

# The Relevance of the Traditional in Social Change

PETER RIGBY\*

The problem of social change can be approached along two fundamentally different but related axes. The first of these yields empirical studies of social change by the exploration of particular societies or institutions through time in order to show which "traditional" elements retain their institutional force, which fade away and die and which are consciously rejected as being "bad", "wrong", "retrogressive" or "reactionary". No empirical study, however, is entirely objective. The value orientations and political philosophy of the student always colour to some extent the most rigorous attempts at "scientific" analysis, and there is, therefore, another field of study that explores what *kind* of social change is possible, or desirable, or both. Clearly, we are here in the field of moral judgements and values, however much these are related to, and "justified" by, rational agreement and empirical evidence.

Many social anthropologists have in the past considered, and still do, that the search for "objectivity" is the only "scientific" basis upon which the study of human society can proceed, and this is right. But just as traces of "subjectivity" must contaminate the analysis of empirical data, so too the status of a sociologist as sociologist must influence his moral judgements. The two aspects of sociological study and discourse cannot, and should not be entirely separated, since the sociologist remains a thinking man, as Peter Berger implies when he says:

The sociologist, then, is someone concerned with understanding society in a disciplined way. The nature of this discipline is scientific. This means that what the sociologist finds and says about the social phenomena he studies occurs within a rather strictly defined frame of reference. One of the main characteristics of this scientific frame of reference is that operations are bound by certain rules of evidence. As a scientist, the sociologist tries to be objective, to *control* his personal preferences and objectives, to perceive clearly rather than to judge normatively... He may be aware of or even concerned with the practical applicability and consequences of his findings, but at that point he leaves the sociological frame of reference as such and moves into realms of values, beliefs, and ideas that he shares with other men who are not sociologists.<sup>1</sup>

It could be added that the social anthropologist or sociologist by the very nature of his discipline and his commitment to it, is *obliged* to move into the area of value judgement, since surely he is the most qualified and "prepared" to do so.

\* Peter Rigby is Professor of Sociology at Makerere University, Kampala.  
<sup>1</sup> Berger, Peter, "Sociologist/Social Anthropologist", pp. 27-29, *Invitation to Sociology: a Humanistic Perspective* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966).



Several important questions arise at this point. It has been asserted by many social scientists that we can no longer talk intelligibly about the "traditional" and the "modern", in that there are really no traditional societies, or even traditional institutions, left. Some scholars, including several African social scientists, extend this line of argument to assert that, since social anthropology has concerned itself largely with the "traditional", it can no longer survive as a discipline.<sup>2</sup> Those who hold this viewpoint suggest that, in certain circumstances, concern with the "traditional" is a wasteful antiquarian exercise, usually pursued by social scientists of conservative political and social inclinations. Certainly, some social anthropologists have in their writings laid themselves open to such a charge, but this is mainly a result of their lack of theoretical sophistication rather than their political bent. In other circumstances, these same scholars extol the virtue of "traditional African culture" and the need to reject foreign, ethnocentred, influences; and several African politicians, amongst them Presidents Julius Nyerere and Jomo Kenyatta, have based much of their vision of the socialist future of Tanzania and Kenya upon models drawn from "traditional African society".

Curiously, as the attempt proceeds to discredit the respectability of social anthropology upon the grounds of its interest in the traditional, the historian of pre-colonial, "traditional" systems becomes the embodiment of the "committed" intellectual, particularly in the study of African societies. He is seen to reject the hitherto dominant idea that Africa has no history other than its colonial past and thereby imbues "traditional" African societies with value and significance for the historical process. The romantic anthropologist and the reactionary district officer who jealously guarded "their people" from the corrupting forces of modernization have now been joined, for different reasons, by the left-wing radical, preaching disengagement. Yet it is precisely this quest for the indigenous that social anthropologists have been engaged in for forty years or more.

To be fair, those historians who really do know what they are talking about, a category very well represented by what came to be known as the "Dar es Salaam School" of African history, recognize the pioneering contribution of social anthropology in putting traditional African societies "on the map". For example, the historian Andrew Roberts, then in Dar es Salaam, edited an excellent little volume, *Tanzania Before 1900*, published in 1968. In his preface, Roberts says of his contributors:

All but two [out of seven] of the contributors are trained social anthropologists, and of these, two are also trained historians. There is still room for debate at the higher levels of scholarship on the best means for historians and anthropologists to assist one another. But both are now coming to recognize an urgent

2 p'Bitek, Okot, *African Relations in Western Scholarship* (Kampala/Nairobi/Dar es Salaam: East African Literature Bureau, 1970), pp. 1-14, *et passim*. See also Worsley, Peter, "The End of Anthropology", *Social Anthropology Working Group, Sixth World Congress of Sociology, 1966 (mimeo)*; and Bagamuhunda, G., "Some Dynamic Aspects of East Africa: the Futility of Current Social Anthropological Models", paper presented to the conference on "Methods, Problems and Strategies of Field Research", 1971, held at Lake Nabugabo, Uganda, under the auspices of Makerere Institute of Social Research, Makerere University, Kampala.

practical need to help Africans understand the historical inheritance of their own societies—both in order to see the present in perspective and to plan for the future.

The final phrase in the quotation from Roberts is important. Must anthropology, in Maitland's words "...choose between being history and being nothing" and confine itself to helping "Africans understand the historical inheritance of their own societies",<sup>3</sup> or can it really illuminate the present and help us plan for the future? Clearly, if social anthropology has, among other things, contributed to our understanding of traditional society and institutions, and these traditional institutions can, and should have a place in the moulding of the future as Mwalimu Nyerere, for example, suggests, then social anthropologists are also capable of addressing themselves to the problem of the relevance of such institutions in contemporary change. But if the concept of "the traditional" society is no longer relevant as some have stated, and only the concept of "the transitional society" is valid, then social anthropology must change its focus or die.

It may readily be admitted that there are really no societies which are not to some extent transitional, in some senses of that term, although many sociologists would take the traditional/transitional distinction as critical from a methodological point of view.<sup>4</sup> But it must also be recognized that no society is without elements that can safely be labelled "traditional" and that the task is to assess how such elements influence, hinder or promote social change. More specifically, I, as a social anthropologist, am concerned to understand the relevance of traditional African institutions in contemporary modernization and planned change, both in terms of empirical as well as moral criteria. This implies a certain level of cultural and moral relativity, and social anthropology and sociology share at least a minimal commitment to this as a condition of objective analysis. But perhaps anthropologists, because of their concern with cultural and structural models, have stressed this more than other social scientists, as Barringer, Blanksten and Mack suggest.

The first, most obvious characteristic of anthropological approaches to the study of underdeveloped areas is a concern with culture. In effect, the problem for the anthropologist is to build a cultural model for the society under investigation in order to view the world as members of that society would see it... [anthropologists maintain]... the position that change or stages of change must be formulated in such a way as to be consistent with the culture in question... "Choice" must be investigated in terms of the culture in question: "Who is making a choice about what?"... Choice can be made on many levels, but... the level of greatest scientific value is that of culture.<sup>5</sup>

To this we can add the concept "structure" whenever "culture" appears.

3 Maitland, F. W., *Selected Historical Essays, 1850-1906* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1957), p. 249.

4 Galtung, Johan, *Theory and Methods of Social Research*, Basic Social Science Monographs from the International Peace Research Institute (Oslo: Universitets for Laget, 1967); and *Sociological Theory and Social Development*, Nkanga Edition 2 (Kampala: Department of Sociology, Makerere University, and Transition Books, 1968).

5 Barringer, H. L., Blanksten, G. I., and Mack, R. W. (eds.), *Social Change in Developing Areas: A Reinterpretation of Evolutionary Theory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Schenlen Publishing Company, 1965), p. 5.



By stressing the component of relativism in social anthropological analysis I am not entirely concurring with Peter Worsley's charge that this has become an excuse for lack of theory and even an admission that no theory is really possible. Worsley states that social anthropology as a comparative social science has been based upon two apparently contradictory views, the one emphasizing the universals which can be discovered in the structures which underly various socio-cultural forms, the other stressing the "uniqueness of any particular socio-cultural arrangement". That the contradiction between these is only apparent is admitted by Worsley himself.<sup>6</sup> He then goes on to assert that what is shared by both orientations is:

... a relativizing perspective which is both cognitive and ethical, since the first orientation emphasizes that seemingly exotic customs are, in fact, attempts to deal with similar problems that we handle in different ways. The second orientation suggests that *our* folkways and preoccupations are time—and culture—bound, and that our particular cultural heritage, being unique, is both transitory and by no means superior. (Worsley's italics.)

This relativism, as only one variable in a complex set, can easily be overstressed; but no social scientist can deny that it had at a critical time in the growth of social science a salutary and liberating effect upon the analysis of societies and cultures all over the world.

Like "tribal", the word "traditional" is too easily extended to imply an ideology, and to slip into "tribalism" and "traditionalism". Few people in the modern world, whether in Africa or elsewhere, would voluntarily label themselves as "traditionalists" or "tribalists", and most of the associations connected with these words are derogatory. But, in fact, most social scientists insist upon the usefulness of distinguishing between "tradition" and "traditional" on one hand, and "traditionalism" and "traditionalist" on the other. In his discussion of political modernization, Apter suggested that:

"Traditionalism" (as distinct from "tradition") we will define as validation of current behaviour by reference to immemorial prescriptive norms. This is not to say that traditionalist systems do not change but rather that innovation—that is, extrasystemic action—has to be mediated within the social system and linked with antecedent values. Modernity, in contrast, presupposes a much more remote relationship between antecedent values and new goals.<sup>7</sup>

"Immemorial" is a relative term: what is innovation today can become tradition tomorrow. And by this reckoning, no society can escape at least some of the effects of "traditionalism" as Apter himself recognized in saying:

Cultures never give way completely to the new, no matter how ruthless the impact of the innovation. The varied responses of tradition to modernization account for many of the differences in political forms among the new nations.<sup>8</sup>

6 Worsley, Peter, "The End of Anthropology", paper presented to the Sociology and Social Anthropology Working Group: Sixth World Congress of Sociology, 1966, p. 3 (*mimeo*).

7 Apter, D. E., *The Politics of Modernization* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 83.

8 *Op. cit.*, p. 81.

Berthold Hoselitz<sup>9</sup> has argued cogently that traditional institutions and traditional norms can benefit social and economic transition rather than detracting from it, although the concepts of "tradition" and "the traditional" have too frequently been closely associated, and even equated with "the tribe" and "the tribal". The latter terms, with their close cousin "tribalism", are much more difficult to disentangle from derogatory connotations and negative values. As recently as 1969, a most valuable and perceptive set of papers published under the title *Tradition and Transition in East Africa* was prefaced by the statement:

This symposium is not intended to be, and could not be, an exhaustive and definitive treatment of the nature and problems of the tribal factors in East Africa...<sup>10</sup>

P. H. Gulliver, in his introduction to the volume, continues:

There are two... crucial problems in each East African country—the problems of unity and identity. These problems exist irrespective of the particular form and character of the political and economic systems of these countries. A critical factor at the core of these two problems is that of "tribe".<sup>11</sup>

Given the premises of this book, all this is quite legitimate. But since this equation or association of the "traditional" with the derogatory "tribal" bedevils the analysis of the role of tradition in social change, we must consider its further implications. The traditional and traditionalism can be an asset; the tribal and tribalism always constitute a problem.

It is reasonably arguable that the concept of "tribe" as used during the colonial period in Africa and inherited since independence, far from assisting in understanding and explaining the data, in fact distorts and does violence to them. Many of the assumptions arising from its use are, in fact, false assumptions; and it is a pity that so many young Africans have unquestioningly absorbed the idea that "tribe" and "tribalism" are inescapable facts of their everyday existence. But the widespread use of these terms does not only influence and frequently distort our perceptions of everyday behaviour, it also affects our understanding as social scientists of the social structures and processes of contemporary Africa. The commonly accepted meaning of the term "tribe", Raymond Apthorpe cogently argued, "was imposed upon Africa by its early visitors educated perhaps in Anglo-Saxon or Classical Studies".<sup>12</sup> But, Apthorpe continues:

... it is after all a common and perhaps a universal mental practice for everyone to invoke the existence of "common basic units" like classical notions of tribe. This seems to put into familiar terms what otherwise would have to remain

9 Hoselitz, B., "Tradition and Economic Growth", in Hoselitz (ed.), *Tradition, Values, and Socio-Economic Development* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1961).

10 Gulliver, P. H. (ed.), *Tradition and Transition in East Africa* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 1.

11 *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

12 Apthorpe, R., "African Rural Development Planning and the Conceptions of The Human Factor" in Apthorpe, R. (ed.), *People, Planning and Development Studies* (London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd., 1970), p. 142.



either unknown and thus, in the given context, threatening in some way, or else be known for what it is, a collection of social facts not easily reducible, with similarly uncomfortable consequences.

He added:

... I am not arguing here in a simplistic sense that what are today in Africa called tribes and the *ists* and *isms* connected with them were altogether absent from the continent before European colonization.

But in support of the argument for the colonial genesis of the concepts "tribe" and "tribalism", Apthorpe quoted both the anthropologist Elizabeth Colson and the politician-anthropologist Mzee Jomo Kenyatta. Elizabeth Colson rightly claimed that contemporary African tribes are "either new forms of political organization created for administrative (or political) purposes by the modern states within which they exist or they represent the emergence of self-conscious nationalistic movements". What they certainly are not are "survivals from the pre-colonial world".<sup>13</sup> Kenyatta argued convincingly that the colonial ban on the organizing of national political parties encouraged the growth of "organized tribalism and regionalism", which is now the problem that above all others bedevils many modern African states.

Nowhere is it demonstrated, either by the supporters or detractors of these concepts, that they have anything *necessarily* to do with tradition, traditional, and traditionalism. Neither does recourse to the dictionary suggest any connexion, either in respect of meaning or of etymology, between these two sets of terms. Our name for a "group of barbarous clans under recognized chiefs" has its (dubious) origin in Latin *tribus*; our word for an "opinion or belief or custom handed down... from ancestors to posterity" has its (indubitable) genesis in Latin *traditionem*. So why our apparently overpowering compulsion to consistently associate the two? Even Apthorpe, in his otherwise unexceptionable critique of the assumptions underlying colonial social science, claimed without comment or correction that African social values "were classified as essentially 'tribal' or 'traditional' in nature", terms that were interchangeable in most theories of institutional changes.<sup>14</sup>

The role of tradition is not the role of tribe, as can be seen by an appraisal of traditional institutions in social change amongst two contrasting East African peoples: the Wagogo of Central Tanzania and the Baganda of Uganda.

At first glance, the social systems, both traditional and contemporary, of the Wagogo and the Baganda differ from each other in almost every conceivable way.<sup>15</sup> But both societies do share common historical and cultural

13 Colson, E., "Contemporary Tribes and the Development of Nationalism", in Helm, J. (ed.), *Essays on the Problem of Tribe* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968).

14 Athorpe, R., *op. cit.*

15 They also differ in terms of the amount of published material available on them, the Baganda being probably one of the most written about people in Africa, the Wagogo much less so. For analysis of some aspects of their social systems, and bibliographical references, see Rigby, P. J. A., *Cattle and Kinship among the Gogo: A semi-Pastoral Society of Central Tanzania* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1969); and Fallers, L. A. (ed.), *The King's Men* (London: Oxford University Press for East African Institute for Social Research, 1964).

origins in being members of the "Bantu" linguistic and cultural category: their vocabularies contain a large number of cognate words and their categories of classification, historical traditions, folk literature, legends, and so on have a great deal in common.

Ecologically, the Wagogo inhabit a dry, economically marginal environment, best suited to the raising of livestock and with a precarious agricultural commitment to grain crops such as sorghum, millet and maize. Drought and famine are endemic, and, apart from livestock, "cash cropping" is minimal and its development uncertain, without heavy government investment, probably through the development of *ujamaa* communal villages.

Buganda, the country of the Baganda, on the other hand, lies in one of the most fertile, best-watered parts of East Africa. The staple crop is the banana (plantain), and in the pre-colonial period an ample surplus of food could be produced most of the time, thereby providing the economic conditions for highly-specialized political and cultural institutions centred in a royal capital which had many of the characteristics of an "urban" community.

Traders and travellers had comparatively early contact with both Ugogo and Buganda during the period leading up to the establishment of colonial dominance, but for very different reasons. The country of the Wagogo lay directly astride one of the main trade routes between the coast at Bagamoyo, and the Eastern Congo and, in fact, Buganda itself, since travellers shied away from the northern routes to Uganda because they passed through Masai country. But Ugogo was considered a dry, dangerous and hostile area through which Arabs, Europeans, and Wanyamwezi wished to pass as quickly as possible.

Buganda, on the other hand, had impressed strangers with its complex traditional state and its obvious potential for economic and political exploitation. Its reputation quickly spread far and wide. If there was a European myth about the Masai, there certainly were many stories and myths about the Baganda; but no disease akin to "European Masaiitis" affected those enamoured of Buganda. Arabs and Europeans, traders, missionaries, adventurers, and, later, colonial administrators, were, however, all attracted to Buganda, ensuring that it would become the centre of colonial economic, social, cultural and political domination in Uganda.

Other historical variables are also relevant to our discussion of social change in the two areas. Ugogo first came under colonial domination by the Germans, whose crude and violent "pacification" of the area, particularly evident further south in Uhele, left indelible marks on Cigogo society, and, later, on its relations with the outside world. The ravages of the Anglo-German war devastated large areas of Ugogo until the German capitulation in 1916. This was followed in 1918-19 by one of the worst droughts and famines in living memory, combined with an influenza epidemic.

In contrast, the British formally entered Buganda under a treaty made between Lugard and Kabaka Mwanga in 1890; and, although they came eventually under *de facto* colonial rule, the Baganda have never admitted that they were "colonized". They had been allies of the British in operations



against the Kingdom of Bunyoro and others, and Baganda were often placed in positions of authority over non-Baganda areas. In some parts of Uganda, Busoga for instance, this domination had been established before the colonial intrusion; in others it was a direct result of the extension of colonial power.

Then again, the motivations of the colonial intruders differed between Tanganyika and Uganda, and also changed through time in the two countries. The Germans entered Tanganyika as committed settlers, and did, in fact, alienate several areas. Ugogo was not directly affected by this, but neighbouring Uhehe and other areas were. The commitment to settlement affected German colonial policy and administration. This changed when Tanganyika became a mandated territory under the Treaty of Versailles in 1922. But despite Tanganyika's apparently "unique" status as a mandated territory, which eventually did influence very strongly the course of colonial rule and the struggle for independence, many British administrators viewed it as just another protectorate, and colonial settlement continued, though on a very limited scale. B. Chidzero reports that the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1925, Mr. L. S. Amery, said at an "East Africa dinner" in London:

We have got rid of that intrusive block of German territory, which under the name of Tanganyika, has now been permanently incorporated in the British Empire. I stress that—permanently. It is an entire delusion that it is any less British than any other colony. Though we have laid ourselves under an obligation to the League of Nations, it is not one whit less British nor does it make our tenure there one whit less permanent.<sup>16</sup>

This attitude changed rapidly, but this statement by a Secretary for the Colonies, fundamentally wrong in legal terms, does illustrate the ambiguities surrounding the motivations and policies of the British colonial period in Tanganyika.

Uganda was declared a British Protectorate by the Uganda Order in Council of 1902, but it was never really conceived of as an area for colonial settlement, let alone as a "colony". And even under the protectorate, as I have stated, Buganda always had a semi-autonomous status, a status it tried to carry over into the post-colonial period of independent, nationalist Uganda, with what in many ways were disastrous consequences. The situation during the colonial period, as Apter succinctly put it, was that:

By virtue of its superior institutions and successful collaboration with the British, Buganda was made a privileged area. The Uganda Agreement of 1900 formally recognized these privileges, and elsewhere in the country the Kiganda pattern of territorial organization was established—a three-tiered system of local government, each with a chief and a council (Lukiko) and ranging in scope from the parish to the country... Buganda, as a province, formed the model for the other ethnic groups to follow in the districts.<sup>17</sup>

Interestingly, writing in 1960, Apter added that "the Parliament of Buganda, the Great Lukiko, has been the model for the district councils, which have

16 Chidzero, B. T. C., *Tanganyika and International Trusteeship* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 40-41.

17 Apter, D. E., "The Role of Traditionalism in the Political Modernization of Ghana and Uganda", *World Politics*, XIII (1960), pp. 45-68.

become the object of considerable tribal parochialism in the districts outside of Buganda". From this evidence it might legitimately be concluded that the introduction of the "Buganda model" into other areas of Uganda aided and abetted the growth of tribalism, and this is true to a certain extent. Here, we would ostensibly have a case where the introduction of a traditional model of politics and administration caused the problem of tribalism. But the critical point is that this export model of the Kiganda system was not really traditional at all, but a creation of the 1900 Buganda Agreement with the colonial power. I must, therefore, now turn to a brief examination of the effects of this Agreement upon Kiganda politics and society.

Although continually changing in structure, Buganda has been a highly centralized, complex state for the whole period for which information is available to us. Legend has it that the state was founded by Kintu, the first Kabaka (King), and the deposed Kabaka, Frederick Mutesa II, was the thirty-fifth in line of succession. During the course of Buganda's history, the office role, functions, and the rules of succession of the Kabakaship varied a great deal. But there is little doubt that the institutions, values, and symbols concerned with the kingship permeated the whole fabric of Kiganda society, and still do to a considerable extent.

Supporting the Kabakaship, and also exercising restraint upon the incumbent, were several categories of notables. Some of these "non-commoner" categories were recruited by descent, the most important of these being the *abalangira* ("princes") and the *bataka* (clan heads). Some particular offices in the hierarchy were also hereditary. But, particularly during the later phases of the Kingdom's history, and up to the time of colonial penetration, more and more important offices and positions were appointive and their incumbents dependent ultimately upon the will of the King. Hence, through most of Buganda's history, heredity was giving way to the patron-client relationship as the most critical organizing principle in establishing relative status and relations of authority. Not only was the kingship becoming less dependent upon the values and orientations of kinship, but also the individual choices and dictates of the king began taking precedence over the authority of the *bataka* and other leaders of kinship groups. Fallers puts it this way:

Baganda believe, and there is no *a priori* reason to doubt them, that over the centuries the Kabaka moved from a position of *primus inter pares* among heads of patrilineal descent groups to that of a despotic monarch who could remove areas from descent group control and put them in charge of other personal appointees of his own choosing.<sup>18</sup>

In the broader system, then, ascriptive descent ties lost certain political functions to the increasing importance of individually created "patron-client" relationships. Writing in 1964, Lloyd Fallers said:

There appears to have been in Ganda society an unstable balance between the unilineal descent group organization and that of the kingdom—a balance which

18 Fallers, L. A., *The King's Men* (London: Oxford University Press for East African Institute for Social Research, 1964), p. 76.



during the past century has swung more and more in favour of the Kabaka-centred kingdom.<sup>19</sup>

As is to be expected in a situation like this, the use of kinship terminology and categories as organizing principles in the public domain becomes more and more limited, and is replaced by the introduction of a proliferating vocabulary concerned with non-kinship categories of subordination and superordination. The terms *mukama wange*, "my lord", and *muddu wange*, "my servant", stress the personal quality of the patron-client tie and are still universally used in discussions of how people improve their status and get on in the modern world.<sup>20</sup> A "traditional" proverb with as much relevance in contemporary Kiganda society as ever is *Omuddu awulira y'atabaaza engule ya mukama we*, "The good servant carries his master's crown into battle".

This transformation to a more personal system of authority relations imbued Kiganda social structure with greater flexibility, particularly during the 19th century. Upward mobility was possible, in political, economic and social terms, and the categories of "non-commoners" were comparatively open, both in respect of their composition and recruitment and in their relations vis-à-vis each other. The pyramidal structures characteristic of most other African kingdoms did not predominate in the Buganda polity, and the hierarchy that did exist was flexible and manipulable rather than static and rigid.

The 1900 Agreement changed all this. A rigid, three-tiered hierarchy of administrative offices and roles was introduced, land rights were transformed from those attached to political estates into personal ownership of large areas by a select group of those Baganda who were in positions of authority at the time. And it was *this* "colonial" system that was exported to other areas of Uganda to serve as a model for administrative and governmental structures. The chiefly system was also radically altered and was subject to regular changes from 1900 onwards. The King's council, or court (*Lukiko*), which largely served the traditional function of advisory council, "audience", and highest court of appeal, was transformed into a legislative body. Immediately after the 1900 Agreement, the Great *Lukiko's* main function was defined as "to discuss all matters concerning the native administration of Uganda (*sic*), and to forward to the Kabaka resolutions which may be voted by a majority regarding measures to be adopted by the said administration".<sup>21</sup> By 1966, when it was dismantled by Obote's government, the *Lukiko* was an elective, legislative body, and party politics played a significant role in its composition, functions and procedures. It was thus a very different institution in all respects from its traditional precursor.

But the point to stress here is that, despite the great transformations in the Kabakaship, the Great *Lukiko*, chiefship, and other political institutions,

19 *Ibid.*, p. 72.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

21 Article 11 of the *Uganda Agreement*, quoted in Apter, D. E., *The Political Kingdom in Uganda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 135.

the belief that they were still Kiganda institutions was, and still is, very widespread in Buganda. Despite even the struggle of the *bataka* to regain influence at various times during the colonial period, and their regular failure to achieve their aims, the transforming political system in Buganda was still, for the great majority of the Baganda, validated "by reference to immemorial prescriptive norms". The changes brought about by the colonial regime and the educated Baganda élite were still "mediated within the social system and linked with antecedent values".<sup>22</sup>

We may, therefore, conclude that traditional elements continued to play a major part in the modernization of the political system of Buganda throughout its relatively highly successful period of adaptation to colonial influence and control. This success with continuing "traditional" legitimacy began to break down, however, after Ugandan independence in 1962, culminating in the "desecration of the Kingdom" as Kabaka Frederick Mutesa II described it in 1967. The breakdown cannot be attributed entirely, or even largely, to a failure in the system itself since Obote's regime was dedicated to its destruction. Selwyn Ryan compared Obote's problem with the Baganda to Nkrumah's somewhat similar problem with the Ashanti, and concluded: "Where Obote sought to denigrate and root out traditionalism in Buganda, Nkrumah attempted instead to traditionalize republicanism".<sup>23</sup>

What of the adaptability of Gogo society to the transforming influences of the colonial and later independence periods?

The Cigogo political system retained many traditional elements intact throughout the colonial period. However, instead of adapting innovations to the traditional as the Baganda managed to do, the Wagogo largely retained the traditional at the cost of rejecting innovation and transformation. Economic change was also comparatively slow throughout the colonial period, and Ugogo was considered second only to Masailand in "backwardness" in Tanganyika. For a start, the highly egalitarian, age and ritual-based authority system of the Wagogo was inimical to the severe status inequalities and chain of administrative command of the colonial regime. The Wagogo adapted to the colonial presence by mediating it through a filter of structural "distance" and "fog", while retaining their own politico-ritual institutions in a functioning "shadow" structure underlying the formal administrative and governmental hierarchies. "Chiefs" were created by the British, and disappeared after independence with the democratization of local government in Tanzania; the Wagogo were not really perturbed by either event.<sup>24</sup>

After Tanzanian independence in 1961, however, the Wagogo did appear to be able to adapt rapidly to new forms of participatory democracy. Despite continuing difficulties in "internalizing" administrative and judicial offices and institutions, they had no hesitation whatever in expressing opinions in

22 Apter, D. E., *The Politics of Modernization* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 83.

23 Ryan, S., "Uganda: A Balance Sheet of the Revolution", *Mawazo*, 3, 1 (1971), pp. 37-64.

24 Rigby, P. J. A., "Local Participation in National Politics, Ugogo, Tanzania", in *Micropolitics in Eastern Africa*, edited by A. W. Southall (1971, in press).



the arena of public political debate. For example, in the national elections of 1965, they did not retreat from expressing even strongly anti-government sentiments about their grievances in their election and voting behaviour. In this sense, the traditional Gogo penchant for the freedom to express opinion, being given an equal chance to be heard, and being allowed to argue publicly, certainly played a role in producing adaptive political behaviour, and it ensured the acceptance of the legitimacy of the national electoral process.

At first sight then, the rather sketchy comparative material presented above seems to indicate that the Baganda successfully used traditional institutions, roles, offices, norms and values to adapt rapidly to the colonial situation. The Wagogo, on the other hand, seem to have used traditional elements in the social system to survive with their society relatively intact, despite the colonial intrusion. I have discussed this primarily in relation to economic and political organization, but the same could also be said of kinship and other institutions.

In the field of religion, we must tread more warily. The evidence from Buganda shows again that Islam and Christianity were rapidly absorbed, and became as rapidly "Kiganda-ized", providing an early basis for factional politics and other complex intrigues and social movements as F. Welbourn has suggested.<sup>25</sup> But the idea that these foreign religions, by the speed and depth of their penetration, had swept away all traditional religion in Buganda is entirely erroneous. Many aspects of traditional religion are still very strong in Kiganda culture, and provide a very important basis for social action and mental security in both rural and urban Buganda.

The Wagogo, again, retained their traditional religious institutions, rituals, and cosmologies intact by largely refusing to submit to conversion either to Islam or Christianity, until comparatively recent years. This was despite a massive operation launched by the Protestant Church Missionary Society before colonial domination in the area, and later carried on by the Diocese of Central Tanganyika and other missionary bodies. The influence of organized religion has also risen sharply since independence.

For both these peoples, therefore, the traditional was, and still is, critically important for the processes of social change: but for very different reasons and with very different consequences. The contrast confirms the conviction that traditional institutions and traditionalism always influence innovation and change in some way, but in different ways in varying structural and historical contexts. It appears that the nature of traditional institutions in Buganda enabled it to adapt very rapidly to the hierarchical, bureaucratic nature of a comparatively benevolent colonial regime, and that Cigogo institutions enabled the Wagogo to survive despite a relatively more hostile colonial environment. At the same time, one is also led to suggest that, perhaps in the post-colonial situation of national independence, the "preserved" traditional aspects of Cigogo society are well able to respond and adapt to local democratization and the introduction of such institutions as *Ujamaa* communal villages, related to

25 Welbourn, F., *Religion and Politics, 1952-62* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1965).

the ideology of African socialism. On the other hand, the adaptability of traditional Kiganda institutions, so successful during the colonial period of bureaucratization, formalization, and limited democratization, appears to have diminished in the face of an implacably hostile central government during Obote's rule. This diminution in success, however (as I have noted), is not exclusively the result of the nature of Kiganda institutions, but is also a consequence of historical and political factors in Uganda at large. In the new circumstances stemming from the coup in January, 1971, the remarkable resilience and ability to absorb change exhibited in the past by the Baganda may come again to the fore.

After considering two such different situations it is possible to dismiss as erroneous the "theory" of "adaptable" and "non-adaptable" societies as having little relation to empirical fact and being, rather, the result of mistaken analysis and moral judgement. Instead, it is possible to advocate a renewed appraisal of how traditional institutions and even "traditionalism" can assist societies in planning change and reaching their desired goals. Far from interest in the traditional being a disqualification for the analysis of social change in contemporary Africa, it is, despite the warnings of G. Bagamuhunda,<sup>26</sup> a pre-condition of understanding. In his analysis of social change in the rural Ghanaian town of Larteh, D. Brokensha<sup>27</sup> concludes that desirable economic changes were enhanced, not retarded, by occurring within the framework of "traditional social organization". His analysis along these lines gives him the insight to reject some common misconceptions of social change in Africa. Among these are (a) that "change necessarily means social and psychological conflicts"; (b) that "contemporary Africans are 'men of two worlds'." and (c) that "economic progress leads to individualism and (inevitably) 'the breakdown of traditional culture'". This would appear to be equally true in the turbulent and rapidly changing world of modern African politics.

26 Bagamuhunda, G., "Some Dynamic Aspects of East Africa: the Futility of Current Social Anthropological Models", cf. footnote 2 above.

27 Brokensha, D., *Social Change in Larteh* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 268-269.