Introduction

A Long History of Political Voice

MOTHER AFRICA holds up newborn Uganda as the bonds of colonial constraints fall away in the statue that marks Uganda's independence in the center of Kampala, Uganda's capital. Hemmed in by busy traffic on Speke Road and a tall concrete wall, people do not seem to notice the monumental sculpture in a plaza that goes nowhere. For those who do stop to look, the message of the sculpture makes sense. The Uganda being celebrated in 1962 was something entirely new, the wrappings of constraint on Africa had been loosened, and the infant had reason to raise its small arms in celebration. Sixty years ago, this statement of hope cast in concrete stood before a jacaranda arbor with a series of steps welcoming the free citizens of Uganda into a public garden that held, in addition to flower beds, fountains, and a monument to King George, a gigantic "freedom tree" that had been a gathering place over the previous decades. The wall came later, after President Milton Obote encroached on the land to build a large hotel that was later sold to an international franchise. Walls that keep people out of the public square, both literally and figuratively, and the efforts Ugandans have made to create an effective space for civic engagement call the message of the Independence sculpture into question. Over more than six decades, Ugandans have sought good governance using strategies and logic that can be traced back for centuries: the infant reaching upward had a deep, abiding knowledge of how people and their leaders get what they need from each other. Striving for good government has a long history in Africa.

FIGURE 0.1. Independence Monument, created by Gregory Maloba. At independence in 1962, Gregory Maloba's statue graced the formal entrance to a public garden, which included the Freedom Tree where groups had gathered for conversation and deliberation. Photograph by Lynette Nakaye, September 30, 2019, distributed under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license.

It is hard to see that history, in part because the experience of a complete break from the past at Independence was so compelling and in part because what we know about Uganda has been shaped to justify one or another group's hold on power. Histories written in the colonial era looked back to Africans dominated by despotic indigenous rulers, and it has served the interests of postcolonial elites to add harsh colonial rule to that story.

However, Africans who experienced indigenous rule never stopped trying to explain the proper rules of good governance to their European colonizers. In 1922, one contributor to a Luganda-language Catholic newspaper asked, "Is this ruling the people, not to hear what they have to say?"[1] People exercised the obligation to speak and be heard at every level: in the courtyards of a chief or king but also in family compounds, markets, and everywhere else that groups of people tried to solve problems. Looking for the traces that people left of their thinking and their actions, we find people across the region approaching the problems of governance in remarkably similar ways. We find memories of kings deposed because people determined they had ruled badly. We find stories of groups of sugar plantation laborers, hearing a case by firelight. We find records of multiethnic groups seeking redress from World War II inflation in the courtyard of the Ganda king. These strategies proved useful in the deep past and in the transformations inherent in the creation of kingdoms. They survived the assaults of the slave trade and the perverse social engineering of foreign rule. The people whose descendants participate in the nation-state of Uganda shaped their societies through well-understood actions and conventions. People created a space through their presence and their actions, and in that space they spoke to the powerful, and expected to be heard.

These strategies created both a physical space and also a conceptual space as a right and an obligation. This space was created through collective endeavor and expressed well-understood expectations of who had to contribute to ensure a thriving polity. People with authority had to respond to the considered observations of those below them if they were to keep their power. These practical and conceptual strategies contrasted with the parliamentary forms of governance that replaced them in profound ways. They worked on an intimate scale: interlocutors met, saw each other, and interacted. Groups, not individuals, were the fundamental unit, and that created circumstances in which a broad range of people could act, and their actions mattered to others. Multiple replicating spaces for decision-making created opportunities for many to speak, and gatherings for consultation lasted for hours or days because hearing everyone speak yielded better results. Evidence for this basic building block of African political accountability reaches across centuries in a range of East African societies.

Spaces for decision-making that East Africans created together deserve our attention. In 1963 Uganda might have been a metaphorical baby as a unitary parliamentary democracy, but it could also have been represented as a group of wise adults, consulting under the freedom tree. We have to decolonize our minds to see how these spaces worked in the past, how they

affect the present, and how they might shape the future. Categories of analysis modeled on the political history of Europe cannot capture or describe the history of African political space because the assumptions built into those concepts distort the reality of African thought, as recent scholarship has shown. According to Mikael Karlström, it was "communication, justice, and hierarchical civility" that people valued in the local councils established in 1986, not the opportunity to vote for council members.[2] Harri Englund argues that Malawians think about freedom in a context of mutual responsibility, and James Ferguson shows that Africans value dependence—the autonomy of individualism is not their goal.[3] The interlocking parts of the space of collective assent to governance required a small and intimate scale rather than a large and bureaucratic one, the deliberate creation of units that stood together rather than the expression of individual will, the participation of citizens rather than experts, and citizens who sought calm agreement over competition. Those characteristics might classify African strategies of good governance as premodern, but an alternative interpretation, offered by Ugandans at intervals throughout the twentieth century, was that they could serve as the basis of a better modernity.

Very early in an encounter with imperial entrepreneurs, Ugandans argued that a better kind of modernity would have combined the good things of Europe with their habits of loving and helping each other.[4] When we pay attention to the set of expectations people held regarding mutual obligation, and the social practices they used to induce others to meet their expectations, we can see that this call to reciprocity was not just rhetoric. People made it work: they noted its absence in moments of profound social disruption, and they innovated to keep it functioning with the political and economic transformations of the twentieth century. Growing economic inequality made the space of collective assent to government harder and harder to evoke, but people did not stop trying. In this they present a contrast to the English peasants or French artisans whose struggle to uphold the value of social cohesion eventually gave way to acquiescence to social classes with opposing interests.[5] A sense of moral economy that structured the relationships of rich and poor in the English countryside disappeared as the economy grew and centralized, according to E. P. Thompson. In Uganda, visiting labor organizers in the 1950s decried the tendency of Ugandans to believe their employers could be convinced through kindness to offer better conditions. This might be evidence of Ugandans' undeveloped capacity for labor unions, or it might, instead, be an enduring commitment to the responsibility of members of a society to create a coherent, harmonious social whole. A century after some Ugandans courteously explained to the first

British officers how powerful people ought to behave toward the less powerful, many of their descendants are connecting with each other, making the same arguments. This invites a rethinking of Karl Polanyi's important observation that the "smashing up of social structures to extract the labor inside them," which had happened in the nineteenth century in Europe, happened in the twentieth century in Africa.[6] Perhaps there is an element of choice in being smashed up: that is, perhaps the destruction of social structures can only fully happen if people assent to let them go. Ugandans seem to have striven for a modernity with structures that allowed people to see each other, and maintain an obligation to each other, even as political engagement and economic integration expanded to much larger scales. That they kept on trying, even though they did not always succeed, provides insights into what is and is not inevitable in the world we now inhabit.

A kind of power that people evoke together was critical to Ugandans' vision of how to maintain a healthy society, and recognizing it is critical to understanding the dynamics of East African history over the long term. A "power with" that emerges from the way people interact with each other is different from "power over," which one person holds and others struggle to procure. Producers of popular culture have explained the distinction by evoking *ubuntu,* or moral personhood, in the words of Oliver Mtukudzi, "to be a human being among others."[7] Looking at the long history of interlacustrine East Africa, David Schoenbrun distinguished "creative power" from "instrumental power."[8] Jane Guyer and Eno Belinga elaborated the understanding that African rulers found wealth in people arguing that more than amassing the allegiance of many followers, what African rulers were trying to do was collect wealth in knowledge, to assemble a diverse set of people who had many different kinds of knowledge and skills. The deliberate composing of difference made leaders who achieved it powerful. Many people participated in those acts of assembly, and those collective acts of choosing and affirming a group happened at every level of society. A polity built of intentionally put-together groups required sustained effort: people talking to each other about their value, showing up, cementing units, and defining their relationships with other groups through productive labor offered as gifts. Because East Africans made society healthy and productive through deliberate composing of groups of people, paying careful attention to the actions of groups reveals how people sought good government. Over centuries, and in myriad circumstances, we see purposeful efforts to create a calm and peaceful social whole by noticing who stepped forward to constitute a group, how people made their assent visible or chose to withdraw it, and how groups connected, interacted with, and distinguished themselves from others.

FIGURE 0.2. Conversation in a marketplace, 1906. Ugandans cultivated the capacity to compose a group and consult. This conversation in a 1906 marketplace includes a messenger carrying a letter on a stick to keep it clean. Charles William Hattersley, GBR/0115/RCS/Y3045T, #78. Cambridge University Library.

The collective power to assemble did not necessarily clash with a singularly exercised power to rule over others. In passionate debates, which are captured in archival documents from the twentieth century and visible in metaphor and symbol in traditions for earlier centuries, Ugandans have argued that "*power with*" and "*power over*" can and should support each other.[9] That rich corpus of political philosophy asserts a healthful complementarity: the presence of many people demonstrates their ruler is effective, and his (or her) effective rule attracts people to participate. When conflicts inevitably arose, they took forms that attempted to preserve social harmony. Leaving entirely and joining a different group gave redress to the dissatisfied without disturbing the peace. Dividing responsibilities, distinguishing authority into smaller units, or creating new kinds of honor allowed groups to avoid conflict inside a unit or among groups with each other. Ignoring tensions and waiting for a problem to go away without confrontation was sometimes effective and sometimes had unintended consequences. Individuals (and groups) became distinguished through sustained, remarkable generosity or sometimes through rumormongering regarding rivals. Individuals or parts of a group exerted pressure on others by choosing to not

provide what others required from them, including their presence. When all else failed, assembling in a new, alternative group could establish a new kind of social whole. The results of these strategies and innovations under pressure are inscribed in language, landscape, and stories that tell of the distant past; they are apparent in written records of nineteenth- and twentieth-century events; and they can be encountered in the present. They were carefully and eloquently articulated by generations of Ugandans who tried to engage foreigners—both colonizers and postcolonial experts—on the subject of good government. Materialist modernity directs our attention to the actions of individuals, but there is more to see, if we take the historical evidence seriously. Over centuries, ancient East Africans assembled or refused to show up, brought essential gifts or withheld them, sometimes assented and sometimes temporized, and created new avenues of voice and action when existing ones had ceased to function. All these avenues of seeking good government coexisted with the power of chiefs and kings.

The stories commonly told about Uganda's past erase a long history of groups of people wresting good government from their leaders. Secondary school students learn that kings mutilated their subjects and that the early colonial treaties were not really agreements because the British were so much better at negotiating than their African interlocutors. In the oldest neighborhood of Kampala, visitors to the Kasubi Tombs (all that remained of the palace of the Buganda kingdom's Kabaka [King] Mutesa until a 2010 fire) used to hear stories that emphasized the king's power and the people's absolute obedience. The one large thatched structure, surrounded by a few outbuildings and a reed fence, suggested the simplicity of the system, and old women dressed in barkcloth praying in the dim shrine demonstrated the people's enduring devotion to the kingdom. The capricious violence of kings is part of the story at Namugongo, where Mwanga's executioners burnt to death some of Uganda's first Muslims and Christians in 1886. But these same physical places tell another story. Among the hundreds of buildings that once comprised Mutesa's palace were halls where royal women, royal men, and commoners waited to meet with the king, and a very large space in front of the gates where chiefs met in council. Nakulabye, the name of the market one passes on the road to Kasubi Tombs, commemorates a conversation in which the king was forced to justify a decision to his chiefs. Some of Kampala's main roads, clogged with traffic in the present, once carried throngs of representatives of particular groups bearing gifts to the palace—and when the king displeased the producers, they withheld the necessities on which he depended. Adjacent to Namugongo were some of the estates of the queen mother, whose independent authority over chiefs

and land in every part of the kingdom served as a check on the power of the king. The land of the Speke Resort, now the meeting place of the rich and powerful, was once part of the estate of the queen mother's brother, the *sabaganzi*—and therefore part of the power base she used to "prevent the king from ruling badly."[10] We need to add gendered political power and the spaces where organized groups of people challenged their rulers to our understanding of the political heritage of the present.

During the colonial era, Ugandans continued to act on the expectation that they could make rulers listen and respond to them. Histories of colonized Uganda that portray the powers of colonial chiefs as traditional and their courts as a blend of old and new also obscure what was actually happening to indigenous forms of political voice. In 1922, opponents described the pretense of participation imposed by leading colonial chiefs: "You did everything by virtue of your powers, and you put the *Lukiko* [the gathering of chiefs in the courtyard of the king] down under your feet. We had a *Lukiko,* but it was not a *Lukiko* in reality."[11] In Mengo, Kabaka Njagala ("the king loves me") Road, with the monumental Buganda Parliament at one end, the Buganda High Court in the middle, and the palace and government ministries at the other, was a kind of stage set where a small number of people acted out a form of indirect rule that gave them an entirely new kind of power over others. But even after almost a half century of colonial reengineering of indigenous institutions, thousands gathered at the palace in 1945 and 1949 to be seen by the king and to force him to hear their demands: on both occasions the overthrow of the king seemed likely to some observers. Evidence that portrays the strength, creativity, and multiethnic character of these efforts has been buried in a secret archive for a half century; it offers new ways of thinking about the relationship of the past to the present.

A national constitution that valorized competition among political parties delegitimized a collective effort to preserve social harmony, but Ugandans did not let go of those strategies. After his military coup in 1971 Idi Amin used rituals of listening to legitimize his rule, and Makerere students sought to mobilize the will to overthrow him through collective actions in public spaces. After years of violence and upheaval, people drew on expectations of reciprocity and accountability to re-create order and to signal their unwillingness to assent to misrule. Wealthy people's loss of their assets diminished economic inequality, which may be one part of an explanation for the success strategies of local-level and regional councils using gatherings of people to reimagine a united Uganda as the war to oust Amin progressed, and after it concluded. People innovated and changed collective strategies of seeking accountability so that they survived even the radical

transformations of colonial rule, but seeking social harmony through assent has never successfully combined with parliamentary party politics, which are premised on conflict.

If East Africans in the past understood that they had the responsibility to create a space of speaking and being heard, the absence of that opportunity and that space must have consequences in the present. The understanding that good government required people to place themselves with others in groups that ensured a calm and harmonious social whole lost out to competitive party politics in the transition to independence in 1962. The structures that made reciprocal obligation effective no longer exist, but the will to mutuality remains. Recognizing this helps illuminate a static quality in Ugandan politics. In many societies in Uganda and East Africa, a person demonstrated allegiance—and found personal and moral security—through aligning with the appropriate leader. It was a reciprocal relationship: the follower and the leader needed each other. People believed and still believe that loyal service to a leader brings rewards, and they experience that as morally valid. They see the logic of patron-client relations played out everywhere. Yoweri Museveni, who became Uganda's president with the National Resistance Movement's victory over Idi Amin's troops in 1986, has taken care to show himself to be a generous and attentive patron, and his decades in the presidency also demonstrate his ability to satisfy the so-called donor

FIGURE 0.3. Gathering to show support for presidential candidate Kizza Besigye. Supporters gather to listen to presidential candidate Kizza Besigye in the Kampala Bus Park. Photograph by Edward Echwalu.

states. A powerful moral contract is enacted in Uganda when crowds surround Museveni, or a traditional ruler, or an opposition politician. The wild enthusiasm has a clear—if unrealized—meaning: "Because I have aligned with him, I am his man, and he will therefore take care of me." These displays of loyalty are just one-half of a relationship, and in the present, there is nothing to compel the powerful to reciprocate.

Ethnic chauvinism has taken hold in Uganda in part because economic inequality undermines the effectiveness of strategies people continue to use to make claims on the powerful. Throughout the twentieth century, economic, political, and educational inequality has increased across Uganda.[12] As this happened in the area that was Buganda, a small elite that had benefited insisted that this unequal social order was people's cultural heritage. They said—quite directly—that loving the king and the kingdom meant not wanting to exercise political voice. Chiefly self-interest was not the driving motivation in the negotiation of the 1900 Uganda Agreement between the British and the Buganda kingdom, but it did create private property in land, which greatly advantaged chiefs. In the early colonial period, ordinary people resented the growing power of the very small number of chiefs who retained their positions in the colonial chiefly hierarchy, at the same time that forced labor undermined most people's prosperity. Older and newly formed groups complained to the king, and later to a British commission, that the new order of things was disrupting Ganda traditions of participatory government. One of their leaders described "our existing dry-bone, lifeless native government, which is reduced from its real meaning and its old sanctions, to a mere shadow or rather an artificial symbol of its former self."[13] It was a devastatingly accurate critique, but the prime minister defended his actions with an appeal to loyalty: "It is well known in Buganda as well as in other nations that he who despises the Kabaka's representative despises the Kabaka himself."[14] In the 1950s, when reformers pushed for a Buganda parliament that would be directly elected rather than a gathering of chiefs and large landowners, the Ganda kingdom leaders argued that Baganda did not want the vote, preferring loyalty to the kingdom in the form of complete obedience to the pronouncements of Mengo (the location of the palace and shorthand for the power of the wealthy elite who claimed to rule in the king's name). The assertion of a purported Ganda preference for obedience over political agency was enshrined in Uganda's first constitution, in which Baganda were deprived of a direct vote because a *Lukiko* (Ganda kingdom parliament) electoral college voted for them. Not all people who lived in Buganda agreed, and the Buganda boycott of direct elections was enforced through intimidation and violence. Mengo's current rejection of a regional
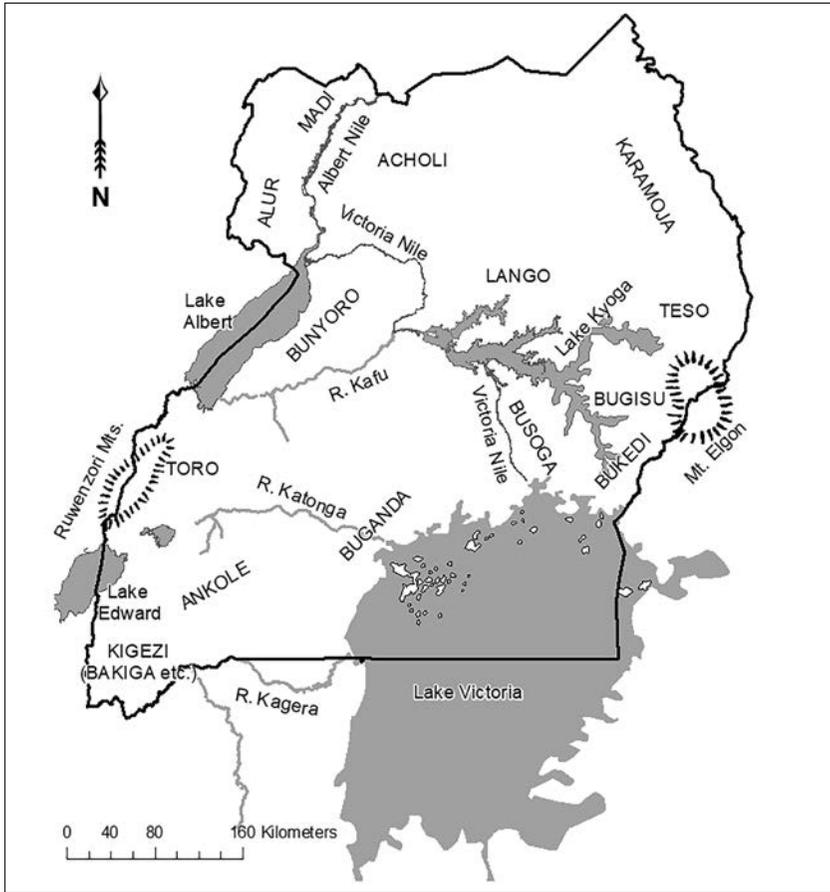
MAP 0.1. Ancient kingdoms and homelands in the borders of Uganda. Significant commonalities characterized the forms of government experienced by the ancestors of modern Ugandans: Buganda exceptionalism was a myth.

tier of governance is also said to originate in a Ganda "cultural" preference for a Lukiko over direct political voice in a regional government. Baganda elite have substituted ethnic allegiance for political accountability and good governance for almost a century.

A space in which people took action to construct a wholesome polity has been hidden in plain sight in part because well-accepted interpretations of Ugandan history served other purposes. The idea that Buganda stood out as distinctly more advanced than other interlacustrine kingdoms rationalized British rule through Ganda surrogates in the earliest years of a British presence, and later historians have never fully repudiated that view.[15] Over the long term, however, Buganda looks more similar to its neighbors than

different, and contingencies of timing and location explain the advantages over others the kingdom amassed in the twentieth century. The myth of Ganda superiority obscures a collective history of political accountability in two ways: first, because the Buganda of absolute obedience to authority is a distortion that served the interests of a small elite, and second, because it obscures the fundamental coherence of patterns of political engagement across the region.[16]

Two other ways of thinking about Uganda also obscure the history of the collective enterprise of building a harmonious polity. Post–World War II high modernist social science has had remarkable staying power in Uganda because the East African Institute of Social Research interpreted colonially created institutions as "traditional," and their valorization of African autocrats has met the needs of Independence-era elites. As I have argued elsewhere, the story of despotic chiefs who consolidated power to create efficient bureaucracies was built on one side of an argument in Buganda, and entirely leaves out the social upheaval of the slave trade.[17] East African societies changed profoundly in the nineteenth century before imperialists arrived, and seeing that dynamic process changes our view of the decades of British presence. Foreigners were not the only people with the capacity to act in powerful ways, even at the height of colonial rule. Scholarship that explains colonial rule as the source of all Uganda's problems may actually be assenting to colonial authorities' inflated view of their own power. Recognizing that East Africans had well-developed habits of seeking political accountability when British imperial entrepreneurs arrived, it makes no sense to categorize colonial-era actors as either traditionalists who favored royal power or modernists who wanted people's representation.

Important scholarship on Uganda and Africa illuminates the history of groups of people combining with each other to create a calm, harmonious social whole. Work on Uganda's ancient history sheds light on how strategies of composing a polity might have developed.[18] Richly detailed studies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries show how those strategies were deployed in difficult times.[19] A few scholars have documented the critical importance of social inequality to understanding Uganda.[20] Recent efforts to take seriously how people thought, and how their thinking changed, create a space for exploring political thought. Recent ethnographic scholarship demonstrates how Ugandans continue to deploy expectations of reciprocity.[21]

Recovering the history of a way of thinking and acting that was discredited and forgotten poses a number of methodological challenges. Until they were challenged, people had no reason to speak about—or even to

see—the assumptions that shaped their social world, and therefore the evidence for expectations regarding strategies for creating social health are indirect. When overbearing chiefs and colonial officers provoked groups of people to articulate their rights to speak and be heard, they made claims that might refer to actual practices, or they might have been imagining a past with greater political voice to embarrass their opponents. Exaggeration was a characteristic of Ganda political rhetoric: How does the historian distinguish between statements that the author did not intend to be taken literally and statements that had a basis in objective reality? Another challenge is to discern whether the large body of witty and incisive criticism produced by literate Ugandans also represents the perceptions of those who did not write letters to the newspapers, the governor, the bishops, the United Nations, and the Fabian Colonial Bureau. In addition, there is a danger of creating a self-reinforcing feedback loop while looking for a habitually unspoken way of thinking at odds with received views of modernity and progress: there is a challenge of finding what one is looking for, and not seeing the counterevidence.

In order to document the practices through which groups composed themselves, marked their importance in gifts, and made themselves heard by the powerful in pursuit of a just and wholesome polity, I focused on the actual physical spaces in which negotiations occurred. These included the courtyards of chiefs and kings, clan burial grounds, and for more recent decades, the official spaces of courthouses or council meetings and unofficial ones such as family meetings and the consultations of drivers at a stage. I gathered information about what people did in those spaces, what they said, and the consequences of their actions, and tried to understand what factors led to success or failure. Because circumstances created a fuller historical record for Buganda in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, I have relied on material from Buganda to supply detailed evidence. In each chapter, I introduce comparative material to bolster my argument that the rich documentation of the actions of people in Buganda is illustrative of people using similar strategies elsewhere. The book considers the spaces that characterized three distinct historical periods, and the periods of transition between them.

Chapter 1 documents the ancient origins of a space of seeking social harmony, using historical linguistics, dynastic traditions, clan histories, and maps drawn of the Ganda capital in the mid-nineteenth century. I argue that strategies of participation preceded the emergence of the kingdoms and that the expansion of the kingdoms, as well as the profound social upheaval of the slave trade, diminished but did not end the practice of groups

seeking accountability in the courtyard of a ruler. The displays of wanton cruelty and violence early European visitors witnessed at the palace were not, therefore, evidence of a long history of despotism but rather evidence of a social order collapsing. The vivid recollections of this time in the memoirs of Bartolomayo Zimbe, Apollo Kaggwa, and James Miti demonstrate how various factions deployed the strategies creating good governance even as the kingdom fell apart in civil war in the 1880s.

Chapter 2 explores how Ugandans used their well-developed understanding of how to get the powerful to meet their expectation of reciprocity during the decades in which colonizers arrived and made an effort to exercise sovereignty. It documents Ugandans' success in drawing European imperial entrepreneurs into interaction following indigenous rules of constructing a wholesome polity. Although popular perception and published histories assert that the British arrived in Uganda and immediately took control, British authority in fact developed slowly, relied on the symbolic participation of Ganda chiefs, and almost dissolved in 1897. The acting commissioner George Wilson, who recognized the power of the Lukiko (the gathering of chiefs in the courtyard of the king), created an identical gathering of the chiefs, which became known as "the Lukiko of the Kampala European." He had to do this because chiefs consulting together were actually making essential decisions. Not only were the aspiring colonizers militarily weaker, but foreigners could only command labor through creating relationships of mutual obligation with African leaders. When the balance of power shifted, Ugandans still spoke and expected to be heard, and wielded quite effectively the power of not showing up, as in the Nyangire rebellion in Bunyoro in 1906.

Chapter 3 explores how decades of colonial rule impacted the practice of speaking and being heard through a close analysis of the 1945 strike and the 1949 effort to educate the king, using the recently released "migrated archives," which show these events in an entirely new light. Described in the Uganda Protectorate's explanations and subsequent scholarship as anomic disturbances, both civic actions featured orderly efforts of people of multiple ethnicities meeting in the courtyard of the Ganda king to be seen, to speak about injustice, and to get a response. The contrast between assumptions regarding the nature of indigenous government portrayed in official reports regarding 1945 and 1949 and the assertions participants made regarding what they were doing sheds light on the assault on the practice of seeking social harmony made by colonial social engineering. The motivations for mass action, articulated by the 1945 protesters and by those who participated in the 1949 effort, provide evidence for the growing inequality that undermined the fundamental premises of indigenous strategies of governance.

Because subsequent investigations required every member of the police to provide verbatim accounts of his interactions with people involved in the disturbances, the recently released archives reveal expectations regarding governance expressed by illiterate immigrants to the capital as well as the Ganda elite whose letters fill colonial archives.

Chapter 4 argues that Ugandans did have the capacity to launch a united, functional nation-state, and they could have done so if leaders in Buganda and Britain, and Uganda's first politicians, had made different choices. The Ugandan state did not have to fail. During the period from the 1949 insurrection in Buganda until the end of the Bush War (which is what Ugandans called the effort to oust Idi Amin), the forces of integration and authentic citizen participation were shut down. What people remembered and valued still existed, despite two generations of colonial interference, and the history of cooperatives demonstrates efforts to take those practices onto a national stage. To build the framework of a national polity would have taken time, and to have the time, it would have been necessary for the British Colonial Office to articulate a clear plan and timetable for a transition to majority rule. Habits of racial separation, an infatuation with modernization that discounted the agency of ordinary people, and the self-interest of politicians in Buganda and on the national stage shut down the process of learning that was underway and left Ugandans with less than they had had before. The hasty "constitution-mongering" of the transition discounted indigenous political strategies that sought to collectively create a calm social whole and instituted a form of party politics that became little more than pretense. Tragically, when people used older political strategies in a party political system, they diminished the possibility of participation even more thoroughly.

Chapter 5 explores how Ugandans used their understanding of strategies of accountability when the veneer of post-Independence parliamentary democracy and economic prosperity fell away in the 1970s and 1980s. From the first extrajudicial killings under Obote 1 in 1964, through the presidencies of Amin, Obote 2, and the Okellos, and the rise to power of President Museveni via the Bush War, Uganda's political institutions lost their meaning, economic institutions ceased to function, hundreds of thousands of Ugandans fled, and those who stayed at home experienced brutality and deprivation. The ways strategies of speaking and listening came back into public space reveal both their enduring salience and also the profound challenge posed by extreme inequality. Idi Amin tried to solve his crisis of legitimacy through elaborate enactments of participation, speaking, and listening that drew on indigenous understandings of accountability. It was

entirely pretense, but people knew their parts and played them. Makerere University students drew on expectations of reciprocity and accountability to signal their unwillingness to assent to misrule, and new kinds of groups worked to re-create social order.

The conclusion explores the ways assembly, voice, and gifts figure in Ugandans' efforts to shape good government in the present. It considers the LC-1 form of local government in its earliest years and then explores the contradictory consequences of people using indigenous strategies of seeking social consensus in the context of party politics.

This book contributes to an effort to see African categories of thought in their own terms and to understand how they have changed over time. There is a value, in the present, of recognizing the past practice of people assembling to hear a case, to consult with elders, or to make their presence felt in the courtyard of a chief. Ugandans lost this heritage because disparaging and dismissing it served a succession of powerful interests. Colonizers undermined indigenous forms of accountability and labeled the change improvement, aspiring leaders of the 1950s endorsed hastily made political arrangements that brought them electoral success, and Independence-era politicians have used a mythical authoritarian past to justify their own practices of power. Even so, the heritage is real. Over centuries, people in Uganda have sought justice by gathering in spaces where people spoke and were heard, and where the powerful demonstrated their ability to take care of others.