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Scandal and Mass Politics: Buganda's 1941 *Nnamasole* Crisis

By Carol Summers

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In February of 1941, Irene Namaganda, Buganda's queen mother, informed Buganda's prime minister, Uganda's Bishop, and eventually British administrators of the Uganda Protectorate, that she was six months pregnant, and intended to marry her lover. That lover was only slightly older than Mutesa II, her teenage son who had been selected as *kabaka* (king) in 1939. Despite reservations, the kingdom's prime minister and his allies among Buganda's protestant oligarchy worked with Uganda's British officials to facilitate the marriage. Namaganda's Christian marriage, though, was powerfully scandalous, profoundly violating expectations associated with marriage and royal office. The scandal produced a political crisis that toppled Buganda's prime minister, pushed his senior allies from power, deposed the queen mother, exiled her husband, and changed Buganda's political landscape. The scandal launched a new era of public mobilization and protest that took Buganda's politics beyond the realm of deals between the oligarchy and British elites, and into public gossip, newspapers and eventually the streets.

As elsewhere in the British empire, Buganda's politics in the 1940s and 1950s were energetic as plaintive petitions to redress grievances gave way to general strikes and mass mobilization. Individuals who might in earlier years have simply fled abuse or quietly sabotaged colonial administration, increasingly organized networks and campaigns and mobilized public action against expropriation of land, inadequate war bonuses, cotton policy, constitutional reform, and a wide range of other issues. In response, both during World War II and in the austerity years that followed, British administrators struggled to find helpful allies, sometimes seeking to reinforce the ethnic connections built through indirect rule, but often dismissing senior men in favor of experimenting with new alliances to junior men, including political activists calling for democracy and University graduates who could be leaders of newly modern development schemes.

Within this context of political mobilization and British experimentation, Ganda public activists gradually developed a new politics grounded in a moral condemnation of the kingdom's oligarchy and its alliance with Britain, rather than any simple nationalism or developmentalism.¹ This public politics of culturally grounded moral critique emerged in 1941 in what became known as the *Nnamasole* (queen mother) crisis. Buganda's mobilization around the Queen Mother's marriage was widely recognized as powerfully

¹ I have written of this elsewhere, including Carol Summers, "Grandfathers, Grandsons, Morality and Radical Politics in Late Colonial Buganda," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 38, 3 (2005), 427–47.

destabilizing.² Buganda's discontents accused the kingdom's leaders of shameful behavior and the scandal allegedly even made it into German propaganda broadcasts to African soldiers.³ In this very public furor, older elite and oligarchic politics faced and fell to an emergent mass politics in a newborn public sphere. Politics in Buganda has a very long history described in both contemporaries' political proposals and historians' modern explorations.⁴ The mass, public, and inclusive conflicts over the *Nnamasole* crisis, though, marked a turning point. The scandal included salacious rumor and sexual speculation. Most dramatically, though, it discredited older oligarchic bargains with the Protectorate government and put forth newly public political claims articulating a citizenship of rights and obligations within a Buganda of precedents and customs fundamentally alien to liberal rhetorics of nationalism or individual human rights.

Context

In 1939, Mutesa II became *kabaka* (king) of Buganda without any drama. This was historically unusual. His predecessor Daudi Chwa, for example, had been crowned *kabaka* in 1897 as part of a settlement that ended years of civil war and incorporated Buganda into a larger British protectorate of Uganda, fundamentally re-organizing the kingdom. When Daudi Chwa died, though, Martin Luther Nsibirwa, Buganda's *katikkiro* (prime minister), sped the country through its interregnum. Chwa died in the early morning. That afternoon, Nsibirwa met with the country's chiefs and leaders in the Great Lukiiko (Council or Parliament) and proposed Edward Mutesa, the young son of Chwa's Christian wife Irene Namaganda, as the next *kabaka*. The Lukiiko's members then selected Mutesa by acclaim and each signed his name to a resolution declaring Mutesa as their choice.⁵ No violence, riot, or assassination marked the transition.

In selecting Mutesa, rather than one of Daudi Chwa's other thirty-some children, the Lukiiko also chose his mother, Irene Namaganda, as the new *nnamasole*, or queen mother. Daudi Chwa's long reign thus ended and Mutesa II's began with a quick choice of a candidate born in Christian marriage to a Christian mother, and raised by protestant missionaries. This selection affirmed Buganda's association with Christian Britain and bypassed the sorts of struggles among scheming clans and ambitious royal women that had

² Gardner Thompson, *Governing Uganda: British Colonial Rule and Its Legacy* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2003), 228–32, acknowledges the *Nnamasole* crisis as the first of three “great wartime issues” within a study largely devoted to economics and politics.

³ M. Nurock to EA Temple-Perkins, DSI 24-6-41, FCO 141/18222, National Archives of Great Britain, Kew, London, UK (hereafter NAGB).

⁴ For longer term discussions of politics in Buganda, viewed by both local and alien analysts, see Holly Hanson, *Landed Obligation: The Practice of Power in Buganda* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003); Richard J. Reid, “Ghosts in the Academy: Historians and Historical Consciousness in the Making of Modern Uganda,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 56, 2 (2014), 351–80, and Jonathan Earle, “Reading Revolution in Late Colonial Buganda,” *Journal of East African Studies* 6, 3 (2012), 507–27.

⁵ This description is taken from the official account in CO536/202/40080, NAGB.

been as much a part of previous successions as any vote of the Great *Lukiiko*.⁶ With apparently apolitical speed, the succession demonstrated how colonial authorities had ended older forms of political contention.

This lack of overt public politics in the formal succession was not, however, an indicator of social peace. Administrative dysfunction and popular unrest marked the end of the 1930s. Part of the problem was a lack of effective leadership by Daudi Chwa. After he briefly experimented with condemning “foreignisation” in Buganda’s educational systems or administration, he became so thoroughly sidelined from power that by 1938, he could not even control his own ministers, let alone their critics, and British officials discussed whether to force his abdication, and whether he was drinking himself to death.⁷

The kingdom’s greater problems, though, were factional and generational. The 1900 Uganda Agreement and the alliance it codified between Britain and the oligarchs of Buganda had frozen Buganda’s political institutions during Daudi Chwa’s reign. By 1939, Britain was distracted by the looming war. Age and the rise of ambitious junior men educated under colonial rule weakened the colonial oligarchy. As the ruling oligarchy looked shaky, older discontents recruited educated and unemployed youth as allies. Petitions from clan leaders had allowed some elders to reclaim land during the 1920s, in the first major Bataka movement.⁸ In the wake of that success, the kingdom’s internal critics experimented further. By September of 1939, for example, a collection of men describing themselves as the “descendents of Kintu” petitioned against the leaders they denounced as egocentric and corrupt abusers of the people.⁹

Smooth and apparently undramatic transition from one kabaka to his successor was possible despite these tensions because by 1939 the kingdom’s rulers saw succession as almost a private thing—from Daudi Chwa to the sole son of his Christian marriage—rather than something that everyone in the kingdom had the right to agitate over as clans sought to enthrone their own candidates. The old contentious politics of faction and clan had dwindled as people remembered the costs of the civil war, paid lip service to imported ideas of Christian marriage, and recognized that the kingdom’s status as part of a British protectorate meant that armed struggle was unlikely to succeed.

⁶ See Neil Kodesh, “Renovating Tradition: The Discourse of Succession in Colonial Buganda,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 34, 3 (2004), 512, 517.

⁷ For Daudi Chwa’s ideas, see “Education, Civilization and ‘Foreignisation’ in Buganda,” 1935, in *Mind of Buganda* 104–108. Chwa apparently threatened to abdicate in 1937 during a clash with a British official, but his threat was dismissed. By 1938, however, he fought not simply with British officials, but with his own ministers, provoking a “constitutional crisis.” Unsuccessful in his struggle with Britain and leading Baganda, he retreated to his estate at Salama, and passed his time in what one British observer referred to as “semi-seclusion,” and the governor described as “drunken orgies.” See Note, 5-7-38 CO536/197/40080/2 and Sir Philip Mitchell to Dawe, 15-7-39, CO536/202/40127. Secret discussions between the Residency and the Kabaka’s ministers in 1939 were included in FCO 141/18120, NAGB.

⁸ See Holly Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 203–28.

⁹ Petition of the Descendents of Kintu to the King of Buganda, 19-9-39, CO536/197/40080. Further discussion in Carol Summers, “Grandfathers, Grandsons,” 427–47.

Despite this damper on kingdom politics, the tensions suppressed in the rapid enthronement of Mutesa were very real, and were expressed over subsequent years as activists criticized the behavior of kingdom leaders, making private practices public and political. Activists critiqued leaders with not simply the old technologies of rumor, threat, character assassination and prosecutions for slander, but also newer mass media, organizing and lobbying. Despite its quick and sedate inauguration, Mutesa II's reign thus became a time for the emergence of a new hybrid politics that drew on a system of political thinking rooted in real and metaphorical family life and relationships, but deploying ideas of inheritance, relationships, stewardships, inheritance, and loyalty in thoroughly modern, public, ways. This transformed Buganda's elite politics from private negotiations over the royal succession and patronage, into a public world accessible to new political actors with new methods.

This transformation from private factions to public debate, according to veterans of the process, began with the *Nnamasole* affair of 1941. In the scandal it opened up, tensions privately suppressed in the 1939 succession became public, and led to a rejection of Irene Namaganda as *nnamasole* and Martin Luther Nsibirwa as *katikkiro*.

The *Nnamasole* crisis of 1941 was a scandal. Contemporary descriptions, though, emphasized politics. Salacious details became a tool to involve a broader public in discussions of ethics and political morality. In a pioneering discussion of scandals, British historian Anna Clark argued that one of their most important attributes is scandal breaks down divisions between private and public life, potentially triggering popular political mobilization around issues of morality.¹⁰ Beyond Europe, Nicholas Dirks has argued that Britain's formal empire in India can be traced to the transformation of politics when the public learnt of the private corruption and abuses of the British East India Company, and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan has portrayed scandal as facilitating claims about accountability and rights.¹¹ In Buganda, the *Nnamasole* crisis proved an opportunity for Baganda—ranging from a beleaguered *katikkiro* to stone-throwing youth—to experiment with ideas about the future of Buganda and both express and act on their moral judgments of the country's leadership. Public contention that had been suppressed during the interregnum, the moment when it should have been overt and violent, following historical patterns, instead simmered until the crisis provided a narrative and an audience. By the end of the crisis, according to the young political analyst E.M.K. Mulira and his father-in-law the elder statesman Hamu Mukasa, the controversy that surrounded the *Nnamasole*'s affair and marriage both launched a decade of tumultuous politics in Buganda and demonstrated to the young and discontented of the country that they could bring down governments, make demands on the institutions of Buganda, call for accountability by its leaders, and affect

¹⁰ Anna Clark, *Scandal: The Sexual Politics of the British Constitution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1–3.

¹¹ Nicholas B. Dirks, *Scandal of Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006). In Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, *The Scandal of the State: Women, Law and Citizenship in Postcolonial India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), see especially the discussion of state sponsored hysterectomies for the mentally disabled, 73–113.

the country's future.¹² Buganda's late colonial politics were initially explicitly structured not around the issues of autonomy from Britain, land, labor, cotton prices, and business opportunities that were to become key concerns over the next two decades, but around abstractions of social order, loyalty, and affiliation. Social order, loyalty and affiliation were mapped out—partly through violations and inversions—in the structure of the *Nnamasole* crisis.

Beyond Africa, historians of early modern Europe have made a variety of claims for scandals' significance. Simplest is the observation that scandals generated waves of documentation. Thus, historians studying norms on subjects such as marriage, love, the obligations of masters and servants or other potentially amorphous but important topics can use the minute, detailed discussions of scandals to track the history of affect and emotion.¹³ Historians of early modern France have moved further, arguing that scandals—discussed and documented in materials ranging from broadsheets and chapbooks to newspapers—were causal in opening politics to new participants. The early modern public sphere, according to Robert Darnton and Sarah Maza, was created through scandals discussed and reported in popular literature, scandal sheets and other widely disseminated publications.¹⁴

In Buganda, scandal was more than simply a moment of documentation, and even more than a causal blow to an older private and aristocratic politics. Parallel to the early modern cases tracked by Clark, Maza, and Darnton, it offered activists an opportunity to build a public sphere complete with newspapers, pamphlets, songs, dramatic public performances, and speeches. That public politics rooted in scandal also offered Baganda a template for popular political involvement. Connecting a private politics of loyalty, patronage and reciprocity with a modern politics of institutions and laws, contention over scandal provided Buganda's new political actors with a moral vocabulary and set of categories for thinking and talking about politics, as well as the venues in which to carry out that politics. As such, it not only opened up a public sphere, but *shaped* a public discourse not around European-style ideas of individual rights or equality, but around values of loyalty to affiliates and to Buganda's past. The *Nnamasole* crisis illuminated the assumptions of Ganda society. It provided an occasion for conservative affirmations. It opened a venue for popular assertions and judgments and—significantly—offered a pattern for the sort of morally grounded popular politics that were to characterize the following decades of Ganda politics. Discussing and litigating the scandal, Baganda built a public sphere that deployed Ganda methods as well as more modern media, and invoked ideals

¹² E.M.K. Mulira, "Background to the Troubles in Buganda: Being a Contribution to Sir Joseph Sheridan's Enquiry June 1949," typescript in CBMS A/T. 3/2 Box 281, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, UK.

¹³ For an example of this genre, see J.S. Ravel, "The Coachman's Bare Rump: An 18th Century French Coverup," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 40, 2 (2007), 279–308.

¹⁴ For England, Anna Clark's work *Scandal* falls in this category. For France, see Sarah Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), Robert Darnton, "An Early Information Society: News and the Media in 18th Century Paris," *American Historical Review* 105, 1 (2000), 1–35.

and values rooted in an indigenous past to condemn violations, and claim a right to inherit and build a future. Scandal in Buganda was a collection of social acts through which Baganda laid claim to and expanded politics from a private relationship among royalty, or between patrons and clients, into a matter for citizens and for Buganda as a nation.

Events

To understand the crisis, it is useful to begin with the basic chronology. Irene Namaganda, a baptised Christian and daughter of a clergyman, had been educated at Gayaza, the Church Missionary Society's prestigious girl's school, before her 1914 Christian marriage at the age of eighteen to *Kabaka* Daudi Chwa.¹⁵ Their marriage proved neither monogamous nor companionate, though she gave birth to Mutesa in 1924. Daudi Chwa had various recognized children with other women, and husband and wife were reportedly not on especially good terms. At the time of Mutesa's birth, Daudi Chwa recognized him as his son. But Mutesa was neither his first recognized son, nor his favorite.¹⁶ Even at the time of Chwa's death, an older son, George Mawanda, was widely regarded as a logical successor. By the 1950s, senior Ganda men explicitly asserted that before his death Daudi Chwa had designated George Mawanda his heir, and denied paternity of Mutesa.¹⁷ As Mutesa succeeded Daudi Chwa, though, Namaganda was sworn in as Buganda's *nnamasole* on 12 January 1940. Namaganda was, however, a *mulokole* (born again Christian) awkwardly suited to her ritual and ceremonial roles.¹⁸

Namaganda's Christianity, personal life, and choices, were nonetheless important. While not part of the formal alliance of Buganda and Britain, the office of the *nnamasole*, even more than that of the *lubuga* (the queen sister who took a coronation oath alongside the *kabaka*), was both a powerful symbol, and had historically been important to the stability of Buganda. Whether or not the *nnamasole* was the biological mother of the

¹⁵ Nakanyike Musisi, "A Personal Journey into Custom, Identity, Power and Politics: Researching and Writing the Life and Times of Buganda's Queen Mother Irene Drusilla Namaganda (1896–1957)," *History in Africa* 23 (1996), 369–85.

¹⁶ Provincial Commissioner to Governor, 25-2-37, CO536/194/40080, NAGB. A copy of Daudi Chwa's will, dated 3 March 1935, lists at least 34 children. "Excerpts from Daudi Chwa's will": initialed WYZ, Lloyd Fallers Papers Box 32, folder 2, University of Chicago Special Collections, Chicago, USA (hereafter Fallers Papers).

¹⁷ See, for example, comments by Zaki (1-3-54), who said he had been one of six witnesses present when Daudi Chwa discussed inheritance. Audrey I. Richards Papers 7/6, London School of Economics, London, UK (hereafter Richards papers). Even if true, Daudi Chwa's choice of George Mawanda as heir to his personal properties would, under Kiganda precedent, have been only one factor in determining the successor to the kabakaship. A sometimes-violated rule also stated that a kabaka's first son, titled the *kiwewa* was ineligible as heir. And the Lukiiko, not the kabaka, selected a successor from among eligible princes. The title and office was literally the only one in the kingdom that the kabaka did not in some way control.

¹⁸ See Juliet Kiguli, "Gender, Ebyaffe, and Power Relations in the Buganda Kingdom: A Study of Cultural Revivalism" (Ph.D. thesis, Cologne University, 2001), 179–81.

kabaka, she represented the center of morality and good government for the kingdom.¹⁹ As Holly Hanson has argued, she was the mother of the country, with the understanding that motherhood conveyed a power, independence, and a duty to offer discipline and advice to her son, the *kabaka*. Her role was not private. She was the highest-ranking commoner in the kingdom. Estates and subordinate officeholders, as well as the clan of her birth, supported and benefitted from her official position.²⁰ Past *nnamasoles*' responsibilities included espionage and personal defense of their sons.²¹ In later years, Thomas Kibuka Lwabidongo, a palace protocol expert, testified that in his experience, which extended back to the reign of Kalema during the civil wars of the nineteenth century, that "when *Kabaka* was away the *Namasole* was regarded as the *Kabaka*." He illustrated this by noting that "whenever a man was arrested the *Namasole* had the power to order his release. Another thing whenever a person was going to become a chief the *Namasole* would first be consulted." Even more dramatically, the *nnamasole* shaped military decisions. Overall, Kibuka Lwabidongo argued, the *nnamasole* was the most important person in the kingdom after the *kabaka*, and "the *Kabaka* also respects her."²² Significantly, this status meant that just as the *nnamasole* protected the *kabaka* from his enemies and rivals, she also protected the kingdom from the potential excesses and dangers of a young king. Perceived as structurally loyal to the king, without whom she would lack any office, she could moderate his excesses without losing her office for insufficient displays of loyalty. The *kabaka*'s role could be understood as that of the chief patron and owner of Buganda. The *nnamasole*'s complementary status as the *kabaka*'s equal and guardian was enough to make her potentially the single most significant check on a reckless *kabaka*'s actions.²³

When Namaganda announced her pregnancy, she was offered options. The British Resident suggested that she conceal her pregnancy with a quick trip to South Africa, but

¹⁹ On royal women, see Nakanyike Musisi, "Transformation of Baganda Women: From the Earliest Times to the Demise of the Kingdom in 1966" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto 1991), 81–83, and especially the concise discussion of the role of the *Nnamasole* by Holly Hanson, "Queen Mothers and Good Government in Buganda: The Loss of Women's Political Power in Nineteenth Century East Africa," in J. Allman, S. Geiger, and N. Musisi, eds., *Women in African Colonial Histories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2002), 219–32.

²⁰ Hanson, "Queen Mothers and Good Government," 219–32.

²¹ Henri Medard, *Le Royaume du Buganda au XIX Siecle* (Paris: Karthala, 2007), 228–30.

²² Thomas Kibuka Lwabidongo, questioned by Dingle Foote, "Mukubwa and others v Mukubira and others, Uganda High Court 1954, "Procedures and Evidence," Civil Case no. 50 of 1954, Hancock Papers Institute for Commonwealth Studies, London, UK, 110 [later reportedly moved to Senate House Library, University of London] (hereafter Hancock Papers). Significantly, during the 1953 crisis, Baganda suggested that the *Nnamasole* and *Lubuga* be regents, rather than the three ministers (prime minister, treasurer and chief justice) selected by the Protectorate.

²³ For a discussion of this pattern, see Rhiannon Stephens, *A History of African Motherhood: The Case of Uganda, 700–1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 169–72.

she said no. Instead, she sought to marry Simon Kigozi, a young commoner and former schoolteacher.²⁴

This was a problem. The *Nnamasole*'s belated acknowledgement of pregnancy suggests that she knew this. Ganda officials' decision to consult with the Bishop before informing the British Resident or the *Lukiiko*, and above all Bishop Stuart's defensive letter of explanation to the Archbishop of Canterbury, all indicate the sensitivity of the situation. The Resident procured a special marriage license from Uganda's British governor to allow the couple to avoid any public banns. Kigozi declared that he was the child's father and that he loved Namaganda and wanted to marry her even though Bishop Stuart noted that Kigozi was "fifteen to twenty years younger" than Namaganda. The bishop counseled Kigozi that marrying simply to legitimate the child was a bad idea. Even the liturgical calendar created problems as it discouraged marriage during Lent.²⁵ The wedding nevertheless took place, celebrated with a marriage feast in the official residence of the *Nnamasole*, where the couple slept "as man and wife."²⁶ The Protectorate sought to keep the marriage a private matter: the pro-government newspaper carried no coverage at all of the small wedding, or the controversy surrounding it, instead offering as its only tidbit of Buganda news a report of the kabaka's successful hunting trip.²⁷

The immediate popular reaction to the marriage included thrown stones and shouts of "kivve" [translated in contemporary records as "abomination"] that hit the couple as they left the ceremony. The *Lukiiko*'s formal prosecution and banishment of the couple for breaking the customs of Buganda followed, stripping Namaganda of her office as *nnamasole* along with its status and properties. The crisis culminated in the forced resignation of Katikkiro Martin Luther Nsibirwa, who the *Lukiiko* held responsible for facilitating the marriage and thus sponsoring the degeneracy of the kingdom. The *Lukiiko* appointed Namaganda's sister Perpetua Nnaabawesi, a woman Bishop Stuart considered immoral (and nominally Catholic), as the new *nnamasole*.²⁸ Her subsequent influence,

²⁴ Bishop Stuart to Archbishop, 16-6-41, Lang Volume 184: 327–38, Archbishop of Canterbury's Papers, Lambeth Palace Archives, London, UK (hereafter LPA).

²⁵ While it is not clear that this was a factor for British officials, it was later mentioned as an indication of Church hypocrisy and violation of its own rules by Christian activists such as Timosewo Luule. See "Christians of Uganda" (T. Luule and 217 others) to the Lambeth Conference, 23-3-48, CO 537/3593 NAGB.

²⁶ Criminal Appeal 149 of 1942, originally criminal case 205 of 1941 of the Principal Court. Criminal appeal 34 of 1941 of the Judicial Adviser. Noted in E.S. Haydon, *Notes of Selected Decisions of Her Majesty's High Court of Uganda on Cases Originating from the Buganda Courts 1940–1958* (Nairobi: EA Printers, 1958).

²⁷ *Uganda Herald*, 19 February 1942, reported that the British official Temple Perkins had taken the Kabaka hunting. This lack of any coverage contrasts with the elaborate description of the wedding of the Omwanika's son William Kiwanuka to the daughter of the ssaza chief of Gomba, described in "A Pretty African Wedding," *Uganda Herald*, 4 June 1941.

²⁸ Bishop Stuart to Archbishop of Canterbury, 3-11-41, Lang v. 184: 327–38, LPA. For an additional perspective, see Stephens, *A History of African Motherhood*, 175–80. Stephens argues that Chwa's *nnamasole*, Evalina Kulabako, had already diminished the real resources of the office by transferring the estates associated with the office of *nnamasole* to private ownership. Namaganda—and certainly her

either on the young *kabaka* or on the kingdom, was apparently negligible. The British Governor accepted the Lukiiko's action and signed the letter of banishment that excluded Kigozi from Buganda and restricted Namaganda's movements.²⁹ The protectorate's Judicial Advisor and High Court declined to block the *Lukiiko*'s actions, setting as a precedent the principal "where a Native Court has held that a certain act is contrary to custom an appellate Court should I think be reluctant to hold otherwise" even in the absence of any evidence of said custom.³⁰

Sex and Scandal

Irene Namaganda's pregnancy and marriage are less interesting as simple events than as the basis for a public crisis that toppled a government and transformed Buganda's politics. But it is essential to examine the link between events and furor. Why, exactly, did people react so dramatically? Royal extramarital sex and pregnancy were hardly new phenomena. They were, indeed, so prevalent that Church leaders sympathised with Namaganda, who they described as a devout and Christian long-neglected wife and widow.³¹ Despite the implications of a Christian queen's out of wedlock pregnancy, and her naming of a man only slightly older than her son as her lover, sex *per se* was not the center of the scandal.³²

In today's political contexts beyond Uganda, sex scandals are usually politically relevant because they dramatize and publicise failures of personal restraint in powerful men. This apparent megalomania—of powerful men and risky sex—encourages critics to condemn the scandalous for failing to follow social rules. Scandal can also make powerful individuals appear startlingly stupid for engaging in such violations when, as public figures, they were subject to intense scrutiny and were thus likely to get caught. Most discussions of sex scandals then revolve around the powerful men's individual actions as betrayals not simply of their wives and families, but of a sort of public trust.

Within Uganda today, it is often possible to read a similar sort of discourse in contemporary scandal sheets and newspapers, which report on imagined or real affairs

successor—thus had diminished official wealth, making them more reliant on both the men of their natal clans, and on the political and religious officials they worked with. Namaganda struggled to hold even private property in the wake of the crisis. See Irene Drusila, *Mother of the Kabaka of Buganda* [written in English] to Governor of Uganda, 14-7-41, FCO 141/18118, NAGB.

²⁹ Kiguli, "Gender, Ebyaffe," 179.

³⁰ Criminal Appeal 149 of 1942, originally criminal case 205 of 1941, of the Principal Court, Criminal appeal 34 of 1941 of the Judicial Adviser, noted in E.S. Haydon, *Notes of Selected Decisions of Her Majesty's High Court of Uganda on Cases Originating from the Buganda Courts 1940–1958* (Nairobi: EA Printers, 1958). This important decision was later modified in Criminal Appeal 98 of 1953, *S.B. Musoke v. Lukiiko*, which held that something could not be considered a violation of customary law just because the principal court wanted it to be.

³¹ Namaganda had been neglected by Daudi Chwa, Bishop Stuart commented, but noted that Namaganda as *nnamasole* "was rejoicing in her freedom—going everywhere and following her religion faithfully" during her time in office. Bishop Stuart to Archbishop, 16-6-41, Lang Volume 184: 327–38, LPA.

³² Nakanyike Musisi emphasized this in oral comments on an earlier version of this research. Makerere University, 2002.

among those in the country's political leadership, leading to a general atmosphere that expects affairs among the elite as well as more predatory or tactical associations with subordinates.³³ Journalists routinely report sexual predation and transactional sex by actors that include schoolteachers, ministers, business leaders, the military, and others. When not about leaders' lack of restraint, contemporary Ugandan sex scandals often detail the experiences of the less socially prominent partner and delineate survival strategies, efforts toward patron-seeking and social climbing, or victimization.

The initial British response to the crisis provoked by Namaganda's pregnancy assumed that the situation was a straightforward sex scandal—a pregnancy that unequivocally indicated sexual activity outside of wedlock by a female official. The response of hiding Namaganda's pregnancy thus made sense.

Within Uganda, though, the public rhetoric of the *Nnamasole* crisis was strikingly different, especially among Ganda observers. Irene Namaganda was condemned by the *Lukiiko* and stripped of her office not for sex, or even for the pregnancy that made her sexual activity public knowledge, but for her response to the situation: the Christian marriage that violated normative Ganda private and public relationships.³⁴ The marriage provided explicit evidence for the charge of trespass that led to Kigozi's exile. Local opinion accepted the idea that a powerful *nmasole* might have sex, and historically sexual relationships may have been among the resources available to a *nmasole* working to sway officials or recruit Buganda's factions to support her son.³⁵ The *Lukiiko* and the Ganda public were scandalized and condemned Namaganda and her husband for the trespass and treason inherent in a *marriage* that made a private association a public one and in so doing opened an official royal space to a court outsider. In doing so, the marriage also violated local ideas of appropriate relationships, giving Baganda a template not for appropriate family life, but for misaffiliation and chaos. Sex, pregnancy, and marriage with a commoner further violated the prestige of the *Nnamasole*'s deceased husband. One of the praise names of the *kabaka* was *ssegwanga* (cock), a specific celebration of his sexual status and domination of the kingdom. Namaganda failed to live in mourning. She accepted another sexual partner capable of begetting a child, and chose to become that new partner's wife. She thus very explicitly put commoner above king.³⁶ Further, in so betraying her office, Namaganda left her son dangerously unguided and her people

³³ These stories circulate as possibly slanderous rumors. New newspapers have emerged in Uganda for which this sort of commentary is a mainstay, such as *Red Pepper*.

³⁴ For historical parallels, see Stephens, *History of African Motherhood*, 143–44, 168.

³⁵ Holly Hanson examined the *nmasole*'s role in building support for her son. Hanson, "Queen Mothers," 222–24. Bishop Stuart's description of the crisis emphasizes the *Lukiiko*'s acceptance of a *nmasole*'s sexual activities, saying its resolution of condemnation implied that she could have sex and live with men, but not marry them. Namaganda's sister whom the *Lukiiko* selected to replace her as *nmasole* reportedly had at least three children outside any Christian marriage. Bishop Stuart to Archbishop, 16-6-41, and Bishop Stuart to Archbishop, 3-11-41 Lang Volume 184: 327–38, LPA.

³⁶ Kiguli, "Gender, *Ebyaffe*," 179.

unprotected from a young kabaka who as part of taking office was expected to “eat” the kingdom.³⁷

The marriage's meaning in Buganda was not what it might have superficially appeared to British observers. It did not re-establish order by tying a wayward widow to a new husband, offering the young king a stepfather and the unborn baby a family. Instead, it chaotically inverted the basic assumptions of Ganda relationships. Critical observers feared that in doing so, it threatened the structure of Ganda society.

Misaffiliation and Inversion

Normative secular expectations around elite Ganda marriages made the institution radically different from companionate or Christian marriage. An elite Ganda marriage directly modeled the structure of the kingdom, with a strong emphasis on the husband's power and the subordinate wives' loyalty and competition for their husband's favor.³⁸ The marriages of chiefs and officials often followed this pattern well into the twentieth century despite nominal Christianity.³⁹ The formulation was most meaningful, though, with regard to royal marriages. When daughters or sisters—or even wives—of important men established relationships with the *kabaka*, offices and preferment could follow.⁴⁰ Despite formal Christianity with its emphasis on monogamy, in practice a *kabaka*'s sexual partners were referred to as his wives.⁴¹ In a polygynous system this elaborate sexual and associational politics, in which clans deployed women and men to gain power through closeness to the *kabaka*, was not one a *katikkiro* could monopolise. The *katikkiro*'s rivals expected to

³⁷ See Hanson, “Queen Mothers,” 223–27. On expectations of a young *kabaka*, see Carol Summers, “Youth, Elders and Metaphors of Political Change in Late Colonial Buganda,” in Andrew Burton, and Helene Charton, eds., *Generations Past: Youth in East African History* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 175–95.

³⁸ Key works that historicize Ganda marriage are Nakanyike Musisi, “Women, ‘Elite Polygyny’ and Buganda State Formation,” *Signs* 16, 4 (1991), 757–86, and Holly Hanson, “Stolen People and Autonomous Chiefs,” in Shane Doyle and Henri Medard, eds., *Slavery in the Great Lakes Region of Eastern Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007), 161 ff. I discuss marital loyalty's political significance further in Carol Summers, “All the Kabaka's Wives: Marital Claims in Buganda's 1953–5 Kabaka Crisis,” *Journal of African History* 58, 1 (2017), 107–27.

³⁹ Bishop Brown to Archbishop, 15-7-53, Fisher Papers Vol. 133, 65–138, LPA, for example, describes the new Bishop's sense that, “The whole tone of the ruling class in Uganda is rotten. As soon as a man becomes a chief he takes other women into his house....” and described how he had been angry to realize that his chiefly host on itineration had four wives who meekly showed up for evening prayers despite the Bishop's insistence on monogamy as basic to Christianity.

⁴⁰ One of the blunt (if unsuccessful) examples from the 1950s was the effort to get Enoch Mulira to accept *Kabaka* Mutesa II's relationship with his wife. Enoch Mulira was offered a *ssaza* chiefship, and a scholarship to study in the United States.

⁴¹ Casual associations may not have led to acknowledgement of marriage, but the standard euphemism used in English for sex seems to be that the woman was taken as a wife. Sara Kisosonkole, the mother of *Kabaka* Mutebi, for example, was taken as a favorite wife by Mutesa II, who at the time was already married to her sister.

deploy clever and beautiful women to establish connections with a *kabaka* that would provide resources and power for their ambitions.

In rapidly selecting Mutesa to succeed Daudi Chwa, though, the prime minister set the Christian marriage and Christian wife above all of Chwa's other relationships, thus minimizing the royal significance of all the clans that had supplied women, and the women who had given Chwa sons.⁴² With the succession of Mutesa and Namaganda, instead of an competitive transitional interregnum, Baganda lost an opportunity to forge relationships with a new king who courted their help. Instead, the prime minister ruled with a strong hand. The young king lived at a mission school and was in no position to interfere, and the queen mother owed her position to the prime minister and the power of the protestant church. Namaganda was thus accountable and beholden as *nnamasole* not to the people of Buganda, organized in clans and factions under patrons with interwoven ties of reciprocal obligation to the *kabaka* and *nnamasole*, but to the prime minister, who was himself closely associated with the British and the Native Anglican Church. This was at odds with the expectation that the *nnamasole* should be the channel through which clans could balance, and when necessary challenge or even violently correct, the power of the *kabaka* and his prime minister.⁴³

By 1941, Buganda's prime minister Martin Luther Nsibirwa had by 1941 become subject to much criticism by political enemies that included many of Buganda's important men. He had been trained for his office by Sir Apolo Kagawa himself, living in Kagawa's house, working as his page and apprentice. When he became *katikkiro*, he focused his attention on modernization, emphasizing efficient bureaucratic administration of Buganda's *ssazas* [counties], building projects, the development of new cash crops, and Buganda's investment in education.⁴⁴ Instead of deferring to *Kabaka* Daudi Chwa, he had selected his own men for offices and dismissed senior officials and clan leaders. Those who lost offices resented his usurpation of the *Kabaka*'s powers.⁴⁵ Educated men proud of their elite status also disliked him as both insufficiently educated and excessively deferential to British officials.⁴⁶ As prime minister to an ineffectual Daudi Chwa, Nsibirwa and his small group of allies were backed by Britain's Resident, the officials of the

⁴² Provincial Commissioner to Governor, 25-2-37, CO536/194/40080, for example, alluded to maneuvering (up to and including poisoning attempts) among other wives of Daudi Chwa as they sought to position their sons as heirs. The stakes were high, as options for unchosen children were limited. See JEW Flood, 28-10-37, CO536/194/40080, NAGB.

⁴³ This structural discussion draws on Hanson, "Queen Mothers and Good Government," and Laurence D. Schiller, "The Royal Women of Buganda," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 23, 3 (1990), 455-73.

⁴⁴ Rhoda Kalema (daughter of ML Nsibirwa), interviewed by author at her home in Kabalagala, Kampala, Uganda, 18 July 2006.

⁴⁵ See, for examples, S. Damulira [PT to Kabaka] and Ivan G. Mutaka [Acting Private Secty to Kabaka] to Governor, 21-8-39, and Kintu Descendents to Governor, 30-8-39, CO536/202/40127, NAGB.

⁴⁶ For examples, J. Batu, for the Bagnada [sic] Kwebera Club to the Resident Buganda, 20-9-39, and Petition by Descendents of Kintu to S of S for Colonies, 17-12-38, CO536/202/40127, NAGB.

Protectorate, and the Protestant Church. Nsibirwa ruled, rather than simply serving as the kabaka's administrator. Working with British officials left him secure against rivals as long as the *Kabaka* did not dismiss him. The accession of Mutesa as a minor granted Nsibirwa even more power as he became not simply prime minister, but regent.⁴⁷ Plenty of Nsibirwa's enemies were old enough to recall the power his patron Sir Apolo Kaggwa had wielded from the signing of the Uganda Agreement onward. While unable to mobilize in time to block Mutesa's succession, a range of Baganda sought to prevent Nsibirwa from becoming a second Kaggwa.

For these Baganda observers, the center of the crisis was not Namaganda's sex life, but her marriage. Baganda commentators on the kingdom's laws and "traditions" generally do two things: they specify normative absolutes—such as the idea that the *nnamasole* does not marry—and also make clear that one of the powers of the *kabaka* was to change or violate the rules, as "traditions are under the *command* of the *kabaka*."⁴⁸ During the 1800s, Mutesa I used this ability to command and re-make rules when he gave his sisters in marriage.⁴⁹ Such rule-breaking or altering, though, was a power of the *kabaka*, rather than the *katikkiro*. When *katikkiro*/regent and *nnamasole* combined to use the power of the *kabaka* to re-make tradition, they offered a shift in the kingdom's structure that went beyond the personal antagonisms and rivalries of Nsibirwa's relations with other elite Baganda. In an odd, political way most of Buganda's *Lukiiko*, as well as much of the politically active public, was nervous about the new power claimed as the *Katikkiro* and his allies claimed the *kabaka*'s rule-breaking authority. And they were jealous of the specific pattern of alliances that the marriage formed. Kigozi, Namaganda's new husband, was not politically significant, and thus was not the target of this jealousy, though he was prosecuted and exiled from Buganda as a commoner who had trespassed. Even as Kigozi accepted paternity of Namaganda's child and became her husband, though, wild rumors circulated suggesting other possible fathers with highly political implications, ranging from the *Katikkiro* himself to the British Bishop, and officials such as the Resident of Buganda and the Governor of Uganda.⁵⁰

In arranging for the Nnamasole's wedding, Nsibirwa and Namaganda's actions delineated their understandings of tensions over power and authority in Buganda. Namaganda informed the prime minister, rather than simply ignoring discussion of her

⁴⁷ Nsibirwa both gained power, and rejected tact. Charges that he was "overstaying" in office (as Sir Apolo Kaggwa had done) were widespread enough that even his daughter recalled them. Rhoda Kalema [daughter of ML Nsibirwa], Interviewed by author at her home in Kabalagala, Kampala, Uganda, 18 July 2006. Nsibirwa reportedly shouted, drowning out other voices. Mutesa II, *Desecration of My Kingdom*, 74–75.

⁴⁸ Ernest Ssempebwa described how Suna had revoked the rule that the reigning *kabaka* should not visit the *nnamasole*, noting that inherent in the *kabaka* was the power to re-make or break any rules. Interview by author with EKK Sempebwa, Kampala, 10 June 2004.

⁴⁹ For example, Musisi, "Transformations of Baganda Women," 76, 85–86.

⁵⁰ These rumors were widespread enough that the Bishop reported them to the Archbishop of Canterbury. He considered it unlikely, though not impossible, that the child was the *Katikkiro*'s. Bishop Stuart to Archbishop, 16-6-41, and Bishop Stuart to Archbishop, 3-11-41, Lang Volume 184: 327–38, LPA.

baby's paternity or marrying without government approval. The *Nnamasole's* rank was technically equal to that of the *Kabaka*, and thus above that of the prime minister. Even in the nineteenth century, under the reign of the powerful *Kabaka* Mutesa I, a *nnamasole* had been responsible for forcing the deposition of a *katikkiro* she disapproved of and shaping the selection of another.⁵¹ Namaganda's action, however, indicated her understanding that she needed male political support in order to act. And Nsibirwa's decision to inform the Bishop before the British Resident, enlisting them both to create a *fait accompli* that could be presented to the *Lukiiko*, indicates that like Namaganda, he understood her marriage as political, and sought backing from his allies who, coming from a different set of assumptions about marriage, might be misled into believing that Namaganda's marriage was simply a contract between one woman and one man.

The political alignment of the *Nnamasole's* marriage challenged other centers of political power and influence within the kingdom. It bound Namaganda and Nsibirwa closely as, together, they wielded the power of the *kabaka*, and it aligned them unequivocally with the Bishop and Resident and ultimately with the Governor of Uganda above the officials and people of Buganda. Namaganda and Nsibirwa, together, led their ward, the minor Mutesa II, to grant official permission for the wedding to take place. Critics saw his assent as the result of his regents' pressure and his own vulnerability and youth.⁵² In breaking local rules and expectations that surrounded Christian marriage, rumors even suggested Namaganda was the recipient of special favors from Bishop and Protectorate. Namaganda married during Lent (traditionally a time when no weddings were scheduled), and with a special Governor's license that superseded the reading of the banns. Baganda could read a loss of all constraint on the monarchy in these violations of rules that ordinary Christian couples had to follow.

Alignment with Britain was a successful and profitable Ganda strategy that went back decades. Namaganda and Nsibirwa simply proved rather good at it, recruiting Bishop Stuart's support for Namaganda's marriage rather than the usual suspicious disapproval. More viscerally troubling to Baganda were the many ways that this marriage directly overturned *kiganda* cultural expectations. Secular Ganda marriage was by definition hierarchical with distinct roles and expectations for each party. Ethnographic descriptions made normative hierarchy clear: a husband marries; a wife is married. A man demonstrates his active role in the process by giving bridewealth, or, in the case of chiefly marriage, demonstrates his power by simply taking a woman, with the expectation of favor to her family providing some reciprocity. Ganda marriage was not an event, but a relationship that established a new set of associations and affiliations. As such, it symbolically paralleled the relation between lord and subject. But it was also part of the actual *practice* of establishing an affiliation. This model of marriage was so powerful that historically the daughters and sisters of a *kabaka* had been blocked from marriage by the unthinkability of

⁵¹ Schiller, "Royal Women," 462–63.

⁵² See Mutesa II, *Desecration of My Kingdom*, 85, which states sequence clearly: Namaganda decided to marry, got consent of Nsibirwa, and they pushed Mutesa II into assent. Kiguli "Gender, *Ebyaffe*," 179, offers the standard description of what happened: "being young, Mutesa II consented to his mother's remarriage."

a high status woman marrying a lower status man. During the nineteenth century, *Kabaka* Mutesa I reversed this expectation, giving several sisters to prominent men in marriage. But his actions were understood as destabilizing and dramatic, and princesses as inherently problematic as wives.⁵³

In such a context, Namaganda's marriage was bizarre. The *Nnamasole* was one of the wealthiest, most independently powerful, and highest status individuals in the kingdom. She married a man whose work as a schoolmaster put him under the alien authority of the Native Anglican Church and the Protectorate Government in a position that offered less pay and status than even the lowest of official chiefships. She initiated and coordinated the political backing from the *katikkiro*, church, and protectorate government that allowed her to take a husband in violation of expectations. She married a much younger man, described by critics as "a boy-member of the Fumbe clan"⁵⁴ in a context where age should offer high status. Namaganda even brought Kigozi into her official residence after the wedding, rather than being taken to his. Profoundly reversing the usual gendered marital scripts, she married him.

The inversions and reversals of the marriage make it obvious why Namaganda sought a Christian marriage. While the Christian marriage during Lent, without banns, and with a pregnant wife was irregular, it was comprehensible. The basic declarations in a secular Ganda marriage, though, would have been problematic: how could Kigozi, as a young schoolmaster, offer any meaningful bridewealth for the woman who by virtue of her position was one of the wealthiest individuals in the kingdom? And who would he pay it to? Her family might well reject it, preferring her to act as *nnamasole* and widow of a *kabaka*. Alternatively, how could he as a junior individual—an employee of the Church without even the most minor of chiefly office—steal away a woman with the right to command the kingdom? And how could this powerful woman declare a relative nobody as "her master" or "her lord" as the language of traditional *kwanjera* declarations is usually translated?

Abandonment

The marriage that politically tied Namaganda to Nsibirwa and his British sponsors and turned upside down the expected structures of Buganda's intensely hierarchical social world also signified for her critics Namaganda's rejection of the obligations of a *nnamasole* despite her emphatic refusal to leave Buganda at all, even for a day. Her acceptance of a new husband was a rejection of her status as a royal widow. With a new husband, it would be undignified for her to continue to mourn at *Kabaka* Daudi Chwa's

⁵³ Princesses were problematic as wives because of both high and ambiguously gendered status. They were addressed as "ssebo" or "sir" rather than as women (*nnyabo*), and were notorious for sexual independence, linguistic freedom, and lack of training in wifely deference. Their marriages were thus expected to be awkward. See Rev. Bartolomayo Musoke Zimbe, *Buganda ne Kabaka: Ebyafayo Eby'obwa Kabak bwe Buganda*, trans. by Simon Musoke (Mengo: Gambuze Printing and Publishing, 1939), 40, and Musisi, "Transformations" 78–79, 174ff. The best discussion of marriage's parallels with the political powers of Ganda patrons and clients is that of Holly Hanson, *Landed Obligation*.

⁵⁴ (Nine signatures) translation of letter to *Kabaka*, 31-7-49, FCO 141/18185, NAGB.

tomb. Historically, the widows of *ssakabaka* (deceased kings) had not only mourned their husbands, but had held official posts as mourners, compensated with property and rents. The widows and those that inherited their status over multiple generations built an entire community of women centered at Kasubi, who kept up the graves, rituals and memory of husbands and kingdom not merely for the recently deceased Daudi Chwa, but his father Mwanga, Mwanga's father Mutesa I, Mutesa I's father Suna and so on.⁵⁵

In trivializing and discarding her ritual role, and thus the significance of *Ssakabaka* Daudi Chwa's memory, Namaganda's critics implied that she had abandoned Buganda's people before the Lukiiko deposed her. Bearing a child, possibly a son who could rival the *kabaka* and kingdom for her attention and loyalty was a problem in practical as well as symbolic ways. Nsibirwa's daughter reluctantly noted that the situation might have been less difficult if the child could have been guaranteed to be female, but that a *kabaka* could not afford to have a younger brother, as well as a living [step] father, who could be viewed as a rival.⁵⁶ Both at the time of the crisis and in its long-lasting aftermath, Baganda resented Namaganda's abandonment of her role as guardian of Mutesa II, able to limit royal power and act as spokesperson for clans and commoners.⁵⁷

Reactions

The popular response to Namaganda's marriage was not a private emotional reaction, but a public drama produced by ambitious elite plotters. The most frequently mentioned plotter was Nsibirwa's successor as *katikkiro*, Samwiri Wamala. Wamala had served with distinction as a *ssaza* chief. He also led a political faction of men hungry for offices and opportunities who believed they had been unfairly blocked from advancement by the alliance between Nsibirwa and his Protectorate sponsors. Wamala was simultaneously a traditional Ganda politician with a mastery of clan politics and faction, and willing to innovate: he sought support from the Protectorate government and developed connections with politically active junior urban men centered in Katwe.

The culture and political structure of late colonial Buganda help explain the motives of those who reacted against Namaganda's marriage. Beyond the why, though, it is critical to look also at *how* people reacted—the language and structure of protest and politics that these critics put forth for Buganda's future. Without detailed contemporary

⁵⁵ These women and their heirs lobbied Sir Keith Hancock during the constitutional discussions of the 1950s, and continued to be visible at least until the tombs burned. Summers, "All the Kabaka's Wives."

⁵⁶ Rhoda Kalema, interviewed by the author at her home in Kabalagala, Kampala, Uganda, 18 July 2006. Mutesa II did have recognized half-brothers, recognized sons of Daudi Chwa. For those who understood succession as requiring Christian marriage, though (such as Kalema, presumably) they were no threat. Kalema's larger point, though, about how the existence of potential alternative *kabakas* could undermine a *kabaka*'s authority and power, is significant and demonstrated during discussions of alternative kings in the *kabaka* crisis of 1953.

⁵⁷ For new insight into how Baganda have continued to value the *nmasole*'s role, see Rebecca Zirimbuga Musoke, *Queen Mother: The Remarkable Life Story of Rebecca Zirimbuga Musoke* (Bloomington, IN: Westbow Press, 2016). Both in Zirimbuga's narrative, and in rich testimonials, it testifies to both her own sense of ethical stewardship, and the value placed on her role by others in Buganda.

sources, my analysis rests on the retellings of the events by a number of key Baganda activists whose memories may well have been shaped by their political ambitions and by subsequent events.⁵⁸ While potentially unreliable on exact details of events, these sources are extremely useful as we explore the ways the crisis was interpreted by Baganda and resonated through the politics of the kingdom in the subsequent decade.

The most overtly neutral description is that which begins EMK Mulira's careful discussion of Buganda's politics in the 1940s:

"In 1941, Buganda faced a storm.... A very sad thing happened to the Queen Mother.... It was a palace matter connected with the re-marriage of the Queen-Mother (Nnamasole) to a commoner. There were strong divisions of opinion, and when the church allowed her to marry under a license, many people lost confidence in the church as a whole. The Prime Minister, who had attended the wedding service, was severely criticised and stones were actually thrown at him; he was forced to resign against his will, as British officials supported the opposing chiefs. The fact of chiefs forcing the resignation of a Minister had never been heard of in Buganda before. Naturally the Kabaka appoints his ministers, but this time the chiefs elected the new Prime Minister from among themselves. Samwiri Wamala was elected, and he was approved by the Governor.

"The country was now divided into two parties. There was a minority who supported the Queen-Mother's marriage and a majority who opposed it. A period of slander, rumours and propaganda now followed, such as Buganda had never known. One sad result of these rumours was that they killed confidence. There was no more confidence. There was no more confidence between African and European, between people and the church, between one section of people and another. We were all like sheep without a shepherd. For the first time in the history of Buganda authority lost its hold over the people, as the chiefs now courted the people's favours to support them in office. Hence the intense propaganda by some chiefs about themselves and the slander against their rivals."⁵⁹

Mulira was a son-in-law and friend of Hamu Mukasa, the chief with whom Namaganda took refuge.⁶⁰ And this account was written after the 1949 insurrection but before the intense politicization of the *kabaka's* role during the 1950s. Its studied neutrality is thus striking. One might have expected Mulira to defend the church, which had provided him with scholarships, employment, publishing opportunities, community and recognition.

⁵⁸ Nakanyike Musisi's unpublished work points toward a substantive archive of Hamu Mukasa's papers, once held by his daughter Rebecca Mulira. I have not seen these materials.

⁵⁹ E.M.K. Mulira, "Troubled Uganda," Fabian Society pamphlet, 14/13 Richards Papers.

⁶⁰ Rhoda Kalema, interviewed by the author at her home in Kabalagala, Kampala, Uganda, 18 July 2006. In his autobiography, Mulira described Hamu Mukasa as one of the greatest men he knew. Eridadi Mulira, Unpublished Autobiography, [drafted 1959] EMKM/Gen/1/1, African Studies Centre, Cambridge University, Cambridge, UK. Files from the Residency make clear that Hamu Mukasa coordinated an effort to find historical precedent (real or fictional) for a *nnamasole's* marriage. Note by PK 14-5-4, FCO 141/18118, NAGB.

Alternatively, married to Rachel Mulira who was central to struggles in the *Lukiiko* as Hamu Mukasa's politically active daughter, he might have defended Namaganda. Namaganda was, after all, pursuing marriage and, according to her backers, acting as a modern Christian woman. He could even have drawn on the historical precedents put forward by Hamu Mukasa and Rachel Mulira of marriages by previous Nnamasoles.⁶¹ Yet in this narrative, he offered no defense. Instead, he emphasized the competition of chiefs and people, and a destabilizing, even dehumanizing ("like sheep") breakdown of authority. Instead of celebrating this new public politics as an opportunity for popular involvement in politics and governance, Mulira depicts the process as distasteful—"the chiefs now courted the people's favours"—in description of slander and rumour more sexually suggestive than his version of Namaganda's marriage. The fact of politics—of chiefs being answerable to the people and the ministers' accountability to the chiefs—was, in his interpretation, a divisive betrayal.

The activist Joswa Kivu also saw the crisis as a turning point. Before it, he complained, his superiors had responded to his efforts as a commoner to call attention to injustice and corruption in governance with orders to be quiet and do his job. Threatened with arrest for petitioning the government, he nevertheless founded the politically active Motor Drivers' Association and cooperated with the Descendants of Kintu in fighting the Lugazi sugar estate's acquisition of land. Then the political scene shifted:

"Many people were longing for [change in Buganda's leadership], but as the Ministers had the support of the Protectorate Government this could not easily be achieved. Then fate helped to free us from Mr. Nsibirwa. He had been put in charge of the widowed Queen Mother (the Namasole) and while she was in his care she became pregnant, a thing never before heard of in our history. As an ardent Christian, Mr. Nsibirwa, with the support of the Missionaries, favoured her marriage to the man responsible. The scandal was so great that Mr. Nsibirwa resigned. Having disposed of the Prime Minister, we turned our attention to the Minister of Finance, Mr. S.W. Kulubya, who had also been proved to be a Protectorate Government tool."⁶²

Unlike his detailed depiction of his role in the 1945 General Strike, Kivu's description of the Nnamasole crisis emphasized that it was not provoked by commoners. The elite scandal certainly, though, demonstrated clashes among kingdom elites and offered new openings to more proletarian activists.

Elsewhere, Kivu made clear that his "Many people" was at least partly a reference to Samwiri Wamala and his followers, who spearheaded the campaign against Nsibirwa's leadership, and emphasized—to the point of spreading paternity rumours—Nsibirwa's responsibility for Namaganda's pregnancy and marriage. Notable in Kivu's brief depiction of the crisis is his explicit attention to the powerful alliance that his faction sought to

⁶¹ "Members of the Mothers Union in Buganda to Resident," 3 June 1941 (translated from Luganda), FCO 141/18118, NAGB.

⁶² Joswa Kivu, "Autobiography," Richards Papers 6/16. A handwritten marginal note next to this passage asks "actionable?"

topple— “support of the Protectorate Government” and “support of the missionaries” for an “ardent Christian.” The British-led Protectorate Government, Missionaries, and the Native Anglican Church formed a powerful colonial oligarchy. And it was this order that Kivu sought to reject in his explicit opposition of how it brought Buganda into a situation “never before heard of in our history.”

Key to understanding the crisis's significance for Buganda's politics during the 1940s, though, was how the violation of historical precedent produced a “scandal” that shattered the oligarch's monopoly on authority. This template was to become central in subsequent political mobilizations within Buganda that emphasized scandal—or public awareness of events—as having the power to block the powerful's private deals, and open the way for ordinary people and activists to demand and enforce their historically rooted rights and protections.

In references within the writing of Semakula Mulumba, one of the most prominent and verbose of Buganda's emerging radical political activists, we can see how Kivu's understanding of the power of historical precedent and of public scandal formed the beginning of new political claims. For Semakula Mulumba and his allies in a 1948 letter to the Lambeth Council, Bishop Stuart's actions in the *Nnamasole* crisis constituted one part of a vivid multi-point indictment. The bishop, Mulumba argued, “trampled under foot our indigenous traditions and customs in the case of the marriage of our Namasole.... Contrary to the regulations of the Church, he did not publish the Banns for the purpose of ascertaining whether there were any impediments to the marriage, which incidentally took place in Lent. The sudden uprooting of the national traditions and customs is not at all welcome to any nation.”⁶³ In subsequent letters, he drove the point home, writing directly to Bishop Stuart: “My lord, do you not think that you teased the people's patience a bit too much? Do you not know that the Africans in Uganda love and value their traditions... Did not your chief troubles start in 1940 when you gave permission to the Namasole to marry contrary to our national tradition? Do you not remember that our Parliament forced the Prime Minister Mr Nsibirwa to resign for supporting the Namasole's marriage? Might he not have been involved in the matters that occasioned her marriage?”⁶⁴

Mulumba's invocation of the *Nnamasole* crisis was not a specific critique of the actions of individuals, but a general call for the powerful to respect the restraints of precedent—a position made clear by his reference to the regulations of the Church of Uganda as well as those of “indigenous traditions and customs.” And, significantly, instead of customs and precedent being determined by the powerful, whether the Nnamasole or the Bishop, the powerful should respect “the people's patience.” By invoking the power of precedent and popular power, Mulumba was able to offer an explicit threat—“Do you not remember that our parliament forced the Prime Minister Mr Nsibirwa to resign”—that emphasized that the people's impatience had the ability to act.

In their brief depictions of the *Nnamasole* crisis's significance, Mulira, Kivu, and Mulumba showed striking similarity. None of their narratives showed any personal

⁶³ “Christians of Uganda” [218 names] to Lambeth Conference, 25-3-48, Fisher Papers LPA.

⁶⁴ Mulumba to Bishop Stuart, 26-7-48. Fischer Papers, LPA.

emotional reaction, but all underlined how the moment drew the lines of the new political era—of a Ganda oligarchy aligned with Church and Protectorate and in control of the institutions of the state, but opposed to the people. The people, in this formulation, sought to protect themselves against powerful and secretive elites through organizing around historical precedents, loyalties and affiliations, such as clan membership and land. And they did so in powerfully modern ways that involved not simply gossip, rumor and slander, but newspapers, political strikes and insurrection.

In a later letter to Mutesa II about the choice to marry Damali Kisosonkole despite her inappropriate clan membership, Mulumba underlined his vision of Buganda's politics. He saw a custom-breaking marriage as weakening national institutions. A *kabaka* had the power to break tradition, and Mulumba acknowledged modern ideas of marriage based in love and personal choice. Breaking custom would mean, though, that “the Royal couple will always bespeak to the people of the Kabaka's weakness and constantly remind them of the Kabaka's broad departure from the line of national values, which, it is his public national responsibility to safeguard.” As a result, he and those around him “will no longer be able to speak effectively when other people are involved in irregularities...[and] The rising tide of the evils of Western civilisation will soon inundate the whole field of our national culture without a single embankment to stem it.” Worse, this stance would “increase in your people the low-hanging dark clouds of suspicions about the British Government, quisling chiefs, and the missionaries ... [and] You will miss a grand opportunity of creating a favourable atmosphere in which you can direct all the present forces of healthy nationalism into positive plans devised... for the development of the country and the general advancement of your people. You will fail to ensure the spontaneous interest and cooperation of the masses of the people, and murder that enthusiasm which would be employed in a big drive of effective action...” Ultimately, this would be not just a loss of opportunity but a loss of prestige and “You will indeed confirm ... the growing conviction that the British damage the character of their young generation.”⁶⁵

Marriage—for Mulumba and many others in Buganda—indicated both alliances, and the integration of alliances and associations into the social network of restraint and rules that offered everyone a basis for security and collective identity. The *Nnamasole* crisis, as the *nnamasole* in the view of many Baganda betrayed precedent and duty for her own marriage to her lover, supported in her choices by key upholders of the oligarchy, had demonstrated for many Baganda the possibility of a destabilized world, an anarchic place shaped only through the choices of individuals who could be swayed by greed or desire. This was not the world that the *Bataka* Union and its adherents in the 1940s sought, but a world they feared. By the late 1940s, like his mother, the *Kabaka* who should be the people's strength appeared weak, abandoning the people and their precedents. “National values” were no more, and instead of gradually evolving, Buganda was in danger of washing away in the British flood.

⁶⁵ Semakula Mulumba to HH Kabaka Mutesa II, 28-10-48, Fisher Papers, LPA.

In a pamphlet after Uganda's 1949 uprising, EMK Mulira devoted an entire section to "The Consequences of the Nnamasole Affair" which, he emphasized, sowed a "dangerous seed," or a "wild tare ... the offshoots of which are now trying to outgrow the good wheat" of progress. He quoted Hamu Mukasa's warning that "this would be only the beginning of many such acts of insolence, when the juniors would rise to dispose the seniors, the governed, the Governor, [and] what would be the end?" Despite official rejection of Mukasa's critique as comments of a man who was "old and out of touch with modern thought," Mulira emphasized, that "what he feared has happened, and in rapid succession." "Insolence" grew from the forced resignation of Nsibirwa in 1941 to the 1942 teachers' protest at Budo,⁶⁶ protests against the Omwanika (treasurer/finance minister) in 1944, the 1945 general strike, Nsibirwa's assassination in 1945, and 1949's uprising by "A mob of people, under the dignified and traditional title of *Bataka*." The consequences of the crisis produced a decade of political challenges that re-wrote order, leaving Mulira to complain that "Impudence had never before reached such pretentiousness!" Destabilized by the *Nnamasole* crisis, "all the people...tried...to have their own way, failed...[and] became malcontents." Deference to king and officials, or to a modernizing British administration, lost popularity and a new politics emerged, centered on the *Bataka*, "for by that name the whole of Buganda is included, for all of us spring from one *Mutaka* or another."⁶⁷

Abandoned by a *nnamasole*, adrift in a decade dominated by all of the uncertainty associated with a young king, and without the protections of history and precedent, Baganda during the 1940s searched for ways to reconstitute a meaningful world of political attachments. In doing so, they turned from loyalty and intense competition for the favor of the king and toward the new popular organizations. They mobilized as *Bataka*, an identity that included all as grandparents and grandchildren or citizens. Politics that had centered on the private world of the court, through ambitious and volatile negotiations between wives and factions, became public as people saw kingdom elites as allies of Britain, not patrons, leaders and protectors of Buganda.

In a decade of speeches, petitions, mobilization and action, new leaders built political precedents from not the *Kabaka* and his *Nnamasole*, but in respect for Buganda's past of clans, of the stewardship of the elders and the inheritance by the youth. Instead of organizing around loyalty to the undisciplined and individualistic *Kabaka* and *Nnamasole* who failed to protect them, activists sought, impudently, publically and contentiously, to secure their futures for themselves using both classic covert methods of gossip, slander, riot, arson and assassination, and innovative public initiatives that included international lobbying campaigns and appeals to democratic ideals. The scandal of *Nnamasole* Irene Namaganda's marriage brought the private alliances of the colonial oligarchy into public view and allowed activists to link Buganda's British-allied oligarchy with ideas of corruption, selfishness, immorality, irresponsibility, and bad stewardship.

⁶⁶ For a discussion of the Budo controversy, see Carol Summers, "'Subterranean Evil' and 'Tumultuous Riot' in Buganda: Authority and Alienation at King's College, Budo, 1942," *Journal of African History* 47 (2006), 93–113

⁶⁷ Mulira, *Troubled Uganda*, 35–37.

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