Researching Institutional Life in Modern Uganda

Katherine Bruce-Lockhart and Jonathon L. Earle

Abstract: This introductory article reflects on the trajectories, possibilities, and limitations of studying institutional life in Africa, with a particular emphasis on Uganda. Engaging with some of the central issues articulated in the African Studies Association's theme for the 2017 Annual Meeting – "Institutions: Creativity and Resilience in Africa" – it considers the category of "institution" and how it has been imagined and contested in Africa's past and present. The article begins by examining the competing visions of institutions across the continent in the late colonial period. It then moves to a closer consideration of institutions within Uganda's historiography, while also introducing the articles in this collection and the themes that tie them together. The final two sections turn to the question of sources, illuminating both the possibilities and limitations of recent developments regarding Uganda's archives. In so doing, this article considers not only the shifting terrain of

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Uganda's research landscape, but also explores the ways in which the study of institutional life is animated by deep, longstanding deliberations on questions of community, authority, and reciprocity.

Résumé: Cette introduction fournit des réflexions sur les trajectoires, les possibilités et les limites de l'étude de la vie institutionnelle en Afrique en se penchant en particulier sur l'Ouganda. En se focalisant sur certaines questions centrales articulées par le thème "Institutions: Creativity and Resilience in Africa" de la conférence annuelle de 2017 de l'African Studies Association (Etats-Unis d'Amérique), cet article analyse la catégorie d'"institution" et la manière dont elle a été imaginée et contestée dans l'histoire africaine. L'introduction commence par examiner les visions concurrentes des institutions à travers le continent à la fin de la période coloniale. Elle passe ensuite à un examen plus approfondi des institutions dans l'historiographie de l'Ouganda, tout en introduisant les articles de cette collection et les thèmes qui les unissent. Les deux dernières sections abordent la question des sources, éclairant à la fois les possibilités et les limites des développements récents concernant les archives ougandaises. Ce faisant, cette introduction examine non seulement l'évolution du paysage de la recherche ougandaise, mais explore aussi les façons dont l'étude de la vie institutionnelle est animée par de longs débats sur les questions de communauté, d'autorité et de réciprocité dans le passé et le présent.

Introduction[1]

The articles in this special issue explore the possibilities and limits of researching institutional life in colonial and postcolonial Africa. They also identify new opportunities and challenges that concern the use of institutional archives and their digitization. This special issue grew out of a workshop on emerging approaches in Uganda Studies in early 2017 at University College London, which was organized to rethink the multiple trajectories, spaces, and temporalities existent in the field.

For reasons that are outlined in this introductory article, the study of institutions in Africa has a long history. The supposed function and absence of institutions across the continent was quickly incorporated into much

[1] Katherine Bruce-Lockhart would like to thank all of those individuals who were involved in the April 2017 Uganda Studies workshop. She is very grateful to the Institute of Advanced Studies at University College London for hosting the workshop, Jonathon Earle and Marissa Mika for their tremendous efforts to organize the event, and for the support and vision of Michael Twaddle, Carol Summers, and Richard Reid. Lastly, she would like to thank Jonathon Earle for his insightful contributions and spirit of collaboration in co-authoring this piece and editing the special issue. Jonathon L. Earle wishes to express his gratitude to the contributors of the Uganda studies workshop at University College London during April 2017 and its co-conveners, Kate Bruce-Lockhart and Marissa Mika. He also wishes to thank the Institute of Advanced Studies at UCL for supporting the workshop, and Richard Reid, Carol Summers, and Michael Twaddle for their input into the early development of the forum. And last, he wishes to thank Kate Bruce-Lockhart for her co-authorship and editorial remarks.

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larger historical and political debates surrounding the legitimization and fraught expansions of colonial empires into the interior of Africa from the early nineteenth century onward. More recently, as noted in the annual theme of the African Studies Association's 60th Annual Meeting, "Institutions: Creativity and Resilience in Africa," scholars continue to "consider how various institutions have been constructed, how they function, and how they relate to Africa and African Studies."[2] The call for proposals continued:

> The concept of institutions is far-reaching and comprises the patterns and organizations that have become embedded within societies. Institutions are universities, donors, non-profit organizations, state and legal structures, as well as cultural norms, music and book festivals, religious associations, languages, rituals, interactions, and exchange.

The articles in this collection, though, wish to interrogate the category of *institution* itself, the etymology of which derived from the Old French gloss *institucion*, a term that circulated increasingly from the twelfth century onward during a moment of extensive political debate surrounding the expansion of French institutions in England. African vernacular reflections on the question and creation of colonial institutions developed alongside much older and far-reaching debates about reciprocity, patriotism, and public justice. This introductory article, then, begins by outlining the contested practices of institutional life in late colonial Africa. It next turns to the place of institutions in Uganda's historiography, where it will introduce the articles in this volume. We then briefly outline developments in Uganda's archival landscapes before, in a final section, critically assessing the possibilities and limits that surround these recent transitions. In doing so, we recast existing frameworks for the study of institutional life in Africa.

Institutional Life in African Studies

The history and practice of institutional life in Africa has long attracted the attention of activists and scholars. As luminaries looked toward Independence by the late 1950s, questions concerning local and regional institutions throughout the Continent propelled international discourse. Dissenting activists and parliamentary administrators in British colonies engaged in debates about the production of commodities and the importance of regulating economic institutions. When Nigeria's future president, Nnamdi Azikiwe, addressed a rally in Trafalgar Square on 4 December 1949, following the massacre of twenty-one Nigerian coalminers at the Iva Valley

[2] African Studies Association, "Call For Proposals: 60th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association," accessed 12 December 2017, http://www.africanstudies.org/annual-meetings/call-for-proposals/95-annual-meetings/756-call-for-proposals-2017.

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Mine in Enugu, he scathingly noted that "[w]hat interested some of the Members of [the British] Parliament was the effect of the disturbances on the shipment of groundnuts to Britain."[3] As the editor-in-chief of Nigeria's leading nationalist press, the *West African Pilot*, Azikiwe's remarks were not only a response to obtuse rhetoric in the parliamentary halls of Lagos and Westminster. Three days prior to delivering his remarks in Britain's imperial capital, the *London Times* had highlighted the local "riots" – not government massacre – at the Enugu colliery.[4] The article argued that political and economic institutions in Britain's African colonies "must go together step by step."[5] During his speech at Trafalgar, in turn, it was not without reason that Azikiwe went to such lengths to emphasize the international support that Nigeria's massacred miners had attracted. He was especially keen to note the backing of Soviet states, including "[t]hree million Czech trade unionists," who "registered protests against this evidence of man's inhumanity to man."[6] In an international climate that was increasingly, ostensibly divided into a First, Second, and Third World,[7] the claims made by Azikiwe to "discard the yoke of oppression" demonstrated the extent to which the region's institutions raised questions about international allegiances, local solidarities, and development throughout the Cold War.

The relationship between formal administrative strategy and local activism was equally complex in Francophone Africa. The policy of "assimilation" during the Third Republic extended the possibility of full citizenship to France's African colonies. As Kenneth Robinson noted, the colonies' "economic relationship with France and with other French colonies, their constitutional position and their administrative organization were to be identical with any part of France itself."[8] On the ground, however, assimilation was extended only to the *Quatre Communes* of Senegal. The overwhelming majority were subjects of an empire whose architects, even into the late 1940s, saw administrative development as a possibility only within the context

[3] Nnamdi Azikiwe, "Nigeria and Independence," in: Robert O. Collins (ed.), *Western African History: Vol. I of African History: Text and Readings* (New York: Markus Wiener Publishing, Inc., 1990), 238–244, 239. The best summary of the Enugu massacre is: S.O. Jaja, "The Enugu Colliery Massacre in Retrospect: An Episode in British Administration of Nigeria," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 11 (1982–1983), 86–106.

[4] For further discussion on Azikiwe's life in London and the emergence of Black internationalism and anticolonialism in the United Kingdom's imperial capital see: Marc Matera, *Black London: The Imperial Metropolis and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015).

[5] "Policy in Africa," *London Times*, 1 December 1949, 5.

[6] Azikiwe, "Nigeria and Independence," 239.

[7] The best account of the emergence of international articulations of the First, Second, and Third World is: Odd A. Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[8] Kenneth Robinson, "The Public Law of Overseas France since the War," *Journal of Comparative Legislation* 32 (1950), 37–57, 37.

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of the French imperial system.[9] Following the Second World War, the call for the liberalization of African institutions within France was limited. When forty-four French colonial administrators and unionists convened in 1944 at Brazzaville, without an African delegation, the Recommendations maintained the supremacy of French language and culture.[10] Indeed, at one level, de Gaulle's role in the convening of Brazzaville signified the solidifications of power that surrounded the emergence of a new, Fourth Republic. As Ruth Morgenthau argued, the colonial administration in French West Africa had remained loyal to Philippe Pétain and the Vichy government until late 1942, following the Allied landing in northern Africa.[11] But as Elizabeth Schmidt and Frederick Cooper, respectively,[12] have persuasively argued, provisions set out in the Constitution of 1946 were sufficiently adequate for communities to assert claims of citizenship within colonial institutions that had been largely absent prior to the Second World War. "The citizenship that French West Africans were claiming in the postwar years was not that of a nation-state," notes Cooper,

> but an imperial citizenship – in a composite political entity, built by conquest, governed in a way that had subordinated and denigrated its subjects, but which was, activists asserted, to be transformed into a structure that would ensure the rights and cultural integrity of all citizens.[13]

In ways that were not present in British colonies, debates regarding institutional life in French Equatorial and West Africa were shaped by concerns about the possibilities and limits of European citizenship for colonial subjects.

Public contestations regarding unions, rights, and citizenship, however, not only preoccupied writers and activists during the postwar period. The relationship between public order and the necessity of colonial chiefs was the subject of numerous ethnographies and travelogues throughout the nineteenth century.[14] The role of local agency and the limits of colonial

[9] Ruth Schachter Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French-Speaking West Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 38.

[10] Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 39–41.

[11] Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 37.

[12] Elizabeth Schmidt, *Mobilizing the Masses: Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in the Nationalist Movement in Guinea, 1939–1958* (Portsmouth NH: Heinemann, 2005); Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

[13] Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*, 9.

[14] Two of the most insightful accounts into this preoccupation were: T. Edward Bowdich, *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee, with a Statistical Account of that Kingdom, And Geographical Notices of Other Parts of the Interior of Africa* (London: John Murray, 1819); Frederick D. Lugard, *The Rise of Our East African Empire: Early Efforts in Nyasaland and Uganda*, 2 volumes (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1968 [1893]).

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authority have continued to propel contemporary scholarship, especially in western Africa's historiography.[15] In southern Africa, by contrast, discussions surrounding nineteenth-century chiefs and state-builders were not used to inform the policies of indirect rule; they were used to legitimize the invention of settler policies and the eventual formation of Bantustans. Throughout the 1900s, as Julian Cobbing argued in 1988,[16] academic descriptions of violent chieftaincies and pasts, supposedly characterized by "black on black destruction," developed during a period when European historians and settlers were engineering political and legal institutions that sought to systematically disenfranchise local communities from settler societies. Historical claims, reflected in accounts written by Eric Walker in 1928 and John Omer-Cooper in 1966, infused apartheid policy with a particular historical logic.[17]

Throughout colonial Africa, however, the institutional authority of chiefs could only be pressed so far.[18] In no place was this clearer than in the creation of native and colonial courts. Alan Booth has shown in his work on court life in colonial Swaziland, for instance, how colonial courts offered young Swazi women recourse to elude the authority of chiefs, who sought to legislate women's movements.[19] More broadly, religious courts, too, constituted spaces within which women challenged male authority. As Derek Peterson has shown in his work on the East African Revival in colonial

[15] See, for example: Michael Crowder and Obaro Ikime (eds.), *West African Chiefs: Their Changing Status under Colonial Rule and Independence* (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1970); Adiele E. Afigbo, *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria* (London: Longman, 1972); Richard Rathbone, *Nkrumah and the Chiefs: The Politics of Chieftaincy in Ghana 1951–60* (London: James Currey, 2000); Sara Berry, *Chiefs Know their Boundaries: Essays on Property, Power, and the Past in Asante, 1896–1996* (Oxford: James Currey, 2001).

[16] Julian Cobbing, "The Mfecane as Alibi: Thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolompo," *Journal of African History* 29–3 (1988), 487–519. The best review articles on the extensive historiography surrounding *Mfecane* and early nineteenth-century military politics in South Africa are: J.B. Peires, "Paradigm Deleted: The Materialist Interpretation of the Mfecane," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 19–2 (1993), 295–313; Norman Etherington, "A Tempest in a Teapot? Nineteenth-Century Contests for Land in South Africa's Caledon Valley and the Invention of the Mfecane," *Journal of African History* 45–2 (2004), 203–219.

[17] Eric A. Walker, *A History of South Africa* (London: Longmans, 1928); John D. Omer-Cooper, *The Zulu Aftermath: A Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Bantu Africa* (London: Longmans, 1966).

[18] Berry, *Chiefs Know their Boundaries.*

[19] Alan R. Booth, "'European Courts Protect Women and Witches:' Colonial Law Courts as Redistributors of Power in Swaziland 1920–1950," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18–2 (1992), 253–275. For a comparable study on colonial Kenya see: Brett L. Shadle, "Bridewealth and Female Consent: Marriage Disputes in African Courts, Gusiiland, Kenya," *Journal of African History* 44 (2003), 241–262.

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Kenya, "[l]oud-mouthed Revivalists broke church laws, refusing elders' authority and publicizing marital wrongs best kept private. Church elders condemned wordy converts for the sexual and political delinquency."[20] Women used institutional courts to contest the moral boundaries within which communities were obliged to operate.

Institutions and Uganda's Historiography

As was the case across much of colonial Africa, European rule brought with it considerable changes to Uganda's institutional landscapes. From courts to churches, imported institutions assumed key roles in shaping the nature of the colonial encounter, as well as the contours of the postcolonial state. In the last decade or so, institutions have become more prominent within Ugandan historiography. As new archival sources become available, historians are reconsidering the types of institutions – official and otherwise – that have shaped Uganda's state and society. Whereas earlier scholarship had a regional or local focus, producing rich studies of specific communities, more recent works have examined how institutions impacted the imaginaries and experiences of Ugandans across time and space. Whether writing about universities, militaries, healthcare facilities, or government bureaucracies, this newer scholarship considers how institutions inform constellations of identity and authority, and the ways that Ugandans have actively informed and contested institutional life.[21] Richard Reid's recent monograph, *A History of Modern Uganda,* is one of the most productive interventions in this field. Reid traces the significance of a wide range of institutions – including kingship, the military, churches, universities, economic networks, and museums – in shaping conceptions of Uganda as a nation.[22]

The articles in this collection illuminate the ways in which Ugandans – or more specifically political leaders in the early colonial period, Acholi intellectuals and Jonam ethnic patriots in the 1950s, and prison

[20] Derek R. Peterson, "Wordy Women: Gender Trouble and the Oral Politics of the East African Revival," *Journal of African History* 42–3 (2001), 469–489, 472.

[21] Some examples include: Carol Sicherman, *Becoming an African University: Makerere 1922–2000* (Trenton NJ: Africa World Press, 2005); Alicia C. Decker, *In Idi Amin's Shadow: Women, Gender, and Militarism in Uganda* (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2014); Yolana Pringle, "Investigating 'Mass Hysteria' in Early Postcolonial Uganda: Benjamin H. Kagwa, East African Psychiatry, and the Gisu," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 70–1 (2015), 105–136; Kathleen Vongsathorn, "'First and Foremost the Evangelist'? Mission and Government Priorities for the Treatment of Leprosy in Uganda, 1927–48," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 6–3 (2012), 544–560; Derek R. Peterson and Edgar C. Taylor, "Rethinking the State in Amin's Uganda: The Politics of Exhortation," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 7–1 (2013), 58–82.

[22] Richard J. Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

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officers working under Idi Amin's regime – engaged with a variety of institutions. Despite the diversity of time periods, actors, and institutions studied, these articles find common ground in a number of ways. First, they all anchor their inquiries around a particular set of sources, whether material, vernacular, ethnographic, or archival. By placing these sources – their provenance, circulation, and insertion into historical debates – at the heart of the analysis, the articles speak to central methodological questions that are arising amidst the shifting evidentiary terrain available to historians of Uganda.

Beyond the focus on sources, these articles share two other points of overlap. All of them explore institutions from the vantage point of social and intellectual history, tracing particular personalities and relationships to illuminate the affective dimensions of institutional interaction and the circulation of local and colonial knowledge. Early colonial diplomacy appears in Alison Bennett's article as more than a set of transactions; it is instead presented as a gift economy in which elite Ugandan actors sought to position themselves as gatekeepers of a particular vision of authority and history. Adrian Browne's article unpacks the intensely personal dimensions of ethnographic research, as well as illuminating a dissenting politics in which members of the Jonam community challenged the dismissal of their identity within academic and official circles. Patrick Otim's article provides insight into the nexus of relationships that shaped the views and writings of Lacito Okech, an intermediary figure whose roles included *La or Pa Rwot* or royal messenger in Acholiland, colonial clerk, Christian convert, and historian. Finally, Katherine Bruce-Lockhart's article discusses the everyday experiences of prison officers, examining how the quotidian aspects of their work were shaped by wider debates about national identity as well as more intimate and interpersonal concerns.

Despite writing about institutions entangled with colonialism – including physical spaces such as prisons and museums, as well as disciplinary, diplomatic, political, and religious spheres – each author foregrounds Ugandan perspectives and self-representations. By underscoring how Ugandans make claims and position their identities, these articles challenge longstanding narratives drawn from external perspectives. Bennett's article situates early colonial diplomacy beyond the narrow confines of the European "official mind," looking instead at the strategies and negotiations of political leaders from a variety of regions. Both Browne and Otim draw on the perspectives of ethnic patriots. Tracing the contest between anthropologist Aidan Southall and the Jonam community, Browne unpacks Southall's valorization of the Alur ethnonym through processes of ethnographic knowledge production, as well as the rejection of this identity amongst the Jonam. Otim explores the life and career of Okech, focusing in particular on his book *Tekwaro ki Ker Lobo Acholi*, or "History and Chieftainship of Acholiland." As the first written account of Acholi

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history, this book represented a "landmark in the production of historical knowledge" for the region.[23] Last, Bruce-Lockhart's article brings to light the social worlds of prison officers, illuminating the range of relationships, identities, and communities that shaped their professional experiences, as well as how they used paperwork to present their personhood within wider bureaucratic structures.

Along with these shared themes, the articles also reflect a number of emerging research agendas, both within Ugandan historiography and the field of African history more broadly. First, historians are increasingly interested in institutions as arenas of contested historical representation and competing historical imaginations, as Jonathon Earle shows in his recent book on intellectual life in colonial Buganda.[24] This is most evident in the study of public memory, museums, and heritage industries, in which discussions of Uganda are increasingly prominent.[25] Bennett's article examines how museum collections past and present have been crucial sites for negotiating the colonial encounter and memories of this period, while Browne and Bruce-Lockhart both examine the place of the archive – in the form of both official and personal collections – in shaping particular historical narratives. Otim, like Earle, shows the extent to which colonial Acholiland constituted an arena of historical debate about the past; and the ways in which Acholi intellectuals, like their southern counterparts in Buganda, were part of a regional movement to create useful political historiographies. Second, there is a growing emphasis on the impact of colonial institutions following independence. As Frederick Cooper reminds us, Uganda and its colonial counterparts elsewhere were "successor states," whose physical, ideological, and institutional infrastructure was in a large part inherited from imperial rule.[26] Whether through the study of psychiatrists, lawyers, or police officers, scholars still have much to unpack when it comes to understanding the role of institutions in the postcolonial

[23] Patrick Otim, "Local Intellectuals: Lacito Okech and the Production of Knowledge in Colonial Acholiland," this volume.

[24] Jonathon L. Earle, *Colonial Buganda and the End of Empire: Political Thought and Historical Imagination in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[25] See for example: Derek R. Peterson, Kodzo Gavua and Ciraj Rassool (eds.), *The Politics of Heritage in Africa: Economies, Histories, and Infrastructures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2015). On Uganda specifically, see: Derek R. Peterson, "A History of the Heritage Economy in Yoweri Museveni's Uganda," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 10-4 (2016), 789–806. See also: Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*.

[26] Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 156.

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landscape.[27] In Uganda, such inquiries are particularly urgent in a political climate of increasing privatization and decentralization. While Bruce-Lockhart's article tackles these themes most explicitly, both Browne and Bennett consider the legacies of colonial institutions in terms of the ongoing struggles over questions of identity and sites of memory in the postcolonial period, while Otim provides a glimpse of the impact of Okech's work in resolving local political disputes after independence.

Finally, these articles touch on broader discussions about the decolonization of knowledge production, a pressing concern in the Africanist academy and also a focus of contemporary social movements on the continent and elsewhere. Browne's article considers how particular configurations of disciplinary practice produced, silenced or impacted the ongoing creation of categories of belonging in Uganda. Bennett's article touches on the politics of the repatriation of objects of material culture; while Bruce-Lockhart broadly considers how newly accessible archives complicate depictions of the postcolonial state in Uganda as a site of disorder. Otim's research asserts the importance of treating vernacular sources as sites of knowledge production, while also bringing to the foreground a part of Acholiland's history that is often overlooked at the expense of more recent events.

This increasing emphasis on institutions opens up a number of analytical possibilities. By putting these institutions at the centre of our analysis, we can ground our inquiries into various aspects of colonial power and its aftereffects. Examining how Ugandans imagined, helped create, interacted with, and contested institutional practices and forms speaks to many wider themes that have animated Africanist historical inquiries, from debates about modernity to discussions of respectability, state-building, and national identity. Whether in the colonial or postcolonial period, institutions were a place where Ugandan populations worked, came into contact with the state, and created new relational moorings. Furthermore, this institutional focus helps to de-center Ugandan historiography from its longstanding southern bias. The articles here examine a variety of regions, underscoring the increasing diversity of the field. Browne and Otim's articles, which move us into northern Uganda, draw on themes that are of wide interest to Ugandanists, particularly their emphasis on the processes that surrounded local knowledge creation and contestation. In a different vein, Bennett

[27] Examples include: Matthew M. Heaton, *Black Skin, White Coats: Nigerian Psychiatrists, Decolonization, and the Globalization of Psychiatry* (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2013); George H. Karekwaivanane, "'Through the Narrow Door:' Narratives of the First Generation of African Lawyers in Zimbabwe," *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 86–1 (2016), 59–77; Branwyn Poleykett and Peter Mangesho, "Labour Politics and Africanization at a Tanzanian Scientific Research Institute, 1949–66," *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 86–1 (2016), 142–161.

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demonstrates how a variety of political leaders – including those in Busoga, Acholiland, Ankole, and Buganda – used gift giving as a strategic tool in shaping their interactions with Europeans. While this shared practice did not necessarily bring these communities together, it demonstrates the ways in which elites from of a variety of regions deployed some similar strategies when navigating the European encounter. Finally, Bruce-Lockhart's work is grounded on a national institution, where professional, regional, and ethnic identities intersected in a variety of ways to produce new configurations of belonging.

Uganda's Changing Research Landscape

Along with examining the histories of institutions, this special issue considers the types of sources that render such histories legible. Uganda's research landscape has changed considerably in the last decade or so.[28] Successive years of relative political stability have made it easier to conduct research in the country, although Yoweri Museveni's renunciation of the humanities has created significant barriers for scholars based in Uganda. Rather than relying on sources held outside Uganda, historians are increasingly utilizing a range of source materials within the country. As Bruce-Lockhart maps out in her article, this has been in part due a range of archival reconstruction projects led by Derek Peterson and the University of Michigan. These initiatives, carried out by both foreign and local researchers, have resulted in a number of crucial government archives being organized and catalogued.[29] Ugandan scholars, archivists, and university students studying records and archives management have been integral to these projects. While there are certainly ongoing challenges for historians conducting archival research, they do not face many of the obstacles encountered by scholars writing in this journal less than two decades ago.[30]

In the past few years, Ugandan sources have been the focus of a number of new and exciting digital humanities initiatives, making archival sources much more widely accessible as well as helping to ensure their preservation. One of the largest projects has centered on the archives of the Church of Uganda, held at Uganda Christian University (UCU) in Mukono.

[28] For an overview of these changes, see: Derek R. Peterson, "Uganda's History from the Margins," *History in Africa* Special 40th Anniversary Issue (2013), s23–s25.

[29] For more on this, see: Edgar C. Taylor, Ashley Brooke Rockenbach and Natalie Bond, "Archives and the Past: Cataloguing and Digitisation in Uganda's Archives," in: Terry Barringer and Marion Wallace (eds.), *African Studies in the Digital Age. DisConnects?* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 163–178.

[30] Kathryn Barrett-Gaines and Lynn Khadiagala, "Finding What You Need in Uganda's Archives," *History in Africa* 27 (2000), 455–470; Caroline Howell, "A Cupboard of Surprises: Working in the Archives of the Church of Uganda," *History in Africa* 28 (2001), 411–415.

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UCU, the Yale University Divinity School Library, and Brill/IDC publishers have collaborated to digitize nearly five thousand archival files, which date from the 1880s to the 1980s.[31] A similarly large-scale digitization project emerged out of a partnership between the Centre for African Development Studies at Mountains of the Moon University in Western Uganda, the Cooperative Africana Materials Project (CAMP), and the University of Michigan.[32] Through this project, over four hundred thousand pages of archival material from Tooro Kingdom, Kabarole District, Hoima District, and the Kabarole Forestry Office have been digitized, providing unprecedented insight into the politics of this region.[33]

Other new digital collections have focused on intellectual histories. Jonathon L. Earle and the staff of the African Studies Centre at the University of Cambridge have worked together to digitize the papers of Eridadi M.K. Mulira, a Protestant intellectual in Uganda who helped co-author the country's first postcolonial constitution. In total, 4,471 images have been digitized, providing researchers with intimate insight into the region's late colonial and religious politics.[34] In a similar vein, Samantha Stevens-Hall is currently creating an "open access digital archive of primary sources and supplementary materials" based on the writings of prominent Ugandan intellectuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[35] Along with digitizing these sources, Stevens-Hall is also reflecting more broadly on the ethical implications of such digital humanities projects and their entanglement in wider debates about the decolonization of colonial knowledge – questions that will become increasingly pressing as more digitization efforts emerge.

All of the articles in this collection benefit from and engage with this new research landscape, utilizing a wide range of source materials. Bennett argues persuasively for more "object-based histories" in the study of Uganda's

[31] "Archives of the Church of Uganda," University of Michigan Library, accessed 14 December 2017, https://www.lib.umich.edu/database/archives-church-uganda.

[32] Derek R. Peterson, "Archive Catalogues," accessed 14 December 2017, https://derekrpeterson.com/archive-work/. For more on this project, see: Jason M. Schultz, "Supporting Capacity Building for Archives in Africa: Initiatives of the Cooperative Africana Materials Project (CAMP) since 1995," *African Research & Documentation* 121 (2013), 3–12.

[33] Peterson, "Archive Catalogues."

[34] Jonathon L. Earle, "Finding Aid: Eridadi M.K. Mulira Papers: Cambridge Centre of African Studies," accessed 14 December 2017, https://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/handle/1810/257485.

[35] Samantha Stevens-Hall, "Making Uganda's Intellectual History Digital: Knowledge Preservation and Ethical Considerations," Lewis & Ruth Sherman Centre for Digital Scholarship, 1 December 2017, accessed 14 December 2017, http://scds.ca/making-ugandas-intellectual-history-digital-knowledge-preservation-and-ethical-considerations/.

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past, articulating their role as "vehicles for navigating cultural memory, local and colonial power, civic debates and ideals, and identity politics."[36] Bruce-Lockhart's work draws on a range of newly catalogued district archive collections and the disparate archival files of the Uganda Prisons Service, putting these into conversation with memoirs, newspapers, and oral histories. Along with providing a detailed examination of famed anthropologist Aidan Southall's private papers and published works, Browne too draws on a wide range of archival materials based in Uganda, as well as media sources, older ethnographic scholarship on communities in Uganda's Northern Albertine region, and more familiar archival collections housed in the United Kingdom. Otim's work employs a vernacular source base long overlooked by historians, reminding us of the rich intellectual terrain that can be accessed through texts written in local languages. Finally, each article considers the political afterlives of these sources, assessing their position within wider debates on knowledge production from the early colonial period to the present day. These include issues regarding the movement and ownership of material objects, the role of ethnographic knowledge in suppressing and cementing particular identities, the interaction between local and colonial sources of knowledge, and how official archives can complicate dominant images of the postcolonial state as site of chaos and brutality.

The Limits of Researching Institutional Life and Institutional Sources

But if these articles highlight the possibility of rethinking institutional histories in modern Africa, they also underscore the limits of institutional gazing. As Neil Kodesh has argued in his work on precolonial public healing, institutions of power, including institutional sources, can only say so much.[37] Institutions and institutional sources – like all subjects and sources – have their limits. Museums, ethnographies, Christian histories published in colonial capitals, and prison records all underscore the intimate and contested processes that surrounded the standardization of colonial and local knowledge, and institutional legitimacy. In this respect, the articles in this special collection begin to identify the challenges that surround both the framing of institutional histories – and moving beyond them – and the fetishization of archives and their digitization. If the preservation and digitization of institutional archives is a cause for celebration, it is also a moment for pause.

Alison Bennett's article raises important questions about gift-giving cultures, or cultures of reciprocity, in early colonial eastern Africa. It asks why certain material objects were considered museum-worthy in the creation

[36] Alison Bennett, "Diplomatic Gifts: Rethinking Colonial Politics in Uganda through Objects," this volume.

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

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of European repositories. At one level, "gifts reinforced the image of dynastic and ritual authority of the Southern Ugandan Kingdoms and their masculine material culture," while they also raised important insights into the relationship between shifting conceptions and practices of gender and ritual regalia.[38]

Correlations between the past and the present of Uganda studies and the parallels between the creation of colonial museum registries and searchable digital records are similar. *Who* precisely is defining *what* sources are "worthy" of digitization? To what extent do these sources and their geographies reinforce the ostensible legitimacy of the country's southern and western regions – and the scholarship that focuses on the past of these places? Digital records and searchable databases are useful, but for whom and for how long? How many institutions in Africa can actually afford Brill's searchable database of the Church of Uganda archives? To what extent does digitization undermine the types of social reciprocity that Bennett explores and the sustainability of local repositories, universities, and other institutions of local knowledge? In what ways does a preoccupation with institutional spaces and archives call into question the importance of language acquisition, as Otim's article highlights, and long-term fieldwork? And who are the rightful owners of these collections? Surely, to some extent, copyright and intellectual property laws reinforce the political and economic hegemonies and research agendas of the global north.

In ways that echo the earlier sentiments of the history philosopher Edward Carr – that students of the past ought to "re-enact what goes on in the mind of the historian" or "[s]tudy the historian before you begin to study the facts" – Browne's article challenges us to rethink the impact that communities in northern Uganda had on the biography and scholarship of one of Uganda's influential late colonial writers, Aidan Southall. [39] In doing so, he asks us to provincialize the directionality of colonial knowledge and the development of the Ugandan academy. As the British anthropologist Aidan Southall reworked the ethnic classifications of Jonam and Alur, he was in fact adapting the political agenda of the Alur patriot Peter Ringe, who, as an African member of the protectorate's Legislative Council, sought to imagine a distinctive, unified Alur polity to contest the political claims of southern kingdoms following the Second World War. Southall and Ringe spent considerable amounts of time together conducting fieldwork and relaxing. Over time, Southall's changing understanding of the Northern Albertine past was significantly impacted by Ringe's historical vision. By innovatively underscoring this intellectual constellation, Browne reorients the study and inspirations that propelled colonial scholarship, offering new possibilities for understanding the impact of African knowledge on the formation of the European academy.

[38] Bennett, "Diplomatic Gifts."
[39] Edward H. Carr, *What Is History?* (London: Penguin Books, 1961), 23.

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Similarly, Bruce-Lockhart's article challenges conventional understandings of Africa's postcolonial carceral spaces, particularly during Idi Amin's Uganda, which, following accounts of "grisly murders and grim conditions," have often been viewed as sites of institutional corruption and state violence.[40] But as Bruce-Lockhart argues, 1970s Uganda was also a period within which prison officers used literacy and institutional and recreational spaces to assert and rework older forms of social obligation and family life. Prison workers, she maintains, "socialized in a variety of common and residential spaces, played on sports teams or in musical groups together, went to church services, and fell in love."[41] To uncover an institutional world that has been largely overlooked in Africanist historiography, her article draws extensively from personnel files. By using service applications, performance reviews, disciplinary records, petitions to avoid dismissal, and transfer requests, Bruce-Lockhart is able to move us beyond the bureaucratic machinery of the state and into the interiority of everyday life and aspiration, in all its ambiguity and clarity.

Otim's article shows how the academic and colonial preoccupation with the institutions of kingship in southern and western Uganda has precluded scholarship on the social, political, and intellectual histories of colonial Acholiland. The institutionalization of southern historiography and the presence of British and Baganda missionaries in northern Uganda bolstered a particular royalist perspective – seen in the writings of Apolo Kaggwa, for instance – that writers such as Lacito Okech were obliged to contest. The claims of southern kingships upon a colonial state governed by an imperial monarchy challenged activists in Uganda's republican arenas to both adapt and rewrite royalist rhetoric and honorifics.

What is at stake in these articles is a fundamental rereading of institutions and practices that have long interested scholars: museums, the academy, religious literacy, and postcolonial penal spaces. Viewing the British Museum through the managerial collection and distribution strategies of the early colonial historian and prime minister of Buganda, Apolo Kaggwa; assessing the far-reaching impact of local relationships and historical arguments on the biography and research methodology of one of Uganda's premier late colonial anthropologists; considering the processes of history-making in colonial Acholiland; and inspecting the inner social world of Uganda's prison workers during Amin's Uganda. Colonial and postcolonial institutions were not merely the public presence of the state in everyday life in modern Uganda. Interpreted from within the social and intellectual worlds in which they were inhabited, we can begin to see that colonial and postcolonial institutions embodied much larger and longer contested pasts and practices, and the possibilities of alternative futures.

[40] Katherine Bruce-Lockhart, "The Archival Afterlives of Prison Officers in Idi Amin's Uganda: Writing Social Histories of the Postcolonial State," this volume.

[41] Bruce-Lockhart, "The Archival Afterlives."

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