
THE 1966 UGANDAN CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS; AN INDELIBLE SCAR ON THE SOCIO LIFE OF THE BAGANDA

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ABSTRACT

Nothing raises emotions in the kingdom Buganda as much as the memories of the effects of the 1966 Constitutional Crisis. The Battle of Mengo which epitomized the climax of the Crisis, had a multitude of both short and long term significant impacts on the well-being of the Baganda. The military defeat of Buganda in 1966 directly led to the consolidation of Obote's dictatorial tendencies which would have a destructive impact on the kingdom of Buganda.

It is argued that with its full long term social impact on the lives of the Baganda as a people and the Kingdom of Buganda as a region; the mayhem of 1966 left an indelible scar on the history of the Baganda.

This study examined the social impact of the 1966 Constitutional crisis on Buganda. At the end of the research, it is urged that policies and attitudes towards Buganda changed markedly once Obote emerged victorious at the battle of Mengo. As a result, it is further stated that the present distressful socio-economic situation of the Kingdom of Buganda is a result of effects of the 1966 Constitutional Crisis.

Keywords: Constitutional Crisis, Battle of Mengo, Baganda, Buganda, Mengo Establishment

Methodology

The approach of investigation used was of a qualitative nature as it seeks to understand the lifestyles and social phenomena at first hand. Indeed, as Blalock (1970), points out the qualitative approach provides detail and adds richness and depth to the understanding of any phenomena being investigated.

This study employed a historical research methodology, that is reminiscent with the collection of historical data. Supported by Amin, (2006), an understanding of the past was sought by studying documents, relics and carrying out oral interviews. Such a methodology as Patten (2004), further emphasizes, gives a flowing dynamic account of past events and an understanding the nuances, personalities and ideas that influenced these events in the first place.

The study relied heavily on the archival data which revealed the presence of rich unpublished data relating to the 1966 Constitutional crisis. Hence, various documents were consulted in detail and these included but not limited to autobiographies, various official government correspondences, commission reports, memoirs or diaries, Legislative Council & Parliamentary debates and reports of Parliamentary committees. The National archive at Entebbe, the Lubaga Catholic archive, Makerere University and the National Parliament archives provided this archival data.

Finally, with regard to primary data, the real record of history is found in the lives of ordinary people who lived it, hence the use of Oral History. This methodology was useful because of the richness of eye witness accounts and reminiscences about the Buganda history relating to the impact of the 1966 Uganda constitutional crisis. This proved to be of a great importance to the study as it supplemented the incomplete written record about the history of the Crisis.

Introduction

The battle of Mengo, which king (Kabaka) Muteesa II described as an amazingly inexpert attack on his palace, symbolised the climax of the 1966 Constitutional Crisis and had marked the first major blood bath in independent Uganda. (Muteesa, 1974, Mutibwa, 1992). It was also for the first time in the country's short history, that the state had deliberately and systematically turned its guns on its own people. The subsequent events that occurred could not be fully understood without a systematic and comprehensive study of the crisis. However, it is stated in this study that the crisis had far-reaching consequences and left a scar on the history of the Kingdom of Buganda as illustrated in the following discussions and findings.

The decline of Buganda's Civil Service Dominance

Baganda domination of the civil service before the Battle of Mengo was a source of envy for many outside Buganda and now Obote took the opportunity to deliberately design policies of exclusion which curtailed Baganda's access to civil service. In terms of the 1962 Independence Constitution, Uganda had two separate commissions responsible for recruitment and promotions in the public sector: one was the Uganda Public Service Commission responsible for the employment of Ugandans outside Buganda and the other was the Buganda Public Service Commission responsible for employment made within the Kingdom and also making

recommendations to the central government. Buganda was the only region in the country to have its own public service commission and this added to its autonomous powers.

Gingyera-Pinchwa (1978) reveals that the Buganda Public Service Commission was appointed by the Buganda Cabinet and confirmed by Kabaka. In its operations, the Commission had been entirely independent of the central government and had hardly any connection to the Uganda Public Service Commission. It managed the appointment of various categories of staff, including the permanent secretaries; the county, sub-county and parish chiefs; the men and officers of the Kabaka's police force and the prisons department; and the judges and judicial officers in the kingdom. It would also, as above, recommend Baganda to key positions in the central government. This had ensured easy access of the Baganda to employment opportunities both in the central government and in Buganda. This, coupled with the fact that the Baganda were on average the most educated group in the country, as Mutibwa (1992) contends, led to their dominance in the public service and thus enjoy relatively a good livelihood.

This changed with the 1966 Constitution that was enacted following the Constitutional crisis. Article 36 that spelt out the functions of the Buganda Public Service Commission saw it merged with those of the Uganda Public Service Commission. ('Abakozzi gavumenti ewakati yebalinako obuyinza', *Omukeleembeze*, 30 April 1966) The independent Buganda Public Service Commission thus ceased to exist and, in its place, new District Appointment Boards, which were branches of the Uganda Public Service Commission were introduced. Also, as Article 36 of the Interim Constitution stipulated that the appointment of the chairperson of the Commission was to be done by the President, these changes also meant that Obote now had indirect control over the appointments to the Buganda Government such as those mentioned above.

The Mengo Establishment had practised nepotism in the awarding of jobs and, if applied objectively, the changes could have benefitted ordinary Baganda. The selection to office had been based largely on nobility and religion as the dominant value of the Mengo Establishment. The District Appointment Boards could have introduced a meritocracy where candidates' qualifications rather than their family or religion would determine appointments. In practice, however, whereas the Buganda Public Service Commission had been the tool of Mengo, the District Appointment Boards merely became the tools of Obote. Karugire (1980). Obote used the new order to appoint Abdallah-Anyuru, a fellow Langi, to head the national Public Service Commission. Abdallah-Anyuru had been a Uganda Peoples' Congress Member of Parliament for Lango West and he was forced to resign his parliamentary seat and take up the new posting. (karugire 2003). According to Bitariho (A Testimony given during the inquiry into the human rights violations in Uganda:1994), Erunayo Oryema, another Langi, was appointed as the Inspector General of Police instead of Timothy Lwanga, a Muganda, or Inyalio, an Iteso, who

were most qualified. Sam Ocen, a northerner, was appointed Deputy-Commissioner of Prisons rather than the more qualified Kigonya, also a Muganda. Also side-lined, as noted by Onyango-Odongo (1993), was Noah Olwoch, the first Ugandan British-trained civil engineer. He was transferred from the post of Permanent Secretary and Engineer-in-Chief at the Ministry of Works to a purely administrative position at the Ministry of Internal Affairs. This was done to create room for Wilson Aguma who was lower in rank but a cousin to Obote and also from Obote's birth place of Lango, even though there was another better qualified engineer available - Kyobe, also from Buganda.

This trend was also evident at the lower ranks of the public service. In 1967 Obote wrote the Lango Development Master Plan which stipulated that all key positions in Uganda's political, commercial, army and industrial life had to be occupied and controlled by people from Akokoro County, Lango District (Obote's birthplace) and that Akokoro County should be developed at the expense of other areas of Uganda. (point number 15 of the 18 points given by the Uganda Army under Major General Amin justifying taking over the powers of government on 25 January 1971)

The appointment of Abdallah-Anyuru placed the day-to-day running of the Civil Service directly in the hands of a pro-Obote politician as Obote's dictatorship was established. The civil service was abused and appointment and promotion on merit was ignored, mostly because it would largely have favoured the Baganda who at that time were better educated than their countrymen. Instead the civil service was filled with politically unsuccessful Uganda Peoples' Congress members who had failed to win elections in their constituencies.

With regards to this development, Karugire (2003) contends that obsequious mediocrities filled public office as the only requirements were having a party card and to have proven loyalty to the leaders of the UPC. The 'undesirable civil servants' especially the Baganda who were considered to be anti-establishment were promptly and frequently transferred to remote stations, often receiving these instructions by telephone. As a result, some outstanding civil servants joined international and private organisations where job security as assured and others resigned from public service.

Kasozi (1994), reveals that Obote deliberately discriminated against the Baganda. The educated Baganda civil servants who had opted to serve in the central government were deliberately demoted to lower status jobs. Between 1961- 1967 the Baganda share of high level jobs decreased from 46.9% to 36.6%. In addition, Obote did not appoint Baganda to policy- making or Policy implementing positions in key ministries of defence, internal affairs commerce or industry. They were also excluded from important positions in the army police and secrete services.

The Consequences of Obote's Administrative Changes on the Functionality of Buganda's Cultural Structures

In Buganda attachment to culture was being intrinsically valuable. As a result, Cultural ties were an important dimension of identity and a form of capital which was harnessed to move people towards development.

Traditionally, Buganda emerged as clan-based state and every person in the kingdom belonged to a particular clan. Clan system was the core of collective identity of the Baganda. Indeed, Lwanga-Lunyiigo (2007) that the paramount importance of the clans in Buganda was further enhanced by the strong position of the King with his role as the Head of Clans (*Ssabataka*).

The institution of the clan heads (*Bataka*) had an important role of inculcating the Buganda morals and norms among the young and guarding against societal norms. This had ensured a morally upright society. By taking care of the welfare of its clan members in terms of provision of non-formal education, health services and shelter, it also provided a vital support to the wider family and kinship system in Buganda. Many social gatherings in the kingdom including ceremonies related to birth, marriage, sports and death, in most cases rotated around the clan system under the auspices of the clan elders. (Kagwa, 1971)

The homesteads of clan elders and chiefs acted as training grounds (*Ebisakatte*) were life skills were passed onto the young including instilling traditions and cultural values. (Empisa za Baganda, Makerere University Library Archives, AR/BUG/35/3) All these had ensured a socially coherent society. Therefore, the clan system had remained the foundation for social organisation of the Buganda society.

Assisted by the Clan heads (*Bataka*) the King was also the chief custodian of the Buganda cultural norms with the responsibility to protect cultural values, customs and norms of the Baganda. As Head of clan all issues relating to culture in Buganda are a sole responsibility of the king and the clan heads. (Ssemwanga-Kivumbi, 2013) The King was the cultural head around whom the culture of the Baganda revolved. It was because of the above that Buganda became the most culturally vibrant, cohesive and progressive society, and possibly the reason why its cultural structures became a target of Obote's administrative changes after the mayhem in 1966.

Kasozi (2013) affirms that the sequence of events that followed the political turmoil of 1966 had a negative impact on the functionality of the Buganda's cultural structures and also on the way of life of the Baganda. In 1966, Muteesa II was forced to flee into exile, in 1967 the kingdom was abolished and in 1969 three years after the attack of the palace Muteesa II died. There was a disintegration of the cultural structures thereby disrupting the social cohesion that had existed. Also, the support provided by the wider family and the kinship system was disrupted. In the long

run, the absence of these important cultural structures created a new dimension in societal lives where Buganda's social values were greatly undermined and her social fabric weakened.

When Obote abolished the kingship as an institution, many other cultural structures attached to it such as the clan system were either deliberately destroyed or became non-existent. Children born in Buganda in the post 1966 crisis era had little appreciation of the Buganda cultural ways; all they knew was life without a king and any cultural structures to guide them. This resulted in the emergence of a generation that is not well grounded in the Buganda cultural values and customs leading to high levels of moral decadence among the youth in Buganda.

Given the absence of cultural structures, it became difficult for the Baganda to live the normal community life of the pre- 1966 crisis. One of the consequences of this development is the increasing number of street children, unemployed youth and homeless people in the major towns in the Buganda sub-region. Thus, the destruction of Buganda's the social fabric and informal networks of trust would become one of the major lingering effects of the Battle of Mengo.

The above two occurrences disrupted the old-cultural structures through which the Baganda traditionally organized their economy. Subsequently, economic activities in Buganda slowed down as the chiefs' inaction affected three aspects of Buganda's economy revenue collections, road maintenance and agriculture production. It is thus argued that the failure of the Baganda to satisfy their own needs in the period after the crisis was not due to lack of economic resources and means. On the contrary Buganda was still endowed with immense human and material resources. The economic decline therefore is rather explained by the loss of its cultural values that used to be the foundations of the Baganda as a community.

Aftermath of the collapse of the Socio-Economic Infrastructure

For centuries, the Kingdom of Buganda constituted the apex of the socio-economic organization of Uganda and even with the transition from the colonial to post independent era this seemed to continue. Buganda's social structures had still been kept intact by a Kabaka to whom the Baganda attached strong cultural ties. Mutibwa (1992), notes that a glimpse at Buganda's socio-economic status at the dawn of the crisis demonstrates that the Kingdom of Buganda was arguably one of the most culturally cohesive kingdoms providing leadership in both the social and economic life of Uganda.

Decline in the Education Leadership

In the education sector, in the mid-1960s, Buganda had the best social infrastructure in the country. More than 80% of the schools in the country that produced the best students were located in Buganda, and a number of them were being managed by Buganda's government.

(Buganda Economic Planning Commission, 1964-1970, Makerere University library archives, AR/1/5/5). Many Baganda were able to attend these schools because of the wealth generated from the prosperous agriculture sector.

According to documentary evidence (Ministry of Education 1960-1963, Educational Institutions in Buganda, Makerere university Library archive, AR/BUG/1/3), the Kingdom also owned a number of other educational institutions prior to the mayhem of 1966. At the dawn of the crisis the number of primary schools run and managed by the kingdom, was 155 with an enrolment of 38,068 pupils. This was besides the high schools, and the numerous vocational institutes and Teacher Training colleges. Makerere University, the highest institution of learning in East and Central Africa by then, located in Buganda, had produced a great number of educated in different professions. (Mutibwa, 1992).

Furthermore, as noted by archival sources (Ministry of Finance Buganda government 1966, Budgeted expenditures for the education sector, Makerere University library archive, AR/BUG/1/9) in order to broaden educational opportunities to academically deserving but financially handicapped children, numerous bursaries were made available throughout the Kingdom by the Buganda government. In 1966, for example, 47,000 British pounds was spent on this bursary scheme. As a consequence of these efforts, at the time of the Battle of Mengo, the Kingdom had an impressive number of educated and prosperous middle-class professionals that dominated most of the key position in government, in the public service and even the private sector than did any other ethnic group. (Miscellaneous Assorted papers only, Government statistical returns, Entebbe National Archives, Box no 8/15)

In his report to the Public Service Permanent secretary, the Masaka District Commissioner (District Annual Reports, from the District Commissioner, Masaka to Mr. V.A. Ovonji, Permanent Secretary, Public Service Permanent Secretary, 12 January 1967, ENA C10.000/37), noted that; the 1966 crisis negatively affected the educational sector both in the short and long term. In the short term, there had been widespread disruption of educational activities throughout the kingdom. The insecurity that immediately followed attack of the palace greatly affected the children's school attendance from the month of May 1966 to about the end of July 1966. As riots spread throughout Buganda, hundreds of school-going children were displaced while others stayed at home for fear of their lives. This included children that had previously attended the schools located within the palace at Mengo where schools had been closed down. There was total destruction of the infrastructure here during the skirmishes at the palace. Similarly, some dropped out due to the financial and socio-economic constraints attributed to the crisis.

The displacement of people and loss of employment to some had negatively affected their income and no longer afforded to pay fees for their children. On the other hand, the dissolution

of the Buganda government, also negatively affected the beneficiaries of the Kingdom's scholarships scheme as there was no government to continue with the scheme. Consequently, a number of them also could not complete their formal education.

The Buganda government also lost ownership and management of up to 180 secondary and primary schools taken over by the central government. (Records of the Buganda Government Ministries 1894-1967, *The Management of Educational institutions in Buganda*, Makerere University library archive, AR/BUG/58/4). Documentary evidence further revealed (Ministry of Education 1964-1967, *Educational Institutions in Buganda*, Makerere university Library archive AR/BUG/1/3), that various educational institutions that had been initially under the control of Buganda's government were also made public schools. These included vocational institutes, such as the Masaka Technical Institute, Ssesse Farm Institute, Bukalasa Agricultural College, and Kabasanda Technical Institute.

Predictably, the educational institutions that had been taken over by the central government in the later years were poorly facilitated and some of these collapsed. These schools lacked adequate number of teachers and scholastic materials were often in inadequate supplies. Also due to the fact that they were also now managed at the centre, these educational institutions often lacked adequate supervision resulting into poor quality education. It is alleged that this might have been a deliberate strategy since it was assumed that almost all the Baganda were anti-government.

Amidst the shrinking political influence, education would have been the best tool to up lift people's standards of living and keep them at the helm of the socio-economic status. Unfortunately, one of the greatest effects of the constitutional crisis on the Baganda was the way it disrupted and destroyed children's education. In the end, the worsening quality in the education sector coupled with the collapse of a number of schools was to negatively affect the livelihood of the Baganda.

In the wake of the socio-economic crisis that followed the mayhem of 1966, in the long run these educational institutions that had played a vital role in the past in equipping the Baganda with vital skills that greatly contributed to their livelihood were now either providing poor quality education or were in existence. As a result, educational opportunities greatly narrowed and there was a marked decline in the enrolment of children within the region that formerly provided leadership. Obote apparently seemed to be indifferent to this predicament which the Baganda were facing. Perhaps, this is how he had intended to handle the imbalance in education opportunities where the Baganda had been ahead of other ethnic groupings particularly those in the North.

The waning Healthy Sector

In matters of public health by 1966 the Kingdom of Buganda had the best health infrastructure; accessibility of health services was generally at acceptable levels and above the national average - The kingdom was a host to the national referral hospital at Mulago alongside four major missionary hospitals; Lubaga, Mengo, Nsambya, and Kibuli. Within the Kingdom, there were two other major regional referral hospitals at Masaka and Bombo. They were run by the Buganda government. Numerous dispensaries were also scattered throughout the kingdom as the Christian missionaries in Buganda had set up a relatively well-developed system of church-run health centres. (Ministry of Health and Works, Buganda government 1965-66, Makerere University library archives, AR/BUG/6/15). Others were also managed by the Buganda government.

The above had resulted into the general standard of living of the people in Buganda between 1962 and 1966 generally higher than that of other regions in the country. In addition, traditional Buganda healthcare was provided in a number of ways such as through traditional birth attendants, healers, herbalist and psychotherapists. These welfare social systems together with institutional frame works that existed were closely related to forms of political authority which existed in Buganda that regulated public health.

However, according to Sjogren (2013), the above status was to drastically change when the management of hospitals such as Masaka and Bombo regional hospitals and a number of health centres in various parts of the kingdom was taken over by the central government. There was total mismanagement of these facilities in the years that followed the central government take over. The health institutions received very little material and financial support. In addition, they also lacked essential drugs (Ministry of Health and Works, Buganda government 1965-66, Makerere University library archives, AR/BUG/6/15). Thus, handicapped by both a lack of funds and a loss of personnel to manage and supervise them, many of these collapsed or operated below capacity.

Conclusion

In context of the disintegrating institutions, the decline in both the health and the education sectors had a profound negative impact on the well-being of the Baganda. Not only did it reduce the quality of their life, but it also limited their capabilities to live the kind of lives they valued and the real choices they were able to make. In summary, the social consequences of the 1966 Constitutional Crisis had a profound impact on the social progress of the Kingdom of Buganda for many years long after the battle had ended.

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