzi the *Omunaakulya* to go and cut poles from Nakalanga forest for the building of a new capital at Ngalamyé"¹⁹. This was clearly a large-scale operation.

¹⁶ibid., 9

¹⁷Kagwa, *Kings*, 74-5

¹⁸ibid., 108

¹⁹ibid., 117

By the nineteenth century, state labour was locally-organised. In much the same way that 'labour armies'²⁰ were drafted to build enclosures for the *kabaka*, the *ssaza* chiefs and their subordinates commanded local labour on behalf of the state. The primary function of this labour was the construction of roads and bridges, and occasionally public buildings²¹, while the clearing of forest and bush were also common operations. It is likely that responsibility for public labour levies fell on sub-chiefs at a very local level, for example the village: these sub-chiefs were in charge of particular stretches of highway, for instance. Yet the *ssaza* chief had overall authority. One British official reported in 1893 that because the *Kaima*, the chief of Mawokota *ssaza*, was away at the capital, no public work could be done until he returned and gave the necessary orders. The same official related how the *Mukwenda* "hears [that] orders are coming for him to do his share, but as yet they have not reached him": the work could not be done until these orders arrived²². The *ssaza* chief was expected to possess a pride in the strength and industry of his province, and thus his relationship with his constituents was critical; he also bore responsibility for

²⁰The term is chosen carefully. Grant described the following scene in 1862: "One of the sights at the capital . . . was to watch the crowds of men on the highroad leading to the palace; all were under officers, perhaps a hundred in one party. If wood is carried into the palace . . . it must be done as neatly as a regiment performs a manoeuvre on parade, and with the same precision. After the logs are carried a certain distance, the men charge up hill . . . On reaching their officer, they drop on their knees to salute, by saying repeatedly in one voice the word 'n'yans' (thanks) . . . Each officer of a district would seem to have a different mode of drill. The Wazeewah [= Baziba?], with long sticks, were remarkably well disciplined, shouting and marching all in regular time . . .": J.A. Grant, *A Walk Across Africa* (Edinburgh & London, 1864) 231-2

²¹Housebuilding is perhaps the prime example of 'private' labour involving skills which were transferable into a public arena. The *bakopi* constructed their own dwellings, and they did so on a regular basis as the dwellings themselves were never built with permanence in mind. Use was made of whatever raw materials were close at hand, although better-quality materials were probably often sought some distance away. The basic materials included tree trunks, thinner bamboo-like poles, grass and wattle. These were collected by the men, who had the major responsibility for housebuilding: see P. Kollmann, *The Victoria Nyanza* (London, 1899) 14. Tackled with skill and experience, Ganda buildings were erected swiftly: the missionary Hattersley estimated three days as being average, and also suggested that help from the local community might be expected: C.W. Hattersley, *The Baganda at Home* (London, 1908) 119. This 'private' labour thus had a public dimension because of the largely moral obligations felt by the community to assist (as opposed to political or financial obligations, although clearly the economic benefits of reciprocity were influential).

²²U.N.A. A2/1 Reddie to Portal 10.4.93

the maintenance of what were essentially public highways, and thus was in one sense an agent of central government.

The level of maintenance of highways, however, varied to some extent between districts, as certain men in each district were responsible for the local stretch of road. Thus in the late 1890s, the missionary Cook observed that "one man might do his short bit of twenty or thirty yards excellently, while his more lazy neighbour would allow the next section to lie in disrepair or even tumble in altogether"²³. The implication here is that responsibility for outlying roads was regional and decentralised, although from time to time, 'royal inspectors' were dispatched to investigate the condition of highways²⁴. Indeed, a system of fines operated to punish local chiefs and headmen who were considered remiss in the execution of their duties. However, one British official in 1895 was of the opinion that these fines ultimately affected the peasantry alone, who shouldered the financial burden resulting from disputes between chiefs:

Every chief, from the highest to the lowest, acts as 'judge', and one case I had brought before me is worthy of note: A minor chief was fined 'so many' goats for not doing certain road cleaning; he, in turn, fined the next man to him the same number of goats, for not doing his work; he again fined the next man, till it came down to the lowest chief who fined the unfortunate bakopi, and they could do nothing . . .²⁵

The enclosures of prominent chiefs were probably built by local labour, perhaps the chief's own tenants, and was not directly linked to 'state labour' as such. The nature of labour organisation at the capital is less clear. In the mid-1890s, one observer asserted that "[t]hree officers are employed to build houses, fences, and the like every

²³A.R.Cook, *Uganda Memories 1897-1940* (Kampala, 1945) 45

²⁴R.W.Felkin, 'Notes on the Waganda tribe of Central Africa', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, 13 (1885-6) 754

²⁵U.N.A. A8/6 Report by Tomkins on tour of Kyagwe, etc. 23.3.95

three or four months, so that probably they find plenty of work to occupy them". One of these officers, it would seem, was the *Pokino*²⁶. It is not easy to imagine that chiefs as prominent as the governor of Buddu would have had such additional responsibilities; nonetheless, we know that *ssaza* chiefs were required to spend part of the year at the capital, and thus it is possible that these duties were circulated among the chiefs in residence there. In practical terms, however, it is likely that state labour at the capital was performed by local labour, under the command of a local chief who perhaps specialised in construction and labour recruitment. Kagwa, for example, mentions a junior chief named Wabulakayole of the *ngeye* clan who "took charge of thatching the houses of the late Kabakas and all the houses of his chiefs"²⁷. Similarly, mention is made of the duties associated with the *ngonge* clan:

Kisolo made his son Lutaya Sabaddu and he also put him in charge of trimming the lower part of Kintu's house. That was his basic responsibility [and] even later Kabakas observed this custom and Sabaddu Kaggo was in charge of building the main house of the Kabaka. It was after this model that the other big chiefs also construct their own respectable houses within their own small palaces . . .²⁸

Beyond the capital, patron-client relationships were predominant. In return for land given to them by the chief on which to cultivate and establish their homesteads, local men built the chief's enclosure and repaired fences. Yet physical labour was not the only service offered to patrons by tenants. A proportion of the food produced by each homestead was regularly offered to the chief's enclosure, for example²⁹. The chief himself doubtless had land under cultivation, but considering the substantial number of mouths a chief had to feed, supplies from without would have been essential. The

²⁶L. Declé, *Three Years in Savage Africa* (London, 1898) 442

²⁷A. Kagwa [tr. J. Wamala], 'A Book of Clans of Buganda' [c. 1972] 4

²⁸*ibid.*, 7

²⁹Fisher, *Twilight Tales*, 33

reciprocity of the arrangement was firmly understood, but there was no fixed duration to it: tenants could leave as freely and suddenly as a chief could evict them³⁰.

Portal also mentioned "corvée or forced labour": known locally as *kasanvu*, this was operated by a system in which "men have to be supplied by the different provinces in certain proportions"³¹. The logistics of this 'state labour force' are unclear, although it probably only operated at the capital. Evidence of such a force is provided by Livinhac, who in 1879 noted that Mutesa had furnished the White Fathers' mission with "the materials and the necessary workers for the construction of a house"³². It is also unclear whether it was recruited only when necessary, or whether a force of labourers, made up of men from all over the kingdom, established itself permanently at the capital. In general, however, public labour or *kasanvu* was performed locally. One British official observed in 1902:

Throughout the counties I find a great objection on the part of the 'Bakopi' to leave their homes and travel long distances to work off their tax. On this one point there is a very strong and general feeling that they should be put on to works which are within a reasonable distance of their villages . . .³³

These feelings were almost certainly reflective of the pre-colonial system with which most Ganda, or at least their parents, were familiar³⁴.

It seems that such labour was not undertaken by the pastoralist community which, as a number of observers noted, kept itself and its settlements distinct from the

³⁰Dacle, *Three Years*, 446

³¹Portal, *British Mission*, 191-3. Kagwa asserts that each *ssaza* had to contribute men to build a specified portion of the palace: Kagwa, *Customs*, 74

³²White Fathers: C13/4 Livinhac to Lavigerie 9.7.79. Roscoe states that the construction and repair of buildings in the capital "kept an army of men employed the whole year round": Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 366

³³U.N.A. A8/2 Wyndham to Dep.Comm. 24.10.02

³⁴Early colonial officials to some extent saw themselves as inheriting a public labour system which could be made to serve the Protectorate. There was general dissatisfaction among the Ganda, however, as MacDonald observed: ". . . however ready the peasantry may be to build and work for their King in accordance with historical custom, they naturally demurred to working in a similar way for Europeans, with their many new-fangled ideas": MacDonald, *Soldiering and Surveying*, 140

agriculturists. Indeed, it would appear that the Hima were legally exempt from such state service, even though they were still under the patronage of local chiefs. It is not clear, however, by what arrangement they held their land under a central government which had, prior to the nineteenth century, gradually diminished hereditary clan lands and made most land the direct property of the *kabaka*. We have already seen, in Chapter 3 above, that the Hima tended the cattle of chiefs in Buganda. This relationship may well provide clues to the nature of land-holding among the pastoralists. Exempt from war, labour and, possibly, tribute-collection, the Hima nevertheless looked after the livestock of their political masters in lieu of these other, more common obligations, and were thus permitted to establish themselves on chiefs' estates.

Men and women undoubtedly had different roles to play in both public and private labour, although in a number of spheres the distinctions become blurred. It would be misleading to suggest that sexual roles were defined by such crude criteria as physical strength. Wars were carried out overwhelmingly by men, but women also had their parts to play, often perhaps as physically demanding as those of the warriors themselves. Agriculture, which required considerable stamina and strength, was largely a female domain, as we have seen in Chapter 3. There may have been a spiritual dimension to the sexual division of labour, although this requires deeper analysis of notions of masculinity and the extent to which Buganda was a male-dominated society. In Chapter 10 below, we examine the role of female slavery: here it is sufficient to state that women seem to have been more vulnerable to enslavement than men. Often women performed social and economic functions perceived as being beneath the dignity of the male. In Ganda culture, the concept of the female as fundamentally weak or unreliable, even dangerous if not properly controlled, is underlined by the mythical story of the kingdom's creation. Of particular significance is the role played by Kintu's wife Nambi, who brought death personified, Walumbe, from heaven to earth. The parallel with the story of Adam and Eve, or that of Samson

and Delilah, in which the woman is also a source of weakness and betrayal, is striking. Moreover, although the female role as giver of life appears to have been celebrated to some extent through the honour attached to the *kabaka's* mother, the fact that, as we have seen, disgraced soldiers were made to dress like pregnant women again implies that even (or perhaps especially) in this role women were seen as weak and decidedly inferior.

One missionary clearly identified the labour distinctions between the sexes: men were engaged in housebuilding, while women were food-providers and mothers, and collected firewood and water³⁵. In the realm of state labour, women were not exempt: they were expected to assist in the cleaning of the public highways³⁶. Portal's brother observed "[g]angs of women making a great broad road, and bridging the swamps"³⁷. It is unclear whether women were recruited and organised for this kind of work in the same manner as men were, but it seems likely. Women were also responsible for the maintenance of the *kabaka's* enclosure, performing such tasks as the clearing of bush and weeds³⁸.

The Highways of Buganda

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Buganda's road network drew admiration from even the most critical observers. The communications network clearly set the kingdom apart from its neighbours. Shortly after entering southern Buddu in 1862, Speke commented: "The roads, as indeed they were everywhere, were as broad as our coach-roads, cut through the long grasses, straight over the hills and down through the woods in the dells - a strange contrast to the wretched tracks in all the adjacent countries"³⁹. The roads ran throughout the kingdom and were not confined to the environs of the capital, although it is clear that some of the better highways were to be

³⁵Hattersley, *The Baganda at Home*, 108

³⁶C.W.Hattersley, *Uganda by Pen and Camera* (London, 1906) 57

³⁷Portal, *British Mission*, 214

³⁸Kagwa, 'Clans', 25

³⁹J.H.Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (Edinburgh & London, 1863) 274

found here: they tended to be broader around the capital than in the outlying districts⁴⁰. In the mid-1890s, for example, Declé noted an "excellent road" running through the *ssaza* of Singo⁴¹. Broad, straight roads, immaculately cleared of all foliage, stretched from the capital toward Kyagwe's eastern frontier: Portal suggested that they were "from ten to twenty feet wide"⁴². Some of the outlying roads were considerably narrower, however: one British officer observed a 'path' to the north of the capital which was "about 10 inches wide, bordered by tall elephant grass"⁴³. Even so, the enclosures of prominent chiefs in outlying districts may have been surrounded by broad highways, which were perhaps as much an expression of grandeur as a means of communication. Approaching the enclosure of the chief 'Mreko' in Singo in 1876, Emin Pasha noted that "the narrow path widened out into a well-kept broad road, bounded by trees and gardens"⁴⁴.

The missionary Wilson wrote that these highways "connect the principal villages with one another and with the capital". As a rule they were remarkably straight, cutting over the crests of hills and through valleys, forests, swamps and rivers. Despite the regional discrepancies mentioned by Cook, which we have already noted, the roads appear on the whole to have been constantly well-maintained, being regularly cleared

⁴⁰In 1876, Emin Pasha described the road which approached the capital from the north as "the King's highway" and "the Royal highway": G.Schweitzer (ed.), *Emin Pasha: his Life and Work* (London, 1898) I, 31. A year earlier, Stanley had approached the capital from the south: "As we approached the capital the highway from Usavara increased in width from 20 feet to 150 feet . . . Arrived at the capital I found that the vast collection of huts crowning the eminence were the Royal Quarters, around which ran several palisades and circular courts, between which and the city was a circular road, ranging from 100 to 200 feet in width, from which radiated six or seven magnificent avenues, lined with gardens and huts": N.R.Bennett (ed.), *Stanley's Despatches to the New York Herald 1871-2, 1874-7* (Boston, 1970) 222-3

⁴¹Declé, *Three Years*, 432

⁴²Portal, *British Mission*, 141

⁴³A.B.Thruston, *African Incidents* (London, 1900) 130. Harry Johnston wrote: "Narrow paths may circulate between the huts of peasants or as by-ways, but as a rule the Muganda prefers to make roads as broad as those in vogue in civilised countries at the present day". Indeed, the Ganda highway was comparable to "the old Roman road": Johnston, *Uganda Protectorate*, II, 656-7

⁴⁴G.Schweinfurth *et al* (eds.), *Emin Pasha in Central Africa* (London, 1888) 34. Two years earlier, Chaillé-Long had also met a chief named 'Morako' based near the border with Bunyoro. Chaillé-Long described entering Buganda: ". . . the country changed for the better, and the lowlands of Unyoro gave place . . . to roads well-swept, that, 'Morako' tells me, have been widened and swept by orders of his great master, M'Tse . . . The red clay soil marked their direction for miles through a grass-covered country": C.Chaillé-Long, *Central Africa* (London, 1876) 90-1

of weeds, as Wilson observed, "even in the more thinly peopled districts". Bridges were either built on upright tree-trunks, allowing the stream or river to pass beneath unhindered, or were trunks of wild date palm laid side by side across floating vegetation which, although sounding somewhat precarious, "formed a secure and permanent road"⁴⁵. The maintenance of both roads and bridges was to some extent dictated by the seasons: much repair work had to be undertaken after the rains. In Buddu in 1905, local chiefs reported "that roads and bridges need repairs - damaged by the rains - towards Koki and these will have to be done now the [dry] season has set in"⁴⁶.

The most obvious comparison to make in a sub-Saharan context is with Asante in the nineteenth century. Wilks was able to reconstruct in remarkable detail the network of 'great-roads' which covered Asante, and any analysis of road systems elsewhere in pre-colonial Africa owes much to his impressive study⁴⁷. The Asante 'great-roads' were the main thoroughfares linking the political centres of the kingdom: as Wilks points out, "[t]he system of great-roads was maintained by the central government, and was to be distinguished from the many smaller and localized networks of roads the responsibility for which rested with the district authorities"⁴⁸. This situation was not dissimilar to that of Buganda, where, as we have seen, stretches of road further out from the capital were the responsibility of local chiefs. Wilks takes a 'world-view'

⁴⁵C.T. Wilson & R.W. Felkin, *Uganda and the Egyptian Soudan* (London, 1882) I, 147. On river-fording generally, it is clear that work was dictated by seasons. The river Katonga, in northern Buddu, was crossed by Speke in 1862, but he was told that "it sometimes swells to the height of a man, and therefore cannot be crossed on foot". As Speke suggested, however, this was no barrier to the river being crossed: throughout his stay in Buganda, "there was constant communication between the palaces of Karague and Uganda, and those who went to and fro invariably forded the Katonga": J.H. Speke, 'The upper basin of the Nile, from inspection and information', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, 33 (1863) 329. As we saw in Chapter 8, however, canoes were also used during times of flooding. Bridges were prominent features of local travel. The road on which Portal travelled from Busoga crossed several swamps, the bridges being 'causeways' of interlaced palm logs covered with brushwood, grass and a thick layer of earth. The labour which built these means of communication was organised by local chiefs, in both Buganda and Busoga, although the level of chief involved is not made clear: Declé, *Three Years*, 435; Portal, *British Mission*, 141-2, 166

⁴⁶U.N.A. A8/6 Isemonger to Sub.Comm. 5.6.05

⁴⁷I. Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1975), esp. Chapter 1.

⁴⁸*ibid.*, 1

of the highways of Asante. The 'great-roads' themselves were divided into the northern and southern roads. The northern roads, Wilks explains, led to the towns on the frontiers of Greater Asante, "where they articulated with major trans-continental caravan trails leading to the Mediterranean shores via the great entrepots of the Western and Central Sudan". The southern roads, on the other hand, "linked the capital with the series of coastal ports between the Volta and Komoe Rivers, and so with the maritime highways to Europe and the Americas"⁴⁹. Buganda's geographical position was perhaps less clear-cut than this, but a comparison can still be made. Ganda highways stretched to the south, leading ultimately to the entrepots of Unyanyembe and Zanzibar; greater obstacles were placed in the way of the north-bound roads, but by the second half of the nineteenth century, these too led to broader horizons dominated by 'Equatoria' and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

Ganda roads were built with convenience and comfort in mind, of course, but above all they facilitated rapidity of movement, of persons, armies, news and commerce. The Ganda understood well the need for a communications network in these respects. Moreover, road construction itself was an important expression of the collective interest of Ganda society. It is surely significant that the local term for a public highway built by communal effort was *oluguudo lw'obulungi-bwansi*, literally meaning 'for the good of the country'⁵⁰. It is also worth reiterating the view of a recent historian that a relatively dense and stable population led to the development of such communications⁵¹. The origins of the Ganda road system are unclear. The missionary Felkin, however, claimed that Suna initiated the systematic building of highways: the source of this information is not disclosed, nor is the information corroborated⁵². Yet it is quite possible that this was indeed the case: the road system

⁴⁹ibid.

⁵⁰J.D.Murphy, *Luganda-English Dictionary* (Washington, 1972) 41

⁵¹S.Feierman, in P.Curtin *et al.* (eds.), *African History* (London, 1978) 171

⁵²Felkin, 'Notes', 754. A number of economic, political or social phenomena which clearly pre-dated the reign of Mutesa were attributed by Europeans to that of Suna, presumably for the sake of convenience, although it is not clear to what extent this impression may have been conveyed by the Ganda themselves.

may have been developed during the 1840s with the escalation of long-distance trade, when the need was seen for a network which would facilitate the large-scale movement of slaves and ivory.

During the 'religious wars' of the late 1880s and early 1890s, the road network all but collapsed. Moving north from Kampala in 1891, Lugard "marched along what were once the great roads of Uganda": they were overgrown and many had fallen into complete disrepair. It is a tribute to the earlier maintenance of the highways, however, that Lugard was still able to follow the routes due to "the embankments which often bordered them, and the remains of culverts of palm-logs across the riverine swamps"⁵³. The decline of the road network was at least in part due to population movements: one of the consequences of the upheavals at this time was the widespread depopulation of certain districts.

Mwanga's Reign: an Abuse of the System

The coup against Mwanga in 1888 had a number of causes which are not examined here, but it is surely significant that among the justifications for the revolt was the belief that the young *kabaka* had abused his position as guardian of the kingdom's taxation and labour systems. The potential fragility of these systems was exposed by Mwanga's excesses: for example, as we have already mentioned, internal plundering increasingly took the place of the peaceful and legitimate collection of tribute. In late 1887, Mwanga undertook two such expeditions in quick succession, seizing large numbers of livestock⁵⁴. At the same time, there was an enormous increase in the demand for labour at the capital, mostly for the purpose of building the royal lake. Zimbe tells us that no-one was spared: "Everybody in the country, chief and commoner . . . had to dig and carry soil on his or her head"⁵⁵. Even allowing for exaggeration, it is striking that Mwanga's decree was remembered in this way. It was

⁵³F. Lugard, *The Rise of Our East African Empire* (Edinburgh & London, 1893) II, 117

⁵⁴B. M. Zimbe [tr. F. Kamoga], 'Buganda ne Kabaka' [c. 1939] 156

⁵⁵*ibid.*, 148

an exercise in royal arrogance. Heavy fines were also imposed on those who were not seen to be working hard enough: Zimbe describes how "[e]very man down from a Mutongole to a Saza chief was required to come to work before dawn. He who failed was to be fined a woman, a slave and a cow . . . Indeed there were very many chiefs . . . fined women, slaves, cows, goats, heaps of barkcloths, bales of clothes". In addition, there was an excessive daily taxation: everyone was compelled to put a 'coin' (presumably meaning a specified number of cowry shells) into the baskets provided⁵⁶.

These abuses of the tribute and state labour systems undoubtedly contributed to the overthrow, albeit temporary, of the *kabaka*. The rebellion was not without precedent. We have already noted how several princes refused to obey Mawanda's command for public labour in the early eighteenth century. Indeed the parallels are striking: Mawanda, like Mwanga, was also reputedly a 'notorious plunderer', as Kiwanuka has pointed out⁵⁷. He was not a 'respector of persons'. Unlike Mwanga, however, Mawanda was actually assassinated by his sons⁵⁸. Both episodes suggest the ways in which the *kabaka* might be perceived to have abused the system which sustained the state and royal enclosure; it is also clear that such abuses were not tolerated by the Ganda political establishment. In this sense, the system by which the Ganda state utilised its human resources was more resilient than any individual who might temporarily control it. The ways in which the slave system was utilised were, however, less clear-cut: it is to that system that we now turn our attention.

⁵⁶*ibid.*, 153, 156. Zimbe's assertions are supported by the missionary Robert Ashe, who observed with regard to the building of the royal lake that "if [Mwanga] found the chiefs had not arrived, he inflicted enormous fines upon them, demanding something like one thousand women in all, besides valuable coloured cloths and guns": R.P.Ashe, *Chronicles of Uganda* (London, 1894) 93

⁵⁷Kiwanuka, in Kagwa, *Kings*, 76

⁵⁸Kagwa, *Kings* 75-6

CHAPTER 10

The State and its Human Resources # 2: Slavery in Buganda

We have already seen, by examining regional and long-distance trade in the second half of the nineteenth century, how slaves were critical in Ganda economic life. In this section we look more broadly at the role of slaves and slavery in Buganda, and examine the background to their commercial importance, for the slave trade drew on a long-established system of economic, political and social control. In order to understand much of Buganda's economic and indeed military development, it is essential to examine slavery as an institution in the kingdom, in all its many dimensions. The significance of this exercise has been largely overlooked by historians of Buganda: the existence of slavery, while accepted in the vaguest of terms, has provoked little questioning. In recent years only Michael Twaddle has ventured to explore this vital area, and he has also lamented the fact that Ganda slavery remains a subject yet to be seriously broached¹.

Slavery in Buganda can be viewed from a number of perspectives, while slaves themselves could be found in many walks of life and in many guises². In the broadest possible sense they represented an 'underclass' insofar as they usually performed a range of lowly tasks and, with one or two notable exceptions, were liable to be bought and sold³. Yet many enjoyed higher standards of living - notwithstanding the lack of personal liberty - than the free peasantry which constituted the bulk of the population.

¹In particular, see M. Twaddle, 'The Ending of Slavery in Buganda', in R. Roberts & S. Miers (eds.), *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Wisconsin, 1988) 119-49; M. Twaddle, 'Slaves and Peasants in Buganda', in L. J. Archer (ed.), *Slavery and Other Forms of Unfree Labour* (London, 1988) 118-129

²E. M. K. Mulira was the first to make clear that such distinctions existed, describing how there were "the *abanyage* (those stolen or pillaged in war); as well as the *abagule* (those bought). All these came into the category of *abenvumu* or true slaves, that is to say people not free in any sense": see Twaddle, 'Slaves and Peasants in Buganda', 121

³As we shall see below, slaves were not perhaps sold as freely by their masters as might be supposed. Moreover, slaves - and in particular female servants - who had been distributed by the *kabaka* may not have been exchanged in the market: these were, rather, expected to remain with the recipient of the gift for life.

Slavery and poverty were not necessarily connected, as is clear from the existence of well-dressed and often haughty serviles who belonged to wealthy chiefs. More definite links can be established between slavery and gender, and slavery and 'foreignness', although it is worth noting the obvious, namely that neither every woman nor every foreigner in Buganda was a slave.

It is safe to say, however, that most slaves in Buganda were either foreign or of foreign origin. The distinction is not as superfluous as it may seem, for by the nineteenth century there existed a number of slaves who were the descendants of war captives, perhaps at a remove of several generations, in which case the slaves were as fully incorporated into Ganda society as was possible for persons of their status. Buganda's reputation for being able to absorb (and often exalt) foreigners was also deserved in the realm of slavery. Clearly the fact that they were slaves meant that they never quite lost their alien dimension, but they were different from more recent imports who were still living on the edge of Ganda culture and whose alienness was as yet undiluted. Several years might pass before such slaves felt themselves an indispensable part of an extended household, if they were 'fortunate' enough to be thus retained. It is true that a slave's life was characterised by relative uncertainty, but such uncertainty was exacerbated during the second half of the nineteenth century when the large-scale export of slaves greatly widened the range of fates which might await him or her.

The fact that most, although not all, slaves were foreign to a greater or lesser degree suggests that there was indeed an ethnic dimension to Ganda slavery. There were circumstances in which Ganda were themselves enslaved, as we shall see below, but non-Ganda swelled the ranks of the servile class. It is not difficult to find evidence of a sense of ethnic superiority among the Ganda: much of their military ethos was founded upon it. Such ethnic tensions are certainly present in Uganda today, with the Ganda at least implicitly presenting themselves as the vanguard of the nation, and

many non-Ganda groups understandably regarding this with deep suspicion. The Ganda were on occasion described to the author by non-Ganda as 'arrogant'. These tensions may have been exaggerated to some extent by the creation of the Protectorate, but they are certainly much older than this. We cannot be sure if ethnic haughtiness came prior to the systematic enslavement of foreigners, or whether it was actually prompted by increasing military success, but it seems likely that such attitudes developed in tandem with the latter. The term *mudokolo*, an insulting and generic reference to anyone from the north, probably tells a story in itself. Moreover, it is possible that there was an ethnic dimension to Ganda toward the Hima: as we have seen, the latter were frequently described as 'slaves' to the agricultural Ganda and regarded by them as being culturally inferior, although this contempt - if it can be so called - was apparently heartily reciprocated⁴. Ganda attitudes, then, seem to have been somewhat contradictory, if we set the willingness to absorb outsiders in juxtaposition with this sense of ethnic superiority; however, on another level - namely that of slavery - it is clear that these attitudes were in fact perfectly complementary.

The fact that slaves in Buganda were mostly foreign in origin takes on a particular relevance when it is considered that they were employed by the Ganda in war. It is unclear how far back this can be dated, but by the second half of the nineteenth century large numbers of slaves appear to have been thus employed. In 1875, Stanley reckoned that the Ganda army was accompanied by about fifty thousand slaves⁵. The improbably high figure is in this context irrelevant. Roscoe mentions that the 'servants' of chiefs were present on military expeditions⁶, while Mackay observed the organisation of an army involving the major chiefs and their slaves⁷. Slaves were clearly used as carriers of weapons and provisions, or simply as personal attendants to

⁴For example, see C.W.Hattersley, *The Baganda at Home* (London, 1908) 90; F.Lugard, *The Rise of our East African Empire* (Edinburgh & London, 1893) I, 173

⁵R.Stanley & A.Neame (eds.), *The Exploration Diaries of H.M.Stanley* (London, 1961) 99

⁶J.Roscoe, *The Baganda* (London, 1911) 350

⁷A.Mackay [ed. by his sister], *Pioneer Missionary in Uganda* (London, 1890) 111

chiefs and sub-chiefs in the field. The use of slaves in this way again raises the question of their effective integration into Ganda society. It is perhaps difficult to imagine that the Ganda would have risked attacking Bunyoro with Nyoro slaves forming part of their military force. It seems likely that only the most loyal of slaves accompanied their masters on such expeditions: in other words, those who were descendants of war captives, and whose loyalty to their adopted culture transcended all others, or similarly slaves captured in childhood. It is also possible, of course, that Ganda slaves were also employed in war: enslavement within Buganda is examined below.

The Ganda term for slavery or bondage is *buddu*; *muddu* referred specifically to a male slave, while there existed by the nineteenth century a headman whose title was the *Sabaddu*, or 'head of the slaves of a chief who were not entitled to live within that chief's compound'. It is tempting to connect the term with the *ssaza* of the same name, as did Speke in 1862:

In the earliest times the Wahuma of Unyoro regarded all their lands bordering on the Victoria Lake as their garden, owing to its exceeding fertility, and imposed the epithet of Wiru, or slaves, upon its people, because they had to supply the imperial government with food and clothing. Coffee was conveyed to the capital by the Wiru, also mbugu (bark-cloaks), from an inexhaustible fig-tree; in short, the lands of the Wiru were famous for their rich productions.

Now Wiru in the northern dialect changes to Waddu in the southern; hence Uddu, the land of the slaves, which remained in one connected line from the Nile to the Kitangule Kagera . . .⁸

Speke's research was admirable, but his conclusions were inaccurate. In fact, as Wrigley has recently argued, the Nyoro form of the name Buddu was Bw-iru, which simply referred to the fact that the land was inhabited by cultivators, or *ba-iru*, who

⁸J.H.Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (Edinburgh & London, 1863) 251-2

were distinct from the herdsmen to the west⁹. It may have been a derogatory term, but it had little to do with slavery. Nevertheless, the problem remains of why the Ganda should eventually call the region Buddu: this may indeed reflect an ancient relationship about which it is virtually impossible to know anything for certain.

Before arriving in Buganda in 1862, Grant was told that the average Muganda owned one hundred slaves; even youths possessed "ten or twenty . . . whom they steal or kidnap in war"¹⁰. This was, of course, a gross exaggeration, but it conveys some idea of the impression foreigners had of Ganda slavery and its extensive nature. Nonetheless, the Ganda were not unique in taking foreign captives as slaves, which was practised by most of their neighbours. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Buvuma islanders periodically raided the Ganda shore, mostly seizing women and children¹¹. Stanley noted a raid of this kind in 1875¹², and during the Anglo-Ganda subjugation of Buvuma in the early 1890s, a number of Ganda were 'liberated'¹³. The Nyoro also frequently carried out raids on Singo and Bulemezi in the north: MacDonald reported that a group of Ganda who had been "carried off into slavery in Unyoro were recovered and liberated"¹⁴, while in the early 1890s another British officer observed that in recently fighting the Nyoro, the Ganda had succeeded in "recovering five hundred of their countrywomen held as slaves by Kabarega"¹⁵. A little more surprisingly, perhaps, one observer discovered around fifty Ganda slaves in Toro, women who were subsequently given their freedom by the king, Kasagama¹⁶. Slaving activities on the part of the Nyoro were doubtless intensified during the 1880s and 1890s, but in general, slaving was a long-established feature of warfare in the region. One British soldier remarked that the "capture of slaves by each side . . . was

⁹C.C.Wrigley, *Kingship and State: the Buganda dynasty* (Cambridge, 1996) 218

¹⁰J.A.Grant, *A Walk Across Africa* (Edinburgh & London, 1864) 55

¹¹J.R.MacDonald, *Soldiering and Surveying in British East Africa* (London, 1897) 149

¹²H.M.Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent* (London, 1878) I, 303

¹³MacDonald, *Soldiering and Surveying*, 159

¹⁴*ibid.*, 320

¹⁵H.Colville, *The Land of the Nile Springs* (London, 1895) 134, 188

¹⁶A.B.Lloyd, *In Dwarf Land and Cannibal Country* (London, 1900) 163

looked upon as the usual thing"¹⁷. In 1893, even though Ganda participation in the external slave trade was all but at an end, another officer noted that the Ganda welcomed "the opportunity of . . . replenishing their harems and slave establishments"¹⁸. It is thus clear that slavery had been a prominent feature of Ganda life long before external demand, as it continued to be for a short time after the long-distance slave trade was crushed.

Slaves were brought to Buganda from throughout the lacustrine region, but they appear to have come mostly from Bunyoro and Busoga, which were clearly geographically convenient areas, although it is possible that the Ganda indiscriminately described their slaves as 'Nyoro' or 'Soga'. One intriguing piece of testimony dating from 1888 suggests that the Ganda had recently raided among the Nyamwezi and seized 'great numbers' of slaves¹⁹. This is difficult to accept, not least because at this time Buganda was scarcely in a position to organise such an ambitious operation; even so, there is little doubt that slaves were brought from considerably farther afield than Bunyoro and Busoga. It is worth noting, of course, that not all foreign captives were enslaved: the practice of killing male prisoners was a significant feature of Ganda warfare, although it is likely that it declined with the rise of the slave trade. Arbitrary execution of certain captives was formally abolished by the Ganda in 1889²⁰.

Slave raiding was not the only method by which slaves were brought into Buganda: as we have already noted, it seems likely that there was a regional trade in slaves throughout the nineteenth century. Grant depicted the Nyoro capital as the location of a thriving slave market, remarking that "Kamarasi was constantly visited by men of

¹⁷T. Ternan, *Some Experiences of an Old Bromsgovian* (Birmingham, 1930) 188

¹⁸A. B. Thruston, *African Incidents* (London, 1900) 129

¹⁹D. Middleton (ed.), *The Diary of A. J. Mounteney-Jephson* (London, 1969) 396. Mounteney-Jephson passed through the area in August 1888 and was told that the attack had taken place some eighteen months previously.

²⁰C. M. S. G3 A5/0 1890/77 Mackay to Lang 28.12.89

far countries coming to trade with him for cattle, slaves, and ivory"²¹. There is every reason to suppose that the Ganda were among these visitors. Such commerce also existed at the highest level. Emin recorded that Mutesa sent commodities such as cloth, copper, brass and glass beads to Kabarega, who offered slaves in return. The slaves thus acquired, however, were not retained domestically but were used specifically for export²². It is therefore possible to perceive Mutesa as a private, albeit extraordinarily powerful, trader who was able to use his position to commercial advantage; it would also seem that he wished not to rely too heavily on the domestic slave pool for export. As we have seen, a balance had to be maintained between slaves retained for domestic use and those earmarked for export, although the distinction was, in practice, not always as clear as this.

It is impossible to assess with any exactness the true extent of slave ownership in nineteenth-century Buganda; indeed, it is difficult to avoid reducing the discussion to one of chiefs and powerful men. Perhaps the best that can be said is that while a stratum of poorer *bakopi* was probably excluded from the slave ownership system, a significant proportion of wealthier peasants and 'non-chiefs' owned at least one or two serviles. Slaves had to be fed, and so any extended household would need to have been at least self-sufficient in order to maintain a slave enclosure. It is highly likely that some chiefs faced difficulties of this kind as they accumulated slaves during their careers. If it seemed likely, however, that an over-sized entourage was going to lead to impoverishment, slaves could easily be sold off. Chiefs and peasants alike, then, could acquire slaves by commercial means, but the missionary Livinhac believed that the most powerful force for slave distribution was royal patronage. Following the arrival at the capital of a batch of war captives, the *kabaka* would distribute them among successful chiefs and soldiers²³. In other words, it was only after slaves ceased to be the property of the *kabaka* - as, in theory, much war booty was - that they

²¹Grant, *A Walk*, 289

²²G.Schweinfurth *et al* (eds.), *Emin Pasha in Central Africa* (London, 1888) 115

²³White Fathers: C13/5 Livinhac to Lavigerie 24.9.79

entered the social system and became economic commodities. This process was undoubtedly important, and was probably the norm at the royal enclosure; but it was only one of many channels through which slaves might be acquired, and should not be over-emphasised.

Female Slavery

Considerable caution is required when dealing with contemporary European references to slaves in Buganda. The most common error - and one which was made with regard to a number of pre-colonial African societies, for example Dahomey in West Africa - was the classification of virtually all the *kabaka's* subjects as 'slaves'. Peasants and slaves were frequently assumed to have been one and the same²⁴. The term 'slave' was perhaps used most indiscriminately in the case of women. The missionary Hattersley, for example, considered that women were looked upon as slaves, because they were expected to be mothers, cultivators, provide food, water and firewood, maintain public roads and generally to be 'domestic drudges'²⁵. Yet it is clear that female labour was distinct from female slavery, even though the latter very often entailed the tasks described by Hattersley. A key feature of domestic female slavery was the harem. We have already noted, for example, how highly valued local Hima women were in this respect. A *kabaka's*, and indeed a chief's, women were drawn from a great many sources, but not all were considered slaves, as Schiller has recently demonstrated²⁶. Many, and probably most, wives were free and could leave their husbands at will. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, the

²⁴One more recent writer confusingly felt it necessary to describe the *mukopi* as being "of the same race as the Baganda", which is similar to asserting that the working class of Britain belonged to the same race as the British. The same writer barely distinguished the *mukopi* from "the real slave, the Baddu . . . who was the chattel of his owner, and subject to hard usage, and whose women were degraded to the level of mere playthings", which is just about as unsatisfactory and opaque a description of Ganda (or any) slavery as one could ask for: R.W.Beachey, *The Slave Trade of Eastern Africa* (London, 1976) 193. See also Twaddle, 'Slaves and Peasants in Buganda', 121-2

²⁵C.W.Hattersley, *Uganda by Pen and Camera* (London, 1906) 57

²⁶Schiller cautions against the idea that all Ganda women were 'inferior' and subordinate to men; he argues that the more important women in Buganda were not passive actors but used their positions to manipulate the political system, most clearly by advancing the careers of their male relatives: see L.Schiller, 'The Royal Women of Buganda', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 23:3 (1990) 455-473

number of women connected to the royal enclosure increased dramatically, and it is likely that a large proportion of these were indeed slaves insofar as they were seized violently and deprived of the liberties normally taken for granted by wives. The missionary Gorju suggested that it was in the middle of the eighteenth century that chiefs began to take as concubines foreign female slaves; he wrote that "[f]rom this era chiefs were in the habit of taking as concubines foreign women who had been seized in war"²⁷. This seems plausible, coinciding as it does with the era of Buganda's greatest military success. Emin Pasha passed through a deserted district just inside Ganda territory where he noted that the "housewives had been torn away from their work to increase the number of slaves in the king's household"²⁸.

Still, there were several ways in which women might be acquired and actually 'owned', as Speke described in 1862:

If any Mkungu possessed of a pretty daughter committed an offence, he might give her to the king as a peace-offering; if any neighbouring king had a pretty daughter, and the king of Uganda wanted her, she might also be demanded as a fitting tribute. The Wakungu in Uganda are supplied with women by the king, according to their merits, from seizures in battle abroad, or seizures from refractory officers at home. The women are not regarded as property according to the Wanyamuezi practice, though many exchange their daughters; and some women, for misdemeanours, are sold into slavery; whilst others are flogged, or are degraded to do all the menial services of the house . . .²⁹

Speke's earlier assertion that there were 'no such things as marriages in Uganda', implying that there was no such thing as a free woman, is clearly mistaken. But the above passage is nevertheless revelatory, insofar as it depicts a culture in which women certainly had fewer rights than their men folk, even if many of them stopped

²⁷J. Gorju, *Entre le Victoria, l'Albert et l'Edouard* (Rennes, 1920) 123

²⁸Schweinfurth, *Emin Pasha in Central Africa*, 44

²⁹Speke, *Journal*, 361

short of actually being slaves. Women were 'second class citizens', so to speak, and were probably more vulnerable to enslavement than Ganda men, by the very definition of their place in the social hierarchy. This was the case despite the surreptitious influences over political life as described by Schiller which many were able to wield.

Women, then, could be acquired through warfare, as purchases or gifts, or as part of an alliance or agreement between local chiefs³⁰. There were clear distinctions, however, between wives and women in the service of chiefs. The brief passage below is the testimony of a Nyoro woman, apparently a runaway slave, recorded in 1903:

When Tibashoboke [a Ganda chief] went away to German territory I went with him. I only stayed one day as I was afraid of being sold. I am not the wife of Tibashoboke but was bought by him when a small girl. I was captured during a raid by the Baganda in Unyoro³¹.

Another woman, this time a Ganda, stated that "I was not married to Tibashoboke, he bought me when I was a small girl"³². The Ganda chief in question had clearly expanded his harem by purchasing pre-adolescent girls, perhaps in addition to mature women. This was probably viewed as economic expedience: by adding minors to his entourage, he might expect a lifetime of service. Moreover, children were theoretically less likely to attempt escape, while as they grew up they might develop stronger feelings of loyalty to, and dependency on, their master. It is striking too that both women were unequivocal in their assertions that they were not Tibashoboke's wives; their status as slaves is clear, particularly in the case of the Nyoro woman who feared that she might be sold.

³⁰White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 1/18.1.80

³¹U.N.A. A8/4 There is neither a date nor a title for this document, but it appears to have been written in late 1903.

³²ibid.

The Ganda had terms to indicate the ranking of women according to social status. The title *kaddulubaale*, meaning the principal wife of a chief or the *kabaka*, was clearly a more exalted position than that suggested by the term *muggya* which could mean either second wife or a concubine, perhaps a telling linkage. The words *muzaana* and *nvuma* both refer specifically to female slaves, although *muzaana* tended to describe a maidservant in the royal household or that of a chief. These were usually female war captives³³. Chiefs usually endeavoured to supply their wives with female slaves of this kind³⁴. The act of handing over a woman in return for the rendering of a service, or as the payment of a debt, is expressed in the verb stem *wumiriza*.

It is clearly no coincidence, then, that the noun *mwami* can mean not only chief or master, but also husband. Ganda society appears to have been male-dominated, and a large a proportion of women - certain royal females being among the more notable exceptions - were regarded as being economic assets, perhaps even those who were not strictly slaves. It is unlikely that women who were involved in formal dowry marriages could be sold off by their husbands, and indeed such women were entitled to leave their husbands and return to their father's house: if their grievances were upheld, the dowry would be returned, although there was a certain amount of stigma attached to this. But women who had yet to marry could apparently be sold by male blood relatives without recourse to any form of legal representation. The missionary Pilkington held a somewhat extreme, but telling, view, which he expressed in 1893:

. . . both wives and children are slaves in the eye of the law, able to be sold at the husband's will, & a woman is not set free by her husband's death, but necessarily passes with cows, goats & other property to her husband's heir . . .

I ought to add that the only free women in the country are the 'Namasole', the

³³A.Kagwa [tr.E.B.Kalibala, ed.M.M.Edel], *Customs of the Baganda* (New York, 1934) 67

³⁴Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 95

'Nalinya' & the 'Bambeja'; and all of these are by the law of the land not married . . .³⁵

The missionary Mackay was at pains to point out that generally the lowest of female - and perhaps any - slaves were elderly women, who were often given the most degrading agricultural tasks to perform³⁶. This highlights the extent to which 'old' women - i.e. women who could no longer bear children or offer sexual services - were prone to social isolation and economic hardship. This rendered them even more vulnerable to dependency. Deference to the role of motherhood was clearly not always sufficient to offset economic impoverishment, and one is led to question the extent to which the position of the *Namasole*, the *kabaka's* 'official' mother, was exceptional rather than reflecting general social conditions. The ways in which women coped with, even resisted, these economic and social pressures is a subject worthy of investigation. We have noted in an earlier chapter, for example, how women made baskets for the market-place in order to avoid total destitution. Further, it is clear that women often refused to be treated as inheritance upon the death of their husband or master and simply ran away³⁷. What became of these women is uncertain, but presumably an opportunity was thus created to improve their quality of living.

Female slaves were also often dedicated to the shrines of the major Ganda deities by the *kabaka*³⁸. Many of these women were designated to spend their lives in the service of particular deities, tending the grounds of the shrines and providing food for the spirit mediums and 'priests'. At the royal enclosure itself, female slaves were employed *en masse* in supplying the palace with food. Roscoe hints at the idea of female slaves as the real 'underclass' in Buganda when he suggests that even male slaves within the royal enclosure had their food prepared for them by the 'King's

³⁵U.N.A. A2/1 Pilkington to the Bishop 18.4.93

³⁶C.M.S. Acc.72/F 10 Mackay's 'Uganda Notes in 1879'

³⁷See J.Roscoe & A.Kagwa, 'Enquiry into Native Land Tenure in the Uganda Protectorate', *Mss.Afr.s.17* (1906), held in Rhodes House, Oxford. See also J.Iliffe, *The African Poor* (Cambridge, 1987) 59-60, 63

³⁸Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 204, 274, 276, 297, 298, 300, 303

women³⁹. This was presumably also the case on the estates of major chiefs, on which there might live "hundreds of women and slaves"⁴⁰. Roscoe later asserted that Mutesa "had five hundred wives, each of whom had her maids and female slaves", while in addition there were 'hundreds' of retainers and slaves⁴¹. The slave population of the royal enclosure, and indeed of the capital as a whole, clearly represented a large proportion of the total. Arab traders told Burton that Suna's harem had contained "3000 souls - concubines, slaves, and children"⁴², while almost twenty years later Stanley numbered the royal women at five thousand, of whom five hundred were the *kabaka's* concubines; the rest were responsible for the upkeep of the royal enclosure⁴³. Nonetheless, the distinction between concubines and 'maidservants' or *bazaana* is probably to some degree a false one: a woman might regularly move from one category to the other. Mutesa himself is supposed to have told the missionary Mackay that 'I have no wife; my women are all slaves'⁴⁴, which may indeed have been a characteristic of royal domesticity, although the *kabaka* may have been posturing. But both Roscoe⁴⁵ and Stanley stressed that possession of women - i.e. female slaves - meant economic wealth. Stanley wrote that 'large possessions' of women "mean wealth in Uganda, for all of them have a market value, and are saleable for wares of any kind, be they cloth, cows, beads, or guns"⁴⁶.

The Development of Slave Hierarchies

It is probably fair to say that the only feature which all slaves in Buganda had in common was a lack of personal liberty. Otherwise, there existed a social hierarchy of slaves and many had markedly different experiences. In 1878, for example, Mackay asserted somewhat simplistically but with a grain of truth that "work is only for the

³⁹ibid., 206

⁴⁰ibid., 240

⁴¹J.Roscoe, *Twenty-five Years in East Africa* (London, 1921) 88

⁴²R.F.Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa* (London, 1860) II, 188

⁴³Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 308

⁴⁴Mackay, *Pioneer Missionary*, 129

⁴⁵Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 246

⁴⁶Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 309

lowest class. Many slaves have slaves themselves. As a rule only the women do any work"⁴⁷. It is true that what particular slaves actually *did* would depend on the social status of their owners. There is little evidence to suggest that slaves were employed in more specialised professions, such as iron-working, fishing, or even the manufacturing of barkcloth, although it is likely that they were. Even so, slave labour can probably be generalised in terms of agriculture and personal services.

Freedom of movement was not, of course, the only right denied. For example, slaves were not honoured with funerals but their corpses were thrown into the forest⁴⁸, a procedure consistent with the theory that a dead slave was an expended economic asset. Yet they were often allowed to own small plots of land⁴⁹. Lugard suggested that male slaves were often permitted to chose a wife, and more importantly, most slaves might expect the protection of their owners⁵⁰. Clearly this was dependent on individual circumstances, as slaves were the property of their masters who might, for example, decide to sell them. Felkin observed that a master might kill his slave if he so desired, but that this was generally frowned upon⁵¹, apart from being, presumably, financially unsound. In more extended households, where there may have been a number of slaves, a hierarchy developed. According to Felkin, head slaves might be given land, permission to marry and even slaves of their own, whom they might in theory sell. However, any offspring resulting from a slave marriage legally belonged to the master⁵².

⁴⁷C.M.S. CA6/0 16/37 Mackay to Wright 26.12.78. Mackay pursued the notion that "manual labour is reckoned a disgrace" in Buganda; in this respect the Ganda 'upper class' was clearly no different from that of most other societies. See also C.M.S. CA6/0 16/49(a) Mackay to Hutchinson 11.7.80

⁴⁸R.W.Felkin, 'Notes on the Waganda tribe of Central Africa', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, 13 (1885-6) 759. According to Roscoe, even peasants were properly buried in clan burial grounds, no matter how distant the latter were from the home of the deceased: Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 125

⁴⁹Felkin, 'Notes', 743

⁵⁰Lugard, *East African Empire*, I, 171-3

⁵¹Felkin, 'Notes', 746

⁵²*ibid.*, 746

The existence of intricate slave hierarchies was itself indicated by the emergence of two official titles. The *Sabaddu* was the title of a man in charge of the slaves of a chief who lived outside the chief's compound. Above this figure in importance was the *Sabakaaki*, who was the head of the slaves of a chief living within the compound. Both titles were also to be found in the *kabaka's* enclosure⁵³. It is unclear whether the holders of these titles were themselves slaves: if they were, they were clearly slaves of considerable standing. Stanley met Mutesa's 'Sabadu' in 1875, and the latter does appear to have been more of a junior chief than a slave: he was placed in charge of a group of canoes with responsibility for locating the European at the south end of the lake⁵⁴. It was probably the same *Sabaddu* who was part of the Ganda mission to Britain in 1879⁵⁵. Some time after the return of this mission, however, there was considerable outrage that Mutesa had sent mere slaves, and not princes or important chiefs, on this journey.

It is likely that the duties of a *sabaddu* were interpreted according to context. Zimbe noted that Ham Mukasa was "the Sabadu of the Kigalagala", suggesting authority over royal servants or pages⁵⁶: the status of the *mugalagala* is examined below. According to the history of the *ngonge* clan, it was a *Sabaddu* from among their number who was 'traditionally' in charge of building the *kabaka's* main residence⁵⁷. Lourdel noted that the head of the *Mukwenda's* slaves also had responsibility for the protection of the *Mukwenda's* harem⁵⁸. It is not made explicit that this 'young man' was himself a slave, but it seems likely that he was indeed drawn from the slave ranks to become an overseer. Mutesa apparently referred to a man named 'Kurugi' as his chief slave⁵⁹. In the mid-1850s, Burton was told that the *Sekibobo*, the governor of Kyagwe, was in charge of "the life-guards and slaves, the warriors and builders of the

⁵³See J.D.Murphy, *Luganda-English Dictionary* (Washington, 1972) 512

⁵⁴Stanley, *Dark Continent*, I, 282

⁵⁵A.Kagwa [tr.&ed.M.S.M.Kiwanuka], *The Kings of Buganda* (Nairobi, 1971) 175

⁵⁶B.M.Zimbe [tr.F.Kamoga], 'Buganda ne Kabaka' [c.1939] 136

⁵⁷A.Kagwa [tr.J.Wamala], 'A Book of Clans of Buganda' [c.1972] 7

⁵⁸White Fathers: C14/24 Lourdel to Deguerry 7.6.80

⁵⁹White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 1/3.9.80

palace", which suggests that command of slave labour at the capital was rotated among prominent chiefs in residence near the royal enclosure⁶⁰. At the same time, however, the *Sekibobo* may also have been known as the *Sabawali*, or head of the *bawali*, another name given to "servants presented to a chief by their parents to work": according to one testimony, the *Sekibobo* was indeed the head of the *bawali* of the *kabaka*⁶¹. The missionary Wilson also hinted at the existence of slave differentiation:

The servants in Uganda are all slaves, the majority being born in slavery, and a tolerable percentage are prisoners, children mostly, taken in war. They are, as a rule, fairly well off, and are not often badly treated; but of course they are liable to be sold to the Arab and half-breed traders for guns, ammunition, cloth, etc. They often live on terms of familiar intercourse with their masters, and are treated as part of the family . . .⁶²

In a domestic context, 'trusted slaves' and those of long-standing employment were very often part and parcel of a chief's estate, as much an integral part of his property and responsibility as poor and dependent relatives. Logically enough, the loyal and devoted slave was much less likely to be sold off. "Rarely", Livinhac wrote to Lavigerie in 1879, "do [the chiefs] give up a slave who has spent several years with them", and hardly ever did chiefs sell the children of their slaves, who were themselves born into bondage⁶³. In this way slave descent groups were established in many prominent chiefs' enclosures. Roscoe is worth quoting at length:

Slaves were obtained by raids, or from wars made upon neighbouring tribes, or they were inherited from the owner's predecessors, or they were given in payment of a debt. As a rule slaves were foreigners, chiefly Banyoro and Basoga; Baganda who were slaves were treated with much consideration in their own country; they were men and women who had been sold by a relative

⁶⁰Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, 192

⁶¹Roscoe & Kagwa, 'Enquiry', 11

⁶²C.T. Wilson & R.W. Felkin, *Uganda and the Egyptian Soudan* (London, 1882) I, 186

⁶³White Fathers: C13/5 Livinhac to Lavigerie 24.9.79

in trouble, children who had been kidnapped, or who had been pawned to raise money in an emergency . . . The status of slavery was not so dreadful in Uganda as in many other countries. In many cases the worst that could be said against it was that a slave was deprived of his freedom, that neither his wife nor her children were his own, and that his life was at his master's disposal. On the other hand if a man married his slave girl, and she had children, she became free . . . They were sometimes allowed to inherit property, even though the mother was a woman of another tribe; this, however, was not a general rule . . . When the King gave one of [his female slaves] away, she might become the wife of the recipient, but he could not sell her out of the land. Other slaves could be sold just as cattle, and could be put to death at the will of the owner, who looked upon them as his property. Slaves were often treated as members of the family, the only difference being . . . that they could not succeed to the property, and, if women, they were handed over to the heir as part of his possessions . . .⁶⁴

It is significant that, according to this testimony, which largely corroborates that given earlier, the only way the 'slave line' could come to an end was if the master formally took one of his female slaves as a wife, although any offspring were also slaves. In his last statement, Roscoe appears to imply that male slaves could not be inherited, perhaps becoming free upon the death of their owner, but this seems unlikely.

Runaway slaves were by no means uncommon in the later nineteenth century, and presumably earlier. However, although in many circumstances it was possible to climb the slave ranks and attain a position of some importance, and although in a few situations emancipation was feasible, slaves appear on the whole to have been reigned to their status. Thus the majority of runaway slaves were merely fleeing from one master, who may have been particularly cruel or negligent, in the hope of finding the

⁶⁴Roscoe, *The Baganda*, 14-15

protection of another⁶⁵. Desertions were common particularly among female slaves, notably those belonging to the *kabaka* or prominent chiefs. Livinhac asserted that "the reason for these desertions is certainly not a love of freedom. With the Negro this is scarcely the case, and when he leaves his master, it is in order to search for another"⁶⁶. The search for a new owner was doubtless an exercise in damage limitation, rather than being symptomatic of an antipathy toward liberty. Both male and female slaves would have been well aware that they would not stop being slaves simply by running away; there was therefore little alternative but to give themselves up to someone else. We are not told of the outcome of these flights. It is likely that in most cases the slave would have been returned, although they might also have been sold to the individual to whom they had fled. The experience of the White Fathers' mission was that markedly little was required to prompt an escape attempt. Two of their slaves apparently fled because the bananas they were served were not cooked to their liking⁶⁷. But it is clear that being sold to the French mission was not a 'normal' occurrence, and it may indeed be that the slaves were freed as a result. Lourdel suggests that many chiefs were noted for their restraint in the punishment of slaves, refusing to carry out the more common forms of retribution, including the removal of ears and other facial disfigurements. The reputations of such men loomed large in the slave community at the capital, to which the French missionaries had access⁶⁸.

However, slaves were exposed to the possibility of a different fate: human sacrifice was not uncommon in Buganda, and despite contemporary European accounts describing innocent freemen dragged randomly from highways for this purpose, it seems likely that it invariably involved slaves. Students of slavery in other African societies - for example Uchendu on the Igbo and Austen on the Duala - have shown that slaves used for human sacrifice were usually fresh captives, not yet integrated

⁶⁵As footnote 59.

⁶⁶White Fathers: C13/7 Livinhac to Deguerry 6.11.79

⁶⁷*ibid.*

⁶⁸White Fathers: C14/185 Lourdel to Directeur . . . 1.6.88

into the broader society or even sold, but rather held in limbo by the state⁶⁹. This seems likely to have been the case in Buganda, although other enslaved groups may also have been sacrificed. In Buganda the Italian officer Casati was told that Suna, when suffering from an illness, had "ordered a hundred human victims of expiation to be killed daily to obtain his cure"⁷⁰. It is significant that these individuals were likely to have been Ganda, as victims of 'expiation' - in this context the surrender of personal liberty as repayment of a debt - usually were. It is unclear in this scenario whether the victims actually belonged to the *kabaka* or were offered by chiefs; however, it is likely that the legal system which sanctioned the enslavement of Ganda as ransom offered a ready pool for human sacrifice, suggesting a rather more indiscriminate system than that found in other societies where only newly-arrived aliens were used. The sacrifices mentioned by Casati lasted fifteen days, during which time up to 1500 slaves would have been put to death⁷¹.

In addition to their role in sacrificial ceremonies, slaves were also used in entertainment, particularly (if not exclusively) at the capital. Slave entertainers were frequently to be found at the royal court, for example the Soga musicians whose skills were renowned throughout the region. Mackay suggests that wrestling contests between slaves were common⁷². Slaves were regularly made to fight one another in gladiatorial contests before the *kabaka*⁷³. This was probably largely for the amusement of distinguished spectators, but it may also have been linked to the valuation of slaves in terms of their physical prowess. Slaves renowned as fighters may well have been favoured by their owners and awarded positions of relative

⁶⁹See V.C.Uchendu, 'Slaves and Slavery in Igboland, Nigeria', and R.A.Austen, 'Slavery among Coastal Middlemen: The Duala of Cameroon', in S.Miers & I.Kopytoff (eds.), *Slavery in Africa* (Wisconsin, 1977) 129, 316. See also R.C.C.Law, 'Human Sacrifice in Pre-colonial West Africa', *African Affairs* 84 (1985) 53-87

⁷⁰G.Casati, *Ten Years in Equatoria* (London, 1891) II, 51

⁷¹*ibid.*, 51

⁷²C.M.S. Acc.72/F 10 Mackay's 'Uganda Notes in 1879'

⁷³White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 1/27.8.79, 1.9.79, 11.9.79, 4.11.79

privilege; such men (as men they invariably were) would certainly have fetched a good price in the market.

Enslavement within Buganda

Slaving activities carried out by the *kabaka* within Buganda itself were probably of relatively ancient standing, but they appear to have increased during the 1870s and 1880s, and particularly during the reign of Mwanga. The victims were both men and women, but especially the latter: the violent enslavement of women appears to have escalated during the later nineteenth century and was a key feature of this period. Mwanga's internal enslavement was not, however, without precedent. Burton was told of Suna that "when the exchequer is indecently deficient, he feigns a rebellion, attacks one of his own provinces, massacres the chief men, and sells off the peasantry"⁷⁴. In the context, it would appear that the resultant slaves were sold to the Arabs.

Apart from this kind of internal raiding, characteristic of the reigns of Suna, Mutesa and Mwanga, pawning or the 'human collateral' system were the main processes by which Ganda were deprived of their liberty within Buganda. Enslavement was often brought about by economic pressure on individuals in the community, chiefly in the form of fines and debts. More affluent citizens were able to cope with these pressures by selling off the slaves they already owned, but for others the only option was to sell one's relatives. Siblings and offspring often found themselves enslaved as the result of a male relative's economic difficulties; again it seems likely that women and children were the most common victims of this⁷⁵. For example, during a food shortage in mid-1880, the missionary Pearson noted "two or three cases where the parents have sold their children to procure food"⁷⁶. The phenomenon had doubtless existed since before 1800, but it may have seen an increase in the later nineteenth

⁷⁴Burton, *Lake Regions*, II, 189

⁷⁵White Fathers: C14/185 Lourdel to Directeur . . . 1.6.88

⁷⁶C.M.S. G3 A6/0 1881/22 Pearson to Mackay 29.7.80

century, for the same reason that internal raiding also increased: as the demand for slaves for export was stepped up, ownership of people became more profitable than it ever had been before⁷⁷. It is also possible that the repeated failure of crops during the 1880s, and the devastation caused by cattle disease, both of which we have already examined, placed unprecedented economic pressures on the Ganda and increased the incidence of local enslavement.

It is likely that much of the 'people-pawning' that went on was temporary, the victims themselves being returned once the outstanding debt had been paid or a specified service rendered. Yet this was not always the case. Lourdel observed that foreign slaves were not the only serviles to be exported. Ganda who had been enslaved as a result of legal proceedings might also be sold to Arab merchants⁷⁸. Lourdel also asserted that "[t]he chiefs sometimes also sell, by a way of a little financial adventure or simply to procure for themselves a little cloth, the children and the young girls handed over to them by the people of the country"⁷⁹. The meaning of this is not entirely clear, but he appears to be suggesting that chiefs sometimes sold as slaves the children - particularly young women - given to them by their regional tenants. This may have been another form of ransom or debt repayment; it may also have been an illustration of how tenants were obliged to surrender one or more of their offspring to be the property of their local landlord. These became, in effect, the landlord's slaves, to do with as he pleased, which might involve their being sold abroad. Again, this probably became more common in the second half of the nineteenth century. Prior to the surge in external demand for slaves, it was probably unheard of to sell such slaves outside the kingdom. At the same time, the offering of children to the politically and socially powerful represented, to a small number of Ganda, the opportunity for what

⁷⁷Perhaps the most dramatic example of human collateral involves Nakibinge, the early sixteenth-century *kabaka*, and Wanema, the ruler of the Sesse islands. Nakibinge effectively exchanged his son Namuimba for Wanema's son Kibuka: when Kibuka was killed, Wanema enslaved Namuimba. See Kagwa, 'Clans', 9-10

⁷⁸White Fathers: C14/185 Lourdel to Directeur . . . 1.6.88

⁷⁹*ibid.*

we might call 'privileged enslavement' or indentureship. This is more closely examined below.

The Growth of 'Privileged Enslavement' in the Late Nineteenth Century

In the second half of the nineteenth century, a system of 'social indentureship' became increasingly prevalent⁸⁰. Relatively few Ganda had access to it, and it should therefore not be confused with the processes by which most Ganda found themselves in bondage, as described above. Nonetheless, its political - and, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, military - implications were enormous. The system basically involved the handing over of children by peasants to chiefs - or, more precisely, by sub-chiefs to higher-ranking chiefs - and ultimately, by chiefs to the *kabaka* himself, to serve as 'pages' or servants. Both boys and girls might be handed over, but it is clear that the opportunities facing boys were very much greater: as we have seen, girls were usually swallowed up into the ranks of concubines or became *bazaana*. For young men, the system of social indentureship produced a new breed of 'privileged servants', examples of which have already been noted.

As we shall see, there is a sense in which this system cannot strictly be seen in the context of 'slavery'; yet it is worth placing it in contrast to the *batongole* which were created in the second half of the nineteenth century, as well as considering it in the context of 'liberty deprivation'. Both 'privileged servants' and *batongole* were pools from which the new elite - both political and military - were drawn in the 1870s and 1880s. The main difference appears to have been that while *batongole* were directly appointed by the *kabaka*, 'privileged servitude' involved some of the features of Ganda slavery already discussed. The committal of boys to a chief's enclosure or that of the *kabaka* was both a major source of domestic labour and, more importantly for the boys themselves, a critical opportunity for social advancement. Crucially, a 'page'

⁸⁰The fact that certain clans are noted as having been exempt from the offering of children to the royal court suggests its general importance. The *ngabi* and *mbwa* clans were thus exempt: Kagwa, 'Clans', 20-1, 90

was not a *muddu* but a *mugalagala*; yet the distinction was not as clear as might be supposed. Indeed, there appears to have been some confusion among the Ganda themselves concerning the legal status of the *mugalagala*. Zimbe relates the story of how Apolo Kagwa, perhaps the most extreme example of social advancement in action, came to be in Mutesa's service:

It was Nzalambi the keeper of the Kabaka's mosque who persuaded Kagwa to leave his master Basude and join the Kabaka's service . . . But Basude accused Nzalambi when he got a chance of seeing the Kabaka, appealing to the law forbidding mere slaves [*baddu*], for Kagwa was not his son, from serving the Kabaka. The Katikiro, Mukasa, then said to Basude: 'Do not the slaves the kabaka gives to his chiefs bring water for him?' He replied: 'They do, my lord.' Katikiro Mukasa continued: 'Do the chiefs' children bring water the Kabaka uses before prayer (Mohammedan type)?' Basude replied: 'They too can bring it but it is those who have been captured in arms that do not' . . .⁸¹

There seems to have been little doubt, on the evidence of the above conversation, that Kagwa was indeed considered a 'slave', insofar as he was in the service of Basude but was not Basude's son. Yet the term 'slave' clearly took on different meanings according to the context in which the service was being performed. The fact that Kagwa was 'persuaded' to leave his master also suggests that the former, and young men like him, enjoyed a degree of liberty not associated with the status of *buddu*. Basude did not appeal to a law which stated that Kagwa was his slave and could not of his own free will leave his master, but to one which stated that Kagwa and his ilk could not serve the *kabaka*; it sounds as though Basude had little legal ground to stand on.

Moreover, the careers of many of these court 'pages', especially those in the service of the *kabaka*, suggest that they had not been enslaved but committed to a stridently

⁸¹Zimbe, 'Buganda', 96-7

disciplinarian training school for political and social advancement. A *mugalagala* in the 1880s was sure to find a place in the *kabaka's* personal military elite, showered with favour and imbued with arrogance. This phenomenon, most closely associated with the later part of Mutesa's reign and that of Mwanga, has been examined in earlier chapters (see chapters 6 and 7 above), but it can also be seen in part as a form of privileged servitude which ultimately backfired on those who were meant to be served. Certain young men, classed as 'slaves' by the French missionaries, clearly possessed considerably greater freedom and enjoyed a sense of privilege as a consequence of being in the service of the *kabaka*. In late 1879, one missionary noted that "[t]wo young slaves of the king's, in my class of Bagalagala, come to ask if we can teach them to read"⁸². We cannot be sure of the extent of the liberties enjoyed by the *bagalagala* - for example, whether they could remove themselves from the *kabaka's* service at will - but the privilege of their position is clear. The missionary Wilson wrote in 1878:

I am told too that many of the Kings servants can read Arabic and I should like to be able to give them all Bibles . . . for they are a very important class to get at for Mtesa unlike the chiefs has no slaves among his attendants, they are sons of chiefs . . . these young fellows will form the future aristocracy of Uganda partly by succession, partly by creation . . .⁸³

⁸²White Fathers: Rubaga Diary 1/13.11.79

⁸³C.M.S. CA6/025/21 Wilson to Wright 31.5.78

CHAPTER 11

Conclusion

In the preceding chapters, we have seen how Buganda's growth was inextricably linked to economic and military developments. Some understanding of the material basis of state power is clearly critical to unravelling the complexities of Ganda expansion, in terms of both commercial dominance in the interlacustrine region and military organisation. Much of the success of the political state was founded on its ability to marshal economic and human resources for what was perceived to be the common purpose. The ethos of state organisation manifested itself in a number of ways, the recruitment of armies perhaps being the most dramatic example. In other spheres of life, the collection of 'taxes' or tribute in a wide range of local produce was a critical function of the relationship between governed and governing; the construction of a fleet of canoes represented a deliberate attempt to join raw materials with ancient skills for the purpose of extending state influence and making the most of the commercial and military opportunities presented by long-distance trade. Yet such 'centralisation' was balanced by a marked degree of commercial freedom: the ability of the Ganda to trade freely in an enormous range of products - from foodstuffs to textiles to human beings - was to a great extent the true basis of Ganda wealth. In this context, the breadth of Buganda's productive base was striking. The need to defend commercial strength and the restless search for secure supplies of raw materials strongly influenced the nature of Buganda's relations - both peaceful and bellicose - with its neighbours for much of the nineteenth century.

In the opening chapter, we noted that the unifying theme of the thesis is the way in which the Ganda state utilised its natural and human resources in order to reach three main objectives: profit and economic growth; internal cohesion; and external security. Individually, the Ganda traded and produced freely, but this freedom, if not

purely illusory, was often ultimately to the benefit of the state. Buganda's strong commercial position contributed as much as military organisation to the kingdom's regional domination for much of the nineteenth century. The state intervened in the progress of commerce only when the kingdom's regional position was threatened, as was the case with the development of long-distance trade from the 1840s onward. The Ganda 'empire' of the nineteenth century was therefore less 'formal' than 'informal', while Ganda military 'imperialism' was inextricably linked to the desire for commercial and economic hegemony. We have seen, moreover, that through the relative commercial and productive freedom of the individual, the state derived considerable wealth through tribute or taxation.

Yet the state intervened in 'private life' in other ways, and while internal cohesion was an aim in itself, it was in another sense the means to an end, namely external security. The highways of Buganda constructed during the nineteenth century represented the combination of these aims. Roads were built to facilitate human traffic and the transport of goods and people: clearly, then, they aided the pursuit of profit and enabled the Ganda to seize the opportunities presented by commerce. Roads would also have been crucial in the rapid recruitment and deployment of armies. At the same time, the state's ability to marshal the kind of public labour required in road-making was critical in the search for both internal cohesion and external security. Political authority was underpinned by such labour, as it was by the organisation of 'peasant armies'. From such an efficient organisational and communal base, the kingdom strove to secure the external environment to its own advantage. Internal cohesion was essential if the kingdom was to control, or exercise an influence over, the external *status quo*.

The Kingdom and its Natural Environment

It is clear that on the eve of colonial rule a series of crises had developed, serving to undermine both internal cohesion and prosperity, and the kingdom's ability to control

the external environment. One such crisis was recurrent food shortage from the early 1880s onward. It seems that food shortages or even full-blown famines were not unknown to Buganda before Mutesa's reign; there would possibly have been even more had the Ganda not diversified and intensified agricultural production as they clearly had by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Yet the agricultural base remained potentially fragile, as the widespread hunger of the 1880s indicates. This fragility was further exposed by the 'religious' wars of the late 1880s and early 1890s, during which time crops and plantations throughout the kingdom were destroyed or abandoned. There seems little doubt that this situation eased the entry of the IBEAC. At the same time, a wave of cattle disease had struck, possibly as early as the late 1870s; this was followed by the continental outbreak of rinderpest in 1889-90, but in Buganda at least, much of the damage had already been done.

The consequences of these ecological, agricultural and pastoral catastrophes were many. Obviously the most dramatic and tangible of these was widespread mortality. Pastoral communities were also devastated: in this sense, the cattle crisis of the late nineteenth century represented another blow to the Hima in Buganda, whose numbers may well have been decreasing throughout the nineteenth century. At a deeper level, the outbreak of cattle disease and the failure of successive crops in the 1880s not only undermined Buganda's economic base, but may well have weakened the kingdom's social and political structure. The inability of Mutesa and Mwangi to feed their vast entourages adequately and to ensure the supply of food from the countryside to the capital almost certainly weakened the position of the kingship at a time when tensions of a purely political nature were already in evidence. We have noted, for example, how the conspicuous consumption and distribution of food at the *kabaka's* enclosure had served to underline his authority: inability to do so can only have damaged perceptions of the kingship. Similar consequences would have resulted from cattle disease. Cattle were clearly critical as sources of food for a select few, and as trade commodities more generally; they were, moreover, symbols of wealth in themselves,

and ownership of large herds was an essential part of Ganda chieftainship. Political power, and its material basis, would therefore have been thrown into flux. This is no less true of the *kabaka* himself, whose control of vast herds and regular distribution of cattle formed an important part of royal potency.

By the 1880s, the fact that sources of ivory had become severely restricted also had implications for Buganda's economic and political base. The value of ivory had changed markedly throughout the period under examination. Formerly a type of currency, it had been overtaken in this regard by the cowry shell; from the mid-nineteenth century, however, the new demand from the coast re-established ivory as one of Buganda's most valuable material assets. Elephant-hunters represented an increasingly important profession. But the elephants themselves were rapidly disappearing from Ganda territory by the 1870s, with damaging repercussions for Buganda's political, commercial and ecological base. As we have seen, the scarcity of elephants may well have increased the incidence of the tsetse fly which, deprived of its preferred and relatively impervious host, searched for what were less resistant carriers, i.e. cattle. It was surely, therefore, no coincidence that as elephants were hunted out of Buganda, the incidence of cattle disease escalated during this period. Commercially, too, Buganda was weakened: deprived of regular supplies of this most valued trade good, the Ganda were restricted to the export of slaves. During this period, coastal merchants were increasingly looking toward the more lucrative ivory markets, such as those in Bunyoro, to meet their demands. The Ganda could no longer hold the attention of these traders through their own resources. Even the *kabaka*, who alone by the early 1880s could offer ivory in any kind of volume to the Arabs, was hard-pushed to round up sufficient amounts. Mwanga, for example, was almost wholly dependent on supplies from Busoga. But the irregularity of such tribute merely served as a reminder that Ganda influence east of the Nile was not only waning, but had never been as powerful as the Ganda themselves had led others to believe. When the early colonial authority tried to gauge Buganda's influence in the

young Protectorate, the Ganda chiefs were extremely keen to press the 'traditional' tributary obligations of the Soga, and indeed a number of other peoples.

Raw Materials and Material Culture

It is clear, however, that Buganda's regional power was not only based upon the resources it could derive from other societies. In the case of barkcloth production, the Ganda themselves possessed the means to commercial hegemony. Ganda producers of this valued fabric traded throughout the region during the nineteenth century, and derived much wealth thereby. This was as clear an indication of the material basis of Ganda power as were the military expeditions which often travelled in the same direction. Yet these two expressions of Ganda expansionism were rarely far apart. Semakokiro's 'revolution' in indigenous fabric production at the end of the eighteenth century was almost certainly linked to the military seizure of Buddu by his brother a few years earlier. Buddu produced some of the finest barkcloth in the region. There were many advantages to territorial expansion in this direction; but there was no greater prize than barkcloth, one of the less dramatic but certainly no less significant determinants of Ganda regional strength by the early nineteenth century. It was the British, not the Arabs, who eventually destroyed this industry, by which time - i.e., the early twentieth century - it had in any case lost its *raison d'être*.

We have also noted the importance of iron in Buganda's growth by the nineteenth century. Iron was both the cause and the effect of expansionism. Iron was found in the Ganda core area, but it was particularly abundant in the lands to the west: it was the quest for this critical raw material, as well as for barkcloth and cattle, that drew Buganda's attention in that direction. The cultural and social importance of blacksmiths themselves suggests the reverence with which the Ganda treated the profession and the metal. This was particularly the case in the late nineteenth century, with the development of a branch of the profession which dealt in the repair of firearms. In a general sense, both metal-working and pottery were probably the

two most celebrated professions in Buganda: this celebration of material culture speaks volumes about the ways in which the Ganda themselves perceived the kingdom's growth and development. Great warriors, while rewarded with political position and material wealth, were rarely as lauded as the humble smith. They were certainly not exempt from the arbitrary power of the *kabaka* in the way blacksmiths and potters were. The individual endeavour of the local forge was seen, perhaps, as the means by which economic and material greatness could be attained; and the Ganda appear to have acknowledged this manifestation of greatness above all others.

The Growth and Protection of Commerce

Fabrics and metals were among the commodities which placed Buganda at the centre of a complex and flourishing trading system. Buganda's central and often dominant position in this network was the key to the kingdom's material strength *vis-à-vis* its immediate neighbours. Moreover, the promotion and protection of commerce were the driving forces behind Ganda diplomatic, military and technological policy in the second half of the nineteenth century. This was consistent with the kingdom's objectives since around the middle of the sixteenth century, although the scale of the objectives had expanded. Yet recognition of this basic continuity must not detract from appreciating the degree to which the Ganda innovated to meet the challenges of long-distance trade. Theirs was a positive response: the presence of Ganda at Tabora, on the southern shore of Lake Victoria, and even at Zanzibar itself is indicative of the alacrity with which Suna and Mutesa seized their opportunities.

Yet the tensions inherent in Buganda's position after c.1850 are clear. Militarily, the kingdom was not the power it had been in 1800. The army frequently over-reached itself, while changes in military organisation at the centre, initiated perhaps in the 1840s, served in the long-term to impair the effectiveness with which the army operated on the battlefield. The militarisation of junior chiefs and pages - both *ebitongole* and, later, *bagalagala* - introduced conflict into command structures and

signified the *kabaka's* attempt to strengthen his own position politically. European military uniforms at the capital were no mere triviality: in a sense they represented much deeper changes in the military ethos at the capital, where social and political positioning combined with a detrimental gun culture to weaken the army more generally. These difficulties could scarcely have come at a worse time for Buganda, when slaves were increasingly important as export commodities and as the kingdom's own reserves of ivory were dwindling.

We have seen how war and commerce had long been closely interwoven in the kingdom's development: both Suna and Mutesa frequently resorted to conflict to establish favourable trading conditions. The development of a fleet of canoes, some of enormous dimensions, was the most dramatic expression of this policy. The long-term objectives of this policy from the 1840s onward were the control of vital lake trade routes, and the restoration of Ganda military power in the region. It was clearly believed that the navy could overcome the obstacles imposed by land warfare. There is little doubt that the fleet did indeed serve to extend Ganda influence. It also almost certainly prolonged Ganda power and significance in the region: without canoes, Buganda's geopolitical position would have been considerably weaker. But the renewed confidence which the navy gave to successive rulers often proved unfounded and revealed, as on other occasions in the later nineteenth century, the Ganda tendency to *over*-confidence and even complacency about their ability to control the external environment. There is a clear and perhaps tragic paradox in the fact that as the Vuma were repelling Ganda attacks and even raiding the Ganda shoreline for slaves, the *kabaka* was drawing up grandiose plans to invade Buzinza and subdue Mirambo. As we have seen, the evidence suggests that this was not mere talk, at least initially, although subsequent events reduced the plan to just this. Through the fleet the Ganda were able to take control of vital trade routes, but even here they were, in a sense, undermining their own strength.

The reliance on the slave trade, brief but intense, was inimical to the kingdom's long-term economic development; at the same time, the exaltation of the firearm, perhaps the most valued trade good, led to enervating political factionalism and the blunting of the army's effectiveness on the battlefield. Nonetheless, the development of the navy provides an excellent example of the ways in which the Ganda state sought to channel its material and human resources into the extension of power and influence and the generation of wealth. We have seen, in this context, the significance of public labour in the construction of highways which stretched throughout the kingdom. In this way Buganda connected itself to the outside world, which was expanding rapidly from the middle of the nineteenth century, as well as facilitating communications within the kingdom; at the same time, roads were unifying themes, providing the foci for social and political cohesion. The navy can also be seen in these terms, though in practical terms more complex and, perhaps, less successful. The attempt to transfer the skills and labour of fishing communities, on both the mainland and the Sesse islands, onto a wider economic and military stage met with limited success. But even within these limits, it was a remarkable achievement and an even more remarkable endeavour.

Much of Buganda's history is characterised by a striking ability to expand at the expense of neighbouring societies, to marshal raw materials and natural resources in the pursuit of productive growth and commercial gain, and to control or at least influence the external environment. The expansion of the navy represented the kingdom's last flourish, a last attempt to harness and manipulate developments and circumstances far beyond its borders. Yet by the end of the 1880s, the external environment was changing too quickly for even the Ganda to control, while ever more powerful influences were being brought to bear on the region. There were new challenges to be met, and still further innovation was essential; but as the study of the pre-colonial past demonstrates, this, at least, was to Buganda's advantage.

Glossary of Luganda terms

<i>amerikaani</i> (Eng., Sw.)	unbleached calico; important trade cloth
<i>bafuta</i> (Sw., Ar.)	thin cotton cloth
<i>bagalagala</i>	pages in the service of the <i>kabaka</i>
<i>bakopi</i>	peasants; commoners
<i>bakungu</i>	high-ranking territorial chiefs, royally-appointed
<i>bataka</i>	clan-heads
<i>batongole</i>	chief appointed directly by the <i>kabaka</i> ; the offices held by such chiefs
<i>bazaana</i>	female slaves; maidservants
<i>buddu</i>	slavery, servitude
<i>butaka</i>	freehold clan estates
<i>ddooti</i> (Sw.)	unit of measure for cloth, approx. four yards
<i>ensimbi ennanda</i>	cowry shell
<i>hongo</i> (Sw.)	customs duty, demanded from coastal traders throughout East Africa
<i>kabaka</i>	king of Buganda, meaning 'head of the clan heads'
<i>kadyeri</i>	small raft
<i>kaniki</i> (Sw.)	dark blue calico or cotton cloth
<i>kasavvu</i>	forced or state labour
<i>kibuga</i>	the royal capital
<i>kyasa</i>	a string of one hundred cowries used as currency
<i>lubaale</i>	spirit or deity, e.g. Kibuka
<i>mmanvu</i>	dug-out canoe
<i>mpingu</i>	navy or fleet

<i>mukama</i>	title of kings of Bunyoro and Toro
<i>nvuma</i>	female slave or war-captive
<i>ssaza</i>	county, of which Buganda had 10 by the end of Mutesa's reign

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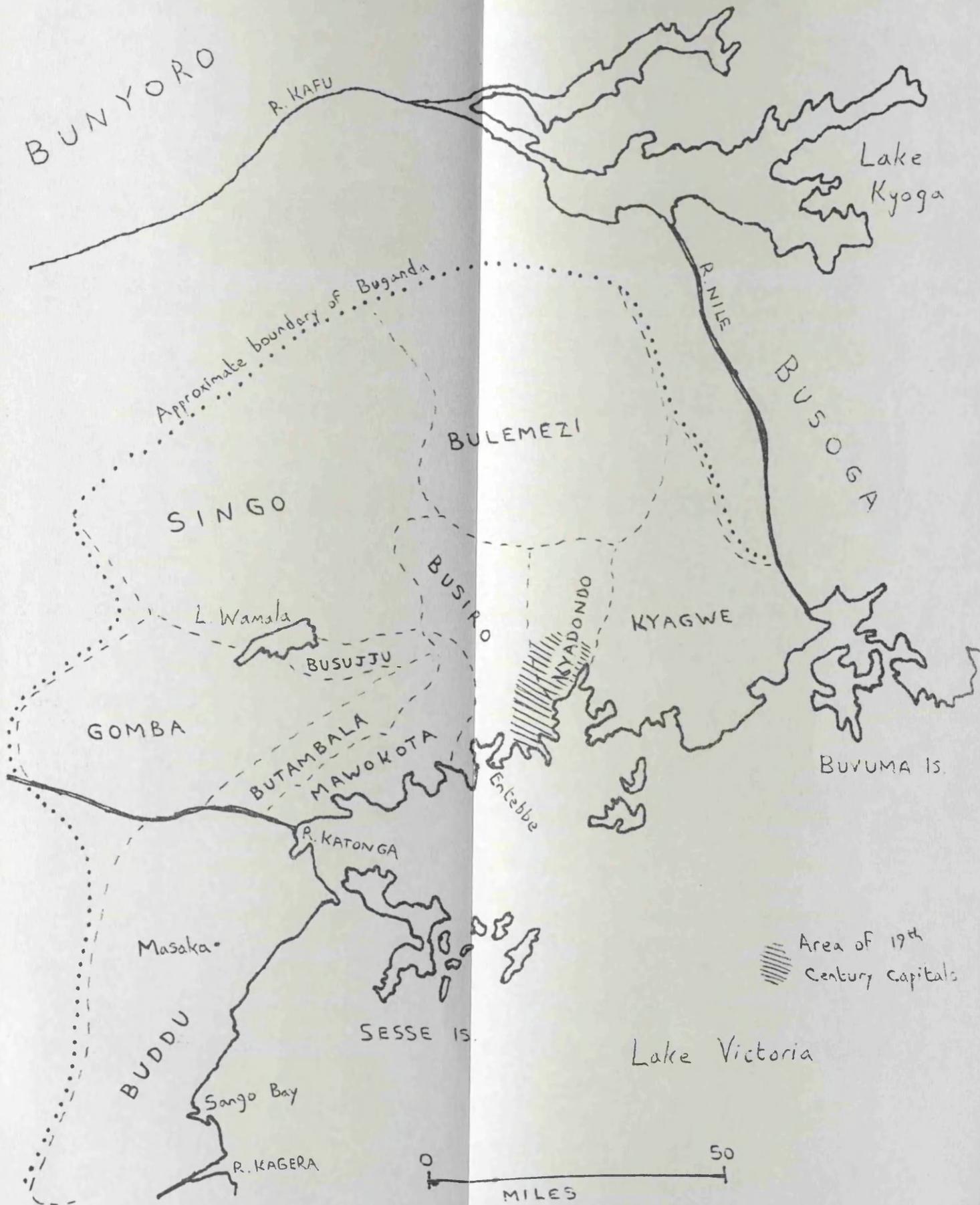
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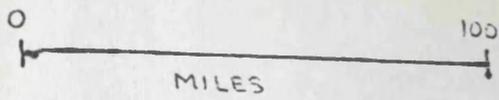
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(I) BUGANDA ON THE EVE OF COLONIAL RULE



BUNYORO

LANGO / BUKEDI

• Mruli

Lake Kyoga

BUGERERE
R. NILE

• Bulondoganyi

BUSOGA

KYAGWE

R. KATONGA

BUGANDA

Rubaga
Munyonyo
Entebbe

• Usavara

BUVUMA I.

'Salt' route

KAVIRONDO

BUDDU

Buganga

SESSE IS.

Lake
Victoria

'Arab' route

R. KAGERA

KARAGWE

UMARA

UKEREWE I.

IHANGIRO

RUSUBI
(USUI)

Kogehyi

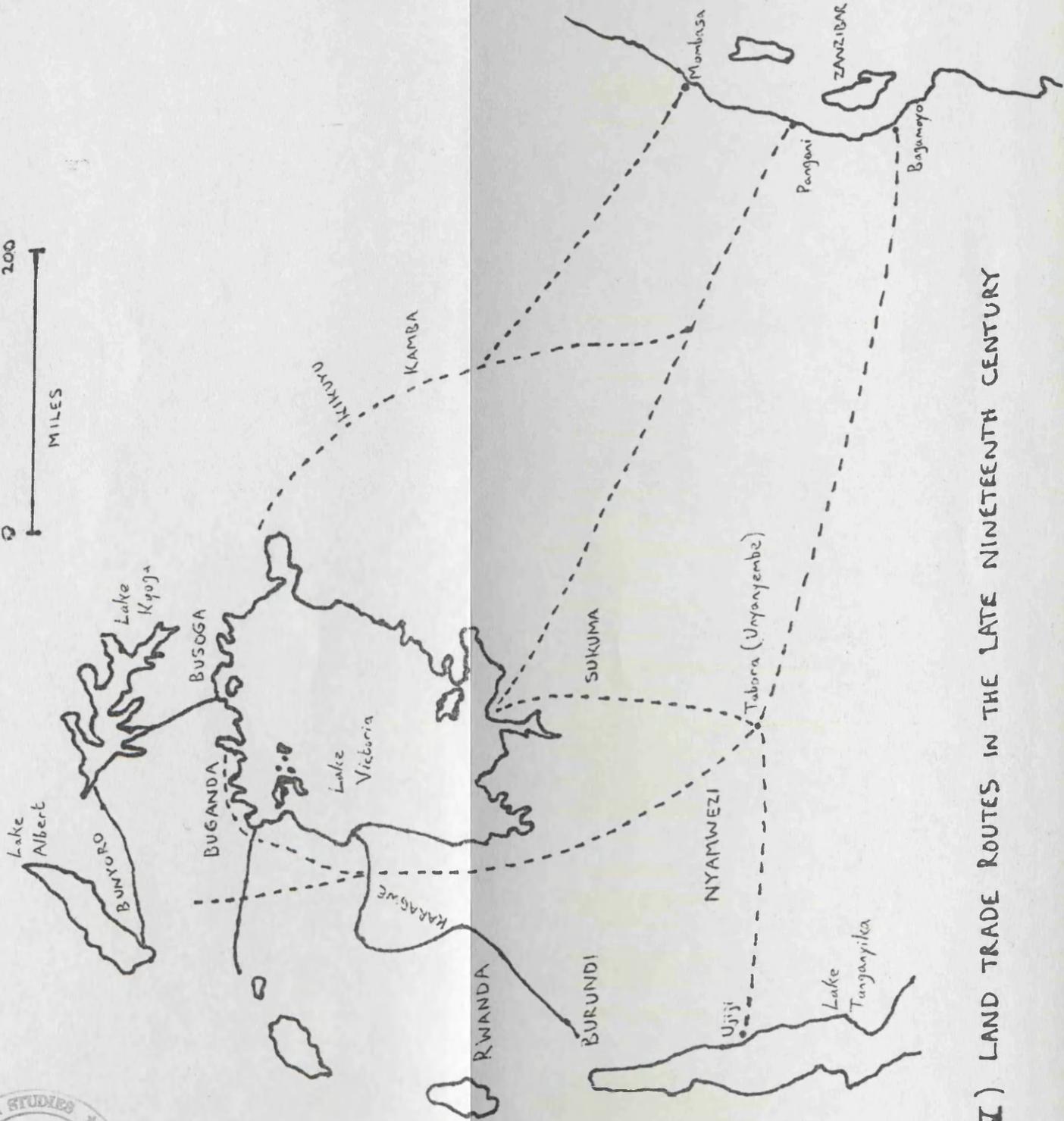
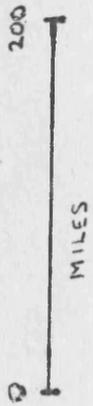
MWANZA

'JORDAN'S NULLAH'

BUZINZA

SUKUMA

(III) BUGANDA AND LAKE VICTORIA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY



(IV) LAND TRADE ROUTES IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY