

Historiography, representation and the history of buganda flashcard



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The history of Buganda has since its documentation in 1901 been the subject of challenges, conflicts, rejections, court cases, and revisions in contests over its sources, compilation, construction and interpretation. This case underlines the argument that whereas historiography and representation are instrumental to the processes of constructing history, in practice they can become the process. That instead of being supportive, the relationship between methodology and history can be deterministic. This argument can be further extended to the debate over a free history by asserting that every history is the image of a particular historiography and representation. Historiography and representation can be constructionist and prescriptive of history.

They can also be inductive and inscriptive. Due to historiography and representation, there are teleological tendencies in the construction of history. In the controversies over Buganda history, representation is part of the wider problem. Towards its uncovering, I assume that representation grants the rules, working precepts, concepts, terminologies, translations and postulates employed to capture meaning from the record and project it into the present, as the qualified image of the past.

The enduring problem is whether a history, oral or textual, satisfactorily expresses the intricate, actual, and critical dimensions of historical thinking about events; which is what makes any given representation of the past a distinctly “ historical” account [White Hayden, 1988, P 2]. On this problem the question is whether it is possible to represent the past as history without significant alteration and loss of meaning without, as is the case with Buganda, creating political and cultural questions, controversies and

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conflicts. For reasons that oblige inquiry, the history of Buganda is fraught with problems of historiography and representation. Because of these processes there is intractability on periodization, sources, trends, content, context, presentation and interpretation.

The history of Buganda is hostage to the compulsion of methodization. Openness to influence has generated a controversial Buganda history. This problem is the product of the informative and performative impact of the content and context of the past on the politics of the later. It is a problem of the uses of history. This case facilitates discussing the problem of history in colonial Africa where imperially created states were subject to external political trajectories and the complementary information, knowledge and faith systems. As an imperial instrument, it is assuming the conception of history as inherent to human societies and instrumental to social construction, consolidation and action [Gordon S W; 2008, Rudi Matthee, 1998, P.

]. And that because history is a constituent part of society, a genuine and aptly articulated record of its past is essential. Subsequently, the argument posited is that resulting from imposed conditions; an unmodified history of Buganda is constrained and what emerges as Buganda history thereafter is highly influenced by non-indigenous modular heuristic historiography and representation and the interests thereof. This essay proceeds with exploration of the controversies over the history of Buganda, reflecting the problems and how they manifest.

It then discusses the key question of history and why there is an intractable problem in the circumstances of the construction of the history Buganda. The essay addresses the problem of historiography in general and the method applied in the construction of the history of Buganda. This leads to the role of representation in the construction of history, the problems and why it particularly generated controversy in Buganda history. In the conclusion, the task is to assess the corruption to the history of Buganda and the constraints to resolving the problems of the history of Buganda through historiography and representation.

Problem of Buganda History The problem of historiography and representation in the articulation of the history of Buganda is historical. It originates from the 'clash of civilizations' dynamics in the early relations between Buganda and western Europe. It started with trade through Zanzibar and the information exploits of Europe reconnoitered by explorers, which occasioned cleavages, conflicts and clashes between the new and foreign, against the old and indigenous cultural political organization; the traditions, power, technology, and material values within pre-colonial Buganda. Long nurtured Buganda traditions were destabilized by the clash of Catholic and Anglican Christians, Islam and the indigenous faiths; the Western, Eastern (Arabic) and its native civilization. The literary tradition which then captured the intellectual space in Buganda, instead of rebuilding, created a Buganda problematic within the history of the wider Uganda.

The subsequent colonial discourse presents the trajectory of Buganda as a programmatic of the history of Uganda. Finnstrom Sverker [2010, P.]

describes the problem of modeling Uganda history on Buganda as " a long-
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lasting bias in the scholarship on what we today call Uganda, where the norm and starting point in the analysis is the royalist and courtly imagination of the politically centralized Buganda kingdom encapsulated as a “triumphant narrative of centralization and modernization”. The history of Buganda became a truism and was adopted as the historiography for Uganda.

It is tragic for Buganda that in early colonial history it is reflected as the metropolis and microcosm for the whole of Uganda. Buganda history was muffled and it became farfetched to consider questioning this premise and review the place of the history of Buganda in Uganda. Semakula Kiwanuka [1971, P. 1] notes that ‘ even when written material purports to deal with (early colonial) Uganda, the reader will find that nearly two-thirds of the book or article are about Buganda.

’ Writers on Uganda pre-colonial and colonial history in the liberal tradition; Karugire [1980], Sathyamurthy [1986], Ingham [1958] and of the Marxist ideology; Mukherjee [1956], Mamdani [1976] and Nabudere [1980] tend to focus more on Buganda than the rest of Uganda. Though the debates on the early colonial history period 1899-1920 are on Uganda being part of Buganda, the debates towards the end of colonial rule and the first four years after being granted independence are on whether Buganda is part of Uganda [Low; Mind of Buganda, P. 215]. The demands of Buganda, through the KY Movement, were that Buganda leads Uganda through Kabaka Mutesa, secedes from Uganda or relates under a federal constitution.

This crisis situation was the product of the immediate pre-colonial and early colonial history where the Buganda history was muzzled, (mis)represented as highly developed and presented as Uganda. The problem Buganda history within the wider Uganda is revealed by Cunningham [1905, P. 145] that in the imposition of colonialism Buganda chiefs and people welcomed British rule and took up arms against their native rulers when convinced that the attitude they adopted was against the colonial program and thus not for the ultimate good of the country. Cunningham concludes that being an intelligent people it is not difficult to understand why the Baganda have always been loyal to the interests of the Protecting Power [Ibid, P.

146]. The people of Buganda are presented as having eagerly abandoned their history and adopted that of the mission of colonial rule in Uganda. This shifting of the then contemporary history of Buganda was followed by a reconstruction of its ancient history and through this the Buganda political heritage. The reconstruction of Buganda history was built on scholarly imagination fusing indigenous Buganda mythology with the colonial racist imagination Hamitic hypothesis which then became integral to the creation of the Uganda protectorate. Buganda confirmed the Hamitic hypothesis that its civilization was the result of ancient influence from Egypt, and in the prolongation, from Europe [Finnstrom Sverker, Op. ctd, P.

2]. Through Buganda the Hamitic hypothesis was extended over Uganda as Cunningham [Op cited, P. 3] notes that according to the Constitution created for Uganda in 1900, the Hima race furnishes the royal family of Uganda, and the Kabaka of Uganda must be selected from that tribe whenever a vacancy occurs on the Uganda throne. Buganda was historicized as representing the <https://assignbuster.com/historiography-representation-and-the-history-of-buganda-flashcard/>

informed and voluntary consent of the whole of Uganda to enter the protection of British colonial rule with the treaty signed between Colonel Colville and Kabaka Mwanga. Cunningham [Op cited, P. 145] writes that in endorsing that 4th April 1894 Britain and Buganda treaty, in London a Protectorate was formally proclaimed over the whole of Uganda on the 19th June 1894.

According to Cunningham [1905, P. 6] the Buganda Agreement of 1900 was the Constitution of Uganda. This history was rolled back to the Mutesa (I) letter supposedly inviting the British to create a voluntary colonization. Citing Kodesh, the construction of the history of Uganda through a colonial image Buganda was a joint project bringing together in unity European missionaries, colonial administrators-cum-ethnographers, and indigenous Buganda intellectuals [Finnstrom Sverker, Op cited, P. 2].

The more peripheral to this project, the more primitive the people. Pioneer colonial administrators in northern Uganda described the effort to include the Acholi in Uganda as greatly discouraging, because Acholi did not compare with the political sophistication of Buganda [Ibid]. So beyond Buganda, early colonial administrators found people with nothing answering to civilization. The conclusion was that people in the north of the protectorate urgently needed leadership guidance not only from the British, but also from Buganda. Along these lines the pre-colonial and early colonial history of Buganda was schematically reconstructed for British colonization and through Buganda, the history of the rest of Uganda was accordingly patterned and generalized. Finnstrom Sverker [2010, P.

3] citing Rusch [1975, P. 390], holds that in this reconstruction of Buganda history the missionaries framed that “ religion in Buganda had attained a much higher standard of development than any religious belief in the neighboring countries” while the colonial administrators-cum-ethnographers invented that the Buganda state “ had reached a much higher stage of development than the majority of African countries” [Finnstrom Sverker, 2010, P. 3]. The invented history fitted, as it was meant to, the politics of early colonial rule in Buganda. The immediate subscribers and beneficiaries, the post 1900 Agreement Bakungu Chiefs, are reported to have been so engrossed with the British political mission that on all public occasions they made it a point to adorn a display of imperial medals many of them won on hard-fought fields [Cunningham, P.

148]. The Bakungu Chiefs leader Sir Apolo Kagwa and his English and Luganda literate private secretary, Hamu Mukasa, became the acknowledged progenitors of the literary history Buganda tradition in British scholarship and they were reportedly not restrained to turn it to political advantage [Twaddle; 1974, P. 6]. To the colonizers, the native collaborators and the Christian missionaries, the Buganda history project was more than history; it was the expediting, through inference, of imperial politics, political advantage and hegemony.

However, possibly because this invention was contained in written texts where the post 1900 public was not literate, it did not circulate, capture and dominate the psychology of the masses. To the native public this history was communicated through the Christian Church services and by the Chiefs but the contradictions between these two colonial institutions and the Buganda
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masses were a constraint. Apparently the Baganda local masses were not persuaded and the ideological space remained open for contest.