

THE POLITICS OF TRANSCENDENCE IN COLONIAL UGANDA*

I

INTRODUCTION

The Ekibina kya Katonda omu Ayinza Byona (Church of God Who Can Do All Things) was formed in 1914. Its moving spirit was Joswa Kate, colonial Uganda's leading nonconformist. Members of the Church — known as Malakites, after their chief preacher, Malaki Musajakaawa — believed all medicine, whether traditional or modern, to be a human conceit. They would not consent to undergo treatment for their own illnesses, and neither would they allow their cattle to be inoculated against disease. Kate argued that illness was an act of divine providence: 'If God wishes to bring sickness or ill health on human beings or animals, no one can stop it', he wrote.¹ Medicine was therefore trickery, a contrivance that deceitfully elevated human design above God's will.

Kate and his thousands of followers horrified the Christian aristocracy that governed the kingdom of Buganda, and British missionaries thought the Malakites' aversion to medicine to be both 'anti-social' and a 'menace' to public health.² The aristocracy were ardent in their condemnation. The prime minister and the chief justice of Buganda accused Kate and his followers of fomenting rebellion against the king. 'We have never heard of religious bodies which rebel and which refuse to observe the lawful orders and laws of the country', they wrote. If Kate's movement was not crushed, they told the king, 'everyone who does not wish to obey the laws . . . or who hates Europeans and yourself, or who wishes to be lazy or not to work . . . will attach themselves to the Society [that is, the Malakites] and refuse

* Earlier drafts of this essay were presented before helpful audiences at the Eisenberg Center for Historical Studies at the University of Michigan and at the British Institute in Eastern Africa.

¹ Quoted in Fred Welbourn, 'Abamalaki in Buganda, 1914–19', Aug. 1956: Makerere University Library, Kampala (hereafter MUL), MS 276.7611.

² Sir Albert R. Cook, *Uganda Memories, 1897–1940* (Kampala, 1945), 324.

to obey orders'.³ In 1929 the kingdom's police attempted to vaccinate a congregation of Kate's followers; six people died in the ensuing fracas. Prompted by the outraged ruling elite, the British government deported Kate and Musajakaawa to Uganda's far north, where Musajakaawa died a premature death and Kate lived in exile for two decades.

Protestant aristocrats and Malakite dissidents contended over their political loyalties because they lived in radically different dispensations. Buganda's Protestant elite avidly pursued the credentials of colonial modernity. They saw themselves as professionals, whose knowledge and education were assets that entitled them to exercise authority over others. They earned their qualifications through a structured process of accreditation. Their lives were punctuated by a finite series of dated events — baptism, marriage, examinations, promotions — which described each individual's standing within the religious, political or educational establishment. A *curriculum vitae* is, among other things, a way of life. By accumulating certificates, earning degrees and accruing credentials, Ganda professionals made themselves legible in the eyes of British authorities, and so they enjoyed a pre-eminent position in the administration of colonial Uganda.⁴

Kate and his followers refused to recognize the experts who governed the kingdom. They were living on a different register from their Protestant contemporaries. Kate himself made strenuous efforts to circumvent the temporal and political confines of his time. In 1889 he had assumed the office of *mugema*, the hereditary chief of Busiro county, where many of the ancestors of the *kabaka*, the king of Buganda, were buried. His post made him 'prime minister to the dead' and the ritual father of the *kabaka*. It was the *mugema* who, when a new *kabaka* came to power, invested him with his powers, and it was the *mugema* before whom the new king swore fidelity to the new nation.⁵ Kate's office made him the spokesman for elemental things. He habitually refused to eat food that other people had

³ Martin Luther Nsibirwa and Serwano Kulubya to the *kabaka* of Buganda, 27 July 1929: The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA (Kew)), CO 536/157/7.

⁴ The term 'Ganda' (plural, 'Baganda') is an ethnonym that refers to the African inhabitants of the kingdom of Buganda.

⁵ Described in John Roscoe, *The Baganda: An Account of their Native Customs and Beliefs* (1911; 2nd edn, London, 1965), 197–9.

prepared for him, preferring to take each of the components of a meal separately, ending with the salt; he had a square bed made for himself, so that he would not be forced to lie in any particular direction; he would not wear a hat as God had given him hair to cover his head.⁶ Kate's followers similarly lived at a tangent. One of them, Reubeni Musoke, devised a new calendar for the Malakites to follow. It was organized around 357 days, or fifty-one weeks, and featured twelve months bearing new names. Musoke called it 'the calendar of the church of God the Almighty — the best and most perfect in Buganda'.⁷

The kingdom's professionals carefully metered the passage of time, which could be saved, or wasted, or spent as capital.⁸ People who spent their time wisely became experts, possessors of competences and credentials, who were thereby entitled to exact obedience from other people. Professional knowledge was knowledge that was saved and accumulated, possessed as an asset by some and not others. The Malakites, on the other hand, were invested in a text, the Bible, that belonged to a commonwealth. It was first published in the Ganda language in 1896; the mass-market edition was three inches thick and fitted perfectly into a two-pound Huntley and Palmers biscuit tin.⁹ Along with other Christian texts it commanded a vast readership. The Anglican mission in Buganda sold over 750,000 books between 1893 and 1911 to a population of about a million.¹⁰ The Malakites cited the Bible extensively in the voluminous correspondence they carried on with the kingdom's establishment. They inhabited an open-source economy of knowledge. In their engagement with Christian theology, they found a means by which to provincialize the rule of experts.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed a worldwide proliferation of organizations that defended God's

⁶ See F. B. Welbourn, *East African Rebels: A Study of Some Independent Churches* (London, 1961), 31–2.

⁷ Reubeni Musoke, 'Explanation of the History B.C. 4004', 10 Dec. 1924: MUL, MS 276.7611.

⁸ See Jean Comaroff, 'Missionaries and Mechanical Clocks: An Essay on Religion and History in South Africa', *Journal of Religion*, lxxi (1991).

⁹ Louis Timothy Manarin, 'And the Word Became Kigambo: Language, Literacy and Bible Translation in Buganda, 1875–1931' (Indiana University Ph.D. thesis, 2008), 129.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 224; Roscoe, *Baganda*, 6.

prerogatives against medical expertise.¹¹ In Massachusetts the founder of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy, and her followers railed against allopaths, hydropaths, Grahamites and mentalists, all of whom had developed elaborate therapeutic regimes to deal with human illness. The Christian Scientists argued that disease was an illusion, not a real affliction, and that believers could be cured through prayer, without the intervention of experts.¹² Eddy's movement was one among a number of Christian organizations in the United States and Canada that sought to harness divine power in order to advance human healing.¹³ African Christians were likewise pioneering new ways of thinking about health. Missionaries from John Alexander Dowie's church in Zion, Illinois, had reached South Africa in 1904, and soon thousands of Africans were crowding into Zionist rallies in search of a cure.¹⁴ In the Gold Coast (modern-day Ghana) Africans were avid readers of the newspaper published by the Faith Tabernacle in Philadelphia. In 1918 African converts established the first Faith Tabernacle centre in the Gold Coast, where they apparently healed thousands of people suffering from influenza.¹⁵ The pandemic of 1918–19 witnessed the multiplication of faith healing churches throughout Africa, as Christians disillusioned by the failures of the colonial medical establishment sought other therapies.¹⁶ In

¹¹ Described in the American context in Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine* (New York, 1982).

¹² Rennie B. Schoepflin, *Christian Science on Trial: Religious Healing in America* (Baltimore, 2002); Rosemary R. Hicks, 'Religion and Remedies Reunited: Rethinking Christian Science', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, xx (2004). Eddy's defining work was *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (Boston, 1875).

¹³ Heather D. Curtis, *Faith in the Great Physician: Suffering and Divine Healing in American Culture, 1860–1900* (Baltimore, 2007); James Opp, *The Lord for the Body: Religion, Medicine, and Protestant Faith Healing in Canada, 1880–1930* (Montreal, 2005).

¹⁴ Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People* (Chicago, 1985); Matthew Schoffeleers, 'Ritual Healing and Political Acquiescence: The Case of the Zionist Churches in Southern Africa', *Africa*, lx (1991); Retief Müller, *African Pilgrimage: Ritual Travel in South Africa's Christianity of Zion* (Farnham, 2011). We await the publication of Joel Cabrita's manuscript on the transnational history of the Zionist movement.

¹⁵ Adam Mohr, 'Capitalism, Chaos, and Christian Healing: Faith Tabernacle Congregation in Southern Colonial Ghana, 1918–26', *Journal of African History*, lii (2011).

¹⁶ Argued in Terence Ranger, 'The Influenza Pandemic in Southern Rhodesia: A Crisis of Comprehension', in David Arnold (ed.), *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies* (Manchester, 1988). See also David Killingray, 'A New Imperial Disease': The Influenza Pandemic of 1918–1919 and its Impact on the British Empire', in

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southern Nigeria, where the virus had killed 250,000 people, members of the newly established Aladura (Prayer) Church burned their fetishes and sought a remedy in prayer.¹⁷ In Congo the prophet Simon Kimbangu heard God's call while thousands of people lay dying from the disease. He healed the sick by laying hands upon them, insisting, like the Aladura, that people who wished to be cured should destroy their fetishes, avoid doctors and worship God alone.¹⁸

The Malakite Church represented a chapter in the longer global history of resistance to the powers of medical expertise. Like their contemporaries in other parts of the world, Malakite Christians responded to the expansion of doctors' authority by emphasizing God's surpassing power. The first British officials to report on the movement called it a 'new section of Christian Science', and attributed its popularity to the 'dislike, disbelief, and fear of doctors and surgeons among many classes of the community'.¹⁹ But while Kate's movement shared a profound distrust for biomedicine with Eddy's followers, the Malakites were not a faith healing church. Nowhere in the archival record is there evidence to show that Malakite leaders sought to heal people. There were no special prayers that demanded divine healing; there was no holy water, no honey, pebbles or other objects that could be imbued with healing power. Neither was there charisma: Kate was a famously generous man, but neither he nor his colleagues claimed the power to heal the sick. The Malakites seem to have borne with their diseases; they regarded illness as a consequence of a life of faithfulness, not a condition that demanded healing.

Scholarship on the history and anthropology of medicine in Africa is guided by the commendably liberal premiss that people may seek healing for their afflictions along divergent paths. The aim of scholars is to relativize the authority of

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Juanita De Barros and Sean Stilwell (eds.), *Colonialism and Health in the Tropics*, special issue of *Caribbean Quarterly*, xlix (2003).

¹⁷ J. D. Y. Peel, *Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yoruba* (London, 1968), 60–2; J. D. Y. Peel, 'Syncretism and Religious Change', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, x (1968).

¹⁸ Marie-Louise Martin, *Kimbangu: An African Prophet and his Church*, trans. D. M. Moore (Oxford, 1975), 44.

¹⁹ Annual report, Buganda province, 1914/15: Uganda National Archives, Entebbe (hereafter UNA), A 46/426.

biomedicine, redeem healers from the aspersions that have been cast upon them, and give the practice of traditional medicine a logic, a trajectory and a history. The eminent historian Steven Feierman played the foundational role. His article 'The Social Roots of Health and Healing in Modern Africa' argued that African healing practices were grounded in a social and material rationality.²⁰ In subsequent work he coined the term 'public healing' to define the integrative work done by healers. He argued that communities can suffer 'collective analogues of illness'; it was the healer who organized knowledge, coordinated therapeutic movements, and healed people and communities.²¹ In Feierman's wake a substantial body of scholarship has highlighted the socially integrative labour that the practice of healing entails.²² There is a parallel body of work investigating the professionalization of 'traditional medicine' and the role that African researchers have played in the expansion of the biomedical pharmacy.²³

By linking the history of healing to that of political innovation, the new scholarship has helpfully cast light on the arenas, outside

²⁰ Steven Feierman, 'Struggles for Control: The Social Roots of Health and Healing in Modern Africa', *African Studies Review*, xxviii (1985). See also Steven Feierman and John M. Janzen (eds.), *The Social Basis of Health and Healing in Africa* (Berkeley, 1992).

²¹ The term 'public healing' was first defined in Steven Feierman, 'Healing as Social Criticism in the Time of Colonial Conquest', *African Studies*, liv (1995), and developed in Steven Feierman, 'Colonizers, Scholars and the Creation of Invisible Histories', in Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (eds.), *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley, 1999), 194–5, 203.

²² Earlier works in this literature include John M. Janzen, *The Quest for Therapy: Medical Pluralism in Lower Zaire* (Berkeley, 1982); John M. Janzen, Ngoma: *Discourses of Healing in Central and Southern Africa* (Berkeley, 1992). See, more recently, Rijk van Dijk, Ria Reis and Marja Spierenburg (eds.), *The Quest for Fruition through Ngoma: The Political Aspects of Healing in Southern Africa* (Oxford, 2000); Julie Livingston, *Debility and the Moral Imagination in Botswana* (Bloomington, 2005); Lyn Schumaker, Diana Jeater and Tracy Luedke (eds.), *Histories of Healing: Past and Present Medical Practices in Africa and the Diaspora*, special issue of *Journal of Southern African Studies*, xxxiii (Dec. 2007); Ruth J. Prince and Rebecca Marsland (eds.), *Making and Unmaking Public Health in Africa: Ethnographic and Historical Perspectives* (Athens, Ohio, 2013); Tamara Giles-Vernick and James L. A. Webb Jr (eds.), *Global Health in Africa: Historical Perspectives on Disease Control* (Athens, Ohio, 2013). For Buganda, see Neil Kodesh, *Beyond the Royal Gaze: Clanship and Public Healing in Buganda* (Charlottesville, 2010).

²³ Karen E. Flint, *Healing Traditions: African Medicine, Cultural Exchange, and Competition in South Africa, 1820–1948* (Athens, Ohio, 2008); David S. Simmons, *Modernizing Medicine in Zimbabwe: HIV/AIDS and Traditional Healers* (Nashville, 2012); Stacey A. Langwick, *Bodies, Politics, and African Healing: The Matter of Maladies in Tanzania* (Bloomington, 2011); Abena Dove Osseo-Asare, *Bitter Roots: The Search for Healing Plants in Africa* (Chicago, 2014).

the hospital and the clinic, where therapies take place and reproduction occurs. In the new scholarship, in fact, it is hard to see an outer limit to the domain of public healing, for the therapeutic impulse towards integration seems to animate culture, warfare, religion and politics: the whole social field. For scholars of public healing in Africa, as for scholars in the social sciences and humanities more generally, sociability is a positive dimension in human life. Community is the fulcrum for conviviality, trust and other virtues.²⁴ Healing is always and everywhere the desired end. While they agree that people choose to pursue different therapeutic regimes, scholars' presumption is that the goal is always the same: wholeness, health and integration.

But not everyone wishes to be healed.²⁵ Not everyone will dance to the drum of the healer, and not everyone will conform to the regimen of therapy. For all its commendable embrace of pluralism, the literature on healing in Africa (and elsewhere) takes too little account of the radical possibilities opened up by disease. Illness is a point of departure, not simply a trial to be overcome. It opens up new kinds of corporeality. Bearing with a disease can be a bodily act of dissent. The sick and incapacitated body, useless in secular life, can be a vital agent of divine revelation; bodily corruption can be a sign of faithfulness, not a burden; rupture can launch a new epoch; breaks can be liberating.

For the Malakites, sickness opened up new ways of being in the world. Illness prised the body outside the regimented time of the healer and into a different dispensation, a different timescale. In the study of Malakite Christianity we can see illness as a condition that leads not unto death, but to new life.

II

ANGLICANISM AND THE ESTABLISHMENT

The kingdom of Buganda was eastern Africa's pre-eminent Christian society. Protestant and Catholic missionaries had reached the kingdom in the 1870s, and in the 1880s and 1890s

²⁴ This argument is developed in Ilana van Wyk, *The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in South Africa: A Church of Strangers* (New York, 2014).

²⁵ As suggested in Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, 2003), ch. 2.

there was a long-running war of religion. The victors were Protestant chiefs, who used weapons provided by the British soldier Frederick Lugard to vanquish their Muslim foes and sideline their Catholic co-religionists.²⁶ The agreement signed in 1900 between the British Crown and the three regents of the Buganda kingdom was the legal cement that confirmed the Protestants' victory. It consolidated power in the hands of a hierarchy of chiefs, eliminating the spirit mediums, ritual experts and clan heads who had formerly exercised authority in Buganda's politics. And it rewarded the chiefly class with freehold estates, called *mailos*. Apolo Kagwa, leader of the Protestants and prime minister of the kingdom, received sixty-two square miles under the agreement.²⁷ In all, 3,700 Ganda men were invested with *mailo* estates under the agreement. In this way some nine thousand square miles of land passed into private ownership.

Buganda's Christian elite was forged in the fires of military conflict and political tumult. But they saw themselves as professionals, not conquistadors, with qualifications that entitled them to govern. In the early twentieth century British authorities appointed hundreds of Ganda clerks, bureaucrats and administrators to oversee colonial Uganda's distant provinces. Their competence allowed them to exercise a technocratic 'sub-imperial' authority over subject peoples in Uganda's peripheries.²⁸ In the kingdom of Toro, in the west, British officials thought the indigenous ruling clan was lacking in 'common honesty, administrative ability or sense of responsibility'.²⁹ They appointed a Ganda agent as prime minister of the kingdom. In Kigezi, in Uganda's south, Yowana Ssebalijja, hitherto a minor bureaucrat in Buganda's establishment, was made responsible for the governance of the whole territory.³⁰ The British thought

²⁶ Described in Holly Elisabeth Hanson, *Landed Obligation: The Practice of Power in Buganda* (Portsmouth, NH, 2003), ch. 4; D. A. Low, *Fabrication of Empire: The British and the Uganda Kingdoms, 1890–1902* (Cambridge, 2009); D. A. Low, *Buganda in Modern History* (London, 1971); David E. Apter, *The Political Kingdom in Uganda: A Study of Bureaucratic Nationalism* (Princeton, 1961); Michael Twaddle, *Kakungulu and the Creation of Uganda, 1868–1928* (London, 1993).

²⁷ Welbourn, *East African Rebels*, 20.

²⁸ A. D. Roberts, 'The Sub-Imperialism of the Baganda', *Journal of African History*, iii (1962).

²⁹ District commissioner, Toro, 'Historical and Political Notes on the Toro District', n.d. [1934]: Kabarole District Archives, Fort Portal, Uganda, box 482, file 1.

³⁰ Yowana Ssebalijja, 'Memories of Rukiga and Other Places', in Donald Denoon (ed.), *A History of Kigezi in South-West Uganda* (Kampala, 1972).

the system to be 'incontrovertibly successful', and lauded the 'undoubted administrative gifts of the Baganda'.³¹ Ganda technocrats thought themselves to be building careers. When the administrator Aliseni Walusimbi was dismissed from government service, he cited his *curriculum vitae* as evidence with which to procure a pension.³² Walusimbi had worked for three years as a clerk under Ssebalijja, then as a clerk of the district court, then as a sub-county chief. In 1929 the district commissioner suddenly told him, 'Your work is finished; the natives must now govern themselves'. Walusimbi thought it was a breach of faith. For him, as for other Ganda men, government work was a career that entitled them to preferment.

Ganda men earned their status through a careful process of self-advancement. The work of career-building was aggregative. It took place in institutions. It required Ganda men to navigate stages, pass examinations and gain credentials. The marriage register from the Anglican church at Namirembe, Uganda's main Protestant church, illuminates Ganda Christians' pressing need to be legible to the institutions that governed them. When, on February 1891, Bajabaita and Nabiloza were married at the church (theirs was the first wedding recorded in the register), neither of them signed the record. They imprinted their thumb marks on the marriage certificate instead.³³ In May 1891 the first signature appears in the register: Timoteo Nkangi proudly signed his name; his new wife, Bogera Okusanya, made a mark in the signature column. For Nkangi, as for other Ganda Protestants, having a Christian baptismal name was a necessary sign of attainment. When the man Wasanji reported to the Namirembe council that he had forgotten his baptismal name (he had been baptized a few months earlier), the council instructed him to choose another that very hour.³⁴ In 1896 the Anglican church council determined that Ganda people who wished to prepare for baptism had first to demonstrate that they were able

³¹ Annual report, Uganda protectorate, 1912/13, quoted in Murindwa-Rutanga, *Politics, Religion and Power in the Great Lakes Region* (Kampala, 2011), 94–5.

³² Aliseni Walusimbi to district commissioner, 7 Jan. 1940: Kigezi District Archives, Kabale, Uganda, bundle 15, Appointment and Dismissal of Chiefs file.

³³ Register of marriages solemnized at Namirembe, Buganda, 17 Feb. 1891–17 June 1895: MUL, Native Anglican Church Archives (hereafter NAC), box AR N 3/8.

³⁴ Namirembe church council minute book, 16 June 1894: MUL, NAC, box AR N 3/2.

to read in the vernacular.³⁵ From an early date, Ganda Protestants were invested in education. One of the first British missionaries remembered that

The natives were amazingly keen. Young boys and greybeards sat together in a class while being taught, often by quite a young boy, their letters and syllables from a large printed reading sheet pinned on a blackboard while the pupils repeated the sounds after him as he pointed to the letters on the sheet with a straw.³⁶

In the year 1899 the Uganda mission sold over sixty thousand books to Ganda readers. They paid a sum total of 7,358,000 cowrie shells for them, a burden that took 368 men to carry.³⁷ Readers had to pay a high price: even the smallest of reading sheets cost ten cowrie shells, the cost of a day's food.

Their educational attainments distinguished Ganda Christians from commoners, defining the political and social hierarchies that structured colonial Buganda's politics. Illiterate men found it hard to exercise influence in public life. According to official procedure, uneducated labourers were obliged to accept their pay from the paymaster's hand without signing a receipt. 'The average native signature is of little or no value as a mark of the identity' of the signatory, averred the governor.³⁸ Asking uneducated men to sign for their wages would be an unnecessary waste, and in any case, 'the state of the paysheet afterwards would be appalling'.³⁹ Educated Ganda Protestants wanted no part of the labour queues. They thought themselves the authors of their own destiny. 'The native of Buganda wants to learn and there is no power on earth which could stop a British directed subject from going to England or anywhere for his education', wrote a Ganda intellectual. 'We want to be lawyers, doctors, in fact everything the brain can master'.⁴⁰ When Erinesti Kalibala opened a night school in the Anglican church in Mengo, at the centre of Buganda, he promised to teach his students 'the meaning of the term business, [how to] develop your power of English knowledge, speak, understand, debate, write, converse

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 28 Mar. 1896.

³⁶ Mary Cook, 'Reminiscences of the First Women Missionaries to Uganda', *Uganda Church Review*, lxxvii (1948).

³⁷ *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, xxv (August 1900), 610.

³⁸ Governor to secretary of state for the colonies, 5 Nov. 1915: UNA, A 46/1350.

³⁹ First assistant secretary to chief secretary, 22 Mar. 1915: UNA, A 46/1350.

⁴⁰ 'Education', n.d. [late 1920s]: MUL, Yusufu Bamu'ta Papers, box B.

and study in English'.⁴¹ By 1935 two of the three ministers in the Buganda government, ten of the eighteen county chiefs and ninety-two of 153 sub-county chiefs were Anglicans.⁴²

The executive capacities of the Ganda ruling class were formed in Protestant churches and schools. Protestant Christianity likewise structured the marital lives of the Ganda elite. The Anglican church council ruled in 1895 that any married candidate who wished to be baptized should bring his wife before the council and agree to remain as man and wife until parted by death.⁴³ Dozens of Christian men were required to divest themselves of all but one of the women to whom they were attached. The Anglican Church conducted a long campaign against the *mukwenda*, the chief responsible for Ssingoo county, who kept a considerable number of women in his household as concubines. In January 1896 the church council interviewed the women, instructing baptized women to apply to the prime minister of Buganda for their freedom.⁴⁴ Thousands of Christian commoners were obliged to narrow the scale of their sexual and social attachments. When, for example, the man Munda applied for baptism, he was rejected because he was found to have three wives. When he chose one woman, named Luwatono, as his wife, he was accepted as a catechumen.⁴⁵ Monogamous marriages were thereby winnowed out of interwoven, unequal relationships.

In fact, a great many people found ways to circumvent the Church's rules about monogamy. Aloni Balwada, for example, had married two women; he concealed one of them on an island in Lake Victoria in order to thwart the council's investigations.⁴⁶ Balwada was not alone in his evasion. Missionaries lamented that 'secret marriage by native custom is the curse of the social life of the Baganda'.⁴⁷ But while many Christian men established secretive relationships with women, these arrangements could

⁴¹ Handbill enclosed in A. M. Williams to Handley Hooper, 18 Oct. 1934: University of Birmingham Library, Church Mission Society Archives, G3 A7 O.

⁴² 'Synopsis of Comparative List of Catholic and Protestant Chiefs in Buganda', 1935: Rubaga Cathedral Archives, Kampala (hereafter Rubaga), D.99 f.2.

⁴³ Namirembe church council minute book, 11 May 1895.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 18 Jan. 1896.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 27 Nov. 1894.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 21 Sept. 1894.

⁴⁷ W. E. Owen to chief secretary, 10 May 1915: Uganda Christian University, Mukono, Church of Uganda Archives (hereafter CU), 02 Bp 177/19.

not be acknowledged in public life. In 1907 the Anglican synod ruled that the illegitimate children of Christian fathers should not be baptized, and in 1919 Buganda's chief justice ruled that polygamous unions entered into by Christian men could not be recognized in a court of law.⁴⁸ A few people objected to the inequities that the Church's rules promoted. The rules caused social dislocation, wrote one critic, leaving otherwise virtuous women at liberty to 'enjoy moving to and fro prostituting in the Buganda Kingdom and spoil[ing] the religion throughout'.⁴⁹ This commentator wanted the law courts to recognize and regulate marriages conducted outside the Christian Church. But his view drew very little support. The Ganda elite saw the social architecture of Christian monogamy as an essential mark of civility. When the Uganda government contemplated revising the law regarding marriage, a critic wrote to 'disagree with any argument that natives of this Protectorate can safely be let go astray and be encouraged to indulge in unChristian or unreligious codes of marriages . . . Christianity is the ruling religion of England and the British empire', he argued. 'Polygamy is next to Bolshevism'.⁵⁰

Ganda families were thereby internally ranked on a hierarchical scale. The children of legally married women enjoyed the social prestige of legitimacy. They had Christian names to sign. Government bureaucrats kept a registry with details of the ownership of freehold land in Buganda; landholders' names were listed in the index.⁵¹ The children of monogamous marriages could enjoy a lineal, direct, unencumbered inheritance to their fathers' property. They righteously defended their privileges. When the Anglican bishop consented to marry the illegitimate daughter of Buganda's king in the cathedral, he occasioned a firestorm of criticism from offended Ganda Protestants. The 'Buganda kingdom belongs to the people who went to the front of the religious wars and bore the scars of these wars', wrote one critic. 'The country is a Christian country in truth and acts. The

⁴⁸ Bishop of Uganda to archbishop of Canterbury, 14 May 1929: CU, 02 Bp 9/1; Stanislas Mugwanya, 'Standing Order on Women Who Are Illegally Married', 6 May 1919: CU, 02 Bp 172/19. For discussion, see Shane Doyle, *Before HIV: Sexuality, Fertility and Mortality in East Africa, 1900–1980* (Oxford, 2013), 108–9.

⁴⁹ Yosia Myigua (?) to governor, 25 July 1935: Rubaga, D.99 f.2.

⁵⁰ G. Kintu to resident, Buganda, 17 Oct. 1938: Rubaga, D.32 f.6.

⁵¹ Discussed in director of lands and surveys to resident, Buganda, 28 Dec. 1956: UNA, Office of the President, Confidential Papers (hereafter OPC), box 17, C.56/53/04.

people's voice is that no state marriage should be done by the church for the illegitimate daughter of a Christian married king'.⁵² Ganda Protestants thought monogamy to be the fruit of their long war against paganism.

There were thousands of men and women who found themselves excluded from the civil and social arrangements that upheld the Protestant Ganda elite. In 1916 the Anglican mission counted about 55 per cent of the kingdom's total population as Christians.⁵³ But while many people identified themselves with the Church, comparatively few could enjoy the social and religious legitimacy that baptism could bring. In Mengo county only 19 per cent of the population were baptized; in Bulemeezi 13 per cent were baptized; while in Buddo only 2 per cent were baptized.⁵⁴ A vast number of Ganda people, numbering in the tens of thousands, were avowed Christians, but because the Church regarded their parents as illegitimately married, they could not enjoy the social advantages that came with baptism.

The Malakite Church was a protest movement against the religious and social inequities that Protestant Christianity upheld.⁵⁵ The motivations of its supporters can be deduced from the enthusiasm with which they received the Church's offer of baptism. During the course of a single day in November 1914, Malaki Musajakaawa is said to have baptized some 4,247 people, working into the dark hours of the night.⁵⁶ No one asked about their parentage, and no one enquired into their educational attainments. Musajakaawa simply asked, 'Do you believe in the Father, maker of heaven and earth?', and, following an affirmation, he poured water over the candidate's head. By 1921 some 91,740 people had been baptized. His first and most biddable constituency was the thousands of men and women who had been disfranchised by the Church's restrictions regarding baptism. Malakite converts took pleasure in pursuing the social possibilities that their new names afforded them. When a Malakite congregation wished to choose a teacher, the names of

⁵² Yowasi Sempa to bishop of Uganda, 23 Jan. 1937: CU, 02 Bp 9/1.

⁵³ *CMS Gazette*, cxvi (Aug.–Sept. 1916).

⁵⁴ Statistics for rural deaneries, 1917: CU, 02 Bp 238/29.

⁵⁵ See Michael Twaddle, 'The Religion of Malaki Revisited', in *Published Proceedings of the University of East Africa Social Sciences Council Conference, 1968–1969* (Kampala, 1969).

⁵⁶ Welbourn, 'Abamalaki in Buganda'.

all the baptized men were written on slips of paper and placed in a basket, and each man was told to draw out a slip. If he withdrew a slip with his name upon it, he was made the congregation's teacher.⁵⁷ There was nothing on the slip to signify rank, social status or educational attainment. The name was enough. By acquiring a Christian name, Malakites gained a purchase within the discriminatory and exclusive hierarchies of Buganda, circumventing the legal and social procedures that the Protestant establishment had erected.

Missionaries often scorned the Malakites for their ignorance and laxity. 'There is no instruction, no preparation, no inquiry as to life, no vows are asked or taken; there are no sponsors and no probation', complained an Anglican missionary.⁵⁸ The doctor Albert Cook thought the Malakites to be 'nothing less than a parody of Christianity'.⁵⁹ And Bishop John Willis thought they were morally compromised, embracing people who had been improperly married. He ruled that no Anglican should call a person by the name given him by Musajakaawa, and told government chiefs not to register a person's name until they produced a proper baptismal certificate.⁶⁰ But by the end of 1914 even Willis admitted that the Malakites were 'conspicuously moral' in their personal lives.⁶¹ In their style of worship they were strikingly orthodox. The missionary John Roscoe, who attended one of their services, thought the teaching of scripture to be thoroughly conventional. Musajakaawa, wearing a surplice, 'preached a good sermon against adultery and against sin against God'. The congregation listened attentively to the sermon (which lasted seventy minutes), looking up the scriptural passages in the bibles they carried with them.⁶² At least two African priests left the Anglican Church and joined the Malakites. Bishop Willis had them defrocked.⁶³ But it is plain that the Malakite Church was by no means distant from the Anglican Church.

⁵⁷ Described *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Revd F. Rowling, in *Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society, 1914–1915* (London, 1915).

⁵⁹ Cook, *Uganda Memories*, 323–4.

⁶⁰ Welbourn, 'Abamalaki in Buganda'.

⁶¹ Welbourn, *East African Rebels*, 42.

⁶² John Roscoe, 'A Brief Account of the Sect Known as Bamalaki', enclosure in Blasio Kaggwa to Bishop Jean Forbes, 22 Dec. 1919: Rubaga, dossier 19.F.1.

⁶³ They were Simeoni Alimanya and Zakayo Buligwanga: standing committee minutes, 6 Oct. 1927–4 Dec. 1930: MUL, NAC, box AR N 3/13.

Anglicans and Malakites shared liturgy, hymnody and vestments; they also shared congregations, for Malakite leaders encouraged their converts to attend Protestant services.

The Malakite movement was a populist refutation of the demographic exclusivity of Ganda Protestantism. Joswa Kate defended the Malakites' widening of Christianity when, in 1929, he responded to a condescending letter from Bishop Willis. 'You say that the time the Baganda have been Christians is too small, compared with the time Europeans have been Christians', wrote Kate. 'It would be good for you to remember the teachings of Christ, that "the last will come first, and the first will come last"'.⁶⁴ Kate's letter was addressed to the Anglican bishop, but it was copied to the whole establishment of Buganda: the *kabaka*, the sheikh at Kampala's principal mosque, the prime minister of Buganda and the chief judge of the kingdom. He reminded his exalted audience of Balaam's donkey, which saw God's angel standing at the bridge before its rider perceived it (Num. 22); and he cited Matthew 20: 30, in which two blind men sitting by the roadside perceive Jesus passing by and shout aloud, 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!' The thousands of people pressing into Malakite congregations were protagonists in the work of Christian revelation. It was commoners, not the accredited elite, who, like Balaam's donkey and like the two blind men, could see the truth of things.

The demographic foundation for the Malakite Church was the thousands of illegitimate children of Ganda Christian parents. Excluded from full membership in the established Church, disadvantaged in the law courts, sidelined in their own families, they developed a theology that turned their marginality into a source of authority. Drawing lessons from the story of Balaam's donkey, they rejected the establishment's emphasis on qualifications and credentials, and positioned themselves in a time and space outside the reach of Buganda's professionals.

III

MEDICINE AND THE ENDS OF LIFE

The Malakites' populist critique of establishment Christianity was particularly focused on the practice of medicine. They saw

⁶⁴ Joswa Kate to Bishop Willis, 13 May 1929: CU, 02 Bp 146/16.

medical practice as a form of idolatry. All medicine, both 'traditional' and 'modern', was, in their view, a human conceit. It elevated human design over the divine order. Malakites saw God's providential hand even in the diseases that Ganda people suffered from. In their affirmative embrace of disease, they located themselves in a different dispensation.

Colonial Uganda's establishment was geared towards coercive, campaign-style medicine. In the early 1900s officials combated a massive sleeping sickness epidemic by evacuating tens of thousands of people from their lakeside homes.⁶⁵ In the decade that followed the focus turned towards venereal disease.⁶⁶ In 1907 a team of medics from the Royal Army Medical Corps launched a syphilis control programme in Uganda.⁶⁷ The campaign was inspired by the missionary doctor Albert Cook, who estimated that infant mortality rate in Buganda was not less than 60 per cent.⁶⁸ Most of the deaths, he thought, were caused by congenital syphilis. Some 85 to 90 per cent of adults were thought to be infected with the disease.⁶⁹ Government officials lamented the lost income in poll tax and the deleterious effects of the disease on the labour pool.⁷⁰ In 1913 the Buganda government adopted the Law for Preventing Venereal Disease. Landowners were empowered to enquire among their tenants about the disease and to compel anyone found to be infected with syphilis to undergo treatment. Police and health inspectors raided brothels in Kampala, arresting hundreds of prostitutes and subjecting them to examination.⁷¹ Government doctors thought

⁶⁵ Doyle, *Before HIV*, 76–81. See also Maryinez Lyons, *The Colonial Disease: A Social History of Sleeping Sickness in Northern Zaire, 1900–1940* (Cambridge, 1992).

⁶⁶ Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness* (Stanford, 1991), ch. 6. See also Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (London, 2003).

⁶⁷ Michael William Tuck, 'Syphilis, Sexuality, and Social Control: A History of Venereal Disease in Colonial Uganda' (Northwestern University Ph.D. thesis, 1997), 215; Doyle, *Before HIV*, 82.

⁶⁸ Captain G. F. Keane, medical officer in charge of venereal diseases, to provincial commissioner, Buganda, 19 May 1911: UNA, A 46/422; Cook, *Uganda Memories*, 329–30.

⁶⁹ Memorandum from principal medical officer, Uganda, 22 Aug. 1922: Tanzania National Archives, Dar es Salaam (hereafter TNA (Dar es Salaam)), Acc. J (450) 19143.

⁷⁰ Annual report, Buganda province, 1910/11: UNA, A 46/422.

⁷¹ Major G. F. Keane, specialist officer, venereal diseases, 'Memorandum on Venereal Disease Legislation and Treatment in the Uganda Protectorate', 12 May 1921: TNA (Dar es Salaam), Acc. 450/3.

these round-ups to be tremendously successful: a simple visual inspection showed some 20 per cent of the people examined to have the disease.⁷² 'It is essential to divest one's mind of European conditions', wrote the British doctor who supervised the treatment of venereal disease in Uganda. 'Coercion is recognized as the customary method of introducing new ideas and advancing progress in this country. This was the case before the arrival of the British Government'.⁷³ The Ganda ruling class agreed. 'This is the most important of all questions affecting our race, to find us every year decreasing in population', wrote Nuwa Sematimba, a county chief. He concluded that the campaign 'may truly be compared to a great war'.⁷⁴

Many Ganda commoners experienced this 'great war' as authoritarianism. The campaign gave chiefs and landlords extraordinary powers over the most personal intimacies of commoners' lives. A British doctor involved in the campaign described how women in a given village would be 'driven up like cattle in groups of 50 or so' and assembled on a hillside, separated from crowds of men by only the flimsiest of partitions. There they would be obliged to undergo the 'most repulsive form of genital inspection': they were made to double over and present their gluteal regions for inspection by the doctor, while their clothes were pulled up by an attendant.⁷⁵ People found to be infected with the disease were obliged to go through a painful course of treatment. Women had their cervix treated daily with iodine or chromic acid. Men had steel or rubber tubes forced through the penis to rip out scar tissue.⁷⁶ Doctors injected sufferers with bismuth salts over the course of several weeks. According to the law, patients were obliged to undergo a full course of treatment, during which they could not trade, marry or have sex.⁷⁷

The practice of medicine was a form of discipline. It structured people's time, organized their relationships and extended

⁷² Keane, specialist officer, 'Venereal Disease in Uganda', 1922: TNA (Dar es Salaam), Acc. J (450) 19153.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Nuwa Sematimba to provincial commissioner, Buganda, 6 Feb. 1922: TNA (Dar es Salaam), Acc. J (450) 19153.

⁷⁵ National Council for Combating Venereal Disease to Colonial Office, 24 Feb. 1922: TNA (Kew), CO 536/123.

⁷⁶ Described in Tuck, 'Syphilis, Sexuality, and Social Control', 244.

⁷⁷ Doyle, *Before HIV*, 84.

doctors' and chiefs' supervision over the most intimate parts of their bodies. Even the most distinguished of Buganda's people were made to conform to the timetable of medicine. In the early 1900s, the *kabaka*, then a small child, fell ill with pneumonia. Doctors were disturbed to find that his Ganda attendants catered to his whims, allowing him to wear linen, or wool, or nothing at all. They would not compel him to take medicine. 'The Kabaka refused, how can I give it to him?', they asked. The doctors appointed an attendant to live in his household, who 'took and charted temperatures every four hours, who never left the Kabaka, who insisted on the medicines and food being given at the right time and in the right doses, [and] who kept a daily report for the Doctor of great value'. In this way, wrote a missionary chronicler, 'an important life was saved'.⁷⁸ It was the work of medicine to override Ganda conceptions of etiquette and to organize space and time according to the periodicity of a therapeutic regime.

In 1922, at the height of the anti-syphilis campaign, the prime minister of Buganda, Apolo Kagwa, could blandly assert that he and his chiefs were 'not aware of any discontent among the people on venereal disease work, while on the other hand they know that many like very much the work the doctor does in curing people'.⁷⁹ He was ignoring the Malakites, whose Church was a refuge for people who stood back from the regimenting powers of medicine. Since 1891 Joswa Kate had refused to accept medical treatment for his physical maladies. When a missionary tried to persuade him to take medicine for the ulcers on his leg, he would agree only to have them bathed, and would accept no injections.⁸⁰ In 1912 he wrote to the Anglican synod protesting against prayer in church for doctors, hospitals or dispensaries.⁸¹ He spoke before the parliament of Buganda in 1915, telling them that vaccination was contrary to God's law. By the latter part of that year thousands of newly baptized members of his Church were refusing to accept vaccination against smallpox and other diseases. They also refused to inoculate their cattle against rinderpest. Malaki Musajakaawa chose to renounce all his

⁷⁸ Howard Cook to Revd H. W. Weatherhead, 4 Dec. 1914: CU, 02 Bp 180/20.

⁷⁹ Apolo Kagwa to provincial commissioner, Buganda, 13 July 1922: TNA (Dar es Salaam), Acc. J (450) 19153.

⁸⁰ Welbourn, 'Abamalaki in Buganda'.

⁸¹ *Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society, 1914–1915.*

cattle rather than accede to a government rule that they be inoculated.⁸² By the mid 1920s, in eastern Uganda, where the Ganda chief Semei Kakungulu had established a Malakite Church, thousands of people were refusing to undergo inoculation against the plague or smallpox.⁸³

Missionaries thought the Malakites' aversion to medicine resulted from ignorance and superstition.⁸⁴ In fact they were acting on principle: they were making examples of themselves. In a series of epistles addressed to the whole of Buganda's religious and political establishment, Malakite activists laid out their case against medical doctors. Their argument rested on the premiss that disease and healing were works of God. 'God cures diseases for both people and animals . . . but you teach people that God cannot cure without a doctor', Kate told Bishop Willis. He had a great number of scriptural references with which to establish God's supervening power. In his letter to the bishop he cited Deuteronomy 32: 39, where God tells his people, 'I have put to death and I will bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand'; and 1 Samuel 2: 6: 'The Lord brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up'. 'God is the one who made death to come about starting with Adam to our Lord Jesus Christ up to now, and will go on until the second coming of Jesus Christ, then death will be no more', Kate argued.⁸⁵ For the Malakites, both disease and cure were providential acts.

The structured, regimented, punctuated regimen of medicinal therapy was therefore a human deception. The Malakites would not agree to co-ordinate their lives according to the schedule that experts set for them. They argued that the whole architecture of medical practice was idolatry, elevating human agency and thwarting God's providence. Malakite thinkers traced the origins of biomedicine back to the times of the Old Testament, when doctors, diviners and magicians had seduced credulous people with their trickery. In Moses' time, wrote the Malakites

⁸² Welbourn, *East African Rebels*, 43.

⁸³ J. Hope Reford to chief secretary, 28 Oct. 1926: UNA, Eastern Province deposit, box 11, file ME.07. The history of the Malakites in eastern Uganda is described in Twaddle, *Kakungulu and the Creation of Uganda*, 265–80.

⁸⁴ Cook, *Uganda Memories*, 323.

⁸⁵ Joswa Kate to Bishop Willis, copied to the *kabaka*, the 'priest at Rubaga', the 'sheikh at Kibuli', the governor, the prime minister of Buganda and the chief judge, 13 May 1929: CU, 02 Bp 146/16; trans. Nabaggala Esther Doreen.

in 1925, Egypt's doctors had failed to cure the people whom a wrathful God had afflicted with boils and sores.⁸⁶ In Joseph's time Egypt's doctors had failed to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. Only Joseph, who knew the mind of God, was able to read the portents. In Daniel's time Nebuchadnezzar had executed the court magicians for their inability to interpret his dreams. For the Malakites, biblical history was fundamentally structured by the antagonism between self-serving, deceitful doctors and faithful followers of God. In the outraged indignation of Israel's prophets the Malakites found their own voice. 'How long will you waver between two opinions?' asked the Malakites, echoing Elijah in 1 Kings 18. 'If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him'.

In all their writing the Malakites claimed for themselves a particular role: they were prophets, standing outside the political and social structures of their time, measuring the corrupted contemporary order against the divine law. In a letter to the chief judge of Buganda they compared themselves with the prophet Azariah, who 'went out to meet King Asa [of Judah] to warn him because he was disobedient to God just as you are now'.⁸⁷ Joswa Kate sometimes compared himself to Daniel, who had refused to follow the Persian king Darius' order that prayer was to be directed only to the king.⁸⁸ While Malakite epistles were always addressed to the generality of Buganda's ruling class, their particular focus was on the *kabaka*, the king of Buganda. Here biblical precedent configured their role. The prophets of the Old Testament had only rarely addressed the totality of Israel's people. Hebrew prophets spoke to a specific audience — the king, or the pharaoh — who was the recipient of God's instruction. In modelling themselves after the Old Testament prophets, the Malakites were also positioning themselves as advisers to the *kabaka*. In a letter to the county chief, Kate refused to contribute to the upkeep of the priests and ritual authorities who watched over the tombs of the ancient kings of Buganda: 'It is for you to report me to the king because of my refusal to abide by laws upholding the idols, so that he can deal with me as . . . it happened to Shadrach, Meshak and

⁸⁶ Danieli Wakulira *et al.* to Andereya Kiwanuka, 25 Oct. 1925: CU, 02 Bp 146/16.

⁸⁷ The scriptural reference is to 2 Chr. 15: 2.

⁸⁸ Joswa Kate to county chief, Busiro, 18 Feb. 1929: CU, 02 Bp 146/16.

Abednego in Babylon'.⁸⁹ Kate thought himself involved in a drama resembling Nebuchadnezzar's persecution of the young men of Israel. Like Shadrach and his companions, Kate hoped that his example would inspire the king to turn towards God.

In the Old Testament, Malakite Christians found a position that they could productively inhabit. As prophets, they could stand outside the political hierarchy and render judgement on the social order of their time. As prophets, they could act as spokesmen for the divine writ. As prophets, they could make themselves advisers of their king, and criticize Protestant chiefs and officials. And as prophets, they could stand outside time, defy the regimenting order of medicine, escape the encumbrances of tradition and obedience, and live in the *longue durée* of divine history.

IV

GENERATIONAL POLITICS

Even as they were taking up the mantle of the Old Testament prophets, Malakites were also trying on political roles that were derived from the history of their own kingdom. The Bataka Party was formed in 1922. At the centre of it was Joswa Kate, the same man who had inspired the Malakite movement,⁹⁰ and one of its leading members was Malaki Musajakaawa, the preacher who had given his name to the Malakite Church. The Bataka Party shared a leadership, a bank account, a legal team and a postal address with the Malakite Church. Malakite epistles were printed on the same press where the Bataka Party printed its newspaper. The Bataka and the Malakites were different registers, not different organizations. Members of the Bataka Party claimed to represent the interests of the thousands of clan leaders who had been dispossessed by the agreement reached in 1900, when Christian chiefs appropriated hundreds of square miles of Buganda's best land as their freehold estates. The British thought the Bataka were a 'nucleus to which flocked every person with an imagined axe to grind, or a personal hatred to satisfy'.⁹¹ But there was more than personal vendettas

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*; trans. Nabaggala Esther Doreen.

⁹⁰ Hanson, *Landed Obligation*, 207–10.

⁹¹ Annual report, Buganda province, 1921/2: UNA, A 46/439.

in Bataka activism. As Bataka, Joswa Kate and his colleagues found another position from which to argue.

Bataka activists made age and elderhood into principles of political organization. They sometimes presented themselves as youthful rulers-in-waiting, champing at the bit and ready to take power from out-of-date, corrupt chiefs. The banner for the party's newspaper, *Munyonyozi*, depicts a man standing proudly erect with his hand raised aloft, making a declaration. Another man, positioned at the speaker's side, recoils in shock.⁹² The Bataka expected to surprise and antagonize. 'The old men of today who are meddling with the affairs of this country do not know how to receive criticism', wrote a Bataka activist, Yusufu Bamu'ta. 'What they want is *Otyano sebo? Oli wakitalonyo gwe!* [How are you, sir? How great you are!] How long will they hope to fool the country with these ideas?'⁹³ Bamu'ta was objecting to the obsequious expressions of deference that Ganda chiefs demanded of their subjects. He argued that changing times needed new forms of leadership. Bamu'ta himself was a well-connected activist. In 1928 he travelled to Britain, where he made an alliance with the Aborigines' Protection Society. Thereafter he kept up a constant correspondence with friends and colleagues in the country.⁹⁴ The governor thought him to be a 'permanent seeker after notoriety'.⁹⁵ His admirers thought him a better advocate than the kingdom's own officials. A Ganda supporter wrote to the *kabaka*, telling him, 'We have appointed [Bamu'ta] our Prime Minister', and asking him to send Bamu'ta to London to represent Buganda's interests.⁹⁶

Plugged into the circuitry of communication and embracing new styles of advocacy, Bataka activists were un beholden to the proprieties and etiquette of Buganda's Protestant establishment. But while they could represent themselves as new men, most often they claimed for themselves the authority of the *ancien régime*. 'We Bataka are the elders of this country from time immemorial and throughout the rule of our previous kings',

⁹² James F. Scotton, 'The First African Press in East Africa: Protest and Nationalism in Uganda in the 1920s', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vi (1973).

⁹³ Untitled essay from Bamu'ta, n.d. [mid 1920s]: MUL, Yusufu Bamu'ta Papers, box B.

⁹⁴ File note, n.d.: TNA (Kew), CO 536/157/7.

⁹⁵ Governor to secretary of state for the colonies, 28 Sept. 1929: UNA, OPC, box 50, C.1421 II.

⁹⁶ Quoted in extract of a letter from Andereya Luboyera to C. Hattersley, 4 Sept. 1929: TNA (Kew), CO 536/157/7.

wrote Joswa Kate in 1927. 'The present king, his predecessors and the entire Buganda kingdom have always been protected by the Bataka'.⁹⁷ In Kate's account the Bataka stood at the beginning of recorded time. When the Bataka activist Jemusi Miti came to write the history of the Buganda kingdom, he emphasized that in the beginning Ganda people had lived in a republic, ruled by their elders, the *bataka*.⁹⁸ The first king, Kintu, had persuaded these ancient clan heads to recognize him as their ruler. But they had not given up their hold over their lands: each clan retained its own property as 'an ancient right preceding the arrival of Kintu'. Bataka activists' self-portrayal made Christian chiefs look like interlopers, nouveaux riches, a recent addition grafted onto the rootstock of Ganda polity. Bataka clan heads claimed a genealogical and social priority over junior chiefs. 'The Parliament of Buganda is our native government, and all the members sitting therein are our children', they wrote in a letter to the prime minister. 'You are our sons among whom the Kabaka chooses to appoint chiefs'.⁹⁹ As fathers, Bataka activists felt free to condescend to the Christian ruling class. In 1926 Kate sent Buganda's king a newspaper clipping which concerned the 'behaviour of gentlemen'. He asked the king to make copies of the clipping for distribution to his chiefs.¹⁰⁰ Kate was patronizing the kingdom's Protestant elite.

It was from this position, antecedent to the contemporary political order, that the Bataka campaigned for a reworking of the land deals struck at the time of the agreement made in 1900. In 1921 they appealed to the Uganda government, arguing that the 1900 agreement 'tends to develop a smaller section of the country whereas the larger section is on the contrary discontented'. They asked that the land should be repossessed from greedy chiefs and given back to its 'original proprietors in accordance with native customs'.¹⁰¹ 'From time

⁹⁷ Joswa Kate to governor, 12 Oct. 1927: CU, 02 Bp 146/16.

⁹⁸ James Kibuka Miti, 'Buganda, 1875-1900: A Centenary Contribution', trans. G. Rock, typescript (n.d. [1946]).

⁹⁹ Bataka community to prime minister, 11 Sept. 1929: UNA, OPC, box 50, C.1421 II.

¹⁰⁰ Joswa Kate to Daudi Cwa, 17 Mar. 1926: CU, 02 Bp 146/16.

¹⁰¹ Bataka Party to chief secretary, government of Uganda, 6 May 1921, in D. A. Low, *The Mind of Buganda: Documents of the Modern History of an African Kingdom* (London, 1971), 62-3. See also Joshua Mugema, Zakayo Semkande *et al.* to governor, 16 Nov. 1927: UNA, A 46/2015.

immemorial all Baganda had their homeland, right from the time of king Kintu up to this year, 1900', wrote Jemusi Miti in a petition to the *kabaka*. 'However, the leaders of that year . . . desired the fertile homelands of the natives and chased them from their lands, so as to keep them for their unborn children'.¹⁰² In this view the 1900 agreement was a bargain among thieves, a betrayal of Buganda's founding principles. It advanced sectional interests over the common good. As spokesmen for the dispossessed commonwealth, the Bataka argued for the restoration of more equitable social and political relations and for bringing an end to the autocracy of the chiefs.¹⁰³ By 1929 their project had widened: they wanted a representative parliament in Buganda, elected by men and women alike.¹⁰⁴ Like their Malakite co-travellers, they thought the social hierarchy of Christian Buganda to be an unjust system of exclusion.

Bataka activists and their Malakite contemporaries were re-engineering the temporal structures that guided Ganda political life. Together, they sought to manoeuvre Buganda onto a longer plane of historical time, a plane in which the coercive powers of the Protestant chiefs would have no hold. To Joswa Kate and his colleagues, the *longue durée* of history seemed very close at hand. In 1926 the kingdom's long-serving prime minister, Apolo Kagwa, was obliged to resign.¹⁰⁵ More than anyone, it was Kagwa who was the architect of Buganda's Christian establishment.¹⁰⁶ As a younger man, he had led the Protestant party during Buganda's late nineteenth-century wars of religion. He had been appointed prime minister in 1890, after the Protestants' final victory, and served as the principal regent during Kabaka Daudi Cwa's minority. Kagwa died in February 1927. A few months later, the Anglican mission in Uganda celebrated its fortieth jubilee. To mark the occasion organizers laid on a pageant at the cathedral in Namirembe, at the centre of the kingdom of Buganda.¹⁰⁷ Actors dramatized significant events

¹⁰² Jemusi Miti and Daudi Basudde to the *kabaka*, 10 Feb. 1922: CU, 02 Bp 146/16.

¹⁰³ Shown in Hanson's excellent *Landed Obligation*, ch. 7.

¹⁰⁴ Yusufu Bamu'ta, chairman, Bulungi bwa Buganda Party, to colonial secretary, 3 Oct. 1929, in Low, *Mind of Buganda*, 82–5.

¹⁰⁵ For reasons described in Apter, *Political Kingdom in Uganda*, 149–58.

¹⁰⁶ Neil Kodesh, 'Renovating Tradition: The Discourse of Succession in Colonial Buganda', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, xxxiv (2001).

¹⁰⁷ J. Duncan, 'The Uganda Jubilee: A Visitor's Impressions', 4 July 1927: University of Birmingham Library, Church Mission Society Archives, G3 A7 O.

in the early life of the Church in Buganda: the arrival of Henry Morton Stanley; the persecution that followed the death of King Mutesa; the arrest and martyrdom of the young Christian pages of Kabaka Mwanga's household. The festivities culminated with the reinterment of the great missionary Alexander MacKay, whose remains were translated to an honoured place in the cathedral's cemetery.

It is not clear whether Joswa Kate was actually present at the jubilee pageant at the Anglican cathedral. But plainly he thought himself living in momentous times. Two days after the conclusion of the festivities he addressed the Anglican bishop and other members of the political establishment on the subject of a much more radical jubilee.¹⁰⁸ Didn't God tell his people: 'Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants' (Lev. 25: 10)? Kate was referring to the jubilee decreed on Mount Sinai, in which God commanded that, every fifty years, slaves were to be freed, debtors relieved of their obligations, labourers freed to pursue other employment and land returned to its original holders. 'Ye shall not therefore oppress one another; but thou shalt fear thy God' (Lev. 25: 17), declared the Lord. In eighteenth-century England, Chartist radicals had used the Levitical jubilee to advance their millenarian argument for a radical redistribution of wealth. But by the early nineteenth century the jubilee had been shorn of its radical politics and refigured as an anniversary, an occasion to celebrate the longevity of public institutions.¹⁰⁹ Kate hoped to reclaim the earlier, radical meaning of the jubilee. 'We are having a new era of peace, that is why we should return all stolen property, and everybody should go back to their homeland', wrote Kate's followers.

It is necessary to return all property stolen from people such as land. We cleanse this year of peace, and all prisons should be closed so that there are no prisoners, so that we can complete this Jubilee, so God will not be annoyed with us and so that he does not punish us as he did the people [of Israel] because of their disrespect for this year and its laws.¹¹⁰

Prompted by the Anglican Church's epochal account of its past, Ganda prophets argued that the great movements of divine

¹⁰⁸ Joswa Kate to Bishop Willis, the *kabaka*, the provincial commissioner, Buganda, the governor and the chief judge, 6 July 1927: CU, 02 Bp 146/16.

¹⁰⁹ Malcolm Chase, 'From Millennium to Anniversary: The Concept of Jubilee in Late Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century England', *Past and Present*, no. 129 (Nov. 1990).

¹¹⁰ Timo Sewo and B. Omwereza to Bishop Willis, 20 June 1927: CU, 02 Bp 146/16; trans. Nabaggala Esther Doreen.

history were at last coming to bear in the secular machinery of Buganda's own politics. The evidence of corruption was all around them: in the land that chiefs had unjustly appropriated; in the unfaithful, idolatrous practice of medicine; in the unnatural powers that chiefs had claimed for themselves. The year of jubilee was a time for radical change: it would lift Buganda's politics and economy out of the hands of the corrupt ruling class. The Malakite correspondents ended their epistle on the jubilee by citing Luke 4: 18: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor . . . to preach deliverance to the captives . . . [and] to set at liberty them that are oppressed'. They were ushering in a new era.

The Malakites inhabited a time and space that was distant from Buganda's political machine. As prophets, they were outside linear time, inhabitants of a history and a scale that stood above the secular machinations of humanity. In their embrace of illness as an aspect of God's providential work in the world, they made disease an occasion for faithful living, not an end of life. In their resistance to medicine, they removed themselves beyond the timetables and regimenting powers of technocratic experts. In their campaign against greedy landholders, they anchored themselves at the very beginning of time, as the most ancient ancestors of Ganda polity. By living on a different scale, they also found a means to relativize the authority of the chiefs who governed in the name of order.

V

CONCLUSION

Matters finally came to a head on a Saturday morning in July 1929, when a government chief and a company of police officers sought to arrest a large group of Malakites for refusing to be inoculated against plague. Appearing suddenly before the Malakite congregation, the chief urged them to abide by the government's anti-plague rules. They threatened to disembowel him. At about 1.30 in the afternoon a British sanitary inspector unexpectedly appeared on the scene. Upon his arrival the Malakites attacked the chief's party with spears, machetes and stones. The sanitary inspector raised his left hand to ward off a blow: it was severed just above the wrist. The chief and his

policemen wrested the prostrate inspector from his Malakite attackers. In the melee six people were killed: the leader of the Malakite congregation, whose skull was fractured; his wife, who died of a broken neck; and four other Malakites, two of them women.¹¹¹

The official account emphasized the courage of the good chief and the self-sacrifice of the injured sanitary inspector. 'Fanaticism in Uganda: An Englishman's Bravery' was the headline in the *Times*.¹¹² The Malakites and their Bataka contemporaries told a different story. Within a day Bataka activists had sent a telegram to London accusing the chief of attempting to forcibly inoculate the Malakite congregation on their sabbath, 'when actually engaged in prayer'.¹¹³ The barrister whom the Bataka retained offered incriminating details. He contended that the chief had set the scene for a massacre by giving Indian shopkeepers advance warning to close their doors in anticipation of a fight. When, on Saturday morning, the Malakite preacher refused to allow the chief to inoculate his people, the 'army then charged those who were in the church, the result being that several people were killed and several wounded. Women were stripped of their clothes and beaten', the barrister wrote.¹¹⁴ Bataka activists put up posters around Kampala saying (in Luganda): 'The truth is being sought so that the country may be freed from upset'.¹¹⁵ It asked for contributions to help defend the Malakite leaders.

All this advocacy had little effect. In the wake of the incident the Protestant establishment in Buganda launched a campaign against Joswa Kate and Malaki Musajakaawa, accusing them of fomenting rebellion against the *kabaka*. In August 1929 the prime minister and several eminent chiefs signed an affidavit swearing that Kate and Musajakaawa were 'conducting themselves so as to be dangerous to peace and good order'.¹¹⁶ By September the

¹¹¹ The official report is Dauncey Tongue, district commissioner, Kampala, to provincial commissioner, Buganda, 25 July 1929: TNA (Kew), CO 536/157/7.

¹¹² *Times*, 1 Aug. 1929.

¹¹³ Bataka Party to secretary of state for the colonies, telegram, 21 July 1929: TNA (Kew), CO 536/157/7.

¹¹⁴ A. MacMillan Moll to secretary of state for the colonies, 17 Feb. 1930: UNA, OPC, box 50, C.1421 II.

¹¹⁵ Provincial commissioner, Buganda, to chief secretary, 26 Oct. 1929: UNA, OPC, box 50, C.1421 II.

¹¹⁶ Martin Luther Nsibirwa *et al.*, affidavit, 6 Aug. 1929: TNA (Kew), CO 536/157/7.

kabaka had asked the British government to arrange the deportation of the two men, and they were sent to remote northern Uganda. In exile Musajakaawa refused on principle to consume food or care for himself. By early November he was dead, perishing in hospital at Kitgum.¹¹⁷ The parish priest would not consent to have him buried on church land, so he was interred in a government cemetery. Kate took a different line. Within a week of exile he had written to the governor to ask for an allowance for his servants.¹¹⁸ He spent his years conducting regular services for a small following.¹¹⁹ In 1942 the governor rescinded his deportation order, and a gravely ill Kate returned to Buganda, dying later that year.¹²⁰

The untimely death of their two most eminent leaders did not answer the questions they raised. In December 1929, less than a month after Musajakaawa's death, the Bataka activist Jemusi Miti wrote to the provincial commissioner to remind him of the contradictions that the Malakites had exposed. 'After we had been assured that all life is obtained from God, who guards all his people, our political leaders tell us that life is obtained from respecting and obeying the Doctor', he wrote. 'These are urgent issues!!! They need to be analysed by the leaders'.¹²¹ Miti was to spend the rest of his life pursuing these and other urgent matters. In the 1940s he was at the head of a new generation of activists who found in the Bataka Party a platform from which to criticize Buganda's autocratic chiefs. Like the activists of the 1920s, the Bataka of the 1940s claimed to be the founders of Buganda's civilization, defending the commonwealth against the usurpations of an unelected aristocracy.¹²² One day in April 1949 they assembled in thousands in the grounds of the *kabaka*'s palace demanding the democratization of Buganda's parliament. Commoners had hitherto been obliged to approach the *kabaka*

¹¹⁷ District commissioner, Kitgum, to provincial commissioner, Northern, 6 Nov. 1929: UNA, OPC, box 50, C.1421 II.

¹¹⁸ Acting chief secretary to governor, 19 Nov. 1929: UNA, OPC, box 50, C.1421 II.

¹¹⁹ Welbourn, *East African Rebels*, 43.

¹²⁰ Governor to secretary of state for the colonies, 21 Sept. 1942: UNA, OPC, box 50, C.1421 II.

¹²¹ Jemusi Miti to provincial commissioner, Buganda, 1 Dec. 1929: CU, 02 Bp 146/16.

¹²² Carol Summers, 'Grandfathers, Grandsons, Morality, and Radical Politics in Late Colonial Buganda', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, xxxviii (2005).

through their chiefs, who presented their requests before the court. Bataka partisans made their own case before their king. In the riot that ensued Bataka activists destroyed 115 buildings, seventy-five of them belonging to officials of the government of Buganda. Rioters also burned the houses of a profiteering butcher and the editor of a pro-government newspaper.¹²³ Not a single building owned by the Anglican Church was burned.¹²⁴ No longer prophets of the future, Miti and his companions fought to bring in a new politics in the here and now. It was eastern Africa's first populist political movement.¹²⁵

Here was a form of activism that could open up new horizons. Joswa Kate, Jemusi Miti and their fellows would not live within the confines of the colonial public sphere. They inhabited a timescale that provincialized the authority of experts and transformed ordinary people into political agents. That is why they objected to the practice of medicine. Medical practice was a form of regimentation that brought the authority of experts to bear on sick people's bodies. Malakite dissenters made a point of enduring their sickness. For them, illness was not a condition that demanded expert attention. We do not know how they experienced illness or pain. What is clear is that they regarded their diseases as fruits of God's power, and as a rebuke to the authority of professionals. They did not seek healing. Living with a disease was an act of nonconformity. It exposed the powers of Buganda's bureaucracy as circumscribed, limited in scope. That is what dissenting theology could do: lift believers into a different life, animate new kinds of agency and make wide-ranging change seem both necessary and timely.

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¹²³ John Sibly, 'Diary of the Riots in Uganda, April 26 to May 1 1949': Rhodes House, Oxford, MS Afr. s. 1825/106.

¹²⁴ Cyril Stuart, circular letter, 17 May 1949: CU, 02 Bp 181/20.

¹²⁵ Malakite Christianity likewise outlived its founders. The Church's membership in Buganda was greatly reduced by the 1930s. But as late as 1961 Malakites in eastern Uganda were antagonizing the veterinary establishment by refusing to allow their cattle to be vaccinated against rinderpest. See Jemusi Biliko to district commissioner, Busoga, 11 July 1961: Jinja District Archives, Jinja, Uganda, Katonda omu Ainza Byona file.