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## Colonial Discourse as [non]full Accounts of History<sup>1</sup>: A Conceptual Inquiry into Fredrick Lugard’s “the Story of the Uganda Protectorate”

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### ABSTRACT

This conceptual inquiry examines colonial discourse as a fundamentally incomplete historical record, using Frederick Lugard’s *The Story of the Uganda Protectorate* as a primary case study. By interrogating the tension between "full" and "[non]full" accounts of history, the study explores how colonial narratives function as instruments of power that simultaneously document and distort the socio-political realities of the African Great Lakes region.

The analysis focuses on three critical dimensions:

- **The Architecture of Erasure:** How Lugard’s narrative prioritizes the "civilizing mission" framework while marginalizing indigenous political structures and agency.
- **Subjective Legitimacy:** The use of personal memoir and administrative reports to construct a self-serving historical "truth" that justifies British imperial expansion.
- **Epistemic Violence:** The way in which colonial discourse suppresses alternative historiographies, effectively creating a "[non]full" account that masquerades as a definitive history.

Ultimately, the article argues that Lugard’s work serves less as a factual chronicle and more as a **discursive tool** designed to facilitate colonial hegemony. By deconstructing these texts, the inquiry highlights the necessity of "reading against the grain" to recover the silenced narratives essential for a comprehensive understanding of Ugandan history.

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<sup>1</sup> “[Non]full accounts of history” is derived from Yusuf Usman Bala’s phrase “full accounts of history”

**Keywords:** Colonial Discourse, Frederick Lugard, Epistemic Violence, Historiography, Uganda Protectorate.

## Introduction

Is it possible to think of decolonization through deconstructing the colonial text? This paper offers an interpretive engagement and critique of Frederick Lugard's "*The Story of the Uganda Protectorate*"<sup>2</sup>. It offers an epistemological and conceptual inquiry into the concepts, categories and assumptions that Lugard uses to construct the story of the protectorate. Lugard's text ranges from understanding the country and the people [their way of life, geography, social and political organization, religion etc.] to examining the early history of the communities, discoveries by Arabs and Europeans, imperial expeditions and the intertribal conflicts among others. To do this, Lugard deploys categories like Barbarous, tribe, savage, primitive, Christian, pagan, etc. to describe the people of the Uganda and draw distinctions between Uganda and the "west". Beyond this, he characterizes society to be organized around tribes/ethnic groups [static with little if any changes] and any significant changes is brought by foreigners. Such writing is not limited to Lugard but the colonial scholarly tradition to which Lugard can be located. Besides, when using written sources by explorers, missionaries etc. like John Speke, H.M. Stanley, Macdonald, Lugard takes no time to investigate their assumptions and categories beyond looking for accuracy and reliability, which would not expose the assumptions embedded in their use, intended meanings and local interpretations thus limiting having [what Yusuf Usman Bala calls] full accounts of history. Lugard tries to postulate the protectorate as having numerous heterogeneous tribes like the "Unyoro", "Uganda", "Usoga", "Wahima" etc. with some features distinct but also sharing others. However, the paper will pay much attention to "Buganda"<sup>3</sup>. I argue that, in order to have a full account of the history of people and places, we need to consider the indigenous understanding and interpretation of themselves by paying keen attention to the categories used to describe them by others and themselves. By deploying a historico-political approach, the paper will attempt an alternative interpretation of the story, the categories used and debunk assumptions made by Lugard.

## Lugard's account of the people and the protectorate

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<sup>2</sup> Lugard Fredrick F. *The story of the Uganda Protectorate*. (Ed. Howard Angus Kennedy. London: Horace Marshall and Sons, 1900).

<sup>3</sup> In the book, Lugard uses the word "Uganda" to mean both Uganda as a country and Buganda as a "tribal community" interchangeably. I will use Buganda in reference to where he used Uganda to mean the kingdom of Buganda and maintain Uganda where he used it to refer to the country to avoid misrepresentation and confusion in the paper.

Lugard begins his story by describing the country and its people. He draws distinctions between people, locations, customs, socio-political organizations etc. However, the success of his description was hinged on the aid of certain conceptual categories. Some of the categories that he deploys include tribe, savage, barbarous, religion, etc. These categories ‘may’ not be problematic but the ways in which he deploys them and the interpretations, assumptions and claims he makes, of the stories and histories of these people and places using these conceptual categories is what shall be investigated. These categories are not only used to describe the people and their places but also to measure the level of development, civilization and progress. These categories are not only representative of the people and groups but their entire history and how it has been conceived by scholars that fall in Lugard’s line of thought. This history is representative of the way of life, the customs of people, their socio-economic and political organization. One needs to engage with some of these categories in order to understand the underlying internal logic and intended assumptions when deploying them, and in order to understand what actually the people and groups like those that Lugard is trying to describe conceive, perceive and take themselves to be and the distinctions they drew between themselves and other groups and people.

Buganda, Lugard argues has the most advanced native civilization with its people being approachable coupled with the customs and traditions. He deploys the language of tribe, custom and tradition when describing the difference between Buganda and other tribes except the Wahuma.

“Uganda presents the most advanced native African civilization ; its customs, people, and country are most nearly approached by those of Unyoro, which shares to a great degree its traditions. The races in Uganda and Unyoro probably have a common origin. Next in similarity comes Usoga...whose people, by long contact with the Waganda, have become assimilated to them in many of their customs and in dress. The districts further north remain in their pristine Savagery. In Kavirondo, Nandi, and Elgon, we find some of the most primitive tribes in Africa, entirely unlike the peoples of the countries we have named to the north and west of the Lake, in language, development, characteristics, and origin”<sup>4</sup>.

We can see that Lugard deploys the categories primitive and savagery to describe certain groups of people and so their civilization. He doesn’t only end at this but also show differences and similarities between people of different groups in terms of their language, characteristic features, and “origin”. However, this concept origin stands to represent a search for authenticity and purity. Lugard creates a dichotomy between civilized and uncivilized [advanced and primitive societies] which is typical of western colonial conceptions that create distinctions between the west and the non-west “other”, with the west being

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<sup>4</sup> Lugard, *the Story*, 1900, p.1-2

civilized for it meets the parameters that determine the level of advancement/civilization of society while the nonwest being uncivilised and so in need of help. When he describes the difference between the people of Buganda, Bunyoro, Busoga etc. Lugard deploys the language of tribe. This is however different when he describes the people of some parts of the western region particularly the Wahuma and Ankole. Here we can see that he uses the language of race when describing them but also when distinguishing them from other groups of people. Here, his understanding of race is based on biology:

Emin relates that in some far distant epoch (assigned by Stanley to the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century) an invasion of “Wa-Witu” (Wahuma) from the north-east entered Unyoro, crossing the Nile at Mruli. Over-running the countries of Uganda, Unyoro, Usoga, and Karagwe, they passed south, founding the kingdoms of Ankole and Toru, and on towards Tanganyika, where they still remain a separate race, speaking their own language. The Wahuma invaders were probably Asiatic, having a common origin<sup>5</sup>.

He presents Wahuma as a different race whose biological make-up was different and considered to have Asiatic race similar to the Abyssinians. For him, their facial make-up is said to be “Orthognathous” and their hair identical to that of “Europeans”. Their colour is light brown, with a thin physic and wiry, and nomadic herdsmen by occupation. Their diet consisted of milk and meat, with beautiful women whose origin is considered Hamitic<sup>6</sup>. The question that comes here is, when does he use the language of tribe and when does he use the language of race? From the reading, it becomes very clear that Lugard uses the language of tribe when describing internal differences i.e. between tribes internal to Uganda and perhaps Africa. To the contrary, he deploys the language of race when drawing differences between people internal and those from outside. Those who come from the outside are considered more superior than those from within and so having the potential to bring civilization. For instance, the Baganda, Banyoro, Basoga etc. in the former while the Wahuma and Ankole in the latter case. This kind of thinking is not limited to Lugard’s writing. Speke writes that “...it appears impossible to believe, judging from the physical appearance of the Wahuma they can be of any other race than the semi-Shem-Hamitic of Ethiopia”.<sup>7</sup> For him, “the government is in the hands of foreigners, who had invaded and taken possession of them, leaving the agricultural aborigines to till the ground”.<sup>8</sup> Speke writes that the Wahuma were a white race that civilized the “negroes” that entered the country through Ethiopia. Speke shows that

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<sup>5</sup> Lugard, 1900, p.2

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.3

<sup>7</sup> Speke John H. *Journal of the Discovery of the Nile*. (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1864), p.146

<sup>8</sup> Speke. *Journal of the Discovery*, 1864, p.247

Wahutu considered themselves to be beautiful, with white skin thus more civilized<sup>9</sup>. The same happened in Rwanda with the Belgian colonialists politicising the difference between the Hutu and Tutsi based on similar models.<sup>10</sup> This came to be both an intellectual, ideological and institutional construct by the Belgian colonialists and the catholic church in Rwanda<sup>11</sup>. The end result was Tutsi privilege, evoking an understanding that Tutsi conspired in the oppressive colonial experience and so later regarded as internal colonisers violence i.e. the genocide in Rwanda.<sup>12</sup>

Lugard like Speke argue that in as much as the negro was an agriculturalist, the Wahuma were pastoralists, which later meant not having cattle but an identity and a common feature which was being shared despite them not having cattle at some point.<sup>13</sup> For Lugard, the Wahuma “were for the most part pastoral, though in Some cases, as in Abyssinia, they became agricultural. The race was phlegmatic, and took a different name in each new country, adopting to some extent its customs. But to-day they are seen to be an exclusive”<sup>14</sup>. This whole story came to be known as the Hamitic hypothesis. This was traced to the colonial construction and the biblical story of Noah cursing his son Ham thus the belief that Noah founded the black races of Africa. The reactions about the biblical provisions on the founding of the black race made the story to be reworked to make only Ham’s son Canaan cursed and Egypt whitened. Napoleon’s momentous invasion of Egypt exhumed a series of archaeological and scientific findings that showed evidence of great civilisation in ancient Egypt. Despite ancient Egyptians being considered black initially, the discovery of the historical achievements following Napoleon’s conquest served to reconcile it with the European assumption of racial superiority by reclassifying ancient Egyptians as racially white<sup>15</sup>. Ibn Khaldun however, shows that differences of conditions however, can be attributed to the different ways in which people try to ake a living.<sup>16</sup> Whatever Lugard did was to use these categories to draw distinctions between various people in Uganda by looking at their customs, their physical attributes, their

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<sup>9</sup> See Speke, *Journal*, 1864.

<sup>10</sup> See Mamdani Mahmood. *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism and the Genocide in Rwanda*. (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 2001, p.87.

<sup>12</sup> Mamdani, *when victims become killers*, 2001.

<sup>13</sup> See Lugard 1900; Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 2001; Sanders R. Edith. *The Hamitic Hypothesis: Its Origins and Functions in Time Perspective*. *Journal of African History*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (1969); p521-532; Speke, 1864.

<sup>14</sup> Lugard, 1900, p.4

<sup>15</sup> Sanders, *The Hamitic Hypothesis*, 1969 p.524-527

<sup>16</sup> Ibn Khaldun. *The Muqaddimah, An Introduction to History*, (trans and intro by Franz Rosenthal, Abridged and edited by N. J. Dawood, with a new intro by Bruce B. Lawrence, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1967), P.91

social and political organisation etc. The same holds true in colonial scholarly tradition understanding of world history in which race becomes fundamental. Lugard's understanding of difference depicted the native as incapable of producing serious civilisation and any serious civilisation was brought by Wahuma [Hamites] and this is emblematic of the civilising and Christianising mission of late colonial project in Africa broadly. In the words of Cheikh Anta, the whole idea of Hamites serves to deny the "moral advantage" of civilisation.<sup>17</sup>

It needs mention that the use of tribe as a category was inherited by colonial scholars that came after Lugard. Tribe is one of the categories which are contemptuous given the assumptions which were constructed around it. Sseremba has shown that this concept and category was founded on a divide between the west and non-west, reason and tradition, and between civilisation and barbarism [primitive/savagery, to use categories that Lugard uses].<sup>18</sup> In the words of Anthony Pagden, Barbarism was used in a European sense to be applied to all non-Christians and races which were not civilised who were considered to be people whose humanity was far from being perfect<sup>19</sup>. Barbarian was used to mean those who were not the "us". Whatever was used by Europeans to mean inferiority/inferior race was based on reason despite having been used to mean foreigner in Greece. For the Greeks, barbarian meant those who never lived in cities and had no political order while for the Romans, it meant people who speak a different language. There was no sharp break between the barbarian and the Greeks nor Romans unlike the European construction of the barbarian that meant people who were uncivilised<sup>20</sup>. The Europeans deployed the Aristotelian theory of natural slave which categorised slaves as slaves as natural slaves for they didn't possess reason, can't formulate instructions for self and incapable of practical wisdom<sup>21</sup>. This however does not suggest that these differences never existed in the premodern Buganda, Uganda, Africa or world, these differences existed. Society always had these differences, just like Pagden has shown how the Greeks distinguished themselves from the foreign barbarians, the Baganda always as well distinguished themselves from Basoga, Banyoro, Bagisu etc. Barbarism, savagery and primitivity are

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<sup>17</sup> Cheikh Anta Diop. *The African Origin of Civilisation: Myth or Reality*, trans by Mercer Cook. (Westport: Lawrence Hill and Co., 1974), p.9.

<sup>18</sup> Sseremba Yahya. *The Concepts of Tribe and Nation in African Historiography, in the MISR Review Number 3, 2020.* (Mumbai: Prodon Enterprises), p.95-6

<sup>19</sup> Pagden Anthony. *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

<sup>20</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, MISR Modern State and the Colonial Subject, Class Seminar, May 19, 2020 via Zoom

<sup>21</sup> See Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man* 1982; Robert Williams, Jr. *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourse of Conquest.* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

used to define difference by Lugard just like the category tribe. It denotes distinction between the European self and the non-European other. For Sseremba, the assumption behind the category tribe is that the non-west is composed of biologically and culturally homogenous people and their “common blood and common customs determine their social and political behavior”.<sup>22</sup> Such homogenization is very modern, based on a common descent. This difference has come to be institutionalized and politicized thus creating more new categories typical of those that Lugard describes [i.e. tribe] with very similar assumptions i.e. ethnicity, nation. Lugard’s depiction of tribe allows him to state that, “from a very early time markets have been established throughout Uganda and Unyoro, and every kind of article is brought for sale by every variety of tribe and race. This alone marks a great advance upon the Savage tribes around them, and few, if any, other Pagan countries in Africa—except Yorubaland—have thus established native markets from time immemorial”<sup>23</sup>. The category tribe and the way it has been deployed by colonial thinkers like Lugard tends to silence and disregard history and multiplicity to an attempt which creates homogenizations in terms of biology and culture across time and space. When we think of places where tribe has been deployed as a mode of organization of society, it has been very problematic with far reaching unimagined consequences. Tribe for instance was deployed in indirect rule Africa as the basis on which access to opportunities and land would base. The resultant effect has been endless ethnic and tribal conflicts even in the postcolonial period<sup>24</sup>. Tribe as a concept has led to fragmentation of the population in Africa i.e. natives and settlers. This fragmentation has effects and attracts violence at two levels, between natives themselves (tribe against tribe) but also between native and settler.<sup>25</sup> Tribe was used to differentiate between one group and the other in terms of their civilization, that’s why Lugard presents Baganda as being a bit more advanced than other tribes that he considers more savages. With this, the conception of tribe without questioning the message it carries and assumptions embedded is as problematic to the extent possible that it sparks violence. In all this, colonial scholarly tradition in which Lugard is part changed the precolonial organization of societies and privileged fronting tribe at the heart of political and social organization.

Those who had different attributes to the ones used to describe the Wahuma were considered different, and because the Wahuma are of a different race, their women he argues were not willing to marry the “negroes”. Lugard drew a distinction between the Wahuma and other tribes with the aid of the category

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<sup>22</sup> Sseremba, *The Concepts of Tribe and Nation*, 2020, p.96.

<sup>23</sup> Lugard, 1900, p.65

<sup>24</sup> Cf Sseremba, *The Concepts of Tribe and Nation*, 2020.

<sup>25</sup> Sseremba, 2020, p.102

negro. Negro becomes another category that Lugard uses to explain the difference between and among people and places.

...these can be contrasted with the negroe wachwezi who had no nasal bones, with thick lips, their woolly on the scalp identical to that of a sheep and has little tufts. their colour is deep black, their physic thick and heavy, they are agriculturalists. These form the Bantu speaking people who are stationary<sup>26</sup>.

It is not clear how Lugard conceptualizes the category negro. Whether it is a term which is specific to the tribes which were internal, or within but having foreign origin or which were nonwestern just like the colonizing project considered them to be. Whoever did not have the physical attributed which were used to define those who were foreigners was considered a non-progressive negro. The wachwezi for this case are categorized by Lugard as negroids.

The aboriginal Wichwezi, on the other hand, were negroids, prognathous, without a nasal bone, thick-lipped, and with a woolly growth on the scalp and other places, which under the microscope exhibits the same structure as the wool of the sheep, and grows in little tufts. Their colour is deep black, their physique thick and heavy, their occupation mainly agricultural and stationary<sup>27</sup>.

By using negro to describe groups of people based on their natural physical features means the naturalization of certain categories such as tribe, negro. This means such a category—like many others—shows how less critical he was when deploying them. If not unintended, then he like many other colonial writers used such categories to ensure the nonwestern “other” is described in a very demeaning and devalorised terms that could have no choice but need liberation by “the western civilizers. Categories like negro are not such categories limited to description of people in Uganda but also other places in Africa and beyond. In describing the people of Abyssinia and Senar, James Bruce is said to have deployed the same category negro especially when he used it synonymous with Shangalla<sup>28</sup>. Netsanet shows that the category negro is used in colonial historiography and travel writing as one that denotes people with animal-like features—groups and individuals. For her, if James Bruce argued that we need to describe people in their own terms, his deployment of the category negro to mean animal-like people raises questions to his own assumptions and on whether the category “negro is entirely human”<sup>29</sup>. Cheikh Anta

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<sup>26</sup> Lugard, p.4

<sup>27</sup> Lugard, p.4

<sup>28</sup> Netsanet Gabremichael. *Travel writing as an Empirical Mode of Knowing: A Methodological Critique of James Brice's Travels and Adventures in Abyssinia*, in the MISR Review Number 3, 2020. (Mumbai: Prodon Enterprises), p.199-201.

<sup>29</sup> Netsanet, *Travel writing as an Empirical Mode of Knowing*, 2020, p.201.

Diop would conclude that Negro became synonymous of primitive being that retranslated into inferior with prelogical mentality, and the need to justify the colonial project along with slave trade necessitated a description of “the so-called inferior traits of the Black”.<sup>30</sup>

Lugard does not only draw distinctions between the people of Uganda but tends to understand them comparatively with the Europeans. He shows many activities and attributes that portray the intellect and systems of Buganda and other tribes. For instance, he points to games and sports like mweso, art of counting, writing in Arabic by some chiefs etc. Interestingly, he acknowledges their intelligence, however, when referring to such, he reads Buganda in comparison to Europe and the western world meaning the intellect of the people of Buganda could only be good if compared with that of Europeans. He states that, “their intellect is good and their system, just like ours”. Europe then become the basis for assessing intellect somewhere else.

Their numerical reach almost indefinite limits, and the system, like ours, is a decimal one. The favourite game, Mweso, played on a board with holes containing peas, requires rapid mental calculation, and is so intricate that no European seems to have mastered it<sup>31</sup>.

The people in Buganda are presented to have been obsessed with the high love for counting, writing especially by chiefs who learnt Swahili language and had knowledge of writing using Arabic character (using slabs of cotton-wood as slates)<sup>32</sup>. Another striking feature to Lugard which showed Baganda intellect

...is their shrewd intelligence, which is shown in their evolution, unaided by extraneous example or teaching; for both the Mohammedan Arabs and the Christian travelers found Uganda semi-civilized when they entered the country. It is shown by the elaborate system of native law and custom, and the strikingly shrewd arguments used in prosecuting or defending a case before the Barraza. The questions put to Europeans regarding civilized practices and inventions are wonder fully intelligent, while the knowledge displayed of their own country, and everything in connection with it, proves them to have not only intellect but extraordinarily retentive memories<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> Cheikh Anta Diop. *The African Origin of Civilisation*, 1974, p. 24-5.

<sup>31</sup> Lugard, 1900, p.18.

<sup>32</sup> Lugard, 1900, p.18.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.3

Three things turn out here; The first is where he notes that the “the questions put to European regarding civilized practices and inventions”. It is with the asking about European civilization that intelligence is thought of without which intellect is less among them. Focus for Lugard wasn't on questions about their own civilization nor interrogating the logic behind the questions. How did the Baganda describe their own intelligence and how did they understand it? In another instance he describes the Baganda as a group of people who “make excellent porters, capable of carrying very heavy loads. They have not the sense of pain that Europeans have, and Felkin relates that a man who had three teeth out was so pleased that he wished more to be extracted, while they often laugh and joke under an operation”<sup>34</sup>. Everything good, smart and that express intelligence has to be measured in comparison or based on western/European parameters. Ibn Khaldun argues that “analogical reasoning and comparison well known to human nature are not free from error”.<sup>35</sup>

### **Religion, “paganism” and pre-colonial society.**

Lugard discusses the category religion in his story of the protectorate. Before the introduction of Islam and Christianity, the Ganda religion “is generally spoken of as Lubare”. For Lugard, the Baganda never wanted their religion to be spoken about which made it hard for it to be clearly understood. For Lugard,

...Wilson, Felkin and Ashe have collected much information regarding that of Uganda. It is said that the belief in a Supreme Creator, called Katonda, was universal, but that there was no definite idea of a future life. There were no idols, but offerings and prayers were made to demons who inhabit certain places and influence certain objects. The greatest was Mukasa. This Neptune of the Lake enters into some individual, who henceforth becomes his oracle and exercises great influence in procuring rain, or averting war, famine, or plague. Plantains are offered to Mukasa before undertaking a voyage.<sup>36</sup>

In here, we notice that the people of Buganda had an idea of God—the creator whom they referred to as “katonda”. Despite that acknowledgement, Lugard still considered the people to be ‘pagans’ who had to be liberated by the introduction of Islam and Christianity.

At the burial of a king in Unyoro, as Speke relates, hundreds of men were mutilated and thrown into the grave, still living, before it was filled in, together with cloth and valuables. This waste of human life was, therefore, in part due to Pagan superstition, in part to the caprice and bloodthirstiness of the king...The

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.15

<sup>35</sup> Ibn Khaldun. *The Muqaddimah*, 1967, p.26

<sup>36</sup> Lugard, 1900, p.33

advent of the Arabs, who brought with them the religion of Islam, and of the missionaries of the Christian creeds, had a remarkable effect in destroying these pagan superstitions.<sup>37</sup>

He argues that so such paganism was destroyed by the advent of Islam and Christianity. Whatever existed before the introduction of Islam and Christianity wasn't religion and was identical to superstition, witchcraft and magic. It was with these religions that such superstition was destroyed though not completely. For him, the people had a strong belief in superstition and supernatural powers.

The legends — especially those relating to the Great Magician in Unyoro, and to Kintu in Uganda—show that the people believed in the continued existence of the spirits of their kings and chiefs, and that these exerted an influence after death. Ashe describes the strange belief that a spirit is controlled by some mortal, who can thus “Samira” the ghost of a dead man, and Mutesa expressed the wish that no one should so “Samira” his spirit. “Lubare” he defines as the “Upper air and water, and the deities who live there,” and he describes a custom of sending a scapegoat into the wilderness. Superstition, and a belief in supernatural powers, has an immense hold over the people. The sorceresses (Wichwezi and Mabanda)<sup>38</sup>.

However, other writers on Buganda like Welbourn (1962) and Rigby (1975) argue that there was religion and an idea of God in Buganda though with a different name [creator/katonda]<sup>39</sup>. For him, conceptualization of religion in Buganda did not have an orderly and integrated system of beliefs, dogmas etc like the western conceptualisation identical to those depicted in Lugard's interpretations. Wrigley writes that, “God was known to the Bantu-speaking peoples by innumerable praise-names and titles, illustrating various aspects of his sovereign activity”<sup>40</sup>. For Neil Kodesh, other than thinking of shrines as places of witchcraft and spiritual power as superstition, we should think about them as places where knowledge is produced and healing practiced. Shrines are said to create “therapeutic networks that drew together communities whose leaders possessed a variety of skill, thus forging a powerful connection between clanship, collective health and the composition of knowledge”<sup>41</sup>. These embodied particular

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p.21, 36

<sup>38</sup> Lugard, p.34

<sup>39</sup> Welbourn, F. B. “Some aspects of Kiganda religion.” *Uganda Journal* 26, No. 2 (1962):171-182. Accessed online via <https://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00080855/00046/65j>; Rigby, Peter. “Prophets, Diviners, and Prophetism: The Recent History of Kiganda Religion.” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 31, no. 2 (July 1975): 116–48. <https://doi.org/10.1086/jar.31.2.3629959>.

<sup>40</sup> Wrigley, Christopher. *Kingship and State: The Buganda Dynasty*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p.81

<sup>41</sup> Kodesh, Neil. “Networks of Knowledge: Clanship and Collective Well-Being in Buganda.” *The Journal of African History* 49, no. 2 (July 2008): 197. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0021853708003629>

kinds of knowledge and skills with a connection between agriculture and public healing. The Baganda through the creation of therapeutic networks are said to have reconfigured boundaries of public healing. Here, they transformed territorial spirits into portable spirits that would guarantee the health of groups of people that were disconnected<sup>42</sup>. Hanson<sup>43</sup> adds to this narrative by showing that land intensive banana farming accompanied the process of social and spiritual transformation and this allows us to understand the relationship between agricultural transformation and spiritual transformation...to ensure spirits are not used for bad but also good intentions through innovations. Through such we can see that healing and spiritual transformation are a larger part of “competing political projects”. Healing can be seen to form an essential social chronicle from which the political and moral is made historically intelligible. This means that power practice and public healing work to serve one another and so intertwined.

Lugard presents women as to being classed i.e. the higher-class and lower-class women, with the former being lethargic while the latter [who were peasants] offered labour in the fields. After producing, these lower-class women took these commodities to the market.<sup>44</sup> Those who were in the upper class could only do work related to taking care of small young boys. Their social status is still depicted as being low in society. It is only with the coming of Christianity that women's social status increased with their treatment based on European ideas<sup>45</sup>. Social status is only understood in the western sense.

The advent of Christianity has greatly improved the social status of women in Uganda, and they are now treated by the chiefs much more in accordance with European ideas than formerly. Polygamy has ceased among the Christians, and marriages are of course celebrated with the rites of the church. Formerly there were no marriage customs other than the usual feasts and libations, and the purchase of the wife. Women age very quickly, being already old at 25 to 30; and many are childless<sup>46</sup>.

If it wasn't for Christianity, Lugard seems to suggest that women would be living a life which wasn't worth. They would be oppressed and treated without any regard for humanity. Wives would just be purchased in perhaps what would be equated to bride price like commodities. Whatever function that took place as a marriage ceremony wasn't a ceremony but just a mere feast. Before coming to the role of

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<sup>42</sup> Kodesh, Networks of Knowledge, 2008, p.200

<sup>43</sup> Elisabeth, Hanson H. *Landed Obligation: The practice of power in Buganda*. (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003), p.213.

<sup>44</sup> Lugard, 1900, p.29.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p.33

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.32

women in the precolonial, allow me ask a question to these many assumptions of Lugard; why were the ceremonies that he considered feasts and libations performed in pre-colonial Buganda? Didn't he have to engage some of the intentions and motives behind the performing of these functions? Back to the role of women in pre-colonial Buganda, Wrigley argues that they were very instrumental in guiding the king in the economic and political affairs of the kingdom, but also provided leadership at certain points thus speaking to the overemphasized patrilineal[patriarchy] of pre-modern state<sup>47</sup>. In kingship and the state, Wrigley shows that queen-mothers in Buganda controlled and managed the kingdom during periods after the accession of their sons especially in instances where kings assumed office when they were young<sup>48</sup>. Here we can see that contrary to the interpretation that Lugard would give about the status of women, Wrigley shows that women even before the advent of Christianity and Islam were actually king-makers and kingdom builders whose role was much more valued. Stephens argues that “applying the label of patrilineality to these societies elides as much as it illuminates, because they and their ancestors, to varying ends and degrees, also gave importance to kin networks created by mothers”<sup>49</sup>.

The intentions behind Lugard's interpretations of some Buganda practices and customs are well articulated by Musisi Nakanyike. She writes that, “the instructions given to the pioneer missionaries heading to Buganda were detailed. Among them was the order to use their discretion about whether to pressure Mutesa at the outset to abandon some of the traditional Kiganda customs. Should they find it necessary to disagree with Mutesa, they were encouraged to explain and expound the laws of Christianity and let Mutesa know that the prevailing Buganda practices were the source of the weakness to the kingdom”<sup>50</sup>. What becomes clear here is not the need to necessarily improve the social status of a single group but to ensure the king of Buganda abandons some of the traditional customs that they considered “weakening the kingdom”. Wasn't this an attempt to promote “western culture” through Christianization and civilization and thus legitimize colonialism?

### **Identity formation and the [im]morality question**

Musisi has argued that evidence suggests that Buganda cannot be thought of as just a single nation nor a neutral identity but as a “an amalgam of sub-national identities” that competed with each other in a

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<sup>47</sup> Wrigley, *Kingship and State*, 1996.

<sup>48</sup> Wrigley, *Kingship and State*, 1996.

<sup>49</sup> Stephens, Rhiannon. “Lineage and Society in Precolonial Uganda.” *The Journal of African History* 50, no. 2 (July 2009): p.204-5. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0021853709004435>.

<sup>50</sup> Musisi, Nakanyike B. “Morality as Identity: The Missionary Moral Agenda in Buganda, 1877-1945.” *Journal of Religious History* 23, no. 1 (February 1999), p.52

struggle for dominance”<sup>51</sup>. Buganda not only as an identity but also as a concept and notion needs to be interrogated and questioned. Such an attempt was not forthcoming from Lugard who just used Buganda to mean a tribe—tribe as a homogenous and fixed category. Musisi states that if we do an assessment, then we can reexamine the attempts by missionaries, colonialists and Buganda elites who attempted a construction of a single and moral identity. Lugard presents the concept [im]morality as a practice which was common in Buganda to describe a great deal of bad and wrong acts which were being done in society and called for some intervention, and yet, these very conceptions are said<sup>52</sup> to have been instrumental in constructing a Buganda identity that served the interests of Christian chiefs and missionaries, contrary to the precolonial conception of morality/immorality. Lugard writes that

“...Wilson relates that it is said that, when trouble came upon him, the animals to whom he had been kind came to assist him, each in its way, and extricated him from his difficulties. His descendants, however, waxed quarrelsome and turbulent. Fighting, drunken ness, and great immorality and cruelty marked the era which followed. Kintu, in disgust, arose one night, and taking the original of each that he had brought, disappeared, no one knew whither”<sup>53</sup>.

This shows that the level of immorality among the people of Buganda was enormous for even animals were better than humans who could not save fellow humans [like Wilson]. Lugard takes no time to understand what immorality was in the pre-colonial Buganda and other societies and what constituted morality. Even when he describes the most attractive characteristic features of Baganda, he considers them to be a group of people who value confidentiality so much and “a superficial modesty” which would do nothing but conceal numerous and enormous immorality. He states that:

Apart from these two characteristics of intelligence and impetuosity, the national traits of the Waganda are a love of pomp and display, great cleanliness and neatness in their mode of dress, of living and of eating; a love of privacy and a superficial modesty concealing a great deal of immorality<sup>54</sup>

It is such constructions and disregard of concepts like morality/immorality that a Buganda identity was formed. If we think of the hegemony of Christian chiefs and missionaries to wield political and economic

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<sup>51</sup> Musisi, Nakanyike B. “Morality as Identity: The Missionary Moral Agenda in Buganda,1877-1945.” *Journal of Religious History* 23, no. 1 (February 1999), p.52

<sup>52</sup> See Musisi, Musisi B. “Morality as Identity: The Missionary Moral Agenda in Buganda,1877-1945.” *Journal of Religious History* 23, no. 1 (February 1999): 51-74

<sup>53</sup> Lugard, p. 71

<sup>54</sup> Lugard, p. 18-19

interests above all others, they used a politico-religious ideology<sup>55</sup>. What Musisi is showing is that the understanding of morality/immorality in this case was too unified, coherent and authoritative in nature and could be uniformly and collectively applied. Morality became a universal principle that had to regulate society. This came with the advent of missionaries and Christians and wasn't the case in pre-colonial Buganda. In the precolonial period however, morality developed differently "in many separate social categories, producing discrete identities" and was conceived in a very different way from the colonial and missionary period. Musisi's suggestion is that we shouldn't settle to have the pre-Christian Buganda and missionary imported [im]moralities as binary opposites, rather there should be need to "...search for those complex areas where there was a symbiosis of interests as well as those where their interests diverged"<sup>56</sup>. The search can only reveal that we have "disjunctures and continuities" when it comes to sexual [im]morality of pre-missionary Buganda and that of "imagined Christian nation of the missionary project"<sup>57</sup>. Despite being so, these existed in different historical contexts. The moralizing project by the missionaries she argues did nothing but to fragment and reconstruct the local/native identities. The Christian yet western morality was given privilege over all "others" as having "higher moral worth" with parameters to determine moral worth based on already preconceived and particular moral choices, i.e. "the development, refinement, and re-coding of sexual austerity in the name of monogamy"<sup>58</sup> which emanated from the "West". She argues that the Europeans judged and rated themselves as being morally superior to the Baganda and others for the form of sexual austerity they were envisioning was very common to "their" religious ideology.

For Musisi, the Baganda ruling elites decided to adopt these very moralizing ideas in order to meet the desires they had for Buganda ["imagined community"] and the knowledge with which it came. Among the desires was the need to ensure that Buganda was way ahead of other groups in terms of political and economic advancement. Her claim is that they knowingly participated and encouraged identity politics based on the moralizing agenda and ideology. This points to some kind of agency of the Baganda elite in the moralizing project. But then, she argues that, the model the missionaries had brought was "impossible" and couldn't be dealt with easily since it had the intention of creating a post-savage individual<sup>59</sup>. What this means is that the structure and model of the missionaries and colonialists shaped

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<sup>55</sup> See Musisi, *Morality as Identity*, 1999, p.72

<sup>56</sup> Musisi, 1999, p.72.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p.73 *Iff.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p.73.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

the agency of the Buganda elites to participate. However, the structure-agency debate is beyond the premise of this paper since the focus of the paper is to problematize the concepts and categories themselves. Going back to the narrative “post-savage individual”, it means that there were two historical periods, one savage and another post-savage, with the savage period being static and non-progressive while the post-savage being moved by progress and advancement. Whatever the intention of the moralizing project was, could not be divorced from one of civilizing the “savage”/native population. The end result was not about the construction of identities per se through such categories but also transformations in the way of life and relations among people say marriage relations through the Christianizing and civilizing mission. The Christianising mission which is depicted in Lugard tends to portray Islam as a religion that was oppressive and disregarded rights through acts like circumcision. Their converts were violent and attacked those who were against Islam i.e. “a plot was formed under one Bilal to murder Owen and Grant, and for the Sudanese and Waganda to set up a Mohammedan kingdom in Toru, or to retire to Kavalli's”<sup>60</sup>. It was Christianity that had to assume the role of salvaging all those misguided Mohammedans. Jonathon L. Earle would show that the contest was one of power and not necessarily oppressiveness of Islam. Earle argues that Christian chiefs failed to agree with Muslim kings hence the religious wars, yet the Christian chiefs and so the Christianizing mission sought to become dominant, and so with shift from Islam to Christianity in the 1900s, Islam became less influential in Ganda politics.<sup>61</sup>

### **An attempt towards alternative interpretations**

Great scholars like Yusuf Usman Bala have championed a project of rethinking the way history has been written. Bala has argued that there is need to reconstruct history but this would only be possible if we engage in an assessment and reinterpretation of sources and categories<sup>62</sup>. Bala argued that the most widely used sources of the reconstruction of African history in the past 500 years were based on European written records which were obtained from travelers, traders, missionaries, governments and their agents. Their assessment was on the basis of reliability, authenticity and accuracy but not the basis and nature of its perspectives and assessment of the conceptual categories used.<sup>63</sup> Reconstruction needs going beyond

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<sup>60</sup> Lugard p.142

<sup>61</sup> Jonathon L. Earle. *Colonial Buganda and the End of Empire: Political Thought and Historical Imagination*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>62</sup> Bala, Usman Y. *Beyond Fairy Tales: Selected Historical Writing of Yusuf Bala Usman*. (Zaria, Nigeria: Abdullahi Smith Centre for Historical Research, 2006)

<sup>63</sup> Bala, Usman Y. *Beyond Fairy Tales*, 2006, p.2-3

“identification and description of events but understanding and explaining their inner connection, movements and existence in a historical process”. In making interpretation, privilege has been given to missionary, traveler and explorers/ and colonial administrators writings.

Lugard's interpretations and historical conclusions sometimes give reference to explorers and travelers whose interpretations were insufficient postulating histories of natives<sup>64</sup>. He took less initiative to interrogate the meaning of the facts which were provided and the categories used by the travelers and explorers plus missionaries which Usman Bala warns us against<sup>65</sup>. Lugard points to the controversy which lies in the accounts of different explorers that visited Bunyoro and Buganda. If Stanley depicted Buganda conquest of Bunyoro under Suna and Mutesa, Emin discovered no such conquest as Kabaka treated Bunyoro king as equals who shared presents over time. To the contrary, Speke depicted a conflict between the two but with no retaliation from Bunyoro since trade-goods passed through Buganda to reach there by depending on Mutesa. Macdonald on the other hand he argues showed that the king of Bunyoro was installed by the envoy of Mutesa<sup>66</sup>. Mutesa converted to many religions given the numerous attempts to convince him to convert, from Buganda religion to Islam then later to Christianity. The reasons for converting from Islam to Christianity of the king Mutesa are two-fold; i.e. chiefs could not eat meat unless slaughtered by a Muslim and using rites prescribed by the Quran; second is Mutesa's unwillingness to undertake circumcision given strict customs and traditions of Buganda. “Mutesa, though always a keen and interested disputant in religious discussions, adopted the attitude of an amused cynic” and consequently died a “pagan”, “weary of the conflict of the teachers of the three creeds to gain him as a proselyte”.<sup>67</sup> Two conceptual categories are cited without giving proper interpretation and problematizing here i.e. pagan and custom. Lugard states that, when Mutesa died in 1884, he argues, was buried in a big grave and this was not in line with Buganda customs. His body was put in three coffins. In what the king was buried in is one thing and considering Buganda custom not to change and learn from other cultures is another. His assumption is that custom is static and Buganda customs had to remain fixed when it comes to issues like burial ceremonies<sup>68</sup>. One contentious claim is his belief in assumptions that the king of Buganda was divine. He notes that, “Emin relates that the death of the king from natural causes presages misfortune to the land, and he is therefore killed by his wives when his death seems

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<sup>64</sup> Cf Lugard, p.7

<sup>65</sup> Bala, 2006, p.2-3

<sup>66</sup> Lugard, p.84

<sup>67</sup> Lugard, p.89

<sup>68</sup> Lugard, p.90.

imminent. The king was an absolute despot, and regarded as divine.”<sup>69</sup>. Other colonial writers like Ray have argued that

while the kabaka was in no sense a god, was known to be a man like others, his role was something more than that of a political executive...He was Buganda’s supreme symbol of order and meaning...kingship was 'the transcendental symbol of political identity...and he himself describes the king as ‘the centre of myth and history. of power, legitimacy and prosperity...and of civil religion’...Centrality, moreover, is inherently sacred<sup>70</sup>

Alternatively, Wrigley has argued that such assumptions and categories used by “acquirers” are insufficient and don’t reflect the indigenous perceptions. To him, there was no “sign of the ritual regicide that was the key component of the Frazerian system, the alleged practice of putting kings to death either at the end of a fixed term or when their vital energies began to fail”. The last four pre-colonial kabakas are locally chronicled to have died natural causes<sup>71</sup>. Colonial assumptions would emanate from the misconception of the Kiganda concepts that translate into God. For Wrigley, concepts like *Jjuuko* and *Mulingu* would be interpreted as God though would still stand for scolding. To this end the king of Buganda is said to belong both to the myth of genesis, creation, child king etc. He writes:

“Jjuuko' may evoke the Lwo idea of God, but the name also has a simple meaning in the Ganda language; it is a 'passive' nominal form derived from the verb ku-juuka, 'to scold'. 'The thing that is scolded' is of course a child. And so, the sixteenth king of Buganda can be seen to belong both to a myth of genesis, of the Creation, and to a myth of perpetual return, being yet another representation of the ever-recurrent Child King...Na-lunga belongs also to the other, divine aspect of the 'Jjuuko' concept; for her name is based on the same stem as Ka-lunga and Mu-lungu, two of the commonest Bantu names of God.”<sup>72</sup>

This means, attention needs to be paid to the way Baganda perceived such concepts than using preconceived assumptions to make conclusions. Such preconceived notions like God, tribe, ethnicity is what Bala warns against in critiquing Henrich Barth accounts portray African societies as organised around tribe and race as basic units. Bala exemplified how Barth’s framework of analysis was preoccupied with mere ethnic categorisation of the people of Kastina based on races, tribes and nations

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<sup>69</sup> Lugard, p.23, 20

<sup>70</sup> Wrigley, p. 17

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p.17

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p.180.

and not full account of history<sup>73</sup>. In the pre-colonial, however, the Baganda for example never initially identified themselves as tribes, but as clans. Wrigley argues that colonial historians that have studied identity formation and difference have failed to show how and why clans were unified nor do they allow “for any really fundamental subsequent change until the impact of foreign influences in the second half of the nineteenth century”<sup>74</sup>. Before the unification of clans to form a single identity ‘tribe’, clan was not a political identity, it was with the advent of imperial powers that such groups became politicized. Clan as a marker of difference was as important only if it came to cultural issues i.e. marriage, food etc.<sup>75</sup> and yet such groups weren’t static but could allow other people who didn’t initially identify with it to become members of that particular clan. Mukwaya has argued that there is no evidence to support claims that clans in Buganda were “originally independent political units” that united to form one kingdom. But rather these clans existed even before the unification.<sup>76</sup> Mukwaya points to the need to disassociate clans with political claims in the precolonial. We cannot therefore think of precolonial society as organized around tribes and ethnic groups [fixed and unchanging]. It is in this sense that Ibn Khaldun argues that historians and writers make mistakes due to uncritical analysis of historical information that results into inability to distinguish between truth and imaginary. Some of the errors historians make include limited assessment of historical information, limited knowledge about the nature of events, partial information, blind trust, over reliance on previous authors’ information without necessarily acknowledging their earlier intentions—typical of Lugard’s writing.<sup>77</sup> Categories that Lugard used like barbarous, savage, primitive etc. would be avoided if he devoid himself of comparative reading of societies and took them for what they were and taking the people for who they were. This is not to say that comparative reading is bad but the challenge comes when there are already preconceptions that were developed to understand other societies and people.

Critical examination reveals that Lugard misinterpreted the powers of the king to redistribute land which he later called dispossession. He states that the king owned land but could not alienate it. He only owned a few estates as private property<sup>78</sup>. Despite saying that the king could not alienate, he says the king could dispossess the greatest chiefs “of lands, property, wives and children, and give them to the meanest slave,

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<sup>73</sup> Usman Bala, p.14f

<sup>74</sup> Wrigley, 1996, p.18 ff.

<sup>75</sup> Cf *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Mukwaya, A B. *Land Tenure in Buganda : Present Day Tendencies.* (Nairobi: Eagle Press, 1953), p.7

<sup>77</sup> Ibn Khaldun. *The Muqaddimah*, 1967, p.29

<sup>78</sup> Lugard, 1990, p.20

without the slightest demur/objection”<sup>79</sup>. Dispossession is a very modernist language, what needs to be focused on was the intention for which the king retrieved and redistributed land<sup>80</sup>. There are local narratives that present the king as a custodian of land on behalf of the people and the act was one of redistribution and not dispossession as he puts it. Therefore, Mukwaya invites us to rethink some of the conceptual categories used by scholars like Lugard and focus on analytical approach when dealing with rights over ownership. He argues that we should shift from analysing systems according to different social groups like clans that exercised control over land to different kinds of rights which might be held “at one and the same time by one person, or one class of persons, or even by different groups in the society”<sup>81</sup>.

### Conclusion.

In conclusion, this paper attempted a critique of the assumptions, categories and interpretations that Fredrick Lugard deployed in constructing the story of the Uganda protectorate. The categories used and assumptions made cannot be thought of outside the colonial framework. Such categories [barbarous, primitive, savage, tribe etc.] would serve to mean that the societies and people he was describing were inferior to others and so needed to be liberated, this is reminiscent of the whole desire and intention of the colonial empire. Lugard’s narratives and categories are contentious if read along other sources which write about same/similar places and people especially when a historico-political approach is deployed. Consequently, his assumptions, categories and claims were carried-over to the post-colonial present and these have done nothing but spark violence among people and groups. Re-evaluating his story allow for better understanding of the historical realities.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p.22

<sup>80</sup> See Reid, Richard J. *Political Power in Pre-Colonial Buganda: Economy, Society & Welfare in the Nineteenth Century*. (Oxford: James Currey, 2002).

<sup>81</sup> Mukwaya, A B. *Land Tenure in Buganda : Present Day Tendencies*. (Nairobi: Eagle Press, 1953), p.7

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