The Journal of African History (2024), 1–16
doi:10.1017/S0021853724000392

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Moral Economy of the Ugandan Crowd in 1945

Holly Hanson

Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, MA, USA
Email: hhanson@mtholyoke.edu

(Received 6 March 2021; revised 29 May 2024; accepted 18 September 2024)

Abstract

In 1945, actions which have been understood as strikes against wartime inflation occurred across colonized Africa: this essay identifies a deeper motivation in the events which happened in the Uganda Protectorate in early 1945. An understanding that people had a moral responsibility to act, and leaders had a moral responsibility to see them, to listen, and to respond led from a mobilization of workers on town streets, to efforts to see wrongful deaths acknowledged, to gatherings in the courtyard of the Buganda king in which he was almost overthrown. In each of the three stages of the protest, Ugandans of different ethnicities asserted an ethic of mutual obligation which acknowledged no boundary between the political and the economic, spoke to authority with an expectation that they would be heard, and drew on enduring knowledge of politics as well as a range of new ideas to solve the problems they confronted.

Keywords: Uganda; East Africa; political culture; protest; strike; mutual obligation; decolonization

On 17 January 1945, people danced through the town of Jinja, Uganda, singing and waving the pangas and slashers for cutting grass they used in their work for the Town Authority. At the same time, other people marched in formation from their workplace at the British American Tobacco factory across the town, and coming from another direction laborers paraded from the Public Works Department carrying sticks. The three groups coordinated their movement through Jinja streets to arrive at the same time in the bazaar, and when they met they cheered each other with a loud shout, and divided into groups of twenty or thirty to find people who might still be working and convince them to stop.[1] Their withholding of labor, which happened across the Uganda Protectorate from January to March of that year, was more than a strike protesting against the erosion of wages caused by wartime inflation.[2] Their actions drew on a set of social practices which long preceded wage labor and an imperial

[1]The National Archives of the United Kingdom, London (TNAUK) FCO141/18111, Police Memorandum 1945, vol. 3, Driscoll, Superintendent of Police, Jinja, 155.

[2]The role of the Second World War in creating conditions that led to strikes is explored in Mark Beittel, "Labor Unrest in South Africa, 1870-1990," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 18, no. 1 (1995): 87–104; Tiyambe Zeleza "The Strike Movement in Colonial Kenya: The Era of the General Strikes," *Transafrican Journal of History* 22 (1993): 1–23; Claudia Baldoli, "Spring 1943: the Fiat Strikes and the Collapse of the Italian Home Front," *History Workshop Journal* 72, no. 1 (2011): 181–89; David De Vries "British Rule and Arab-Jewish Coalescence of Interest: The 1946 Civil Servants' Strike in Palestine," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36, no. 4 (2004): 613–38; and Sjaak van der Veldon, "Strikes in Global Labor History: The Dutch Case – 1944," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 26, no. 4 (2003): 381–405. Even though governments refused to actually hear or engage with protestors, many late 1940s strikes around the world led to structural change and opening for workers voices: Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between the Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 179; David Duncan, "State Bureaucracy and African Labour in South Africa: The Milling

© The Author(s), 2024. Published by Cambridge University Press. This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0), which permits unrestricted re-use, distribution and reproduction, provided the original article is properly cited.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853724000392 Published online by Cambridge University Press

presence in Africa. The dancing, singing workers, waving their tools, spoke to the importance of their work and challenged everyone in Jinja to acknowledge their value. Their loud, visible assertion of their contribution to society echoes the parade and noisy display which accompanied the presentation of tribute to an indigenous ruler.[3] People drew attention to their work — in African societies before conquest, and in the British Protectorate Uganda in 1945 — to state their place in an interdependent social whole, and they withheld labor to remind the powerful of mutual obligations.

Insisting that work required a reciprocal response was the first of three stages of the events known as the "disturbances" of 1945 in Uganda; the second was not fully seen, and the last has been misinterpreted. Taken together, they reveal a set of understandings about how government ought to work that seem to have been held in common by Ugandans of different ethnicities.[4] Joyful labor action that did bring higher wages occurred across the protectorate in January and February. A second phase, centered in Kampala and surrounding areas of the Buganda kingdom, focused on getting protectorate and Buganda government officials to respond appropriately to the deaths of protestors who had been shot. In the third phase large crowds, who were not just Baganda, gathered at the palace of the kabaka (the king of Buganda, one of the four indigenous kingdoms that comprised the Uganda Protectorate) until the kingdom's treasurer resigned. Officials claimed that Buganda kingdom politics had been the real motivation, and the strike was a ploy to foment discontent.[5] More recently, scholars have documented Ugandans' legitimate economic grievances, and framed the palace events as tangential to the strike.[6] Attention to how people understood their own actions suggests another interpretation. The events of 1945 provide clear evidence that half a century of British presence in Uganda had not eliminated ordinary people's capacities to assemble, think, and act together, although the forms had changed. The Ugandans of many ethnicities who withheld their labor demonstrated how the powerful had failed to meet their obligations, and when those powerful people failed to respond appropriately to the deaths of protestors, the logical next step was assembling in the courtyard of the king.

To see what they did as either a strike motivated by inflation or a political plot with the strike as a pretense erases the thought and agency of thousands of participants. A thorough examination of the actions of the Ugandans of different ethnicities who mobilized in 1945 reveals a depth of civic engagement on indigenous terms which can be difficult to discern when Africans speaking the colonial language are the only interlocutors. Despite sixty years of systematic undermining of indigenous political praxis, people still took the opportunity to exercise their responsibility within a moral economy of mutual obligation which colonial authorities, historians, and the drafters of independence-era constitutions, have failed to acknowledge.

The intentions and actions of the thousands of Ugandans who took part in one or more of the three stages of the protest can be discerned in the exceptionally rich archive of the commission of enquiry into the 1945 "disturbances" released by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 2013 as part of the "migrated archives."[7] In contrast to that commission's final report, which has been available, the full

---

Workers' Strike of 1944," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* Volume 25, no. 3 (1991); Kenneth P. Vickery, "The Rhodesia Railways African Strike of 1945" *Journal of Southern African Studies* 25, no. 1 (1999): 49–71.

[3] Holly Elisabeth Hanson, *Landed Obligation: The Practice of Power in Buganda* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003), 45–46.

[4] This set of understandings is the subject of my book *To Speak and Be Heard: Seeking Good Government in Uganda, ca. 1500-2015* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2022). Its third chapter uses some of the evidence presented here to explore the alternative modernity which mid-twentieth century Ugandans imagined to be possible.

[5] N. H. P. Whitley, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Disturbances Which Occurred in Uganda During January 1945* (Entebbe: The Protectorate Government Printer, 1954); David Apter, *The Political Kingdom in Uganda: A Study in Bureaucratic Nationalism* (Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 1961), 226–33.

[6] Gardner Thompson, *Governing Uganda: British Colonial Rule and its Legacy* (Kampala: Fountain Press, 1999), 246–67, also published as "Colonialism in Crisis," *African Affairs* 91, no. 365 (1992).

[7] The "migrated archives," also known as the Hanslope Park papers, are the papers which departing British colonials considered would cast them in a bad light, which were gathered up and left in an office building in the British midlands for sixty years. The migrated archives series for Uganda contains the original police memoranda for the commission of enquiry reports for mobilizations in 1945 and 1949 which had never been available to scholars.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853724000392 Published online by Cambridge University Press

papers of the enquiry in the "migrated archives" contain hour by hour descriptions of what happened from multiple points of view and verbatim accounts of conversations of policemen with participants as events unfolded. Because the police who had been involved were required to write out their own memory of their experience without consulting others, and those policemen occupied multiple class positions and included Africans and Ugandan Asians as well as British officers, their reports provide a unique and invaluable insight into what people were thinking, doing, and saying. These individual written statements show the events in an entirely different light than the official report: they describe cheerful crowds, protestors who seek to engage officers in conversations about appropriate behavior for the people and the police, and groups provoked into anger who then manage to calm themselves. Because it records the experiences of individual participants rather than the official view, the documentation in the migrated archives allows a reconstruction of the social logic of the labor action from the perspective of the participants.

That the 1945 events were the fruit of thoughtful conversations among large groups of people who held a range of economic statuses seems to have been beyond the comprehension of the protectorate. The commission of enquiry described "wild," "threatening," and "violent" mobs, "incited" and "infected" by agitators, and scholars have relied on that view.[8] The Uganda chief justice who conducted the official commission of enquiry was so convinced that ordinary people would not have been capable of initiating a work protest that he conjectured that the strike had to begin on different days in different towns because that was the only way the behind-the-scenes leaders could instigate them all.[9] Late colonial authors attributed their actions to "subliminal factors" that placed a "strain on the psychological dependence of the people upon their chiefs" and called the organization that formed out of the protest "a trivial movement" "looking backward for its standards and values" with "a deep but directionless antagonism" towards authority.[10] Both Governor John Hall and one of his principal adversaries, James Kivu who founded the Uganda Motor Drivers' Union, explained the mobilization as a strike with active leaders and submissive followers.[11] A careful reading of the events themselves suggests that the twentieth century Ugandans in the streets, like the eighteenth-century crowds studied by E. P. Thompson and George Rudé, deserve more credit for their actions.[12]

The timeline of events itself suggests a mobilization that arose from large numbers conversing and acting. Withholding labor spread at the speed news would have been carried by travelers, and it followed road networks: people left their work in Entebbe and Masaka in southern Uganda on January 2 and 5; work stoppages occurred in the commercial capital of Kampala starting on January 8; on January 17 in Jinja; and in towns to the west of Jinja and east of Kampala on January 18. On 24 January 1945, three weeks after the first event, people stopped working and took to the streets in Lira and Gulu. The atmosphere was celebratory, combined with an element of protestors trying to force those who were working to stop, and in most places a commitment on the part of employers

[8]Whitley, *Report*, 19, 21, 23; D. A. Low, *Buganda in Modern History* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 93; Simon Peter Rutabajuuka, "Colonial Capitalism and Labour Regulation in Uganda: 1900-1953" (PhD dissertation, Queen's University, 2000), 301; Richard J. Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 301; Dan M. Mudoola, *Religion, Ethnicity and Politics in Uganda*, (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1996), 15; Mahmood Mamdani, *Imperialism and Fascism in Uganda* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1984), 15.

[9]Whitley, *Report*, 14.

[10]Low, *Buganda*, 161, 145: R. Cranford Pratt and D. Anthony Low, "Crisis and Reform in Buganda 1940-1949," *Buganda and British Overrule: Two Studies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 274.

[11]"End of Labour Troubles," *Uganda Herald*, 31 Jan. 1945, 1, 8; London School of Economics Archives, London, Audrey Richards Papers, J. Kivu, "Life of Kivu." Kivu wrote this unpublished autobiography much later, apparently at the request of scholars at the East African Institute of Social Research: he may have emphasized what he thought his interlocutors wanted to hear (for example, the importance of a conversation he had with a visiting British labor organizer).

[12]E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past & Present* 50 (1971): 76–136; George Rudé, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730–1848* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853724000392 Published online by Cambridge University Press

to higher wages brought workers back. A second, more confrontational phase began in Kampala after protestors were shot on January 16 and 17. As a result of those deaths, and one in Masaka on January 19, protest leaders instructed that food should not be sold to foreigners, and when the colonial administration responded by attempting to bring in food by convoy, the protestors prevented the movement of food by digging culverts on main roads. This led to four more shooting deaths of protestors in a confrontation over a food convoy at Koja, the Polish war refugee camp forty miles from Kampala. To refuse to supply to the capital what it needed held deep meaning in an indigenous logic of power but was interpreted merely as aggression.[13] A significant violation of the responsibility of rulers, in the refusal of Buganda kingdom officials to see the bodies of those that had been wrongfully killed, led to a third phase, the large gatherings at the palace of the kabaka (king) of Buganda, on January 19–20 and 23, the culminating moment of collective political voice.[14] Those gatherings which were, like the other events, multiethnic, resulted in the forced resignation of the treasurer of the Buganda kingdom. People meeting and talking explains the slow spread over three weeks from the first, quickly-resolved walkout at the protectorate headquarters in Entebbe to the protests in Gulu and Toro (the furthest north and west towns of the protectorate) which took place after the gathering at the palace in Buganda that many — including Kivu who claimed to have been the organizer — saw as the final event.[15]

A mass mobilization which drew deeply on indigenous understandings of political voice and moral economy but has been named a strike demonstrates the significant challenge of understanding African history without overemphasizing the few decades of external political power on the continent. The nearly-universal habit of conceptualizing African history with a precolonial/colonial/postcolonial divide encodes the rationalization of conquest and erases people's innovations with indigenous political logic and strategy.[16] A careful examination of the rich evidence of the 1945 protest shows how people in Uganda relied on and also transformed long-existing practices to successfully wrest responsible governance from protectorate and Buganda authorities. They used strategies they knew to be effective in circumstances that were familiar — of rulers not ruling well, and also in circumstances that were unfamiliar — of growing inequality, wage labor, and colonizers' deafness. From the mobilization of laborers to the gathering in which the Buganda king was almost overthrown, Ugandans of different ethnicities asserted an ethic of mutual obligation which acknowledged no boundary between the political and the economic, they spoke to authority with an expectation that they would be heard, and they drew on enduring knowledge of politics as well as a range of new ideas to solve the problems they confronted.

Withholding labor to remind the power of reciprocal obligation

The distress caused by wartime inflation in 1945 had a moral as well as a material component. Ugandans had sacrificed for the war effort without apparent reciprocity, and a colonial government nervous about war rumors completely closed down the limited space for public discussion that had previously been allowed. The uniforms people had made for themselves, which they wore as they walked to enlistment centers in 1940, suggest a sincere and enthusiastic response to appeals to participate in the war effort. Some people wore "a form of home-made uniform which had a map of African in white on the front of the jersey and a black letter A in the middle of the map." Others wore

[13]Eight protestors were killed, fourteen were injured, two police officers were injured by protestors, and one Indian was killed by a stone thrown into a lorry on Jinja road. Whitley, *Report*, 18–19.

[14]Gardner Thompson identifies these three stages, without including the failure of authorities to acknowledge the bodies of protestors who had been killed, *Governing Uganda,* 247.

[15]Jan. 2 and Jan. 5 were the only dates that workers acted on the days Kivu stated he had prescribed, and his narrative states that "everything went back to normal" after the events at the palace on Jan. 23.

[16]Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga, *The Mobile Workshop: The Tsetse Fly and African Knowledge Production* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018), 20, 319.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853724000392 Published online by Cambridge University Press

a different variety of homemade uniform and made a statement that they were joining the war to fight for Africa by carrying a flag with a map of the continent.[17] As the war ended, people looked to colonial authorities for recognition of the contributions they had made as soldiers, producers of crops and infrastructure, and purchasers of war bonds.[18] These and other highly visible gifts of support, purchased through subscriptions by large numbers of people had been framed as part of an empire-wide effort for liberty and freedom.[19] The poverty and suffering caused by war-induced inflation and food crop exports seemed a fundamentally unjust recompense.[20]

Disappointment at a failure of reciprocity as the war ended intensified the anger people already felt about not being heard. Secret police reports from 1939 to 1945 provide evidence that people in various parts of the country tried to engage protectorate authorities in reasoned consultation about issues, and became furious when those efforts failed. In 1939, protectorate disregard of principles regarding land allocation led to the burning of chiefs' houses, prisons, and Lukiko halls all across Teso, and a district officer failed in an attempt to defend the protectorate's actions when people in the Lukiko hall shouted at him until he gave up.[21] In 1940, the descendants of conquest-era mercenaries who had been brought from Sudan and settled by Frederick Lugard in the center of Buganda objected to changes in tax law by submitting themselves for mass arrest, which led to their wives occupying the district commissioner's office in an action which he labeled "screaming hysteria."[22] The published history of Uganda narrates anger at a lack of listening in relation to specific incidents in the Buganda kingdom such as turmoil over the queen mother's remarriage, and the use of eminent domain for land for Makerere College.[23] The war created a rationalization for limiting speech: conversations that criticized the Buganda government and gatherings of more than five people became illegal, and chiefs punished people who spread rumors.[24]

The 1945 mobilization began with vigorous conversations among people who did the same kind of work, who deliberated as distinct groups and sought to learn the thinking of others who did the same work in other locations in the protectorate. It is possible, as the commission of enquiry asserted, that well-educated people had driven around the country in a car disguised as a wedding vehicle urging a strike, but the secret police reports reveal that workers met and consulted about what to do when wages were not raised at a moment when this had been expected.[25] The collective decision-making recalls the vast networks of locations for consultation and deliberation which had been part of East

[17]TNAUK FCO 141/18105, Police fortnightly review, Kampala, 1939–44, 15 Dec. 1940, 1.

[18]Judith A. Byfield, Carolyn A. Brown, Timothy Parsons, and Ahmad Alawad Sikainga, *African and World War II* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2015); David Birmingham, *The Decolonization of Africa* (London, UCL Press, 1995).

[19]Carol Summers, "Ugandan Politics and World War II (1939-1949)," in Byfield, Brown, Parsons, and Sikainga, *Africa*, 480–99.

[20]Thompson, *Governing Uganda*. TNAUK, FCO 141/18109, 1945 Police Memorandum, vol. 2, Harwich to Hinden, Kampala, 81.

[21]TNAUK FCO 141/18105, Police fortnightly review, 13–16, esp.14.

[22]TNAUK FCO 141/18105, Police fortnightly review: 30 June 1940, 9–11; 15 Oct. 1940, 1; 15 Jan. 1941, 2–3; 15 Apr. 1941, 2; 20 Jan. 1942, 34. The arrested Nubians in Acholi refused to eat the food served in prison so the diet had to be adjusted.

[23]Apter, *The Political Kingdom*, 227; Carol Summers, "Scandal and Mass Politics: Buganda's 1941 Nnamasole Crisis," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 51, no. 1 (2018): 63–83; Carol Summers, "Adolescence versus Politics: Metaphors in Late Colonial Uganda," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 78, no. 1 (2017): 117–36; Carol Summers, "Catholic Action and Ugandan Radicalism: Political Activism in Buganda, 1930-1950," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 39, no. 1 (2009): 60–90; Carol Summers, "Radical Rudeness: Ugandan Social Critiques in the 1940s," *Journal of Social History* 39, no. 3 (2006): 741–70; Carol Summers, "Grandfathers, Grandsons, Morality, and Radical Politics in Late Colonial Buganda," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 38, no. 3 (2005): 427–47.

[24]University of Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, Commonwealth and African Studies Collection (BLCASC), Oxford, UK, Mss. Brit. Emp, 365, box 125, folio 1a (365/125/1a), Fabian Colonial Bureau, "'The British Imperial Government': British Restriction Administration Policy in East Africa. Does Municipal Legislation Override a Treaty," enclosed in J. M. Kivu to Dr. Rita Hinden, 2 Nov. 1943.

[25]Whitley, *Report*, 9, 14–15.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853724000392 Published online by Cambridge University Press

African kingdoms and also acephalous societies.[26] The Buganda kingdom in southern Uganda, for example, had had about 6,000 chiefs and figures of authority, and groups of people discussed cases and public affairs in the courtyards of each of these figures. Protectorate authorities eliminated all but a few hundred chiefs, ranked in a strict hierarchy, who were paid through the protectorate treasury and therefore answerable to the protectorate instead of to the people who paid the tribute-turned-to taxes.[27] That too few were involved in decision-making under the British was a central argument of the *Nyangire Abaganda* protest in Bunyoro in 1907, which proposed a council of representatives from all Uganda's kingdoms to consider their request that the Banyoro be ruled by their own chiefs.[28]

Polite, orderly deliberation, involving many voices and demonstrating a concern to show the coherence of a group, characterized the decisions to take labor action. In contrast to groups of neighbors who had consulted in the courtyards of chiefs and elders in the past, the groups that met were people connected to each other through the work they did. Houseboys, drivers, government workers, tailors, and employees of various firms held meetings, deliberated, and sought to align their actions with people doing the same work in other towns. On January 14, a "crowd of at least 200 houseboys from the European Quarters" gathered at the "Big Tree in Nanji Kalidas Gardens" (now the Sheraton Garden) and after a number of comments which were all applauded, they made a collection to pay for letters that would be sent to the houseboys of Entebbe, Masindi, and Jinja, to learn what they intended to do.[29] Government clerks in Masaka told the chief inspector of police that they were waiting to hear from clerks in Entebbe and Kampala about what action to take.[30] The appropriate rate of wages was a topic of consultation for the drivers, who in Masaka informed the assistant superintendent of police who would stop working if the rates they had chosen were not met.[31] Tailors in Kawolo announced the rate of pay at which they would work in the future, and the tailors of Kampala had published the rates at which they would work in the newspaper *Matalisi* in December 1944.[32] People who worked together acted together during the work stoppage, but also joined together: in Kampala on January 18, East African Power and Light employees, together with railway workers, were found by police urging the employees of a soya bean factory to stop working.[33] After one assistant police inspector and some constables prevented about 100 people from entering a factory and a slaughterhouse, the group "then gathered on the green near there, held a meeting, and then moved away together."[34]

The expectation that good government involves listening can be seen in the focus on convincing authorities to respond which characterized the first phase of the labor action. Large numbers gathered each morning to discuss their effort: when the government would agree to negotiate, and how to make them do so, was a main consideration.[35] These meetings took place on the prominent hill where Kabaka Mwanga had allowed Captain Lugard to camp in 1890: it overlooked commercial

[26] Hanson, *To Speak and Be Heard*, 17–26.

[27] Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 218; Derek R. Peterson, "State of Mind: Political History the Rwenzururu Kingdom in Western Uganda," in *Recasting the Past: History Writing and Political Work in Modern Africa*, eds. Derek R. Peterson and Giacomo Macola, (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2009), 178.

[28] Edward Steinhart, *Conflict and Collaboration in the Kingdoms of Western Uganda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 250–41; Shane Doyle, *Crisis and Decline in Bunyoro: Population & Environment in Western Uganda, 1860–1955* (Athens, OH: University of Ohio Press, 2006), 96, 100–1.

[29] TNAUK FCO141/18109, 1945 Police Memorandum, vol. 2, W. Scott, Chief Inspector of Police, 91.

[30] *Ibid.*, 137.

[31] They wanted monthly wages of shs. 250 for bus drivers, shs. 200 for lorry drivers, shs. 100 for car drivers, with an additional shs. 3 per day for all for rations. TNAUK FCO141/18109, 1945 Police Memorandum, vol. 2, A. Cook, Assistant Superintendent of Police, Masaka, 137–38.

[32] BLCASC Mss. Brit. Emp s. 365/127/1, UAMDATU to Rita Hinden, 15. Sep. 1945.

[33] TNAUK FCO141/18111, "Memorandum in Connection with the Strikes and Disturbances which occurred in Uganda in January," vol. 3, W. Scott, Chief Inspector of Police, Kampala, 157–58.

[34] TNAUK FCO141/18109, 1945 Police Memorandum, W. Scott, 87.

[35] BLCASC Mss. Brit. Emp s. 365/125/1a, Fabian Colonial Bureau, K. B. Maindi, Acting President to C. W. W. Greennidge, Secretary of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society and Dr. Rita Hinden, 17 Mar. 1945.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853724000392 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Kampala, and during the weeks of the labor action there happened to be ladders placed against the Uganda Museum building, which allowed speakers to be seen as they addressed the large crowd. A number of statements made by individual officer describe being approached by Africans who sought an opportunity to explain what motivated their actions. C. V. Curtis, the commandant of the Police Training School, was monitoring a large crowd gathered by the bus company garage when he was approached:

> One, Salim, who said he was a Muganda, living at Mengo and a Mohamedan (wore a fez) came to me and commenced talking to me about the fact that the people wanted more pay and better conditions and that they did not want people to work until their conditions had been improved. A considerable portion of the crowd stood around listening to our conversation. I told him that if people returned to their work and represented any problems they may have in the proper manner that proper steps would be taken to consider their cases, but that if the people attempted to use force they would not improve their case at all and they would be stopped by force. The crowd listened with great attention. Salim appeared to be quite a reasonable type of man.[36]

That large numbers listened attentively while a capable interlocutor spoke with Curtis provides evidence that communication was the goal. The *pokino* (chief of the large Buganda province Buddu) calmed a crowd that had been engaged in hours of confrontation with police in Masaka by proposing that a proper discussion could be held on the nearby football ground; what had been described as "a pitched battle" became an animated meeting in which the chief listened to a succession of speakers.[37]

Protestors argued that war inflation had made life impossible: good rulers ought to see that and respond. It did not make sense that some government workers received a war inflation pay hike but others did not, because everyone was suffering. A rumor circulated in Buganda that King George had written a letter to the kabaka instructing him to raise everyone's wages.[38] Writing to the commission of enquiry P. L. Musoke explained, "all employees of British and Native Governments, and of Missions and traders, had tried to explain that their pay did not enable them to maintain their lives and their dependents in their homes," and "one citizen gentleman," wrote "There was total bad delatoriness [*sic*] in making decisions and this delatoriness is inexcusable."[39] One E.A.T.C. employee told the chief inspector of police in Kampala that the "great shout of the strikers" was "we want more pay, you can't feed your wife and family of [*sic*] twelve shillings."[40] People called to the superintendent of police in Kampala "We are paupers!"[41] The goal was not only higher wages, but also a demonstration of reciprocity.[42] As Frederick Cooper observes, labor and wages held social meanings that the employers of Africans sometimes failed to discern.[43]

In the first stage, as well as later ones, the labor action was multiethnic. The chief inspector of police in Kampala commented on "the number of Alien natives taking part in these hostile demonstrations."[44] Cross-ethnic political language, not intelligible to colonial observers, united the large

[36] TNAUK FCO 141/18109, 1945 Police Memorandum, vol. 2, W. Scott, 127.

[37] *Ibid.*, 27.

[38] TNAUK, FCO 141/18109, 1945 Police Memorandum, vol. 2, I. MacCabe, Inspector of Police, Jinja, 135.

[39] Musoke wrote to the Commission of Inquiry in response to an advertisement in Matalisi in February 1945 seeking input from the public, Testimony, P.L Musoke to Commissioner of Inquires, Kampala, February 12, 1945, and Report, "one citizen gentleman" to Dr. Rita Hinden "A Commentary on the Report of Commission of Inquiry into the Disturbances which Occurred in Uganda Protectorate during January 1945" June 1945. Fabian Colonial Bureau Collection Mss. Brit. Emp, shelf 365, file 125, Special Collections, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

[40] TNAUK FCO 141/18109, 1945 Police Memorandum, vol. 2, Scott, 69.

[41] TNAUK FCO 141/18111, 1945 Police Memorandum, vol. 3: Kampala, 212; Appendix 16.

[42] TNAUK FCO 141/18109, 1945 Police Memorandum, vol. 2, W. Scott, 84.

[43] Frederick Cooper, "Work, Class and Empire: An African Historian's Retrospective on E. P. Thompson," *Social History* 20, no. 2 (1995): 235–41.

[44] TNAUK FCO 141/18109, 1945 Police Memorandum, vol. 2, W. Scott, 70.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853724000392 Published online by Cambridge University Press

numbers of protestors of different ethnic groups. In Entebbe, a police inspector saw protestors moving in groups of fifty, wearing banana leaves over their clothes and carrying sticks.[45] Three men, two of whom were wearing skirts and headdresses made of leaves, led a crowd of several hundred at Namirembe Hospital on January 17.[46] Military uniforms also marked leaders, for example the chief inspector of police noticed a crowd of 500 led by one man in a military uniform and one man who seemed to be from a rural area.[47] The protectorate authorities attempted to demonstrate their control of the situation by having the newly-arrived contingent of Kings' African Rifles (KAR) sing military songs as they were driven around Kampala in trucks after their arrival from Jinja on the evening of January 15.[48]

The decisions to assert reciprocity by withdrawing labor, and how to act as the protest unfolded, had not been made by leaders rousing the masses. They had been made by groups who shared a common space, who took action in reference to other groups. They were not the unthinking mass, susceptible to manipulation, which colonial authorities considered them to be.

Insisting on the right to be heard

A phase which was more confrontational and aggressive opened in Buganda in southern Uganda with the shooting deaths of protestors. Eight protesting workers were shot and killed in the course of the mobilization and fourteen were injured. Police officers and Britons living in Uganda sworn in as special constables shot and killed two in Kampala on January 16, one at Kawanda on January 17, one in Masaka on January 19, and four were killed and eleven wounded by the KAR on January 18 in a skirmish over the supply of food to the camp for Polish war refugees in Koja, forty miles from Kampala. The dead were four Batoro, one Munyarwanda, one Congolese, one Lugwara, and one Muziba.[49] Police remarked on the multiethnic character of the crowds at every stage; that protestors responded to the death of men who were not Baganda with insistence that the kabaka (king) of Buganda view their bodies, with funerals in Buganda, and with an escalation of their action when the killing did not stop is even stronger evidence of the multiethnic character of the mobilization.

Understanding what happened and what it meant requires a careful reading of partial and contradictory evidence. Claiming that riot conditions prevailed justified the shootings according to an empire-wide policy that called for shooting leaders in a riot, but framing the events by asking whether or not protestors were uncontrollably violent before their leaders were shot directs attention away from another important element of the violence. The crowds sought not only to show employers that they had stopped working, but also to convince others to join them. Some among those crowds beat waged laborers still at work in order to convince them to stop. This may have been an attempt to enforce an expectation of social cohesion that made sense in a group which held common allegiance to a chief or king but did not work in a new social reality in which people established relationships of mutual obligation with their employers who paid wages. However, if those doing the beating were themselves unemployed, as some sources suggest, the aggression shown to houseboys and hospital workers who chose loyalty to their employers over solidarity with protestors may be evidence of an emerging economic inequality which made social cohesion more difficult. The middle phase of the protest shows protestors employing strategies of accountability in circumstances in which those strategies did not work: other workers refused to conform to the demands of the group, the police shot protestors, and authorities refused to acknowledge their wrongdoing by viewing the bodies of the dead.

[45]TNAUK FCO 141/18109, 1945 Police Memorandum, vol. 2, F. T. Reader, Inspector of Police, Entebbe, 67.
[46]TNAUK FCO 141/18109, 1945 Police Memorandum, vol. 2, R. A. Hook, Assistant Inspector of Police, Kampala, 90.
[47]TNAUK FCO 141/18109, 1945 Police Memorandum, vol. 2, W. Scott, 72.
[48]Whitley, *Report,* 15.
[49]Whitley, *Report*, 18–19.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853724000392 Published online by Cambridge University Press

While some officers and the official report argued that each shooting by police followed threatening mob action, middle-ranked police reported that on the first days the crowd that had been "friendly, quite orderly, and cheerful" but later became "angry and truculent" after the first shooting death.[50] A police inspector in Kampala observed the change in the crowd of several thousand in the area of the Bus Park and the main market street on Tuesday, January 16. In the morning the protestors were "good tempered and obviously enjoying themselves," but then one of their leaders was shot, the mood changed, and cars and lorries were attacked.[51] A British church leader, fluent in Luganda, also remembered the escalation of the conflict in this way. Canon Williams reported that a well-behaved group met him to ask for more pay on Monday, the next day a group that was carrying sticks but was not disorderly tried to convince Namirembe Cathedral employees to stop working, but on Wednesday after the first protestor had been shot, Williams sensed a change in the atmosphere and asked for police protection.[52] Police officers had been trained to quell a riot by targeting the leaders: this strategy fostered violence because the crowd tried to protect and defend their leaders.[53] It is difficult to discern whether a crowd's violence caused each shooting, or was a consequence of it. The sequence of events at Namirembe hospital which led Sub-Inspector Cook to kill one protest leader suggests that the crowd of three to four hundred at Namirembe hospital became agitated after one of their three leaders went forward towards the police alone, was then caught and handcuffed, escaped, and was chased.[54] The "threat" that led to police firing seems to have been large numbers of Africans, with leaders.

It is notable that tension was highest, and two of the deaths occurred, at locations where workers had a strong commitment to their work or an intimate connection to their employers. On January 16 an estimated crowd of 300 people at Mulago hospital tried to make nurses and other hospital staff leave their work; the similar situation which occurred the following day at Namirembe hospital led to the shooting described above. At Kawanda research station the crowd threatened the houseboys who seemed to join them, but then returned to work.[55] In Kampala, M. K. Akker encountered a "gang of about 10 in the garden of E.G. Smith, P.W.D." that was "surrounding Mrs. Smith who was trying to protect her cook."[56] The effort exerted to make everyone participate, sometimes through beating, can be explained in a number of ways, and it seems likely that all have some validity.[57] The chasing and beating might have been a way of punishing those who continued to work for prioritizing loyalty to employers over loyalty to a larger social whole. Violence towards those who refused to obey was part of the discipline of the courts of kings: perhaps that is what the anonymous "one citizen gentleman" implied when he wrote that "Other labourers joined in and eventually arranged on the Old Kampala Hill to perform alarm-dance demonstrations in order to keep their strikes alive."[58] The beatings might also have been anger at those who had jobs that paid more with better conditions of work: at Mulago hospital some in a crowd of 300 trying to make nurses stop working were wearing hospital uniforms themselves.[59] The rupture in the normal order of things may have created an opening for people who

[50]TNAUK FCO 141/18109, 1945 Police Memorandum, vol. 2, G. W. Peskett, Superintendent of Police, Kampala, 75.

[51]TNAUK FCO 141/18107, 1945 Police Memorandum, vol. 1: M. K. Akker, Inspector of Police, Kampala, 72; W. Scott, Kampala, 70.

[52]BLCASC Mss. Brit. Emp s. 365/125, H. D. Hooper to Rev. H. Hooper. 10 Jan. 1945.

[53]TNAUK FCO 141/18109, 1945 Police Memorandum, vol. 2, W. F. Ungless, Assistant Inspector of Police, Kampala 108–9.

[54]TNAUK FCO 141/18109, 1945 Police Memorandum, vol. 2, Cook, Kampala, 90.

[55]*Ibid.*, Ungless, 107.

[56]*Ibid.*, Akker, 91.

[57]Uganda's crowds in Jan. 1945 do not divide into the categories Rudé proposes in *The Crowd in History* of those that deliberately punish the wealthy and those that are not lawless; the Ugandan crowd contained people trying to constrain their fellows.

[58]BLCASC Mss. Brit. Emp. 365/125/1a, Report from "one citizen gentleman" to Dr. Rita Hinden, "A Commentary on the Report of Commission of Inquiry into the Disturbances which Occurred in Uganda Protectorate during January 1945," June 1945.

[59]TNAUK FCO 141/18109, 1945 Police Memorandum, vol. 2, C. E. Page, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Kampala, 59.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853724000392 Published online by Cambridge University Press

felt less bound by social norms to take advantage of relaxed social discipline, but those accusations in the police memorandum seem to come from individuals who were not observing closely.[60]

People felt horror that anyone had been killed, and then deep distress at the protectorate and Buganda Kingdom officials' callous response.[61] Early in the twentieth century, Ugandans were shocked that workers had been beaten by their foreign employers, and took the men whose "bruises can clearly be seen" to be viewed by the members of the Lukiko. The same expectation of leaders' responsibility to observe and respond to inappropriate violence seems to have been operating with the labor action's shooting deaths.[62] Some protectorate officials recognized the social importance of showing the bodies to seek redress and therefore strove to remove corpses so the crowd could not have them; in Masaka, a protectorate official defused a tense situation by turning over a corpse so that it could be taken to be seen by the kabaka.[63] When the protestors took the appropriate action of taking the corpses to be viewed by the kabaka they failed because the kabaka was away hunting, and the kingdom's senior ministers turned them away:

> The mass of people watched this situation but the failure of the chiefs only continued on. Some days later the strikers went themselves to the Lukiko Parliament in search of help but nothing was done materially in their trust and efforts. Failure went on till the situation generally reminded every man in the street of the old popular complaints against the composition of the ministries of state and the working of the Lukiko Parliament.[64]

According to "one citizen gentleman" it was the failure of the chiefs "who are fathers of the people of the state" to properly respond to the manifest evidence of wrongdoing the corpses represented that turned the protest towards politics.[65] Legitimate rulers would have seen the bodies, and would have then advocated with the protectorate government to stop the loss of life and to respond properly to the victims. Colonial reimagining of authority created an impossible challenge for anyone who wished to wield influence over others, because to succeed they had to appear to be listening and responding to the people they governed.

Faced with this failure of good governance, protestors escalated the confrontation by trying to prevent food from reaching Kampala and other urban centers. This action asserted the dependence of all urban dwellers on African producers of food: it echoed the political-voice-through-supply-chain-disruption that people had utilized in earlier times. People made their disagreement or disappointment with a ruler visible by withholding the gifts and services which would otherwise demonstrate their allegiance. For example, in the early 1880s, when many in Buganda viewed the growing presence of foreigners with skepticism, Kabaka Mutesa was frequently unable to fulfil his promise to missionaries to move their goods across the lake: the chief who controlled canoes refused.[66] The ultimate evidence of people's rebellion against the evil king Kagulu in the eighteenth century was that he became hungry and had to steal to eat, because all his subjects refused to provide him with food.[67] Market vendors began to refuse to sell food to Europeans after the first protestors were shot in Kampala and Masaka. When hungry Europeans attempted to organize an alternative food supply, protestors prevented food from entering the city by digging out culverts in the roads so

[60]For example, the O. C. Police in Busoga wrote that "The actual rioters (with few exceptions) were the lower paid of the Township and P.W.D. labour who were ably assisted by their out of work friends and local riff-raff who, like all children love to have FUN." TNAUK FCO 141/18109, 1945 Police Memorandum, vol. 2, G. Woodgate, 183.

[61]TNAUK FCO 141/18109, 1945 Police Memorandum, vol. 2, Kampala, 113–14.

[62]Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 149.

[63]TNAUK FCO 141/18109, 1945 Police Memorandum, vol. 2, W. Scott, 142.

[64]BLCASC Mss. Brit. Emp. 365/125/1a, "One citizen gentleman," "A Commentary."

[65]*Ibid*.

[66]Alexander M. Mackay, *A .M Mackay Pioneer Missionary of the Church Missionary Society in Uganda*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1890), 149–50, 155–56.

[67]Hanson, *Landed Obligation*.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853724000392 Published online by Cambridge University Press

that trucks carrying food could not pass.[68] The objects of this action felt the distress it created but failed to apprehend the assertion of dependence it contained. In this, they followed an earlier generation of imperial entrepreneurs who had failed to comprehend that running up a Union Jack on Kampala Hill did not actually signify sovereignty if they had to send expeditions hundreds of miles beyond the borders of Buganda to acquire food.[69]

The weight of people's disappointment with those in power seems to have intensified not only with the lack of response to showing the bodies, but also in the burials of the protestors who died. These took place out of the sight of protectorate observers, but there were no protests and the city emptied on those days. I. K. Musazi's father, a chief in Bulemeezi, buried the Rwandan who was shot by police on his own land; Kivu wrote that the act of gathering for the funeral "gave the strikers moral strength."[70] Stanley Kisingiri, one of the leading politicians and largest landowners in Buganda, took responsibility for the burial of a Munyoro protestor. It was claimed (in secret, by a source seeking to implicate him in a political assassination) that he said at the funeral that he performed the ceremony, offered the land, and paid for the coffin because "we should honour the deceased who had died for his country."[71] Another chief, who had reasons to undermine Kisingiri's character, claimed that Kisingiri had explained his actions in burying the protestor by saying, "If we do not do things like this our Country will never be free from the reign of the British."[72] Given the problematic nature of the evidence, we cannot know what Kisingiri actually said. However, if these events are considered in the context of the role of burials in defining communities and binding the living to each other as well as the living to the deceased, the burials of the protestors were clearly important. It makes sense that funerals of non-Baganda laborers who died leading the protests, attended by large numbers who had been protesting, conducted by clan elders on clan land, would have evoked statements that those who died had contributed to the creation of a Uganda without colonial rule. The statement "The country is bought with the price of dead bodies" (reported by secret police) from a speech made in the years of agitation that followed 1945 seems to suggest this was the case.[73]

The mobilization which began as a withdrawal of labor intensified to efforts to break the supply of food to non-Ugandans when police killed protestors and authorities refused to condemn the deaths. In contrast to events only a few years later, protestors beating workers was violence directed inwards: towards people who should have been participating with others who were like them, but were not.

Calling rulers to account in the courtyard of the king

When protest moved from streets and workplaces to the Lukiko (the Buganda kingdom parliament), and then to the courtyard of the Buganda king, the Ugandans of many ethnicities who participated took action with confidence that their strategies for creating good governance would be effective. They mobilized a widely held understanding that people informed rulers of social wrongs, that rulers responded, and those who did not lost their power. This political logic, embodied in language and in the physical layout of the compounds of chiefs and kings, can be traced across the continent. In Buganda the entrance to the palace, the *wankaki,* carried a symbolic meaning of the place where "all of Buganda" met the king. Fifty-seven years earlier, as the rebellion against him reached its climax, Kabaka Mwanga had stood at the wankaki with his few remaining followers to fight.[74] In ordinary

[68]Kivu, "Life of Kivu," 54, 56.

[69]How imperial entrepreneurs failed to understand meanings intended by gifts given and gifts withheld is discussed in Hanson, *To Speak and Be Heard*, 53–60.

[70]Kivu, "The Life of Kivu," 50.

[71]TNAUK FCO 141/18157, Nsibirwa Assassination affidavits, Mulyanti, 2b.

[72]*Ibid.*, Mpagi.

[73]TNAUK FCO 141/18095, Uganda African Affairs Fortnightly Review 1947–1948, 26 Sep. 1948.

[74]Bartolomayo Musoke Zimbe, *Buganda ne Kabaka* (Mengo: Gambuze Press, 1939), typescript translation by Simon Musoke, Cambridge University Library, 193. This happened after the dramatic confrontation when "All of Buganda refused" to take Mwanga to Sesse island, and before Mwanga fled.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853724000392 Published online by Cambridge University Press

times the giving and receiving of gifts and honor in the large open space immediately in front of the wankaki bound people to each other, in times of negotiation, the king stood at the wankaki (leaning back against it if he became tired) and the people wishing to raise a concern stood facing him.[75] The remembered oral history of the kingdom records kings giving way to people on a wide range of issues.[76] The rebellion against Kabaka Mwanga, which occurred in the lifetime of some participants and would have been a story many had heard, demonstrates the progression. Mwanga began to oppress people and humiliate his chiefs in the social upheaval of trade for slaves and ivory with guns. He refused to listen to chiefs, and claimed that he had held councils without really holding them.[77] His prime minister advised "persuasive handling" but eventually 6,000 young men, wearing white and holding guns, stood before him and refused to obey his order that he be taken to Sesse.[78] In 1945, Kabaka Mutesa had to answer to accusations of callous indifference to the plight of people that the protestors had expressed.

Anger with the king intensified as the mobilized crowd and the chiefs in the Lukiko fought with each other about who could speak in the important symbolic space of the Lukiko and the king's courtyard. When large numbers of protestors had gathered outside the Lukiko on January 19, the chiefs in the Lukiko sent one of their members out to state that only two delegates would be allowed, but the large crowd proceeded into the Lukiko hall and would not allow Serwano Kulubya, the treasurer of the kingdom, to speak in response to the speeches of the protestors' three delegates. [79] The chief justice who was also the acting prime minister, instructed the crowd to return the following day to hear the response of the kabaka, who was still hunting. Later that day crowds stopped the kabaka as he returned from his hunting trip (at a blockade that prevented food from entering the town), and held him up for half an hour, telling him "they were angry with him for seeking his own pleasure when his people were suffering."[80] That evening the kabaka had to drive himself to a meeting with the resident commissioner, an indication of disapproval of the king because his driver was refusing to work.[81] The kabaka was present when the crowd returned to the Lukiko the next day, and the same three speakers made speeches, but the weight of that meeting was undermined by the absence of most of the Lukiko members. Thousands of people, who were noted to be of many tribes, gathered on January 23 to learn what the kabaka had decided in response to the protestors' concerns, and dissatisfaction escalated when they heard from the kabaka that he had appointed a special committee to discuss Buganda government salaries, and that it would be led by Kulubya, who was despised and distrusted.

The events of the ensuing hours demonstrated the power of the crowd and the discipline with which they were able to wield it. They were calling the kabaka to account through having gathered by thousands in his courtyard and they succeeded by remaining until they had been heard, despite requests from the resident commissioner and the kabaka himself that they should disperse. The kingdom's officials within the palace and the British commissioner were frantically telephoning, believing that the kabaka was about to be overthrown by a mob. One call from the resident commissioner to the kabaka's private secretary recorded "they are not beating anyone at the moment" and "The trouble is wages they are interested in some parts of the Native Government. They wish some changes to take place. The crowd are not all Baganda – mixed."[82] Through subterfuge carried out by a collaborator

[75]TNAUK FCO141/18185, Letter from Semakula Mulumba.

[76]Hanson, *Landed Obligation;* Neil Kodesh, *Beyond the Royal Gaze: Clanship and Public Healing in Buganda* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010).

[77]Zimbe, *Buganda ne Kabaka,* Musoke typescript translation, 174, 178.

[78]*Ibid.*, 178–79.

[79]Kayongo spoke about wages, Gomeri Lwere, Secretary of the Drivers Association, spoke about War Bonuses, and I. K. Musazi spoke about politics.

[80]Kivu, "The Life of Kivu," 54.

[81]*Ibid.*

[82]TNAUK FCO 141/18109, 1945 Police Memorandum, vol. 2, Appendix 5, "Extracts from Kampala Diary of Events," 153.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853724000392 Published online by Cambridge University Press

inside the palace, Kulubya was induced to resign, but the kabaka refused to accept his resignation, and news of this angered the crowd outside. One speaker suggested from the platform that if the kabaka "did not accept and announce Kulubya's resignation within 30 minutes, we would depose him."[83] The senior assistant superintendent of police, who was present, described the crowd as "in good humour and not at all antagonistic."[84] Less than an hour before Kulubya's actual resignation later that afternoon, the resident commissioner informed police headquarters that the crowd "was perfectly quiet and sitting down."[85] The power of the assembled crowd was moral suasion, not violence or the threat of it.

The January 1945 mobilization worked in indigenous terms: employers responded to the reminder of mutual obligation by raising salaries, and the Buganda and protectorate governments heard the warning regarding bad government voiced by the gathering of people at the palace.

Unfortunately for Uganda, Governor Hall failed to comprehend the political culture the mobilization expressed, imagined an opponent who wielded a shadow of his own hierarchical power in opposition to him, and responded with secret hearings, deportations, and a wholesale dismissal of chiefs who did not demonstrate slavish support to the protectorate.[86] The local assumption that one could malign one's rivals to higher authorities because other voices would provide balance was disastrous in the setting of the secret hearings held in the aftermath of the effective protest at the palace, the forced resignation in February of *Katikiro* (prime minister of the Buganda kingdom) Wamala who refused to pass the eminent domain law, and the assassination of his replacement as katikiro, Martin Luther Nsibirwa, who was killed the day after he manipulated the Lukiko into passing the law. The observation of an anonymous critic of the Whitley report on the January mobilization articulates the expectation that cases should be heard in the presence of all involved:

> All evidence were taken on the system of "one-sided" audiences in absence of any of the hundreds of the prisoners concerned who should have attended as listeners. And more still chiefs and other natives were not called to attend the audiences of natives for the sake of guaranteeing native public honesty. Freedom, under this method, was more offered to speak untruth and guesses than it was in speaking true facts.[87]

Instead of the imagined debate among many voices, the protectorate used exaggerated or distorted testimony to dismiss chiefs who were not sufficiently loyal and deported twenty individuals who were thought to have led the effort to articulate mutual responsibility.[88] Governor Hall deported people who were recognized as leaders with a concern for others, exactly the kind of people the new nation of Uganda would need. The Buganda Royal Prince Suna and the long-serving Saza (Provincial) Chief S. Wamala both died in detention.[89]

The 1949 effort to educate the king

That the protectorate government had well understood the power of the Ugandan crowd in 1945 is evident in the contrast between the palace stage of the protest in 1945 and what happened in 1949 when a diverse group of people again gathered at Buganda's palace to attempt to educate the king.

[83] Kivu, "The Life of Kivu," 57.

[84] TNAUK FCO 141/18109, 1945 Police Memorandum, vol. 2, E. J. G. Brown, Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police, Kampala, 131.

[85] TNAUK FCO 141/18109, 1945 Police Memorandum, vol. 2, Appendix 5, "Extracts from Kampala Diary of Events," 153.

[86] Apter, *Political Kingdom*, 230.

[87] BLCASC Mss. Brit. Emp. 365/125/1a, "One citizen gentleman," "A Commentary."

[88] Apter, *Political Kingdom*, 230; TNAUK FCO 141/18185, I. K. Musazi, *Some Observations on the Kingdon Report* (London: Uganda African Farmers Union, 1950). For example, the claim that Prince Suna was disloyal is based on a letter which actually urges protestors to ensure that Ugandans in Kampala who needed to purchase food would be able to do so.

[89] Wamala was then the katikiro (prime minister of the Buganda kingdom) and refusing to comply with the effort to make the Lukiko assent to eminent domain appropriation of land for Makerere College.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853724000392 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Frustration at the pretense of a purported reform of the Lukiko, an escalating conflict with Governor Hall about how cotton grown by peasant farmers would be sold, and a sense that the young Buganda king did not know how to rule properly led to the plan for another large gathering at the palace. A typed announcement, which was nailed to trees around Kampala, invited people to come to the palace on April 25, bringing food and firewood so that participants could stay as long as it would take for the king to learn to heed them. The success of the 1945 gathering at the palace may well have inspired the planners, and protectorate authorities made efforts to prevent the gathering from happening because they recognized that, "The plan to bring pressure to bear upon the Kabaka by sitting down before his palace amounted to planning treason and rebellion."[90] The kabaka was forced to tell people not to come, and the police had planned to disrupt people marching from the kabaka's lake to the palace, but the protestors arrived at the palace before dawn to circumvent police.[91] The gathered thousands then proceeded for one day and part of the next to educate the king in how to rule responsively through their presence, and through banners, emissaries, songs, and speeches. As the morning of the second day was unfolding like the previous one, they were driven from in front of the palace by policemen wielding truncheons and the threat of KAR rifles. These events have been labeled an insurrection because of the three days of burning the homes of chiefs that followed the police beating of the crowd that ended the effort, but the evidence of the "migrated archives" clearly indicates that the crowd gathered at the palace had not intended violence.

The explicitly stated goals of the gathering were both political and economic, but the focus of the engagement between the assembled people, the Buganda government, and protectorate authorities was on who was allowed to speak, in what circumstances.[92] When delegates who had been carefully chosen to be representative met the king and told him his government needed to change because they were not being heard, he lectured them on following proper procedure, which was that he would speak to the Lukiko members and they would speak to the people. He ordered them to tell the people to go home, and walked out of the room.[93] When the katikiro came out to read the king's statement, the crowd shouted him down, even though he was using a van with sound projection, which meant the delegates had to report the king's response themselves. For this, they used a rostrum made of poles that raised the speaker eight feet above the ground which had been specially prepared and trucked in along with the mountains of food and firewood; marshals kept people closely packed so that everyone could hear them.[94] The crowd itself expressed their goal of communicating to the kabaka through remarkable discipline, reestablishing calm after provocation. They sang what the commissioner of police described as "hymns" but may well have been the moving songs regarding Uganda's future composed by Joyce Mukalasi, the secretary of the Farmer's Union.[95] After the effective palace protest in 1945, the police ordinance had been revised to require a license for any gathering of over 500 people, and to make illegal any speech to a gathering over this size which did not have a license, and the protectorate authorities kept informing the crowd that the gathering was illegal because it was too large and anyone speaking to it was breaking the law.[96] When, on the second morning, the

[90]TNAUK FCO/18184, Donald Kingdon, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Disturbances in Uganda during April 1949* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1950), paras. 48–49.

[91]*Ibid.*, para. 55.

[92]That people should choose their own chiefs, that Lukiko membership should be increased, that the kabaka's current ministers should be dismissed, and that peasant cotton growers should be allowed to gin and sell cotton without restrictions. TNAUK FCO 141/18131, "We Ask for Freedom," 25 Apr. 1949.

[93]Kingdon, *Report*, 25.

[94]TNAUK FCO 141/18133, "Memorandum on the Civil Disturbances which occurred in Buganda during the month of April, 1949" (hereafter 1949 Police Memorandum, vol. 2), Diary of J. V. Mullin, Senior Superintendent of Police, paras. 7, 12.

[95]TNAUK FCO 141/18133, 1949 Police Memorandum, vol. 2, C. V. Curtis, 7; George W. Shepherd, *They Wait in Darkness* (New York: J. Day and Co, 1955), for sale in Uganda in 2017 as *The Early Struggle for Freedom and Unity in Uganda: I. K. Musazi and the Farmer's Cooperative Movement,* 55.

[96]Aaron Windel, *Cooperative Rule: Community Development in Britain's Late Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021), 120.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853724000392 Published online by Cambridge University Press

police announcement that the gathering was illegal and should be dispersed was reinforced with a King's African Rifles company lined up in front of the gates of the palace, two "polite and punctilious" former soldiers presented a typed document with spaces for signatures asking that "officers in charge of armed forces requested to sign their names as to by whose order that His Highness's peaceful people are opposed with arms."[97] In 1945, the crowd that had been allowed to remain outside the palace, and the messages that had been smuggled in had yielded the resignation that they sought. In 1949, the crowd gathered, attempts to communicate from outside to inside were made, and a second delegation was being organized, when the procedure was put in motion to end the gathering with force. The permission of both the resident commissioner and governor had been obtained, the law forbidding gatherings of over 500 people was formally read, and exactly fifteen minutes later, police began beating people with truncheons and making arrests. Even after the first foray of police wielding truncheons, with one person dead, some of its leaders asked again to be admitted into the palace for consultation, the crowd calmed itself, and refused to leave.[98] It was only with KAR rifles pointed toward them and further police parties beating people that that the crowd retreated to the kabaka's lake. Labor immediately stopped working, a great shouting could be heard, and the burning of the homes of chiefs and people associated with the protectorate lasted for three days.[99] Like the 1945 mobilization to remind the powerful of their responsibilities, the 1949 effort to educate the king of Buganda emerged from widespread consultations, was premised on an assumption of the capacity of ordinary people to contribute to good government, involved people of different ethnicities, and who should be allowed to speak was a major point of contention. It ended violently through protectorate authorities' concern to prevent the success people had experienced at the palace in 1945.

The total inability of protectorate authorities to respond adequately to the pleas for reciprocity and good government made in 1945 and 1949 created the conditions for the intransigence of Buganda's elite in the negotiations for independence. In the defensive and paranoid response in 1945 individuals with social influence were deported, all chiefs who were not absolutely subservient to the protectorate were dismissed, and the so-called Lukiko reforms increased the representation of chiefs in the Lukiko. This deprived Buganda of the kind of leaders required for imagining the future. Wholesale resentment and anger was fostered in 1949, when Governor Hall imposed crushing communal fines, arrested more than 1,600 people, and ordered press censorship and the confiscation of cotton crops.[100] Late-colonial chiefs, who held their positions only because of their unquestioned loyalty, exercised revenge through arbitrary beatings and confiscation of the property of the emerging middle class.[101] The repression after the 1945 and 1949 events taught harsh lessons in keeping quiet and avoiding the public sphere, and cleared a space for the antidemocratic movement which dominated Buganda in the critical years that followed.

Conclusion

The mobilizations of 1945 and 1949 were not what has been remembered, and the detailed evidence regarding them in the "migrated archives" provides a glimpse of a mid-twentieth century Uganda which does not align with commonly held understandings of that time. Neither of these mobilizations began with an intention of violence: large scale, disciplined assemblies were called "riots" because they called those in power to behave differently and rule well. To withdraw labor or to ask for voice were

[97]TNAUK FCO 141/18133, Police Memorandum, vol. 2, Diary of J. V. Mullin, para. 28. For a discussion of the role demobilized soldiers envisioned for themselves in a postwar Uganda, see Summers, "Uganda and World War II," esp. 486.

[98]TNAUK FCO 141/18133, Police Memorandum, vol. 2, W. H. C. Wells, 1.

[99]TNAUK FCO 141/18133, Police Memorandum, vol. 2, Diary of the Commissioner of Police, 5.

[100]Hanson, *To Speak and Be Heard,* 110; Windel, *Cooperative Rule,* 95.

[101]Yoweri Serukenya to the Kabaka, 13 Sep. 1949, detailing losses to 43 individuals, and dozens of letters to D. K. Sekkuma itemizing losses, which Sekkuma had solicited in *Gambuze* in 1952. BLCASC Mss. Brit. Emp. s. 365/127/1, Papers of the Fabian Colonial Bureau.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853724000392 Published online by Cambridge University Press

not new ideas and behaviors Ugandans had learned from Europeans: people used familiar tools in new ways and incorporated the colonizer's language of protest, but the widespread consultation in groups by profession carried on habits which had existed in many social spaces before colonial rule rationalized and diminished locations of power. In 1945 and 1949, Ugandans of various ethnicities made common cause, the kabaka was not beyond reproach, and people expected their rulers to listen.

The significant distance between the riot and anomie that have been attributed to these events and their actual character invites comparative study: it is possible that migrated archives for other former British colonies will contain evidence that reveal a greater complexity of intention in other events that are remembered only as strikes for higher wages.

The anger of the crowd itself was directed not at ethnic outsiders, but at insiders who refused to act with the social whole. The policy of the police was to aim for the leaders of a riot, and the leaders who died belonged to five different ethnicities. The crowd who were residents of Buganda followed leaders on the street who were not Baganda, and when some of those leaders were killed those crowds made great effort to get the wrong of their deaths acknowledged, and the slain non-Baganda protest leaders were buried with honor by Kiganda clans. These circumstances, which do not accord with our current understanding of the practice of ethnicity in Uganda, suggest that the conservative and isolationist politics that characterized Buganda politics in the 1950s was not inevitable. Those who held power in 1945 and 1949, who were given an opportunity to listen but chose not to, made choices that created the conditions for Uganda's ethnic conflict.

Cite this article: Holly Hanson, "The Moral Economy of the Ugandan Crowd in 1945." *The Journal of African History* (2024). 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853724000392

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853724000392 Published online by Cambridge University Press