



Examining the Role of Pre-Colonial Trade in Shaping Buganda's Socio-Economic Structure and the Impact of European Arrival from 1750 to 1900

Sekiswa Peter

Faculty of Education and Humanities, Gulu University, Gulu, Uganda

Email: jocekiswaa@gmail.com

How to cite this paper: Peter, S. (2024) Examining the Role of Pre-Colonial Trade in Shaping Buganda's Socio-Economic Structure and the Impact of European Arrival from 1750 to 1900. *Open Access Library Journal*, 11: e11530. <https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1111530>

Received: April 4, 2024

Accepted: August 23, 2024

Published: August 26, 2024

Copyright © 2024 by author(s) and Open Access Library Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

This paper examines the intricate relationship between pre-colonial trade dynamics, socio-economic organization in Buganda, and the transformative impact of European arrival during the period from 1750 to 1900. Buganda, a prominent kingdom in East Africa, developed a sophisticated trading network long before European intervention. Utilizing a combination of archaeological evidence, oral traditions, and historical accounts, this study elucidates the central role of trade routes, commodities, and market systems in shaping Buganda's socio-economic structures. Furthermore, it investigates how the arrival of Europeans, particularly British and German explorers and traders, introduced significant disruptions to existing trade patterns and power dynamics within Buganda. The paper also explores the implications of this encounter, including the spread of Christianity, the introduction of cash crops, and the erosion of indigenous economic systems. By analysing the interplay between pre-colonial trade, socio-economic organization, and foreigners' influence, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of Buganda's historical development and its enduring legacy in the modern era.

Subject Areas

History

Keywords

Pre-Colonial Trade, Socio-Economic Organisation, Structure

1. Introduction

Trade is the buying and selling or bartering of items which initially began with

the exchange of one item for another (bartering). In many pre-colonial African formations trade was also a means of subsistence. It is believed that some of the explanations for the growth of this kind of trade were that the natural environments were not the same in the different African social formations; that each of such environments was endowed differently. In such circumstances, one needed a commodity that the other specialised in or had in plenty and which was scarce in one's own environment. The other explanation for the growth of trade was the proximity of societies to each other. Those societies living nearest to each other were in more frequent contact than those living further apart [1]. Generally, trade networks in East Africa have existed since time immemorial through most of the Iron Age, with iron, salt, pottery, and grain exchanged for one another and carried from market to market by 1750. Trade centres were sometimes formed at lake ports for canoe traffic, or at the junctions between two climatic zones, where growers of different food crops met, or where farmers in hungry seasons could buy food from their neighbours whose crops had already been harvested.

The administration of trade followed the same trend as agriculture and any other economic activity in Buganda, which were all well-structured. As shown in the previous chapter, production relations were constructed based on political power relations that had evolved right from the founding of the Buganda social formation. Therefore, the peasant's homestead was the base unit of production but the peasant was subject to the domination of the lords to whom he had to pay tribute and in turn, the lords were answerable to the King. Thus, even the growth and development of trade in the nineteenth century did not change basic relations of production because all major business transactions were monopolised by kings. Trade provided surplus and luxury goods for the ruling class. In Buganda for instance the central authority was enhanced by the importation of guns from the coast. Earlier on in the 1700s in the times of Kabaka, Semakookiro and the successive Kabakas managed to restructure administration of trade. This was controlling the circulation of items from the coastal trade by making specific chiefs responsible for trade in various markets on the edges of the kingdom. Initially, goods from the coast flowed exclusively to and from the Kabaka. For example in 1861, after John Hanning Speke's visit, Kabaka Muteesa killed a chief—the *Mutongole* of Karema—for acquiring cloth in Karagwe that he had not handed over to the king.

Trade organisation in Buganda was looked at from three perspectives: first, local trade within Buganda social formation; next, trade between Buganda and the neighbouring societies, and then between Buganda and the Arabs foreigners, external trade that involved trade dealings with the East African coast.

2. Explanations for the Rise of Trade in Precolonial Social Formations in Uganda

Taking examples from Uganda pre-colonial social formations, initially the demand for consumption goods outside one's own community was extremely lim-

ited largely because these communities produced most of the goods they needed for their own consumption and there was hardly any need for producing a surplus beyond the necessity. The extra production of any kind of food could be stored against hard times or to cover the intervals between one harvest and the next. The range of consumption goods was itself limited since these consisted of nothing much more than food and domestic implements. It should be noted, however, that there were some essential commodities which were beyond the means of these communities, not even to be found within their borders; owing largely, to natural or ecological factors.

The rise of inter-societal trade within the communities of the region of Uganda is accounted for in the following ways: There was the need to satisfy the communities demand for salt. Salt was the primary commodity around which trade was built. Most of the communities were not able to provide for all their salt needs adequately. For example, some used a type of grass found in swamps when burnt to ashes and strained is salty enough for purposes of food seasoning. However, this was far too derisory for their day to day needs. The answer to this crucial need was to turn to the salt mines or areas where natural salt existed. It is at these salt points that the various communities related with each other traded with each other.

In Uganda, the centres for salt extraction were Kibiro on the eastern shore of Lake Albert, Katwe and Kasenyi, and parts of the kingdoms of Toro and Bunyoro. Trade also arose out of the belief that people were from the same stock or from similar ethnic origin and that their historical connections were the same. A case in point is the ruling house of Bunyoro which is believed to have sprung from the same stock which largely populated most of northern Uganda; thus trade connections were maintained by frequent contacts since geographical proximity made this rather easy and also the use of the Luo language which was and is spoken by most of the ethnic groups in that region. So many of the Palwo who set up states in northern Uganda and as far afield as Busoga continued to attach some importance to their origin in Bunyoro—such states as Payera, Patiko and Alero and the Alur chiefdoms Musongwa, Muswa and Jukoth, just to mention a few examples. These were the connections kept alive by occasional formal contacts; therefore trade with Bunyoro presented very few problems because for some it could be said that they were going back “home”—Pawir (chope)—from where their ancestors had migrated in the not too distant a past.

There is another explanation for growth of trade between Bunyoro and other surrounding communities. It was beneficial to all the parties engaged in it, due to the fact that there could have been historical or genetic connections that initially existed among such communities; these served as agencies that promoted such trade. More importantly, this trade was based on specialised production which was also dictated by ecological factors. For example, the Alur and Lugbara were farmers (both agricultural and livestock keepers) while the Okebu were iron smiths (largely because they had iron ore deposits) and also a clan of the Kakawa (the Nyangilia) had acquired specialised skills in making iron imple-

ments, and they imported some of the iron ore from modern Zaire (Democratic Republic of Congo).

To illustrate this further, the societies of the Kebu, Lugbara, Madi, and Alur, the Parombo would obtain livestock, iron products and foodstuffs which they would carry to Panyimar and across the narrow neck of the lake to Magungo. From here these were transported overland to Bunyoro and exchanged for salt and dried fish. By means of these numerous shuttle journeys those goods were spread to the various communities—the Acholi, Langi and the Iteso and as far south as Buganda. Also in the southwest in the present Kibaale and Kabarole district, important trade connections developed around the salt mines of Katwe and Kasenyi and this trade fanned out in several directions. This explains the growth of inter-community trade in communities of mainly northwestern Uganda, many of which could be described, as they were mainly non-centralised communities or societies. The question remains, however, how they were able to organise trade with Buyoro and Buganda where all social and economic activities were centrally managed. The answer could be that probably trader relations were based on coincidence of wants and the difference of natural environment and societies in this region, which was believed to have been ethnically related to Bunyoro and Bunyoro was their original home and centre of trade.

3. Organisation, Nature of Internal/Local Trade in Buganda

In this region of Buganda local trade encompassed the exchange of trade items within Buganda itself, as a state, but also in the exchange of trade items with the neighbouring states.

According to the accounts given by Roscoe and Reid on internal trade in Buganda, it seems that this trade was mainly based in market places where the buyers and sellers met. These were designated places where commercial activities took place. Trading and bartering were common activities, owing to the fact that these activities were imbedded in the customs of the Baganda. For example, as way of paying for brides and the difficulty in finding the amount demanded by the bride's clan, individuals were forced to go to the market place to engage in trade activities. According to Uzoigwe, markets were small and unauthorised gatherings of hawkers and vendors, a definition which did not befit the European concept of markets. The general belief of scholars was that markets in the true sense did not exist in pre-colonial East Africa. Nevertheless, the argument is that the African concept of a market was not abstract but highly concrete. In Uzoigwe's view for the African a market to be worth the name it should satisfy the following conditions: First it must have a defined, physical site, either enclosed or open where buyers and sellers meet to transact business face to face. Secondly, such a gathering must be authorised by those who had political power within the polity. In centralised polities like Bunyoro, Kitara a Omuhiza (tax collector) and a political Agent had to be present to represent the interests of the Omukama King as was the case of Bunyoro. The periodicity of such gatherings

was also predetermined. There are two major hypotheses relating to the rise of market institutions just as there were for the rise of trade. The first asserts that markets arise naturally among communities in response to the needs of economic exchange. The second theory argues that markets can only rise because of external stimuli. In other words, local markets arise as a result of the existence of long-distance trading.

Lucy Mair points out that the first market in Buganda was called *Munaku Yegulira* (the poor man buys for himself) which was introduced by Muteesa I for selling food stuffs, and the second was opened for women to sell Matoke (local green plantain) [2]. There is evidence that there were also numerous smaller markets which were scattered throughout Buganda. Among the oldest markets mentioned in the indigenous sources, were those of Kyagwe which dated from at least the reign of Mawanda in the early 18th century and probably much earlier, namely, Bugegere, Bale and Nsonga. Markets could not be opened at random but special permission had to be sought from a regional chief perhaps the ssaza chief. Technically, such markets were under the overall supervision of the land owner, a mechanism which was clearly designed to benefit chiefs. Market places in Buganda were under the supervision of the authorities, with regular market fees for wares which were offered for sale. Everyone was liable to pay market dues, which is why selling goods privately outside the designated market places was punishable by paying heavy fines and confiscation of the goods which were being sold. All market places were under the supervision of a special chief (*ssentala*), appointed by the king especially around the capital to mainly collect market dues which amounted to ten percent of the value of each article sold or brought (*kituuzza*). The goods offered for sale in the markets in the capital were cows, goats, sheep, butcher's meat, that is beef, and goat and sheep-mutton, fowls, fish, eggs, salt, sweet plantains (*Gonja*), sugarcane, coffee-berries, tobacco, pottery of all kinds, knives, axes, hoes, rope baskets, and native beer. The people sat under sheds, exposed their wares for sale, and made up to amounts needed. Most persons buying salt, coffee-berries, or tobacco only wanted small quantities and these had to be made up into packets, which were sold for two or three cowrie-shells. In the countryside, there were also markets places. These were the responsibility of the chief upon whose land they stood. As soon as the new market opened it is said that the king sent a man whose duty was to plant a *Mutuba* tree/Barkcloth tree with an animal killed near the newly planted tree and the meat eaten on the spot [3]. This was the process of inaugurating a new market place to begin to operate.

According to Kiwanuka, there was increase in internal as well as external trade. As narrated by Kiwanuka, the people of Kyaggwe used to trade with the Islanders of Buvvma, Bugaya, Lwaaje and Koome in goats, fish, sheep, bark cloth, dried foods, and even cattle. Their markets, which extended all the way from Bukunja to Bulondoganyi, were famous and used to attract large numbers of people [4].

Internal trade in Buganda also meant trade with neighbouring societies. This trade was also referred to as regional trade, which went on along the frontiers of Bunyoro and Buganda. Market places, in the two nations of Buganda and Bunyoro, sold to each other products peculiar to their ecological environment, for an example, Bunyoro brought chiefly hoes and salt while Buganda barkcloth and plantains. Markets were also along the shores of lakes, where the people from the islands brought fish and pots for sale or exchanged them for barkcloth and plantains. This is also echoed in the colonial government records, what became the district of Bugangaiizi during the colonial times that had formed part of pre-colonial Bunyoro west of Singa, was noted for its exports to Buganda. These were salt skins, ivory, hoes, tobacco and dried fish. The trade in dried fish between Buganda and Bunyoro was particularly lucrative by the 19th century and was probably one of the oldest commercial interactions in the region. The Baganda carried dried fish to Buruli north of Bulemezi where there was a market. This particular market at Kisalizi Buruli was patronised by the Baganda, as they could make a very good living out of it. Fish were of course brought inland from Lake Kyoga and Lake Victoria, but river fishing also played a part in this trade. Speke noted a thriving river-born trade in 1862 between the Banyoro and Basoga. The canoes of Banyoro were being stuffed with such goods as bark cloth, dried fish, raw and cooked plantains, and beer. Therefore, there is no doubt that the Baganda were also involved in commercial activities, particularly along the Nile. It also seems most clearly that there was a regular trade in basic food stuffs between Buganda and Bunyoro as evidenced from one report from 1894 which mentions the regularity with which the Banyoro sold to the Baganda. There was also trade in the Busoga region. The Basoga traded with the Samia in the east, the Bagisu in the north, the Banyara and Baruli in the north-west and of course with the people of eastern Kyaggwe. This was the expansion of trade to the north-eastern direction of Buganda. Goods mainly from Bunyoro found their way into Buganda through Busoga as mentioned previously. For example, a hoe made in Buruli from metals imported from Bunyoro, could now reach Buganda through Busoga, just as cattle from as far as from Teso could make their way into Buganda across Lake Kyoga. Similarly, Buganda backcloth could be exchanged in Bugishu markets after passing through Busoga [5].

Trade in Buganda and around the regions of Buganda was based on mainly two major items of trade: that is iron and salt. The importance of these two items helps to explain the growth and expansion of this regional trade. This in the long run influenced the intercourse between Buganda and the neighbouring societies and the subsequent political, economic relations between Buganda and her neighbours.

It is believed that Bunyoro played a very big part in the development of Buganda's iron industry before the 1800s. Knowledge of iron-working brought from Bunyoro like repairing of fire arms by Baganda craftsmen in market places was acquired from Bunyoro. Generally, metals, both in raw state and in the form of ready-made implements, were critical trade commodities throughout the 19th

century. It should be noted however that Buganda's iron resources were derived mainly from trade, while a certain amount was from tribute. Iron in unworkable state was carried from Kavirondo into Buganda. This was mainly converted into hoes once it reached the forges of Buganda [6].

Readymade hoes were at one time or another also imported. According to the report of one British official in 1894, it is alleged that for purposes of road construction and for public works the hoes from Busoga were of much better quality due to the fact that their iron was much better and could not wear out faster as was the case of those made in Buganda or those imported from Bunyoro [7]. It is important to note that the iron and the hoe played a very important part, especially in terms of putting in place the radiating road network throughout the Buganda Kingdom and in the carrying out of the regular important public works activities in Buganda state, carried out by residents of Buganda state.

Metals were also traded in the form of weaponry, and indeed the regional arms trade was particularly vibrant, but more importantly for Buganda's military standing. Nyoro traders sold spear-blades to the Ganda. In 1862, according to Grant, these could fetch 500 cowries each, while "one cow would buy ten, or bark cloth would be taken in exchange. From the dimensions given by Grant, these blades were probably destined for use in war rather than hunting. They were two spans long", or around 40 cm, and "two inches at their greatest breadth", Spear blades used for hunting were similar in length but were usually much wider at the socket. Weapons were also brought in from Karagwe to be traded in the frontier areas of Buganda and Bunyoro. The Baganda in particular were kin buyers. Grant noted that spear-heads of very good quality were hawked for sale in the southern borders of Bunyoro and it was the richer Baganda who bought them [8].

Salt, as hinted above, was another (or even most) important article of this regional trade. Salt trade is believed to have been probably older than the societies involved. One of the greatest articles of trade in Africa was salt and it was one of the scarcest products; one who had salt was considered a rich man. Salt is one of the oldest raw materials known to man; perhaps the first chemical substance to be perceived as an essential resource. Historically, control over sources of salt and its distribution was of primary importance in the articulation of the economic, social, and political life in many African societies. A regular demand for salt was common in areas where human subsistence was linked with domestic stock [9].

The Baganda produced a certain amount of their own salt, but this was too little in quantity and quality to satisfy their daily needs; thus, they needed to find an alternative source. Therefore, they had to look for the sources of salt. The major source of salt was the region of Kibiro on the shores of Lake Albert in Bunyoro; salt had been produced there for several centuries; thus the Baganda travelled to Bunyoro to obtain it, but the Banyoro traders also carried it to Buganda [10]. Emin Pasha tell us that the salt came to the market "wrapped in ba-

nana leaves in long packets containing four to eight pounds each". Salt was highly valued and this was reflected in the prices paid for it. Emin Pasha asserted that "in contrast to all other goods, salt, with very rare exceptions, was sold in this region for cash only, that is to say, for cowries" Kibiro was not Buganda's only source of salt. The Baganda also travelled by canoe to the northeast corner of Lake Victoria, apparently to the bay now known as Winam Gulf, where they obtained salt [11]. This trade was first mentioned by Speke, and was still thriving in 1898 when a British official observed that both the Buganda and the Busoga regularly made voyages there. The salt was exchanged for trade goods, cloth, Masai beads, white, red, and pink beads [12]. Salt was also brought from the direction of Toro, more precisely from the Salt Lake at Katwe. In 1901, salt caravans were reported as coming from this area to Buganda [13].

4. Trade with the Arabs; Coastal Merchants in Buganda

As noted in the preceding paragraphs, there was already an ongoing trade within the Buganda region. But the arrival of the Arabs in Buganda by 1844 at the court of Kabaka Suna, inaugurated a new era in the Kingdom's long history of trade and foreign relations. This was an opportunity by the Arab visitors to establish both trade and diplomatic relations with Buganda. The arrival of Arabs in Buganda was a process that had begun when the coastal traders had reached the Nyamwezi by the 1830s and they were notably attracted by the prosperous trading activity along the Nyamwezi-Karagwe-Buganda axis. From then on, the Arab traders began making journeys to Buganda to bring trade items and establish a political relationship with the Kabaka. By the latter part of the 18th century the people of the East African interior in general had developed a political organisation that made it possible for the Arabs to travel inland. The Arabs could trade for profit and in addition search for mainly two commodities in the interior, that is ivory and slaves, that could survive the heavy costs of transport to the coast. However, the initial stimulus for this trade came from the Africans of the interior, especially the Nyamwezi, Yao, and Kamba who had opened trade routes that Arabs followed on entry to the interior. As early as the mid-eighteenth century, there were reports of trade goods reaching Buganda by the beginning of the 19th century [14].

5. Progression and Organisation of Trade with the Coastal Merchants

According to Richard Reid, by the mid-1840s Arab merchants had penetrated the East African interior in considerable numbers. They had travelled forth for one reason: trade. It is possible they could have influenced local political conditions to establish favourable commercial terms. However, a group of coastal traders reached Buganda for the first time in 1844 and several caravans followed over the next few years; after around 1860, there was a permanent Arab settlement at the Ganda Capital [15].

In the same respect trade goods that came from the East African coast were first mentioned in the Ganda epic tradition in time of Kabaka Semakookiro in the late 1700s and successive Kabakas managed for half a century to incorporate these new things into the circulation of goods that expressed Ganda social hierarchies [16]. The intensity of this trade is seen in the middle of the 18th century, whereby Kabaka Kyabaguu is noted as having been the first king to buy cups and plates possibly during the 1750s or 1760s. The notion of cups and plates is possibly symbolic as much as anything else, but clearly reflects the kind of luxury commodities which were finding their way to the Ganda court at this time.

According to Holly Hanson, trade with the Arabs was centrally managed; this was by making specific chiefs responsible for trade in the various markets on the edges of the kingdom. The goods from the coast flowed exclusively to and from the control of the Kabaka. This was shown by the fact that in 1861, after John Hanning Speke's visit, Kabaka Muteesa killed a chief the Mutongole of Karema for acquiring cloth in Karagwe that he had not turned over to the king. Indeed the successive rulers perceived ownership of cloth as a useful way of accentuating wealth, power, and privilege, in much the same way that certain skins, notably that of the leopard, were emblems of royal blood. Thus, cloth became a prestigious good and the subsequent Kabakas made strenuous efforts to control not only its importation, but its distribution.

Foreign traders were met at the borders of the kingdom and escorted to the capital, and food was provided for them in order to prevent them from interacting with people or trading on their own. Through most of Kabaka Suna's reign, foreigners, both traders and missionaries, were the guests of the Kabaka at the capital; they could only acquire food or labour when the Kabaka supplied it, and were forced to offer their goods to the Kabaka on his terms. This is also affirmed by other east African scholars that slaves and ivory were as usual what the Arab traded for. But the trade was carried on entirely under conditions imposed by the Ganda. Arab traders could trade with the Ganda state only with the permission of the Kabaka's officials. The Arabs sent gifts of considerable value to the Kabaka to ensure the reception and were conducted to the Ganda capital where they remained until the terms of the Kabaka's trade were arranged. It was only when royal trade in which the Kabaka had a monopoly of fire arms was concluded that the Arabs could exchange their remaining merchandise with other Ganda. It was mostly slaves and ivory traded to the Arabs. These were gathered by the Ganda through raids on their neighbours, or from tribute paid them. The Arabs were totally prevented from proceeding beyond Buganda, especially to the Nyoro rivals of the Buganda. This was ensured in the 1880s by the Ganda domination of Karagwe, Zinza, and Toro territories that led to Bunyoro. However, a few Arab traders reached the Nyoro during the reign of Kabalega (about 1876 to 1899), but they never developed an important position there.

For the case of Buganda kingdom, the capital appears to have been the only meeting point between Ganda and coastal merchants, for the Arabs had been restricted to the markets in Buganda. Nevertheless, this still suited the Arabs well

enough for it was in the capital that they could exchange their goods for large numbers of slaves and ivory in bulk [17].

It was suggested by Burton that Suna considered the visits of the Arabs as “personal” honours paid to him. However, the major theme running through the foreign and military policies of Suna, Mutesa and Mwanga was the determination to restrict the advantages of long distance trade to only Buganda [18]. And the manifestation of these policies was the creation of a state fleet. The absolute nature of the Kabaka’s control over foreign travel and trade was also illustrated by Mwanga’s killing of Bishop Hannington in 1885; he had aroused suspicion when he failed to enter from the correct direction and changed his travel route without informing the Kabaka.

6. Commercial Change and Destabilising Consequences of Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century

Slaving activities in Buganda did not constitute a mode of production or a stage in the state formation process. Moreover, the export trade, specifically in humans, lasted only for a short period of time through the 1860s and ending basically by 1890 when the export of humans had stopped, according to Richard Reid. This was a manifestation of a break in the redistribution channel of resources as per the structure of power relations in the Buganda society. According to Holly Hanson, the trade in humans can be traced from the era of the destabilising consequences of stolen people, the expansion of the Buganda state, and the displacement of lineage or clan chiefs by territorial chiefs and the ensuing power struggle between the King (Kabaka) and his chiefs, Together with the growing influence of the territorial chiefs as a result of this human trafficking, right from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Initially chiefs who captured people in the wars of expansion created their own power centres “Ebitongole”. Departments and the Ebitongole of chiefs detached themselves from the network of redistribution centred in the Kabaka (King)’s court. This was when there was the expansion of a number of chieftainships, and the number of prominent chiefs also increased. There was also turmoil over chiefly prestige characterised by who commanded more respect, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Therefore, clans lost power as noted in previous chapters and Kings gained it. Kings were taking away many lineage privileges. This period of disorder came not only from the challenge of incorporating the king’s newly asserted power but also to be able to allocate conquered land as chiefships. The other challenge was from the dilemma of what Hanson terms as non-free people brought into Buganda as booty from the wars. These wars of expansion brought large numbers of captive people into Buganda. According to Kaggwa, these were mostly women who were divided among the King’s favourite wives and their subordinates’. Stolen women, as they were referred to, were distributed to principal chiefs of the kingdom and those who had led the expeditions. Even in the account of the Explorer, Richard Burton, it was noted that Kabaka Ssuna who had ruled in the

mid-nineteenth century, had given two to three hundred women to one Arab trader [19].

Captive people who were brought into the kingdom as a result of wars of expansion allowed both the King and other powerful men to create units of productive Labour. Thus, this was the inception of pre-colonial commodification of production and probably the beginning of slave labour and trade in Buganda. The result was the Kabakaship institution taking overwhelming control of all trading activities in the Kingdom. According to Hanson, the actual trade in human beings began when the Arab trade acquired slaves to carry ivory tusks to the coast. Also the existence of a market for human beings transformed the practice of utilising the labour of war captives into more aggressive forms of slave raiding, ivory harvesting, and the use of guns. People began to be sold to the coast; people were merely sold for cloth. According to Kiwanuka, Kabaka Muteesa was the first to allow the selling of people [20]. Muteesa found an Arab, by name Wamisi, had arrived at the capital of Nakawa, bringing with him a lot of cloth. The Kabaka distributed clothes to princesses and ladies, to pages and specific chiefs. Later on he gave clothes to all chiefs and ordered them to buy. The effect was that many people, boys and girls were sold to Arabs in exchange for cloth. In 1883 O'Flaherty reported that he had heard a conversation with Kabaka Muteesa about the effects of trading slaves to the coast. Muteesa said that two years earlier he had allowed trading in ivory but "such a thirst for cloth" had caught hold of the Baganda that they would sell men and women for guns, power, and cloth, soap, etc. According to O'Flaherty, Muteesa regretted the trade, but felt he could not prevent it. Also, according to O'Flaherty, a son of one of the first Christian chiefs described the late 19th century as a time "when a piece of soap could buy a man, and a measure of Bafuta (cotton cloth) could buy many slaves" [21].

The instances of Buganda waging war on the neighbouring society increased in the guise of raiding slaves to sell to the Arabs. A lot of slaves, as well as women and cattle, as booty from battle in this period, increased. According to Hanson, raiding for slaves to sell to Arabs changed the nature of Buganda's wars and intensified conflict during the 19th century. Kaggwa's chronicles, as quoted by Hanson, describe not only an increase in conflict but also more conflicts that resulted in the death of even "expedition leaders". He names a lot of slaves, as well as women and cattle, as booty from battles in this period. In addition, a missionary, Alexander Mackay, wrote in 1881, "One army has been sent east to murder and plunder. Not even the natives themselves can call it war; they say it is for robbery and devastation." He wrote to the Times in January of 1889 that Buganda and Bunyoro had large armies devastating the whole region of their inhabitants [22].

According to Mackay, Arabs supplied guns and powder for plundering expeditions and then received "women, children and ivory" procured in the raids as payment. Traders sent agents into the field with the armies to select the slaves they wanted [23]. However, on the other hand it is believed that the Baganda did

not engage in the trafficking and sale of Humans. According to Reid, we cannot precisely date the beginning of human trafficking from Buganda. There is even no evidence to suggest that slaves were exported any earlier than the middle of the nineteenth century. These arguments attempt to put Buganda on a pedestal. They categorically state, according to Zimbe, that Suna would never allow the sale of any of his subjects to foreigners; all that could be sold were cows and goats. Indeed, the Ganda sold other Ganda only in exceptional circumstances; the implication was that slaves in general were not on offer [24]. Nevertheless, one would still argue that this was the case initially before the Baganda began to develop a system of slave-gathering by warfare, and before the institution of slavery had begun to meet the demands of the coastal traders.

Even the institution of slavery in Buganda thrived on non-free people for- eigners from the surrounding region, mostly from Bunyoro and Busoga, which were geographically convenient areas. These would then be distributed among successful and favoured chiefs and soldiers. Slaving activities even then were the preserve of the King (Kabaka), but the kind of internal raiding which was probably common during the reigns of Suna, Mutesa and Mwanga, being the “human collateral” system, was the main process by which Ganda was deprived of its liberty within the nineteenth-century Buganda. Those writers who are pro-Buganda tend to play down the impact of slaving activities on Buganda and the surrounding region. They believe that Buganda was only forced to engage in the slave trade as a result of economic pressures on individuals in the community in order to pay fines and debts by selling off the slaves they already owned, to the point of even selling one’s relatives. The most likely victims were women and children. For example, during a food shortage in mid-1880, the missionary Pearson noted “two or three cases where the parents have sold their children to procure food” [25].

The missionary CT. Wilson also hinted at the existence of slave differentia- tion:

“That the servants in Uganda are all slaves, the majority being born in slavery and a tolerable percentage are prisoners, children mostly, taken in war. They are as a rule, fairly well off and are not often badly treated, but of course they are lia- ble to be sold to the Arabs”.

In the domestic context, trusted slaves and those of long-standing were treated as part and parcel of a chief’s estate [26]. These assertions probably may be mis- conceptions of the institution of slavery in Buganda by mostly European writers but the fact is the Buganda may have at one time or later engaged in this human trade later in the nineteenth century. Men and the ruling hierarchy, as one may call them, were entitled to servants and individuals who willingly gave in them- selves in the service of the chiefs. In addition, the helms of chiefs and men of authority were full of women acquired from expeditions from neighbouring so- cieties. So, these were the ones whom the chiefs were tempted to sell into servi- tude in the event of the coming of coastal traders.

In another explanation in the culture of plunder and raiding, which was a

common phenomenon in Buganda society, is given in an interview with Traditionalists and Luganda teachers, Mister Kangave Damulira and Madam Nakato Robina:

It was common for the King to order his chiefs to go a raid in the neighbouring societies; it was also one way get the favour of the king or to fulfil cliental obligations; that's why chiefs organised and led raiding parties to the surrounding areas. One could say probably it was for expansionist purposes. These raiding parties/ expeditions were well structured in administration, for example, the raiding party was led by the "*Omugabe*" raiding party commander. He was of the rank of sub/county chief, but his important role was to distribute War Booty to his men but more importantly the Booty "*Omunyaggo*" was to be taken to the palace of the king or the Sub-county chief. Women old and young, moreso young boys and girls, pots which carried by the captured fellows. Goats, sheep, chicken were also plundered since these were the property ordinary folks possessed and not cattle, cattle were a luxiours item for it was a prevserve of the governing class chiefs and kings.

Then the process of sharing out the booty was that the higher the rank in hierarchy, the larger the share one took, especially the leader of the plundering party. Womenfolk were the most prized item in this activity. Apart from the younger ones being married off to their sons, the others captives worked around the enclosures, compounds of the chiefs, doing domestic chores. Nevertheless, those selected as the share of the king or a superior chief, mostly women folk, this depended on their hardworking qualities and facial beauty, came to be known in the local language Luganda, "*Basebeyei*", a term that might be interpreted as the king's concubines in western context. This is the pool of women with whom the king would have carnal knowledge with the help of his principal wives "*Nansaza*" or "*Kadulubale*"; these terms may donate the king's principal wives. To others this is the explanation for many of the unfree women mostly and men that were found in the compounds of chiefs and the king [27].

The line of thinking here is whatever the case, there existed an institution of unfree people in Buganda prior to the coming of the Arabs in Buganda, but more importantly is the structure of organisation of central management of trade activities and the raiding parties, that shows the power of the monarchy in managing all activities in the kingdom, one of the attributes of feudal states and power devolution.

As for Wrigley in his work, the changing economic structure of Buganda has optimistic and different ideas for consequences of external trade, referring to trade with the coastal merchants. Firstly, he points out the acquisitiveness as a feature so marked of the Ganda society—a feature which was exhibited in the latter part of the nineteenth century, As can be seen in the range of articles that were acquired by the Ganda from the coastal merchants, for example soap, china, and glass, cotton, cloth and other fine raiment, ornaments these articles which were traded along with women and cattle. His argument here is that Buganda remained powerful and predatory before the arrival of the first trade

goods and long before regular commerce had begun. Furthermore, it continued to be predatory even after the coastal merchants had arrived on the scene.

The main premise of the argument here is that even though trade with Zanzibar did not alter the nature of the Ganda economy, it did introduce changes in the technique of production, which gave rise to new forms of specialisation, and consequently to profound alterations in the structure of society, and to the emergence of wholly new kinds of men. The contact with the coast did not only strengthen the class of territorial chiefs but also a group nobodies, the highly skilled professional craftsmen; not that these were not in existence, but their position and importance were strengthened. Initially, the Kabaka and the great chiefs had in their service carpenters and smiths; these became indispensable by the fact that they could imitate the cups and water jugs of Zanzibar, and smiths were capable of repairing firearms; such skills were very scarce and their owners attained high standing and a considerable measure of political influence.

Further still, and by far the most important innovation of that period apart from the contact with the coastal traders, was rather of different kind. Buganda's imports did not consist entirely of consumer luxuries. From an early stage, they included a substantial proportion of capital equipment designed to step up the production of exportable commodities. This refers to the guns and ammunition with which the Baganda hoped to strengthen their ascendancy over the surrounding peoples. Fire arms did in effect strengthen government's ascendancy over its own people and at the same time led to a major modification of the structure of government itself. The revolution that had begun in the sixteenth century was rekindled in the nineteenth century whereby the territorial chiefs who had usurped the powers of the clan chiefs of their positions of influence and power were now threatened by those who had acquired guns and cloth from the coastal traders. The new weapons were able to create a new elite of fusiliers who decided on issues on the battle ground. The rest of the peasant spearmen came now to play merely an auxiliary role. This created a sharp cleavage between the masses of Buganda. Wrigley writes that the change in military technique was as a result of the introduction of firearms from participation in the coastal trade that had consequences as far reaching in their way, for example, compared to the introduction of an armoured cavalry in the early middle ages of Europe. Just as the possession of a horse and a suit of mail, helped to create that sharp distinction between armigerous and non-armigerous families and between gentle and simple, which runs through all subsequent European history, so in Buganda, those who managed to acquire a firearm during the latter part of the nineteenth century were set apart from the mass of the population not merely from the rank and file but also from the territorial chiefs, the leaders of the now almost obsolete militia. Instead of being diffused through a hierarchy, power was now concentrated in the hands of a small organised group consisting of the new praetorian of cohorts which came into being at the capital. The personnel of these cohorts were drawn in the main from among the palace pages, the youth who were being trained at the capital for the service of the state. Thus, this class of people

were those who would in any case were going to form the next generation of the governing class in Buganda state.

7. The Advent of the Arrival of Europeans in Buganda

Prior to the advent of the arrival of Europeans in Buganda, by the middle of the 19th century, Arabs had already arrived at the court of the Kabaka of Buganda. These had an enormous influence on the life at the court of the Kabaka, not only in terms of trade and religion, but more so in their political influence as regards the new followers that resulted from the spread of Islam in Buganda. However, there was more to come, as the coming of European missionaries was to add to the religious rivalries already in the kingdom. Also by the mid-1870s, Kabaka Muteesa's initial enthusiasm for Islam was beginning to die down. It was believed that the Moslem converts began to refuse to eat the meat which had been sent to them on the grounds that it had been killed by his royal butcher who had not been circumcised. In addition, apparently the decrees of Islam were beginning to take precedence over the orders of the Kabaka [28]. This in itself was seen as insubordination to the authority of the Kabaka (King).

By the mid-1870s it was clear that Buganda had a new group of visitors on its door step; these were the giants of the new world who were now increasingly impinging upon Buganda. It was most unlikely now that Islam would be of much assistance against the rapprochement of a mightier alien invasion. It is not surprising, therefore, that when a number of Europeans came to Buganda in the mid-1870s the Kabaka insisted upon having urgent discussions with them about Christianity [29]. The advent of the Europeans in Buganda began in 1862 with the arrival of John Speke to the region, a European explorer and the first to find the source of the Nile. He was followed in 1875 by James Grant and Henry Morton Stanley. It was a Buganda tradition that all visitors to the Kingdom had to be first taken to the Kabaka's court and this was also the case with Stanley who, like Speke, was greatly impressed by Buganda's political organisation and the hospitality of the Buganda and their king. Their reports on Buganda markedly influenced two other categories of Europeans who later chose Buganda as their base for expansion; the missionaries and the British colonial administrators.

However, the arrival of Stanley in April 1875 at the Palace of Muteesa in Buganda seemed most opportune for Mutesa in the view of the disturbing interest, which the government of Egypt North of Buganda was showing. Stanley, a journalist of the New York Herald and the London Daily Telegraph, was on a journalist expedition across Africa. It is this journey of Stanley that had a profound impact on the affairs and political life in Buganda. Stanley in the first instance was greatly impressed by Muteesa's intelligence and strength of character. Being a profound Christian he saw in Muteesa not only a man whose interest was in religion but also a ruler strong enough to ensure orderly government under which peaceful evangelisation might take place. That is why he agreed to Muteesa's request to being sent to England for missionaries to visit his kingdom. The

message was duly sent in the care of Linant de Bellefonds, although the romantic account of being discovered on Bellefonds's person after his untimely death in the Sudan is no longer tenable. However, the letter proved to be the key to most romantic chapter in Uganda's history [30]. It was published in the Daily Telegraph on November 15, 1875, and met with more enthusiasm. The CMS at once began arranging to send missionaries to Buganda. Retrospectively, however, the argument is whether Mutesa invited the missionaries to his country. It is also not clear, at least, how much of it was Muteesa's idea. The result was that Muteesa had invited the British to establish a protectorate over his country, even though the bigger picture is that it was not for the safety of the missionaries or an invitation from Muteesa (even supposing that such an invitation existed). Notably, Colin Cross tells us that the British entanglement in Africa resulted, in part, from the great central entanglement in India. That is to say, Africa lay on the way to India. The most obvious reason was to protect the Suez Canal, the stepping stone to India. Therefore, it was essential to control Egypt and the hinterland, Sudan and the source of the Nile on which Egypt depended; thus it was necessary to control Uganda. Whatever the reason was for the scramble for Africa by the nations of Europe, this was an incident without parallel in the history of the World. The point to make here is that the coming of European Christian missionaries to Buganda had a profound impact on the later events in Buganda and Uganda in general, especially as regards the reconstituting of social and cultural institutions in Buganda.

8. Conclusion

The power of the imperial government of Buganda was exhibited through the nature of organisation of both local and international trades. What is referred to as imperial power is the nature of structure of both district and sub-district chiefs/territorial chiefs who managed government functions on behalf of the King/Kabaka, in terms of establishment of local markets and later directed trade with the Arabs on behalf of the King/Kabaka. These elaborate distribution and supply chains; that involved both the raiding of unfree persons and recruitment of labour to serve in the compounds of both the king and palace officials, serve to illustrate the complexity of central control of all trade activities that went on in the state of Buganda. It was during this period that foreigners like that Arabs began to interact with the natives of Buganda, an event that had profound consequences for the people of the Buganda state. Other visitors from Europe followed closely. This would restructure the power relations of the Buganda state as will be seen in the chapters ahead. Thus, this chapter laid ground for the beginning of Buganda's second phrase of feudalisation in the colonial period.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

References

- [1] Karugire, S.R. (2010) A Political History of Uganda. Fountain Publishers, 25.
- [2] Curtin, P., Feierman, S., Thompson, L. and Vansina, J. (1995) African History: From Earliest Times to Independence. Longman, 171.
- [3] Itandala, B. (1986) Feudalism in East Africa. *Journal of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences*, **8**, 29-42.
- [4] Roscoe, J. (1911) The Baganda: An Account of Their Native Customs and Beliefs. Macmillan, 439.
- [5] Uzoigwe, G.N. (1972) Precolonial Markets in Bunyoro-Kitara. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, **14**, 422-455. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0010417500006794>
- [6] Mair, L.P. (1965) An African People in the Twentieth Century. Routledge, 130.
- [7] Reid, R. (2002) Political Power in Pre-Colonial Buganda: Economy, Society and Warfare in the Nineteenth Century. James Currey, 141.
- [8] Semakula Kiwanuka, M.S.M. (1972) A History of Buganda: From the Foundation of the Kingdom to 1900. Holmes & Meier Publishers, 151.
- [9] Speke, J.H. (1863) Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile. Blackwood and Sons, 476.
- [10] (1894) UNA A2/3 Owen to Colville.
- [11] Grant, J.A. (1864) A Walk Across Africa. W. Blackwood and Sons, 293.
- [12] Good, C.M. (1972) Salt, Trade, and Disease: Aspects of Development in Africa's Northern Great Lakes Region. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, **5**, 543-586. <https://doi.org/10.2307/217269>
- [13] Sutton, J.E.G. and Roberts, A.D. (1968) Uvinza and Its Salt Industry. *Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa*, **3**, 45-86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00672706809511487>
- [14] Pasha, E. and Schweinfurth, G.A. (1888) Emin Pasha in Central Africa: Being a Collection of His Letters and Journals. George Philip & Son Ltd., 74.
- [15] (1898) UNA A4/13 MacAllister to Berkeley.
- [16] (1901) UNA A8/1 Tomkins to Comm.
- [17] Bennett, N.R. (1973) The Arab Impact. In: Ogot, B.A. and Kieran, J.A., Eds., *Zamani A Survey of East African History*, Longman, 230.
- [18] Reid, R. (1998) Mutesa and Mirambo: Thoughts on East African Warfare and Diplomacy in the Nineteenth Century. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, **31**, 73-89. <https://doi.org/10.2307/220885>
- [19] Mackay, J.W.H. (2013) A.M. Mackay: Pioneer Missionary of the Church Missionary Society Uganda. Routledge.
- [20] Burton, R.F. (1995) The Lake Regions of Central Africa. Courier Corporation, 195.
- [21] Musisi, N.B. (1991) Women, "Elite Polygyny," and Buganda State Formation. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, **16**, 757-786. <https://doi.org/10.1086/494702>
- [22] Tosh, J. (1970) The Northern Interlacustrine Region. In: Grey, R. and Birmingham, D., Eds., *Pre-Colonial African Trade: Essays on Trade in Central and Eastern Africa before 1900*, Cambridge University Press, 112.
- [23] Kagwa, S.A. (1927) Basekabaka be Buganda. Uganda Bookshop.
- [24] Earle, J.L. (2016) Finding Aid: Eridadi M.K. Mulira Papers: Cambridge Center of Af-

- rican Studies. University of Cambridge Repository.
- [25] Zimbe, B.M. (1939) Buganda ne Kabaka. Manuscript, 79.
 - [26] (1880) CMS G3 A6/0 (1881/22) Pearson to Mackay.
 - [27] Damulira, K. and Robina, N. Interview by Sekiswa Peter. Wampewo Village, Wakiso District, February 2019.
 - [28] Lowe, D.A. (1971) Buganda in Modern History. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 22.
 - [29] Musisi, F. (2017) A Historical Analysis of the Impact of the 1966 Ugandan Constitutional Crisis on Buganda's Monarchy. Ph.D. Thesis, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.
 - [30] Stonehouse, J. (1958) The Making of Modern Uganda. *International Affairs*, **34**, 549-550. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2608069>