

Comparative Political Institutions in Pre-colonial Buganda and Bourbon France

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The aim of this article is to examine the similarities and difference between political institutions in pre-colonial Buganda and Bourbon France.

The article will mainly focus on the following aspects (a) Origins of the Kiganda and French State; (b) Territorial expansion in pre-colonial Buganda and Bourbon France; (c) The monarchy in pre-Colonial Buganda and Bourbon France; (d) Social Stratification in pre-Colonial Buganda and Bourbon France. The author is convinced that there were many similarities between the two kingdoms. A comparative study of the two will enable us to understand the evolution of the early modern nation-state.

Origins of the Kiganda and French State

Buganda is the biggest region in Uganda. In fact the latter derives its name from Buganda.

The exact origins of Buganda, like feudal entities, is a matter of intense debate. The evolution of the Kiganda state is said to have begun between 1000 and 1300. Though by the end of the nineteenth century, Buganda had a uniform language and culture, this had not always been the case, for since each Muganda (singular noun to depict an individual that belongs to the Buganda ethnic group) had a clan with which he or she identified in historical terms this meant that the formation of the kingdom was the result of a heterogeneous fusion of norms and values these clans brought with them. Therefore, the settlement of Buganda was a result of several migrations over several generations that took place between or before the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹

The origins of the country that was to become France could be traced as far back when the Celts were the main inhabitants of the region called Gaul (that was later to become France). The Celts remained the most predominant ethnic group during the Roman times, although, like the early clans in Buganda, they were not the first inhabitants of the region.²

After the collapse of the Roman Empire, France experienced several waves of immigration, that were often full-scale invasions. One of the groups that came with these migrations included the Germans.

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The initial origins of the French state could be traced as far back as the emergence of a strong Frankish - Germanic chief by the name of Clovis in 476. From this time onwards, the Franks were to dominate other ethnic groups in the country. In fact, the name "France" is a result of the immense influence the Franks had in the country.^{3,4}

Territorial Expansion in Pre-Colonial Buganda and Bourbon France

Buganda's territorial expansion was most pronounced between 1600 and 1800.⁵ In the sixteenth century, Buganda's territorial expansion was such that its boundary was at Mityana, which was just 25 miles from the Kabaka's capital city.⁶ This is attributable to the fact that the struggling kingdom was always at the mercy of its formidable adversary at that time; Bunyoro-Kitara which at this time controlled regions such as Bulemezi, South Singo, Busujju and Butambala. Nevertheless, these frontier regions remained sources of political conflict between the two states and often changed hands between the two adversaries.⁷ However, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Buganda embarked on its most ambitious territorial expansion that was to last well into the nineteenth century. During this time, it occupied regions, such as Gomba, Southern Singo, Buvuma Islands in Lake Nalubale (Victoria), Kyaggwe, Buddu, Kooki and for some time, Busoga.⁸

Like Buganda, seventeenth century France expanded territorially. Like Buganda at this time, France waged several wars that, in part assisted in the expansion of its territory, especially in the east with the German border. The most significant war France fought at this time was the Thirty Years War. The wars became more intense and intricate under Louis XIV. These included the conquest of the Spanish Netherlands, the war against the Dutch, participating in an anti-William of Orange coalition and the War of the Spanish succession.

The Monarchy in Pre-Colonial Buganda and Bourbon France.

In Buganda, the Kabaka or King was at the top of the country's ruling hierarchy. Like other feudal societies, the monarchy's specific historical development is very difficult to pinpoint, since such institutions take a very long time to evolve.

The Kabakaship is believed to have started taking shape between 1300 and 1500. The idea of having a Kabaka, like in other evolving states, was borne out of the fact that a rapidly expanding political entity needs a singular ruler to effectively govern an increasingly complex socio-political system. Therefore, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries saw the gradual acceptance of single ruler in the kingdom.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Kiganda monarchy was so powerful that the Kabaka could either ignore or side step the authority of the *bataka*, the hereditary chiefs, by appointing his own, called the *bakungu* and *batongole*. These two categories of chiefs were to ensure more effective administration of the kingdom. During the reign of Mutesa I (which should be pointed out, was in the nineteenth century, 1856-1884), royal power reached its zenith, in that Mutesa was really an absolute ruler, just as Louis XIV had been in France. The only deference was that Mutesa was more ferocious and tyrannical. However, this does not in any way absolve Louis of some excesses, for though he was less authoritarian than Mutesa, at times political dissenters suffered from police action. Towards the end of Mutesa's reign, the chiefs that had hitherto been subdued during his reign, began re-asserting themselves politically. This was attributable to first, his failing health and also to the fact that some of these chiefs were beginning to embrace foreign religions such as Islam and Christianity. The appearance of these religions implied that the international spectrum was changing, for these religions also represented big international forces which the Kiganda monarchy could not contend with. Therefore, it was least surprising that with the help of religious factions, the chiefs managed to stage a palace revolution in 1988, permanently ending the absolute monarchy in Buganda.

As in Buganda, the monarchy had become absolute during the Bourbon dynasty in France. The key personifier of this situation was Louis XIV who, like Mutesa in Buganda, became the most absolute of all French monarchs. However, being this absolutism lay some of the root causes of the decline of the French monarchy (which had in fact begun taking place in the last years of his reign) and conditions that were to usher in the revolution of 1789. The expensive foreign had led to a severe haemorrhage in the country's financial resources, that in turn led to a relatively inefficient administration towards the end of his reign. More centrifugal forces were to appear in France that militated against the continuation of the *ancien r'egime*, such as the Era of the Enlightenment that started manifesting itself in the mid-eighteenth century with thinkers, such as Rousseau and Voltaire who advocated more liberalism *vis-a-vis* the authoritarian regime. The mismanagement of the economy under Louis XIV spilled into the reigns of Louis XV and Lois XVI, in that by 1789, everyone from the peasantry to the emerging capitalist class - the bourgeoisie were fed with the existing socio-economic conditions at the time. The external wars continued to drain the country's resources. All these factors made the 1789 revolution inevitable.

Social Stratification in Pre-Colonial Buganda and Bourbon France.

In Buganda, the *namasole* (queen mother) was the second most influential person in the kingdom. Her role paralleled that of the French queens, such as Maria de Medici and Anne, with the exception that she could not become a regent.

The third most important person in the Kiganda ruling hierarchy was the *katikiro* who was the senior chief. In Bourbon France, he was equivalent to chief ministers, such as Richelieu and Mazarin.

The *Kimbugwe* followed the *katikiro* in the chain of command. He was the chief priest, in addition to carrying out other administrative chores.⁹ His post could also be equated with that of Richelieu and Mazarin, who were cardinals. The *katikiro* and the *kimbugwe* were also responsible in supervising their subordinate chiefs in tax collection.

It is imperative that we look at the chiefs that were most important in Buganda. The most powerful chiefs in the kingdom were the *bakungu* and the *batongole*. The *bakungu* were regional governors who were entrusted with the task of supervising conquered territories. Traditional sources suggest that prior to the seventeenth century, the position of the *Mukungu* chief had been hereditary. In some ways, the *bakungu* and *batongole* resembled the *noblesse d'epee* of France.¹⁰ However, as the *kabakas* acquired more and more power, they relied more on their own personal appointees to the *obukungu* posts. This was so, because they felt that relying on hereditary chiefs to run the country would undermine the effectiveness of the kingdom. Thus, begun the policy of even selecting chiefs from the lower social ranks. The *batongole* appear to have been created at a latter stage. They were often direct appointees of the *Kabaka*, entrusted with the administrative duties at his court. In a way, they generally resembled the French *noblesse d'erobe* who were mostly bureaucratic officials in the King's government. Just as there was a crisis in defining in which of the two categories of nobility a noble belonged to, in the social hierarchy in France, a similar crisis confronted the Kiganda nobility. Therefore, it was least surprising to find the duties of a *mutongole* overlapping with those of a *mukungu*.¹¹

The *bataka* followed the *bakungu* and the *batongole* in the social hierarchy. The *bataka* were clan leaders. They were in charge of clan affairs, such as establishing the successor to a deceased member of the clan. The *mutaka* was in charge of who was in charge of arranging marriages and settling serious feuds between or among clan members.¹² Since the clan system played a leading role in organizing several descent into villages and eventually into a kingdom, the *bataka* often reminded the *kabakas* that without their existence, the Buganda kingdom would never

have existed. Therefore, in a way, they claimed to be the "real" Baganda or the *noblesse d'e race*.¹³ They even claim to have been chiefs at the early inception of the kingdom as was also the case in France.

The bottom social category in pre-Colonial Buganda and Bourbon France were the peasants or commoners who constituted the majority of the populace in both states. Their mode of production was basically in the agricultural sector. They also did a lot of manual work. In France, even a wealthy merchant who did not have noble blood was considered to be a commoner. However, in Buganda, peasants were often poor; a peasant with substantial wealth either had some noble origins or intimate links with rulling establishment. The peasants in Buganda had also to provide taxes in the form of cattle, firewood, barkcloth and other products to their chiefs and the Kabaka.¹⁴ Since the French feudal system, like other Western societies was in part, a monetary system at the time, the peasants had to pay most of their taxes in money to their overlords. In Buganda, a peasant who was lucky, hardworking and was favourable in the eyes of his superiors, could work his way into the ranks of the nobility, thus becoming an *anoblis*.¹⁵ In contra-distinction, one had to present some proof of being of noble origins in order to become a noble. Therefore, it was a little bit harder to enter into the ranks of nobility in Bourbon France than in Pre-Colonial feudal Buganda.

The aim of this study was to show that despite the differences in ethnicity and region, the evolution of the kiganda and French states suggest that at one point, the evolution of many states took place around the same time i.e. between 1000 and 1700 A.D. However, we should note that although this was the case in both states discussed, absolutism in France came a century earlier in France (1770s) than in Buganda (1800s). This is due to the fact that though the evolutionary trends in the two societies were roughly the same, for many reasons, Buganda's evolution towards a centralized monarchy that was absolute was slower in Buganda than in France. Despite such differences, they should not in any way obfuscate us from looking at the general developmental trends in both societies that often overlapped with one another. Unfortunately, due to lingering scholarly ethnocentrism, developmental trends in several societies have often been seen in isolation of a general global inclination towards the gradual coming into existence of a political state. Comparative study of these two sates may dispel some of the biases particular scholarships have had towards the nature of the evolution of some of these societies have followed more or less similar directions in the creation of the state as one of man's cardinal requisite for his survival.

FOOTNOTES

1. M.S.M. Semakula Kiwanuka, *A History of Buganda: From the Foundation of the Kingdom to 1900* New York: Africana Publishing co., (1972), 31.
2. George Burton Adams, *The Growth of the French Nation* (London: Macmillan and Co., (1914), 14.
3. Charles Seignobos, *The Evolution of the French People* New York: Octagon Books, (1974), 42-48.
4. Ibid, 86.
5. Kiwanuka, 68.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 68 - 79.
8. Ibid., 68 - 71.
9. Melvin L. Perlman, " The Traditional Systems of Stratification among the Ganda and Nyoro of Uganda" in Arthur Tuden and Leonard Plotnicov, eds., *Social Stratification in Africa*, New York: Free Press, (1970), 132.
10. L.A. Fallers, "Social Stratification in Traditional Buganda" in L.A. Fallers, ed., *The King's Men: Leadership Status in Buganda on the Eve of Independence* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 93., Robert Mettam, *Power and Faction in Louis XIV's France* (New York: Basil Blackwell, (1988), 74.
11. Fallers, 92-100., Kiwanuka, 120-122., Mettam, 72-81.
12. Perlman, 88.
13. James B. Wood, *The Nobility of the Election of Bayeux 1463 - 1666: Continuity through Change*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, (1980), 81-95.
14. Perlman, 138.
15. Ibid., 142.

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The Sugar Industry and its Place in Kenyan Development.

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For many less developed countries (LDC's) sugar is the mainstay of the economy.¹ Yet, for most of these countries it is an introduced crop, contributing to export dependence rather than internal self-sufficiency. Sugar cane probably originated in Southeast Asia, where it is still an important crop particularly in Indonesia and the Philippines. However, its most horrific history goes back to the Caribbean slave-based economies. In the West Indies for many of the small Island States, the politics of development revolved around the politics of plantation grown sugar. In Fiji, Sugar has been immensely critical in providing up to half the total exports every year. In these countries sugar has also had a crucial effect on the social structure of these societies primarily because of the introduction of indentured labour to work on sugar plantations and sugar mills.

In Africa, sugar cane was first introduced into Mauritius and Reunion in the eighteenth century. By the nineteenth century it had rapidly become the basis of their export oriented colonial economies. It was not introduced on to the mainland of the continent however until the early twentieth century. Most tropical African Countries have joined the rank of sugar exporting countries including South Africa, Mozambique, Swaziland and Zimbabwe, most remain net importers.²

The origins of sugar cane in Kenya are rather obscure but it seems to have been first introduced as a cash crop in the 1920s on a small scale.³ Sugar production has not been export oriented and it was not until the 1960s following independence that a need for self-sufficiency in the light of growing demand arose.⁴ Since then, however, large-scale sugar schemes have become prominent, and are seen as the way to ensure Kenya's self sufficiency in sugar and to assist with rural development by improving the levels of income and employment in areas of extremely high population growth and low incomes.⁵ Today, Kenya has seven major sugar schemes - Miwani, Muhoroni, Chemelel, Mumias, Nzoia and Sony, all of which are located in the Nyanza sugar belt or Western Province and Ramisi located at the coast (see Appendix)

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