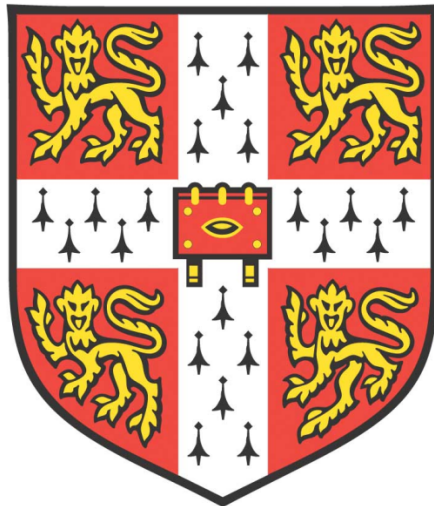


IMAGINING MODERNITY IN THE UGANDA PRISONS SERVICE, 1945-1979



Katherine deVries Bruce-Lockhart
Trinity College
University of Cambridge
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PREFACE

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a social history of the Uganda Prisons Service in the late colonial and early post-colonial periods. Focusing particularly on prison officers, it advances four key arguments. Firstly, it argues that global visions of the prison were crucial in shaping the Service's development, its institutional culture, and the professional identities of its personnel. From the late colonial period onwards, this vision was anchored on notions of penal welfarism, which positioned the prison as a centre of rehabilitation, staffed by professionals who possessed technical expertise. Secondly, the penal welfare model was combined with an emphasis on the prison's role as a driver of economic development and a source of public revenue – features that were seen as compatible with penal modernity. Thirdly, this vision of the prison gave the Service a particular imaginative capital, which prison officers used as an important resource. It provided them with a common set of principles and norms through which to define their professional role. Senior officers adopted it with alacrity, pursuing further professionalization through engagement with transnational penal reform networks. Others summoned it as a source of claim-making, using it to call on the state to provide them with greater benefits and treat them as respectable public servants. Finally, visions of penal modernity and professionalism were contested throughout the periods under study, leading officers to engage in boundary work. Officers were regularly defining their role in relation to other spaces of incarceration, such as local government prisons and informal detention sites. With the take-over of Idi Amin in 1971 and the militarization of the state, prison officers' professional identities were profoundly challenged, but also became particularly important, providing them with a conceptual boundary that at least partially demarcated them from Amin's regime. Ultimately, the case of the Uganda Prisons Service reminds us of the importance of studying prisons beyond their coercive capacities, paying attention to how such institutions became the focal point of debates over modernity, authority, and professionalism. More broadly, this study challenges the narrative of failure that has dominated popular and scholarly

portrayals of state institutions on the African continent, rejecting generic depictions of the postcolony as a site of chaos and disorder.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

Abbreviations

ACTOC – Advisory Committee on the Treatment of Offenders in the Colonies

CASP – Cadet Assistant Superintendent of Prisons

CID – Criminal Investigation Department

CIVHR – Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights

CMS – Church Missionary Society

CPS – Central Police Station

GSU – General Service Unit

IBEAC – Imperial British East Africa Company

ICJ – International Commission of Jurists

ILO – International Labour Organization

KAR – King's African Rifles

KY – *Kabaka Yekka* (The King Alone) Party

LRA – Lord's Resistance Army

NGO – Non-governmental organization

NRM – National Resistance Movement

PSU – Public Safety Unit

SRB – State Research Bureau

TPDF – Tanzanian People's Defence Force

UN – United Nations

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNODC – United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

UPC – Uganda People’s Congress

UPS – Uganda Prisons Service

WHO – World Health Organization

Abbreviations – Archives and Personal Collections

BAHA – Bailey’s African History Archive

CPSA – Central Police Station Archive

GDA – Gulu District Archive

HDA – Hoima District Archive

ICS – Institute of Commonwealth Studies Library, University of London

JDA – Jinja District Archive

KDA – Kabale District Archive

KRDA – Kabarole District Archive

MRC – Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick

MUAC – Makerere University Africana Collection

PJE – Personal Collection of J. Etima

PMK – Personal Collection of M. Kamugisha

PTSL – Prisons Training School Library

RCA – Rubaga Cathedral Archive

RCS – Royal Commonwealth Society, University of Cambridge

TKA – Tooro Kingdom Archive

UKNA – United Kingdom National Archives

UNA – Uganda National Archives

UPL – Uganda Parliamentary Library

UPSA – Uganda Prisons Service Headquarters Archives

Glossary

Affende – term of respect, often means ‘Sir’

Amasamba – stocks used in pre-colonial Buganda

Askari – officer who worked in Uganda’s local government prisons; more widely used to refer to guards, police officers, or soldiers

Bibanja – plots of land

Gombolola – sub-county, originally used in Buganda

Kabaka – ruler of Buganda kingdom

Kasavvu – mandatory labour imposed by the colonial government in Uganda

Katikkiro – chief minister in Buganda, used more widely in other communities in the colonial period

Kondoism – armed robbery

Kyabazinga – ruler of Busoga

Lukikiko – Buganda parliament

Luwalo – mandatory unpaid labour imposed at local government level

Maendeleo – development

Muganda – A person from the Baganda ethnica group (plural: Baganda)

Muruka – parish, originally used in Buganda (plural: *miruka*)

Mzee – term used as a sign of respect, usually for someone who is of an elderly age

Nsuku – banana plantation

Okubonereza – punishment

Omukama – highest authority in Bunyoro kingdom

Omulamuzi – chief justice in Buganda

Pole pole – to soften

Rwot adwong – county level chief in colonial Lango

Schutztruppe – German colonial army in Africa

Shamba – piece of farmland

SsaꞞa – county, originally used in Buganda

Ujamaa – ‘familyhood’, model of African socialism under Julius Nyerere’s government in Tanzania

A Note on Spelling

The following names and words vary in their spelling. The first listing refers to the form used in this dissertation, except if another variation is used in a quoted source or archive collection:

Toro Kingdom, Tooro Kingdom

Askaris, askaries

Mutesa, Muteesa

Kabaleega, Kabalega

Katikero, Katikiro (spelling varies across kingdoms)

Ssentamu, Sentamu

SsaꞞa, saꞞa

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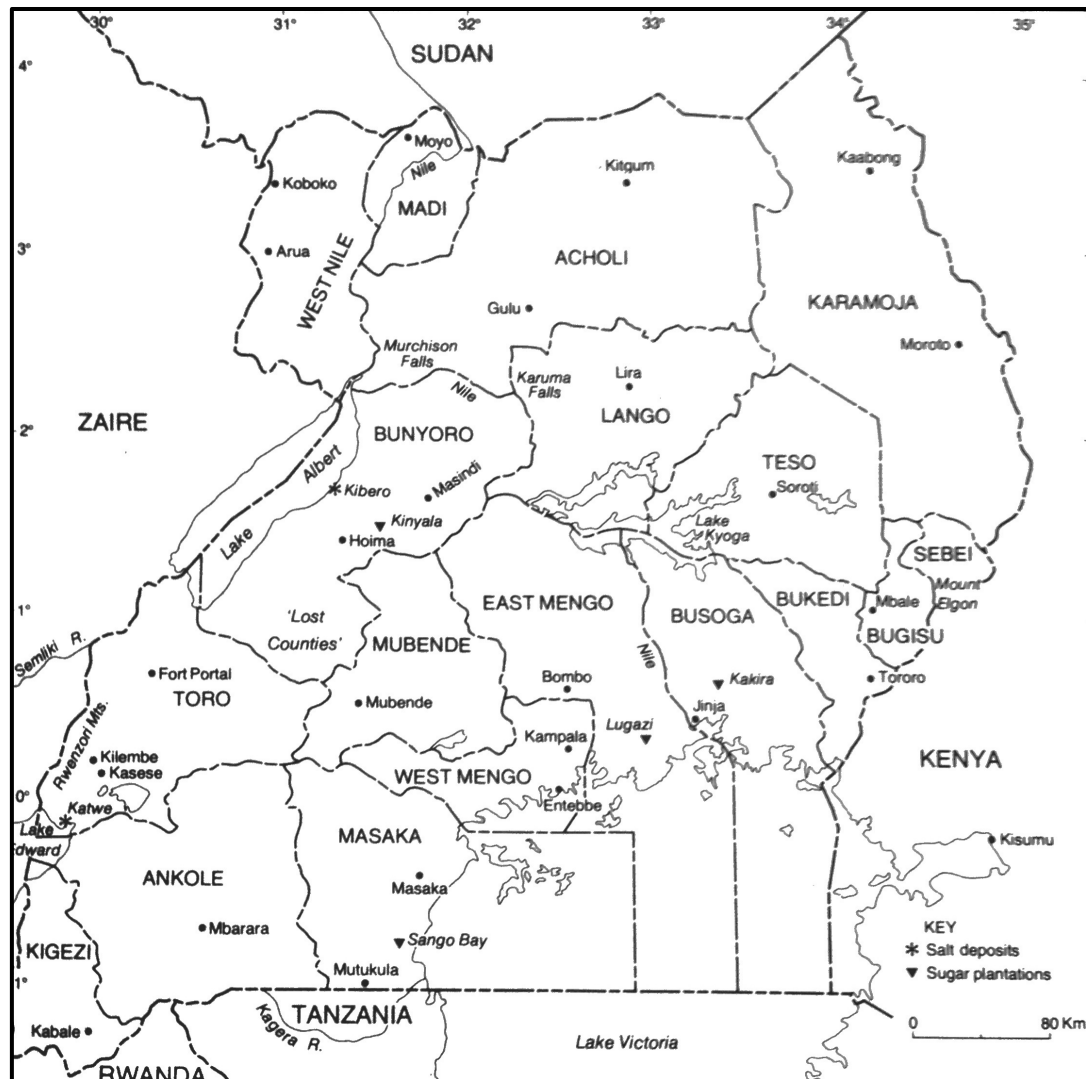
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Map 1: Map of Uganda, 1967. Adapted from Jan Jelmert Jørgensen, *Uganda: A Modern History* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), 213.

INTRODUCTION

Following two and a half decades of violence and instability, Yoweri Museveni became the president of Uganda on 29 January 1986. His path to political power resembled the turmoil that preceded it, which included nearly five years of armed struggle between his National Resistance Movement and the government forces under President Milton Obote. Upon assuming office, Museveni wanted to draw a clear line between Uganda's future and its turbulent post-colonial past. To emphasize this rupture, he created the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights to investigate and assess the involvement of state institutions in the human rights violations committed since Uganda's independence.¹

The Commission – although deeply hobbled by a lack of funding and sustained political will – ultimately produced a dense and candid report of over 700 pages and received testimonies from 608 witnesses.² It was unequivocal in its critique of the majority of state security organizations, including the police and the military. A rather different conclusion, however, was offered in the case of the Uganda Prisons Service:

Evidence indicates that the staff of the Prisons Service were not as involved in human rights abuses as were the military, intelligence organizations, and some Police sections. Many reasons explain this, some of which were that Prisons personnel carry out their functions inside closed fences, outside public view, they only deal with prisoners and have little contact with the general public; they appear to be more disciplined than the personnel of the other services.³

The Prisons Service was thus singled out as having maintained a unique distance from state-perpetrated human rights abuses. The Commission's report depicted an

¹ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights in Uganda* (Kampala, 1994), Monitoring, Reporting, and Fact-Finding Digital Library, Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, accessed 22 November 2016, <http://www.hpcrresearch.org/mrf-database/mission.php?id=114>.

² Joanna R. Quinn, 'Constraints: the Un-Doing of the Ugandan Truth Commission', *Human Rights Quarterly* 26:2 (2004): 407. For more on the Commission and its limitations as a vehicle for reconciliation, see Joanna R. Quinn, *The Politics of Acknowledgement: Truth Commissions in Uganda and Haiti* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010).

³ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 603-604.

idealized version of a prison system: a world unto itself, insulated from politics and society, and inculcated with a strong culture of discipline. It suggested that the Service had achieved the penal ideal of creating a literal and metaphorical boundary between itself and the outside world – a representation that opens up many questions about the real and perceived role of the Service in the early post-colonial period.

Carceral spaces have loomed large in depictions of the African continent. From memoirs of Mau Mau detainees in Kenya to Nelson Mandela's 'long walk to freedom', the prison and Africa have been closely linked in the popular imagination.⁴ Our knowledge of penal sites derives primarily from the media and non-governmental organizations, whose reports are often meant to generate shock or catalyse action with grisly stories of torture and abuse. In most cases, these accounts are deeply entangled with wider discussions of corruption, violence, and disorder within African states. While there is a burgeoning scholarship on African prisons, it has so far done little to challenge this dominant paradigm.

This tendency towards sensationalism is typified by portrayals of Idi Amin's Uganda. Arguably the most infamous of Uganda's presidents, Amin is remembered for his brutality and the scale of abuse carried out by his regime. Not surprisingly, portrayals of 'prisons' have been central in cementing his notorious reputation. During the 1970s, headlines such as 'Amin's Dungeon', and 'I was in Amin's Death Camp' relayed the horror of Uganda's penal sites to an international audience.⁵ Books written by Amin's critics further emphasized their macabre nature. In *General Amin*, British journalist David Martin provides lurid descriptions of detainees being 'pounded to death with sledgehammers'⁶ and thrown into 'deep and dark holes' filled with ice water.⁷ Even the entry on Uganda in the 2006 publication *Prisons and Prison Systems: A Global Encyclopedia* includes descriptions of Amin's 'prisons' as places filled with 'carnage' and 'cannibals'.⁸

⁴ Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (London: Abacus, 1995).

⁵ Martha Honey and David B. Ottaway, 'Amin's Dungeon', *The Washington Post*, 27 May 1979, accessed 23 November 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1979/05/27/amins-dungeon/560583dc-199d-4617-854f-47d86fec2337/>; Bailey's African History Archives (BAHA) 'I was in Amin's Death Camp', *DRUM*, September 1977, 6-7.

⁶ David Martin, *General Amin* (London: Faber, 1974), 213.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁸ Mitchel P. Roth, *Prisons and Prison Systems: A Global Encyclopedia* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006), 277.

In these representations, spaces of incarceration serve as the epitome of the postcolony's worst ills.

This dissertation is the first historical study of the Uganda Prisons Service to consider both the colonial and post-colonial periods, focusing in particular on the Service's development between the close of the Second World War and the overthrow of Idi Amin in 1979.⁹ The years in-between were marked by tremendous volatility and political change. As Uganda moved closer to independence, its institutional landscape underwent considerable reform, with the colonial administration promoting an agenda of modernization, development, and 'Africanisation'. Despite the political turmoil of decolonization, there were intensified efforts to enhance the professionalization of public servants and the interventionist capacity of state institutions. Following the departure of the British, there was a robust sense of optimism, but this steadily unraveled over the first two decades of independence, which were marked by the suspension of the constitution in 1966, a military coup in 1971, war with Tanzania from 1978-79, and the instability that accompanied Amin's defeat. Throughout these years, Ugandans experienced extreme vulnerability and navigated unprecedented levels of state-sponsored violence. In the midst of this, public servants were trying to assert their legitimacy and define their contribution to the nascent nation. For UPS, this challenge was particularly acute, as it grappled with the growing numbers of political prisoners and the rapidly shifting boundaries of state violence.

How was the Service envisioned in this period and how did it respond to political changes? To explore these questions, this dissertation adopts a social history perspective, focusing primarily on the figure of the prison officer. While there is a growing scholarly interest in histories of prisons and prisoners, prison officers have been almost entirely unstudied. In both popular and scholarly accounts, they usually appear to us as stock characters meant to confirm accusations of abuse. Yet, through studying their professional identities and social worlds, we can better illuminate the

⁹ For other studies of UPS, see: Jo Parrish, 'Prisons and Punishment in the Uganda Protectorate, 1909—1940' (Master's diss., School of Oriental and African Studies, 1999); Tomas Martin, 'Embracing Human Rights: Governance and Transition in Ugandan Prisons' (PhD diss., Roskilde University, May 2013).

institutional and imaginative landscapes of the Prisons Service, as well as exploring more comparative questions about the prison, professionals, and the state in the middle decades of the twentieth century.

Historical Context

It is worth providing a broad overview of the events and political dynamics that shaped the period under study. The formal history of the prison in Uganda is tied to the introduction of colonialism. Europeans first came to Uganda in the 1850s, and British explorers such as John Hanning Speke, James Grant, and Samuel Baker came to the region in the 1860s.¹⁰ European incursions intensified in the 1870s and 1880s, with the arrival of missionary groups such as the Church Missionary Society and the White Fathers, as well as explorers such as Henry Morton Stanley.¹¹ Dr. Karl Peters, the founder of the German East Africa Company and the main force behind the colonization of German East Africa, came to Uganda in 1890 and signed a treaty with Kabaka Mwanga II – the ruler of Buganda, the largest and most powerful kingdom in the region – but this was quickly nullified by the Anglo-German agreement of July 1890.¹² Following this, Frederick Lugard went to Uganda in December of 1890 on behalf of the IBEAC to secure British power.¹³ He became involved in a struggle between Protestants, Catholics, and Muslims within Buganda, ultimately tipping the balance in favour of the Protestant chiefs.¹⁴

When the IBEAC withdrew from Uganda following bankruptcy in 1893, the British decided to formalise their influence.¹⁵ In 1894, Buganda Kingdom was declared a British Protectorate.¹⁶ With British backing, Buganda set out to secure its dominance over its neighbours, especially the rival Bunyoro Kingdom in Western Uganda. Within two years, much of the territory that is now considered Uganda was under British

¹⁰ Richard L. Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 18-19.

¹¹ Ibid., 21-22.

¹² Kenneth Ingham, *The Making of Modern Uganda* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1958), 42-43.

¹³ Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 156.

¹⁴ Ibid., 156-157.

¹⁵ Ibid., 157.

¹⁶ D.A. Low, *Fabrication of Empire: The British and the Uganda Kingdoms, 1890-1902* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4.

control, including Bunyoro, Nkore, and Toro kingdoms.¹⁷ In 1900, the British signed the Uganda Agreement. This gave Buganda an unprecedented degree of autonomy within the British Empire, allowing the *kabaka* and the *lukiko* – the parliament – to retain control over the kingdom. With Buganda's help, the British continued to expand their control. By 1926, the contours of contemporary Uganda had been finalized.¹⁸

In contrast to neighbouring Kenya – a prized colonial possession with a large white settler population – Uganda had a relatively marginal status within the British Empire. It was a paradigmatic case of 'hegemony on a shoestring', characterized by a light colonial presence, limited financial resources, and the indirect rule model of governance.¹⁹ Uganda's political landscape had three distinct terrains: the Protectorate sphere, which worked with the Colonial Office in London; Buganda Kingdom, led by the *kabaka*; and the 'Native' or 'African Local' governments, which were run by chiefs and included all communities outside of Buganda. As part of the colonial state's effort to establish 'native' government authorities, the Buganda model of governance – with its three tiered hierarchy of *ssaza* (county), *gombolola* (sub-county) and *muruka* (parish) chiefs – was replicated to varying degrees throughout the Protectorate, without much consideration of the panoply of pre-colonial political forms.²⁰ In places such as Teso, Lango, and Bukedi, Baganda chiefs were directly imposed.²¹ By introducing external chiefs or creating them within societies, the British were able to better control the labour supply, ensure the collection of taxes, and impose law and order through courts run by the chiefs.²² In particular, the colonial state benefited from the imposition of the *kasavu* and *luvalo* labour commitments. *Kasavu* was imposed by the Protectorate Government, and involved mandatory labour on public works, paid below market rates,

¹⁷ Low, *Fabrication of Empire*, 4.

¹⁸ Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 1.

¹⁹ Sara Berry, 'Hegemony on a Shoestring: Indirect Rule and Access to Agricultural Land', *Africa: Journal of the International Africa Institute* 62:3 (1992): 327-355.

²⁰ Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 160; John Tosh, *Clan Leaders and Colonial Chiefs in Lango: The Political History of an East African Stateless Society c. 1800-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 152-153.

²¹ Gardner Thompson, *Governing Uganda: British Colonial Rule and its Legacy* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2003), 44. On Teso, see Joan Vincent, 'Colonial Chiefs and the Making of Class: A Case Study from Teso, Eastern Uganda', *Africa* 47:2 (1977): 140-159. On Lango see Tosh, *Clan Leaders and Colonial Chiefs*. See also Michael Twaddle, *Kakungulu & the Creation of Uganda* (London: James Currey, 1993).

²² Tosh, *Clan Leaders and Colonial Chiefs*, 165-168.

and *lunalo* entailed a month of unpaid labour at the local government level, which often became a source of personal labour for the benefit of the chiefs.²³

Uganda achieved its independence from Britain on 9 October 1962.²⁴ The *kabaka*, Sir Edward Mutesa, was declared the country's first president and Milton Apollo Obote of the Uganda People's Congress became the prime minister.²⁵ The next few years were relatively peaceful, although political tensions were rife between the *Kabaka Yekka*, the UPC, and the Democratic Party. Despite this, there was a relative sense of optimism, with Uganda eagerly asserting its place within the regional and global order. It boasted institutions with impressive global connections, such as Makerere University, the premier site of higher education in East Africa. Furthermore, Ugandans were quickly embracing new opportunities abroad. Throughout the 1960s, the *Uganda Argus* – the national newspaper – was filled with stories about army officers training in India, teachers going to Australia for further education, and students enrolling in American universities.²⁶

However, independence had been built on a fragile foundation. Before long, fissures began to emerge between Mutesa and Obote. The 1964 referendum on the 'lost counties' – areas of Bunyoro that had been given to Buganda during the colonial period – was a key catalyst for this deterioration of relations.²⁷ The introduction of this bill in August 1964 broke the alliance between the UPC and the KY, greatly destabilizing the political order.²⁸ In the November referendum, residents from the two counties under Buganda's rule overwhelmingly voted to return to Bunyoro.²⁹ In addition to this divide, tensions were also apparent within the UPC. In February 1966, a member of the UPC introduced a motion to temporarily suspend and investigate Idi Amin – who was the

²³ Ben Jones, *Beyond the State in Rural Uganda* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 69.

²⁴ Phares Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1992), 24.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

²⁶ '5 Ugandan officers pass out in India', *Uganda Argus*, 7 July, 1965, 1; '20 Teachers for Training in Australia', *Uganda Argus*, 14 February 1964, 2; 'America gives on-the-job training', *Uganda Argus*, 8 July 1965, 3.

²⁷ Shane Doyle, 'From Kitara to the Lost Counties: Genealogy, Land and Legitimacy in the Kingdom of Bunyoro, Western Uganda', *Social Identities* 12:4 (2006): 466-467.

²⁸ Jan Jelmert Jørgensen, *Uganda: A Modern History* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), 220.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 220.

second-ranking officer in the army at the time – and several UPC ministers for smuggling gold into Uganda.³⁰

Obote aggressively countered this challenge. In February 1966, he had five cabinet ministers arrested and suspended the constitution, effectively assuming total control of the government.³¹ He proposed a new constitution in April, which severely limited the power of Buganda.³² Unsurprisingly, this provoked major resistance. The following month, the *lukiko* rejected the constitution and demanded that the central government remove itself from Buganda.³³ In response, Obote declared a state of emergency and his security forces, led by Amin, attacked the *kabaka's* palace on Mengo Hill.³⁴ While the *kabaka* escaped and went into exile, some of his supporters were killed and the palace was destroyed.³⁵ The government also passed the Emergency Powers (Detention) Regulations, enabling Obote to detain prominent Buganda leaders.³⁶ The following year, Obote introduced a new constitution, which led to the abolition of the kingdoms and consolidated all executive power in the hands of the president.³⁷

With his power now solidified, Obote vastly expanded the state's security apparatus. He created three paramilitary organizations to serve his regime: the General Service Unit, which gathered intelligence; the Special Force, which acted as a 'paramilitary police unit' loyal to Obote; and the Military Police, which was set up under Amin's leadership following the upheavals of 1966 in order to 'discipline soldiers', but in reality harassed civilians.³⁸ The passage of the Public Order and Security Act in 1967 – which legalized preventative detention and 'the imposition of restrictions on the movement of persons in the interests of public order, public security and defence' – led to a sharp rise in the number of political prisoners.³⁹ In the estimation of the CIVHR, this set a dangerous precedent as it 'introduced and legalized the practice of

³⁰ Jørgensen, *Uganda: A Modern History*, 229.

³¹ Ibid., 230.

³² Ibid., 230.

³³ Ibid., 221.

³⁴ Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 323.

³⁵ Ibid., 323-324.

³⁶ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 120.

³⁷ Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 324.

³⁸ A.B.K. Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1994), 89-90.

³⁹ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 116.

Government arresting and detaining people without trial indefinitely'.⁴⁰ As Ali Mazrui argues:

It was Milton Obote, not Idi Amin, who began the militarization of Uganda's political system....expanding the domain of fear as a strategy of political persuasion, complete with an elaborate system of internal informers and with a readiness to display military might as a method of silencing dissent.⁴¹

The detention of Rajat Neogy, the founder of the East African magazine *Transition*, and Abu Mayanja, a lawyer and former Buganda Kingdom minister who contributed to *Transition*, resulted in the most significant controversy.⁴² Both were arrested in 1968 on charges of sedition and held in Luzira Prison.⁴³ In what became known as the 'Transition Affair', Ugandans, foreign governments, and international civil society organizations condemned the arrests.⁴⁴ Writing in the *Guardian*, Sir Dingle Foot, the lawyer for Mayanja and Neogy, likened Obote's punitive legislation to Africa's colonial regimes,⁴⁵ while the *Times of India* called Neogy a 'victim of autocracy'.⁴⁶ Amnesty International featured Mayanja in their 'Postcards for Prisoners' campaign,⁴⁷ and declared Neogy a 'prisoner of conscience', generating significant international attention.⁴⁸ Following his release, Neogy penned a powerful article in *Transition* to critique the Obote government, writing: 'Arbitrary arrests and imprisonment without trial provide a new pattern and insight for him [the detainee] into the true nature – and the insecurities – of the governments that use them'.⁴⁹

⁴⁰ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 126.

⁴¹ Ali A. Mazrui, 'The Lumpen Proletariat and the Lumpen Militariat: African Soldiers as a New Political Class', *Political Studies* 21:1 (1973): 9.

⁴² See Bernard Tabire, 'The Press and Political Repression in Uganda: Back to the Future?' *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 1:2 (2007): 193-211.

⁴³ Ibid., 194.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 195.

⁴⁵ 'Uganda takes "lesson" from colonialists', *Guardian*, 11 January 1969, 2.

⁴⁶ Prem Shankar Jha, 'Rajat Neogy: a victim of autocracy', *The Times of India*, 11 May 1969, 2.

⁴⁷ Amnesty International, 'Monthly newsletter from Amnesty International, Postcards for Prisoners Campaign', November 1968, 3-4, accessed 10 August 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/204000/nws210151968en.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Amnesty International, *Annual Report 1969-1970* (London: Amnesty, no date), 5, accessed 10 August 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol10/001/1970/en/>.

⁴⁹ Rajat Neogy, 'It Only Happens to Other People', 'The Anniversary Issue: Selections from Transition, 1961-1979', *Transition* 75/76 (1997): 376-377.

The insecurity of the Obote government became clear on 25 January 1971, when Idi Amin took power through a military coup. Obote, who was in Singapore for the Commonwealth Conference, went into exile in Tanzania. The early days of the Amin presidency were a time of renewed optimism for many Ugandans. In the 'Eighteen Points' published shortly after the coup, Amin promised a departure from Obote's repression. Citing the reasons for the coup, the first point read: 'The unwarranted detention without trial and for long periods of a large number of people, many of whom are totally innocent of any charges'.⁵⁰ Thus, Amin appeared to be departing from the practices of his predecessor.

This image was quickly shattered. Within weeks of Amin's takeover, the regime sought to swiftly eliminate potential opponents, including former members of the GSU, Obote's ministers, and Acholi and Langi army officers.⁵¹ This was primarily done by Amin's paramilitary organizations, which included the State Research Bureau, the Military Police, and the Public Safety Unit. Alleged enemies of the regime – ranging from women who wore mini-skirts to soldiers plotting counter-coups – were subjected to harassment, torture, and murder. Lines distinguishing a 'good' citizen from a 'bad' one became increasingly capricious, with many Ugandans suddenly falling into 'deviant' categories. Overall, it is estimated that a total of 300,000 people were killed during the Amin years.⁵² Millions more were affected by the violence and instability of the 1970s, from the anguish of trying to find a family member who had disappeared to the struggle to buy basic goods to feed one's family following the economic collapse. Uganda's economic situation deteriorated significantly during Amin's presidency, beginning with his declaration of 'economic war' in 1972.⁵³ This had many aspects, but among the most significant was the expulsion of the Asian population that same year.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Martin, *General Amin*, 140.

⁵¹ Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence*, 110-111.

⁵² Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 63.

⁵³ Ibid., 236.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 236.

In November 1978, war broke out between Uganda and Tanzania.⁵⁵ It was the product of a longstanding animosity between Amin and Julius Nyerere, which had reached a breaking point when Amin's army annexed Kagera Salient, a borderland in Northwestern Tanzania that Amin claimed belonged to Uganda.⁵⁶ It was a brief conflict: in April 1979, the Tanzania People's Defence Force marched into the streets of Kampala, securing their victory and Amin's removal from power.⁵⁷ However, Amin's overthrow offered little respite: wanton looting and killing erupted in the immediate aftermath of the military victory, and was followed by a rapid succession of three ill-fated presidencies.⁵⁸ The return of Obote to power in 1980 – the 'Obote II' regime – led to perhaps an even more heinous period of state-led violence.⁵⁹ Obote was widely unpopular as a result, and was overthrown by the military in July 1985.⁶⁰ In his place, Lieutenant General Tito Okello assumed power.⁶¹ However, Okello's control was also short lived.⁶² In January 1986, the National Resistance Army took control of Kampala, led by Museveni.⁶³ As Reid writes, 'For the third time inside seven years, an insurgent force had entered the city proclaiming the death of the old regime and the birth of a new one'.⁶⁴

This period of tumultuous political change, as well as Museveni's ongoing presidency, are beyond the scope of this dissertation. This is not to suggest that April 1979 represents a complete break with the political practices that came beforehand; rather, it is a pragmatic choice. While it would be productive to consider the continuities between Amin and Obote II, the scope would simply be too large to deal with adequately in a doctoral thesis. Similarly, turning to the politics of Museveni's presidency – with its varied dynamics of reform and repression – would result in a superficial

⁵⁵ George Roberts, 'The Uganda-Tanzania War, the fall of Idi Amin, and the failure of African diplomacy, 1978-1979', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 8:4 (2014): 695.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 695.

⁵⁷ Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 71.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 78.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

analysis. However, the state of UPS after 1979 and its place within the wider political developments of the NRM years will be reflected upon in the conclusion.

Literature Review

There has been very little scholarly interest in the history of the Uganda Prisons Service. In contrast, broader discussions of punishment – and its supposed brutality – have featured prominently in portrayals of pre-colonial political communities in Uganda, the Obote and Amin regimes, and contemporary critiques of the NRM government. Discussions of ‘dungeons’, torture, sacrifice, and extra-judicial killings have cast a shadow over many renderings of Uganda’s past and present, from Speke’s horror at the punitive policies of Mutesa⁶⁵ to condemnations of the treatment of presidential contender Kizza Besigye and his supporters during and following the 2016 election.⁶⁶ Prisons appear almost reflexively in these accounts, serving as part of a narrative package about Uganda’s cruelty and chaos.

While there is no shortage of references to Uganda’s prisons in the media and reports of non-government organizations, scholarly studies of the Uganda Prisons Service are almost nonexistent. cursory discussions of the Service’s early years appear in the edited collection *African Penal Systems*, published in 1969.⁶⁷ A more extensive examination of the early colonial period is offered in an unpublished master’s thesis entitled, ‘Prisons and Punishment in the Uganda Protectorate, 1909—1940’.⁶⁸ While providing a useful historical overview, it relies on colonial sources based in the United Kingdom, thus offering a very narrow perspective on the Service’s history. The most sophisticated scholarly examination of UPS stems from Tomas Martin, whose doctoral

⁶⁵ See John Hanning Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1863).

⁶⁶ See: ‘Uganda police arrest opposition leader again amid election clashes’, *Guardian*, 19 February 2016, accessed 25 May 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/19/uganda-elections-police-arrest-opposition-leader-clashes-besigye>; Stephen Kafeero, ‘Policemen brutalise Besigye supporters’, accessed 25 May 2017, *Daily Monitor*, 14 July 2016, <http://mobile.monitor.co.ug/News/Policemen-brutalise-Besigye-supporters/2466686-3293614-format-xhtml-s4shyiz/index.html>.

⁶⁷ James S. Read, ‘Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda’, in *African Penal Systems*, ed. Alan Milner (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul), 89-164.

⁶⁸ See: Parrish, ‘Prisons and Punishment’.

dissertation explores the Service's adoption of a human rights framework in 2006.⁶⁹

Although notable for its analytical nuance and rich ethnographic material, Martin's work is focused on the Service's recent past. Thus, we know very little about its development between the late colonial and early post-colonial periods.

While this dissertation provides the most comprehensive study of UPS, it is not simply an attempt to create a fuller historical record of this institution. Rather, it speaks to the significance of the late colonial and early post-colonial periods as a crucial time of transition in which African actors reimagined key ideas and institutions introduced during imperial rule.⁷⁰ This literature review explores four key fields which are crucial for framing the study of UPS, but in which the sustained study of this transitional period has been limited: the comparative literature on global histories of the prison, the study of bureaucracies and state power, histories of professionals in Africa, and the historiography on Uganda. The first three wrestle with questions of comparison and scale, debating the universality of ideas and institutions – the prison, the state, and different professional classes – in light of studies of the Global South. Such trends are increasingly evident in Uganda's history, as fined-grained analyses of local identities and the pre-colonial past are now being interwoven with explorations of the nation, the post-colonial state, and Uganda's entanglement in broader regional and global processes of change.

The Global History of the Prison

Historical interest in the prison intensified in the 1960s and 1970s as part of a wave of research into social history.⁷¹ Most of this literature was focused on explaining the shift from corporal punishments to custodial sentences over the course of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Initially, scholars presented the history of the

⁶⁹ See: Martin, 'Embracing Human Rights'.

⁷⁰ For a discussion of this approach, see Andrew Burton and Michael Jennings, 'Introduction: The Emperor's New Clothes? Continuities in Governance in Late Colonial and Early Postcolonial East Africa', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 40:1 (2007): 1-25.

⁷¹ Norval Morris and David J. Rothman, 'Introduction', in *The Oxford History of the Prison: The Practice of Punishment in Western Society*, eds. Norval Morris and David J. Rothman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), Kindle edition, location 38.

prison as a progressive march towards civilization and respect for human dignity.⁷² However, in the 1970s, revisionist accounts began to challenge these narratives.⁷³ The most notable example of this is Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*.⁷⁴ In this seminal work, Foucault argued that the shift in punitive practices was not simply a benign endeavor motivated by humanitarian impulses, but was instead linked to the wider consolidation of the state's power and control. Through the prison and other institutions of the 'carceral archipelago'⁷⁵ – such as the mental asylum, the school, and the hospital – deviant citizens were to be rendered 'docile and useful'.⁷⁶ Foucault's arguments have had a transformative impact on studies of the prison: it is difficult to find a subsequent publication on the subject that does not mention his work.

In the last few decades, there has been an increasing interest in the global history of the prison, with scholars tracing its expansion across European empires and non-Western states in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁷⁷ This literature has been

⁷² Michael Ignatieff, 'State, Civil Society, and Total Institutions: A Critique of Recent Social Histories of Punishment', *Crime and Justice* 3 (1981): 153-154.

⁷³ Mary Gibson, 'Review Essay: Global Perspectives on the Birth of the Prison', *American Historical Review* 116:4 (2011): 1043.

⁷⁴ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995). See also Ignatieff, 'State, Civil Society, and Total Institutions', and David J. Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1971).

⁷⁵ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 296-307.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁷⁷ This is best captured in Frank Dikötter and Ian Brown's edited collection, *Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia, and Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007). Select examples of other contributions to this field include: Clare Anderson, *The Indian Uprising of 1857: Prisons, Prisoners and Rebellion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Clare Anderson *Convicts in the Indian Ocean: Transportation from South Asia to Mauritius, 1815-1853* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2000); Clare Anderson, *Legible Bodies: Race, Criminality and Colonialism in South Asia* (Oxford: Berg, 2004); W.J. Berridge, 'Ambivalent ideologies and the limitations of the colonial prison in Sudan, 1898-1956', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 6:3 (2012): 444-462; Bjørn Enge Bertelsen, "'Entering the Red Sands": The Corporality of Punishment and Imprisonment in Chimoio, Mozambique', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37:3 (2011): 37-41; Daniel V. Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Daniel Branch, 'Imprisonment and Colonialism in Kenya, c. 1930-1952: Escaping the Carceral Archipelago', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 38:2 (2005): 239-265; Fran Buntman, 'Prison and Democracy: Lessons learned and not learned, from 1989-2009', *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 22:3 (2009): 401-418; Frank Dikötter, "'A Paradise for Rascals": Colonialism, Punishment and the Prison in Hong Kong (1841-1898)', *Crime Histoire et Sociétés* 8:1 (2004): 49-63; Frank Dikötter, *Crime, Punishment and the Prison in Modern China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Stacey Hynd, 'Law, Violence and Penal Reform in Malawi: State Responses to Crime and Disorder in Colonial Malawi, c.1900-1959', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37:3 (2011): 431-447; Diana Paton, *No Bond but the Law: Punishment, Race and Gender in Jamaican State Formation, 1780-1870*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Ricardo D. Salvatore and Carlos Aguirre, *The Birth of the Penitentiary in Latin*

largely preoccupied with illuminating how penal structures, technologies, and philosophies were circulated and ‘vernacularized’ from the West to the rest of the world.⁷⁸ However, while scholars are increasingly illuminating the contours of these cultures across imperial networks, there is a much poorer understanding of their post-colonial manifestations. This scholarship has focused largely on the failure of colonial prison systems to live up to Western norms, creating a ‘historiographical-cul-de sac’ that has left us with a static narrative of the prison’s coercive uses and poor conditions.⁷⁹ Furthermore, scholars working on the global history of the prison have – largely as a consequence of the source material – focused mainly on the realm of high politics, obscuring how non-elite local actors engaged with these new ideas and forms of punishment.⁸⁰

Such tendencies are apparent in the work of Florence Bernault, one of the few historians to write comparatively about African prisons, most notably in her chapter of the edited collection, *A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa*.⁸¹ Bernault focuses particularly on the spatial aspects of punishment, emphasizing how the prison was part of a ‘larger doctrine of spatial confinement’ through which colonizers sought to control ‘multiple aspects of African life and physical space’.⁸² While this perspective is useful for situating incarceration within wider techniques of control, Bernault’s contributions to the study of the prison itself are conceptually limited. Overall, she argues that the introduction of the prison to Africa ‘gave birth to specific, highly original models of

America: Essays on Criminology, Prison Reform, and Social Control, 1830-1940 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996); Kent F. Schull, *Prisons in the Late Ottoman Empire: Microcosms of Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014); Peter Zinoman, *The Colonial Bastille: A History of Imprisonment in Vietnam, 1862-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

⁷⁸ David Arnold, ‘The Prison and Its Publics: Circulation and Confinement in British India, 1830-1940’ (paper presented at ‘The World of Prisons: The History of Confinement in a Global Perspective, Late Eighteenth to Early Twentieth Century’, University of Bern, Switzerland, 7-9 September, 2016).

⁷⁹ Taylor C. Sherman, ‘Tensions of Colonial Punishment: Perspectives on Recent Developments in the Study of Coercive Networks in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean’, *History Compass* 7:3 (2009): 665. Exceptions to this include: Schull, *Prisons in the Late Ottoman Empire*; Paton, *No Bond But the Law*; Hynd, ‘Law, Violence and Penal Reform’.

⁸⁰ Notable exceptions include: Anderson, *The Indian Uprising of 1857-8*; Paton, *No Bond But the Law*; Zinoman, *The Colonial Bastille*.

⁸¹ Florence Bernault, ‘The Politics of Enclosure in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa’, in *A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa*, ed. Florence Bernault (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003).

⁸² *Ibid.*, 34.

penal incarceration'.⁸³ Yet, her articulation of this model is vague, and rests on a poor understanding of variations over time and between specific colonies. She makes four broad points about the nature of colonial prisons: the absence of a 'carceral archipelago'; the continued use of 'archaic forms of punishment' such as flogging; the economic role of prisons as a source of forced labour; and the lack of rehabilitative efforts within prisons, which stemmed from colonial views of Africans as a 'fundamentally delinquent race'.⁸⁴ While these arguments certainly hold some weight – especially in the early twentieth century – they do not hold across time and space. Notably, Bernault largely glosses over the late colonial penal reforms. While she acknowledges that officials started to pay more attention to 'the moral rehabilitation and professional reformation of adult prisoners' after 1945 – which was spurred on both by the 'increasing globalization of criminology and penology worldwide' and the 'colonial regimes' need for legitimization in the face of internal and external anticolonial movements' – she does not follow this promising line of inquiry, instead concluding that the 'concrete results' of these reforms 'seem to have been few'.⁸⁵ In contrast, David Killingray offers a much more instructive – albeit brief – account of late colonial penal reform in East Africa in his contribution to Bernault's collection.⁸⁶ Overall, Bernault's work offers little new insight into African prisons beyond confirming existing narratives of their failure to live up to European standards, while also neglecting to illuminate how African populations engaged in the adaptation of this institution.

While her approach to the colonial prison has been widely critiqued, Bernault also provides some cursory analysis of the post-colonial prison.⁸⁷ Reflecting some of the

⁸³ Bernault, 'The Politics of Enclosure', 29.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 25.

⁸⁶ David Killingray, 'Punishment to Fit the Crime? Penal Policy and Practice in British Colonial Africa', in *A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa*, ed. Florence Bernault (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003), 112-113.

⁸⁷ For a particularly pronounced critique of Bernault, see David M. Anderson, 'Varieties of Incarceration', review of *A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa*, edited by Florence Bernault, *Journal of African History* 46 (2005): 158-160. See also: John McCracken, review of *A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa*, edited by Florence Bernault, *African Affairs* 104 (415): 347-349; and Steven Wood, review of *A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa*, edited by Florence Bernault *International Criminal Justice Review* 16:3 (2006): 209-211.

wider approaches to the study of the institutional legacies of colonialism, she draws a clear line from the colonial to the post-colonial period, arguing that the violence of colonial prisons has been fundamental in shaping the nature of prisons after independence. Bernault contends that ‘post-colonial dictators have built sites of detention and torture that speak to no other logic than that of megalomaniacal and murderous power’, shaped by ‘the legacy of colonial penitentiaries’, ‘the tragic modernity of contemporary political strife’, and the ‘imperatives of local political culture, one of arbitrariness, physical torture and personalization of violence’.⁸⁸ Furthermore, she uses the post-colonial prison as a symbol of the inadequacy of African statehood: ‘Through the lens of its penitentiary regime, the African state does not resemble the Weberian or even the Foucaultian state based on techniques of power, general surveillance, and the citizens’ interiorization of omnipresent discipline’.⁸⁹ Thus, for Bernault, the post-colonial prison is a site of violence that epitomizes state failure. Her assessment – notable for its sweeping generalizations and tendency towards sensationalism – is representative of the limited scholarship available on African prisons following decolonization.⁹⁰

In contrast to the historical interest in the expansion of the prison across European empires, its ‘resilience’ in the post-colonial period has been largely unproblematised. As states in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and the Caribbean became independent, the prison remained an important part of their institutional landscapes. While this continuity has largely been taken for granted, it deserves further critical scrutiny.⁹¹ As this dissertation will emphasize, the study of the post-colonial prison offers more than an affirmation of state repression or failure. By tracing how local actors – from presidents to prison officers – engaged with transnational discourses, networks, and philosophies of penalty, and adapted these to their own visions of

⁸⁸ Bernault, ‘The Politics of Enclosure’, 30-32.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 33.

⁹⁰ See for example, Stephen Peté, ‘A brief history of human rights in the prisons of Africa’, in *Human Rights in African Prisons*, ed. Jeremy Sarkin (Cape Town: HRSC Press, 2008), 40-66.

⁹¹ One of the few notable exceptions to this is Mairi MacDonald’s account of how Sékou Touré’s regime treated political prisoners in post-colonial Guinea. See Mairi S. MacDonald, ‘Guinea’s Political Prisoners: Colonial Models, Postcolonial Innovation’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54:4 (2012): 890-913.

modernity, we can open up a new lens into the histories of both the prison and the post-colonial state.

Along with emphasizing the need to study post-colonial prisons, this dissertation also addresses another glaring gap in the wider literature: the paucity of scholarship on prison officers. These actors have been neglected by historians, usually appearing only as ballast to arguments about the violence and corruption within penal systems. As David Arnold writes of prisons in colonial India, ‘it was at the interface between prisoner and warder that many of the evils of the prison system arose’.⁹² Offering a more nuanced discussion, Taylor Sherman argues that warders ‘epitomise the ambiguity of colonial violence for they reveal the extent to which many of the colonial state’s coercive mechanisms relied on a small number of the colonized population who, reluctantly, willingly, or cunningly, were instruments of colonial dominance’.⁹³ Although representative of real abuses on the part of the prison staff, such analyses gloss over officers’ roles in enacting and interpreting the state’s approach to punishment and rehabilitation. In many ways prison officers were ‘intermediary’ figures, much like those Africans who worked as clerks, translators, or teachers in the colonial state.⁹⁴ While several scholarly works have examined officers’ role in the context of penal reform processes, these have understandably relied on official archives, thus offering limited insight into officers’ identities and experiences.⁹⁵ Overall, there is no critical engagement with officers’ unique status: working in an alien institution inherited from the colonial state and embraced by post-colonial governments, they were tasked with ‘Africanising’ penal institutions, and had the chance to refashion their professional identity in light of new political realities. The contours of this process were shaped by officers’ ideas of what state institutions should and should not be, a boundary that became particularly pressing with the rise of authoritarian rule throughout much of the continent.⁹⁶ Through

⁹² David Arnold, ‘India: The Contested Prison’, in *Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia, and Latin America*, eds. Frank Dikötter and Ian Brown (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 171.

⁹³ Sherman, ‘Tensions of Colonial Punishment’, 662.

⁹⁴ See Benjamin N. Lawrance, Emily Lynn Osborn, and Richard L. Roberts, eds., *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks: African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

⁹⁵ Schull, *Prisons in the Ottoman Empire*, 142-165.

⁹⁶ Jocelyn Alexander, ‘Militarisation and State Institutions: “Professionals” and “Soldiers” inside the Zimbabwe Prison Service’, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 39:4 (2013): 808.

studying prison officers, we can move away from the reductive question of whether or not African prison services met European standards, instead asking how they were imagined and experienced by those who worked there.

Such approaches are increasingly evident in recent studies of post-colonial prison officers, such as Jocelyn Alexander's examination of prison officers in post-colonial Zimbabwe.⁹⁷ Although the militarization of the Zimbabwean state at the turn of the millennium greatly diminished the Zimbabwe Prison Service's capacity – leading to an upsurge in prisoners' mortality rates as a result of starvation and disease – officers 'embraced an historically rooted state ideal built on the value of rules and expertise'.⁹⁸ They looked disparagingly upon the soldiers who had entered the Service's ranks, arguing that these military men had undermined the 'plans to align the prison service with modern practices'.⁹⁹ Officers' critiques of the soldiers and narratives of the Service's decline were bound up not only in their views of prison work, but also with broader ideas about professionalism, public service, and political legitimacy. Even if these views did not always reflect the reality of the Service's past or present, Alexander does not dismiss them. Rather, she urges scholars to stop insisting 'on ideal forms or to measure deviation from them', instead asking 'how formal state institutions are conceived and how they claim and wield authority from the point of view of their actors'.¹⁰⁰ Despite writing about a country that is often seen to epitomize the problems of post-colonial African states, Alexander illuminates the 'stubborn historicity' of bureaucratic imaginaries.¹⁰¹

In a similar vein, W.J. Berridge has recently argued that post-colonial prison professionals in Sudan embraced ideals of rehabilitation and modernization in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁰² This was a product of the political zeitgeist of the time, reflecting the 'wider efforts of the newly empowered generation of educated nationalist professionals

⁹⁷ Alexander, 'Militarisation and State Institutions', 807-828.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 807.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 817.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 810.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 812.

¹⁰² W. J. Berridge, 'The frailties of prisons in post-colonial Sudan: from rehabilitation to retribution, 1956-1989', *Middle Eastern Studies* 52:3 (2016): 385-401.

to demonstrate Sudan's civility and the capacity of the educated elite to govern the country'.¹⁰³ The prison, Berridge argues, was an important 'sphere in which this "civility" could be performed'.¹⁰⁴ However, rather than 'simply parroting post-Enlightenment European penal ideals', these Sudanese officers tried to shape the penal system using policies developed during the pre-colonial Mahdist period.¹⁰⁵ They also continued colonial-era policies of using prisoners as labourers, with a view that they could contribute to agricultural and industrial development. However, Berridge argues that such approaches lost significant traction from the late 1970s onwards as the state became increasingly repressive.¹⁰⁶ This failure to institutionalize rehabilitative policies, Berridge contends, supports Jean-François Bayart's argument that the development of an 'integral state' from a 'soft state' in Africa has 'not taken place despite advances in the technology of social control'.¹⁰⁷ Whereas Alexander focuses on officers' belief in bureaucracy and notions of the 'modern' prison in order to critique dominant scholarly approaches to the post-colonial state, Berridge argues that officers' failure to uphold such principles broadly affirms such paradigms. Thus, while both historians use the study of prison officers to make wider points about the nature of the post-colonial state – a theme to which we shall now turn – they draw very different conclusions.

Bureaucracy and the State in Postcolonial Africa

The study of the state in Africa has long been dominated by discussions of chaos and informality. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, political theorists eschewed the study of official institutions, instead adopting a 'narrower concern with how networks function'.¹⁰⁸ The state was viewed as inept at best and irrelevant at worst, with phenomena such as neopatrimonialism deemed to be much more germane for understanding power dynamics than the frameworks regularly deployed to describe Western states. For example, Bayart's concept of the 'politics of the belly' asserts the

¹⁰³ Berridge, 'The frailties of prisons', 386.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 386.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 387.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 385.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 386.

¹⁰⁸ Paul Nugent, 'States and Social Contracts in Africa', *New Left Review* 63 (2010): 35.

importance of personal relationships between patrons and clients in Africa, one that undercuts the need for institutions.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz argue that the African state is ‘vacuous and ineffectual’, unable to ‘acquire either the legitimacy or the professional competence which are the hallmarks of the modern state’.¹¹⁰ Scholars writing in this vein have marked African states as weak, failed, and fundamentally different to those in the West.

A recent wave of anthropological scholarship has challenged these interpretations, using ethnographic research to explore the perspectives and experiences of public servants in Africa. It argues that institutions *do* matter in African states, and that they are underpinned by Weberian bureaucratic principles. One of the foremost philosophers to study bureaucracy, Weber’s work has been pivotal in shaping how scholars approach the state. In his model, an ideal bureaucracy has the following components: ‘official jurisdictional’ areas, in which each section of a bureaucracy has its own duties and skills; ‘rule-based office management and execution of tasks’; ‘office hierarchy, monocratic rule and channels of appeal based on written documentation’; separation between the ‘bureau’ and the ‘private domicile of the official’ and between public and ‘private monies and equipment’; ‘recruitment and promotion based on general rules concerning specialized training’; ‘a fixed monetary salary and old-age pension’; ‘promotion according to fixed career lines’; ‘full-time activity’, ‘life tenure’ and security against ‘arbitrary dismissal’; and ‘office holding as an abstract vocation’ rather than ‘loyalty to a particular ruler’.¹¹¹ This model is meant to represent an ideal type, one that envisions bureaucracy as a ‘well-functioning, effective machinery of domination’.¹¹²

Like Foucault’s ‘carceral archipelago’, this perfect bureaucratic machine exists only as a theoretical abstraction, and is not fully realized in African states or elsewhere. As Thomas Bierschenk argues, ‘to claim that a given bureaucracy, say an African police

¹⁰⁹ See Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009).

¹¹⁰ Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as a Political Instrument* (Oxford: James Currey, 1999), 14.

¹¹¹ Thomas Bierschenk and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, ‘Studying the Dynamics of African Bureaucracies. An Introduction to States at Work’, in *States at Work: Dynamics of African Bureaucracies*, eds. Thomas Bierschenk and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan (Boston: Brill, 2014), 12.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 10.

force, does not conform to Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy, is a sociological banality, and would certainly not come as a surprise to Weber himself'.¹¹³ By recognizing this, scholars studying African bureaucracies have challenged the 'deficiency perspective' that has dominated analyses of post-colonial African states.¹¹⁴ However, while pointing out the impossibility of a perfect bureaucracy, these scholars have nevertheless demonstrated the salience of bureaucratic ideals on the continent, and the significant role they play in shaping the imaginaries and actions of state employees.

Within this vein, two recent studies of public servants in Ghana stand out. Drawing on extensive ethnographic research, Jan Beek demonstrates the significance of bureaucratic norms in guiding police officers' perceptions of their organization and their professional identities.¹¹⁵ Through drawing on particular 'registers' and principles of 'bureaucratic order', police officers produce 'stateness' or the qualities of a state organization, giving their work a particular legitimacy and moral worth.¹¹⁶ The fact that officers only 'partially and inconsistently adhere to their belief in law and their notions of social order', does not diminish the importance of bureaucratic ideals in guiding police work.¹¹⁷ Instead, these notions of professionalism provide officers with a set of values and practices that make their profession meaningful. By drawing on certain morals and expectations, officers perform 'boundary work', thereby asserting the distinctiveness of their organization and creating distance between themselves, civilians, and other professionals.¹¹⁸ At times this boundary is shifted or breached, but it still exists, and also guides how officers act. 'For the most part', Beek contends, 'police officers in Ghana create a police organization that maintains social distance, is bureaucratically impartial and acts as a final authority'.¹¹⁹

¹¹³ Thomas Bierschenk, 'Police and State', in *The Sage Handbook of Global Policing*, eds. Ben Bradford, Ian Loader, Beatrice Jauregui, and Jonny Steinberg (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2016), 161.

¹¹⁴ Bierschenk and de Sardan, 'Studying the Dynamics of African Bureaucracies', 43.

¹¹⁵ Jan Beek, *Producing Stateness: Police Work in Ghana* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2-9.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

The second, by Carola Lentz, uses oral history to examine the identities of a range of public servants from Northern Ghana.¹²⁰ Rather than exploring how they worked in practice, Lentz focuses on these individuals' self-characterizations. Overwhelmingly, they all drew on a 'Weberian ideal-type image of a worthy bureaucrat', insisting on the merits of political neutrality, loyalty to the state rather than the government, and the importance of professionalism.¹²¹ Through their 'normative statements and narratives', these public servants also engage in boundary work and cultivate a particular image of what it means to be a good public servant.¹²² Pre-empting critiques that interviewees could 'simply put up a façade of universalist ethics to camouflage their real actions', Lentz argues that such a reading is far too narrow.¹²³ 'It is not sufficient to simply point to the difference between official norms and observed behavior, and then explain away the latter with broad, generalizing concepts such as neopatrimonialism and clientism', she contends.¹²⁴ Instead, Lentz – like Alexander – urges scholars to 'pay more attention to the official norms as phenomena *sui generis* and analyse how public administrators produce, defend, or modify them'.¹²⁵

Historians have been less focused on the study of bureaucracies in the postcolony. Instead, their contributions to the rethinking of post-colonial theories have centered on complicating portrayals of the colonial state's legacy, challenging generic depictions of colonial power by scholars such as Chabal and Daloz, Mamhood Mamdani, and Crawford Young.¹²⁶ While valuable, these studies have turned more to empirical renderings of the colonial state and the realm of high-politics, paying minimal attention to professionals.¹²⁷ Yet for historians, the 'stubborn historicity' of bureaucratic

¹²⁰ Carola Lentz, "I Take an Oath to the State, Not the Government": Career Trajectories and Professional Ethics of Ghanaian Public Servants', in *States at Work*, ed. Thomas Bierschenk and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan (Boston: Brill, 2014), 175-204.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 176.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 176.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 178.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 178.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 178.

¹²⁶ Mamhood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Crawford Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

¹²⁷ See for example, Frederick Cooper, 'Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective', *Journal of African History* 49:2 (2008): 167-196; Leander Schneider, 'Colonial Legacies and

ideals should not be a surprise.¹²⁸ Western European structures and conceptions of statehood undergirded the colonial state apparatus, even if these were modified to fit the priorities of imperial powers. This heritage is not hidden in the Ugandan Public Service Commission's renderings of its own institutional history, but rather explicitly evoked:

The present Uganda Public Service is an aggregate descendant of the various measures taken at the beginning of this century by the British Colonial power to effectively administer the then Uganda Protectorate. Before the advent of the British administration, Uganda had a number of well developed political institutions with definite systems of administration. It was the refinement of these, combining them with the concept of the British Civil Service, that gave rise to today's public service.¹²⁹

As Andrew Burton and Michael Jennings have recently argued, the institutional legacy of colonial rule is 'hardly surprising' and should not be 'blithely condemned'.¹³⁰ With the quick pace of decolonization and Africa's 'marginal position' in the global economy, the 'internal imperatives of governance immediately after independence probably necessitated a high degree of continuity'.¹³¹ This was not only true for political elites, but also for the first generation of public servants, who were steeped in the philosophies of colonial bureaucracy. For UPS and other public service institutions, Weberian ideals provided an essential foundation after independence. This has been lost, however, in many scholarly and popular accounts of the African state, which present post-colonial bureaucracies as 'strangely ahistorical entities, a set of functional imperatives of regulation arising from society but devoid of distinct characters and different historical trajectories'.¹³² More historical research is needed to enrich existing ethnographic perspectives.

Postcolonial Authoritarianism in Tanzania: Connects and Disconnects', *African Studies Review* 49:1 (2006), 93-118.

¹²⁸ Alexander, 'Militarisation and State Institutions', 812.

¹²⁹ Uganda Parliamentary Library (UPL), *Report of the Uganda Public Service Salaries Review Commission, 1980-1982* (Kampala: Public Service Salaries Review Commission, 1982), 3.

¹³⁰ Burton and Jennings, 'The Emperor's New Clothes', 3.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹³² Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat, 'Introduction: States of Imagination', in *States of Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State*, eds., Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 1.

Social Histories of Professionals in Africa

In turning to the lives of prison officers, this dissertation engages in some of the core themes that have animated Africanist social history. Scholars studying Africa's past have done groundbreaking work to shed light on the voices and everyday experiences of Africans, from studies of prostitutes living in colonial Nairobi to the story of a single sharecropper in apartheid South Africa.¹³³ Within this field, there is a growing focus on professional groups, including doctors, psychiatrists, lawyers, and soldiers.¹³⁴ These studies have provided crucial insight into Africans' participation in various institutions, illuminating how individuals adopted, negotiated, and altered the professional categories introduced through European rule.

Studies of professionals in colonial Africa have been rooted in the concept of the 'intermediary', which recognizes that these actors served as the primary interface between European and African communities.¹³⁵ Initially, this term was used to describe figures such as clerks, interpreters, and secretaries working for the colonial government, members of the bureaucracy able to 'mediate and bridge the gap between the colonizers and the colonized'.¹³⁶ While much of this scholarship uses intermediaries to illuminate the nature of state power in colonial Africa, historians are also increasingly exploring the dynamics between these actors' professional and personal identities. For example, in *Making Men in Ghana*, Stephen Miescher looks at the class of men who became clerks,

¹³³ See Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Charles van Onselen, *The Seed is Mine: The Life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper, 1845-1985* (Cape Town: David Phillip, 1996).

¹³⁴ See for example: Myron Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Sénégalais in French West Africa, 1857-1960* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991); Matthew M. Heaton, *Black Skin, White Coats: Nigerian Psychiatrists, Decolonization, and the Globalization of Psychiatry* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013), Kindle edition; John Iliffe, *East African Doctors: A History of the Modern Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); George H. Karekwaivanane, "'Through the Narrow Door': Narratives of the First Generation of African Lawyers in Zimbabwe", *Africa* 86:1 (2016): 59-77; Timothy Parsons, *The African Rank and File: Social Implications of Colonial Military Service in the King's African Rifles, 1902-1964* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999); Branwyn Polleyket and Peter Mangesho, 'Labour Politics and Africanization at a Tanzanian Scientific Research Institute, 1949-66', *Africa* 86:1 (2016): 142-161; Michelle R. Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest, and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014).

¹³⁵ See Lawrance, Osborn, and Roberts, *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks*.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

police officers, soldiers, and teachers during the colonial period.¹³⁷ These individuals ‘hoped for a share of power and sought to be part of a modern and increasingly urban world’, embracing new skills and opportunities including literacy, leisure, and engagement in the political sphere.¹³⁸ Often migrating to a new part of the country in pursuit of employment, they sought to create a ‘professional identity that was also meaningful to their wider network of social relations’, managing new professional responsibilities alongside duties within their families and communities.¹³⁹ In the process, these men forged new meanings of masculinity, authority, and respectability. Similarly, Michelle Moyd’s work on the *Schutztruppe* in German East Africa moves beyond reductive representations of soldiers as collaborators, positioning them instead as ‘military actors as well as social actors’.¹⁴⁰ Seeking a path to respectability in the increasingly constrained parameters of the colonial economy, many young men in German East Africa chose to become an *askari*. Although moving far from home, they created new social spaces, living in communities that became ‘lively scenes of work, recreation, and sociability’ while also forging connections with the surrounding populations.¹⁴¹ More broadly, Moyd’s work rests on a fundamental question that is pertinent to the study of professional groups, as she seeks to answer ‘how and why people become part of such institutions and what outcomes these commitments produce for them, for those around them, and for the states that employ them’.¹⁴²

In contrast, much less work has been done on the professionals in the postcolony. Yet, these actors were also involved in negotiating notions of power, progress, and authority. While the concept of the ‘intermediary’ is perhaps less relevant, post-colonial professionals were engaged in the reconfiguring of categories and roles introduced through colonial rule. The most instructive scholarship on these actors has drawn out their role as ‘liminal’ figures who operated within transnational networks,

¹³⁷ Stephen Miescher, *Making Men in Ghana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

¹³⁸ Miescher, *Making Men in Ghana*, 85.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 86.

¹⁴⁰ Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries*, 15.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 170.

¹⁴² Ibid., 35.

national political arenas, and also local communities.¹⁴³ Historians writing in this vein have woven together different historiographical threads, combining recent scholarly interest in global networks with more familiar approaches to the study of nationalism and social histories in Africa.

For example, Matthew M. Heaton's work on Nigerian psychiatrists in late colonial and early post-colonial periods illuminates how their careers were shaped by external professional norms, the agendas of the post-colonial Nigerian state, and the mental health needs of the wider populace.¹⁴⁴ While the first generation of Nigerian psychiatrists embraced many of the 'frameworks' of Western psychiatry, they also insisted that these could be 'adapted and redefined to incorporate non-Western realities in ways that could then claim to be universal',¹⁴⁵ thereby challenging colonial notions regarding the inferiority of the 'African mind'.¹⁴⁶ Overall, Heaton demonstrates how these psychiatrists were 'intimately engaged in a contrived but nonetheless preoccupying negotiation about what postcolonial "modernity" should look like, not only in Nigeria but in the world at large'.¹⁴⁷

Similar themes are evident in Branwyn Poleykett and Peter Mangesho's work on the Institute of Malaria and Vector Borne Diseases in Tanzania, founded in 1949.¹⁴⁸ Young, educated Tanzanians sought out the stability and promise of a career tied to scientific research, one that was rooted in colonial structures but was also being reimagined after independence to fit the aims of the Nyerere government. Their struggle to be seen as professionals performing skilled work was entangled in wider debates about Africanization and labour unfolding in this moment of political transition. In contrast to the Nigerian psychiatrists, these professionals were actively encouraged to cut their ties within older imperial networks, including any overseas training, as this was seen to impede Africanization.¹⁴⁹ Poleykett and Mangesho also illuminate these

¹⁴³ Poleykett and Mangesho, 'Labour Politics and Africanization', 151.

¹⁴⁴ See: Heaton, *Black Skin, White Coats*.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., location 104.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., location 149.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., location 103-109.

¹⁴⁸ Poleykett and Mangesho, 'Labour Politics and Africanization', 143.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 157-158.

professionals' personal networks, demonstrating how the Institute 'functioned not just within globalized networks of tropical medicine and scientific research but as a place bound both to local economies of labour and to larger geographies of African ambition and aspiration'.¹⁵⁰

These studies remind us of the crucial role of professionals in negotiating the transition from colonial to post-colonial rule. Trained in imperial frameworks and institutions, they were nevertheless deeply engaged in challenging exclusionary categories and processes of knowledge production, while also seeking to rethink their profession in light of local contexts. Many were deeply committed to their vocation and eager to tie their professional success to the pursuit of 'modernity' in their newly independent nations. These processes were also shaped by their status as social actors embedded in communities of family and kinship, which generated particular aspirations, loyalties, and values. Prisons officers in Uganda, although perhaps of a less elite status than psychiatrists or scientific researchers, were nonetheless involved in similar pursuits, and also engaged in a wide range of professional and personal networks within Uganda and beyond its borders.

Uganda's History

Finally, this dissertation is situated within Uganda's historiography. In contrast to the literature on Kenya or Tanzania, this field has been somewhat uniquely dominated by studies of the pre-colonial period. Using innovative and interdisciplinary methods, historians have produced rich histories of kingdoms and other political communities, providing insights into topics such as fertility, land, warfare, and motherhood.¹⁵¹ Although these have greatly enhanced our knowledge of the pre-colonial period – especially in respect to Buganda¹⁵² – they have also 'balkanized' the

¹⁵⁰ Poleykett and Mangesho, 'Labour Politics and Africanization', 160.

¹⁵¹ See for example: Shane Doyle, *Crisis & Decline in Bunyoro: Population & Environment in Western Uganda, 1860-1955* (Oxford: James Currey, 2006); Holly Hansen, *Landed Obligation: The Practice of Power in Buganda* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003); Richard Reid, *Political Power in Pre-Colonial Buganda: Economy, Society and Warfare in the 19th Century* (Oxford: James Currey, 2002); Rhiannon Stephens, *A History of African Motherhood: The Case of Uganda: 700-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

¹⁵² In addition to those already mentioned, examples include Jonathon Earle, 'Political Theologies in Late Colonial Buganda' (PhD diss. University of Cambridge, 2012); Neil Kodesh, *Beyond the Royal Gaze: Clanship*

historiography, resulting in an impoverished understanding of histories shared across regions, especially from the colonial period onwards.¹⁵³ As Derek Peterson and Edgar Taylor argue, 'historians have done startlingly little work on colonial Uganda, and they have left Uganda's post-colonial history almost entirely unstudied'.¹⁵⁴

This is beginning to change. For this dissertation, two recent developments are particularly relevant. The first is the growing reconsideration of the Amin regime. Although much has been written about Uganda in the 1970s, most of it has stemmed from non-governmental organizations, journalists, expatriates, and Ugandans in exile.¹⁵⁵ While this material offers some useful empirical evidence, it is notable for its sensationalism rather than substance, laden with images of dismembered and disfigured bodies, gruesome details of torture techniques, and rumours of Amin's cannibalistic practices. In these writings, public servants are portrayed either as accomplices to Amin's abuses or fervent dissenters, while the wider citizenry are often depicted as hapless victims. Such generalizations are also a product of the overwhelming emphasis on Amin's personality. As Reid argues, in much of the early writing on the 1970s, 'Uganda was Amin, Amin was Uganda, and he dominated observers' line of vision absolutely'.¹⁵⁶

For much of the post-colonial period, carrying out research in Uganda was exceedingly difficult. Amin openly advertised his hostility to local and foreign academics, and his departure ushered in further years of war and political turmoil.¹⁵⁷ However, this has begun to shift. In recent years, academics and archivists have been

and Public Healing in Buganda (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010); Carol Summers, 'Young Buganda and Old Boys: Youth, Generational Transition, and Ideas of Leadership in Buganda, 1920-1949', *Africa Today* 51:3 (2005): 109-128.

¹⁵³ Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 36.

¹⁵⁴ Derek R. Peterson and Edgar C. Taylor, 'Rethinking the state in Idi Amin's Uganda: the politics of exhortation', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 7:1 (2013): 58.

¹⁵⁵ See for example: Thomas Melady and Margaret Badum Melady, *Idi Amin Dada: Hitler in Africa* (Kansas City: Sheed Andrews and McMeel, 1977); Henry Kyemba, *State of Blood: The Inside Story of Idi Amin* (New York: Paddington Press, 1977); George Ivan Smith, *Ghosts of Kampala: The Rise and Fall of Idi Amin* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1980); David Gwyn, *Idi Amin: Death-Light of Africa* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co, 1977).

¹⁵⁶ Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 66.

¹⁵⁷ Peterson and Taylor, 'Rethinking the state', 60.

working in tandem to restore and catalogue tens of thousands of records in Uganda.¹⁵⁸ Amongst Ugandans, there is a newfound willingness to discuss the 1970s, whether in newspaper columns, memoirs, or in the public sphere. Generations with firsthand memories of this period are still alive, and many are willing to speak about their experiences. Thus, we are in a unique moment in which innovative research on the 1970s is finally possible.

Drawing on these new sources of evidence, historians are transforming the study of the Amin years. As Holger Bernt Hansen argues, the time has come to ‘look beyond the mere spectacular events during the 1970s and not least beyond the personality of Idi Amin himself’.¹⁵⁹ Similarly, Alicia Decker contends that we must discard the view that ‘Idi Amin was an aberrant character with no underlying rationale animating or unifying his political strategies’.¹⁶⁰ Peterson and Taylor offer one of the most useful framings, calling upon scholars to view Amin’s Uganda as a ‘field of action’, rather than a ‘homogenous Leviathan’.¹⁶¹ Incorporating these new approaches, historians have produced fascinating accounts of this period, exploring themes such as gender, bureaucracy, and race.¹⁶² Moreover, a number of recent doctoral projects have focused specifically on the 1970s, further underscoring this decade’s renewed prominence in the study of Uganda.¹⁶³

This intensified interest in the Amin years has not, however, been replicated in the study of the 1960s. While most of the new scholarship on Amin examines the Obote I period, it usually serves as a backdrop to the 1970s. In contrast, many chapters in this dissertation treat the 1960s and the 1970s in a single analytical frame. More

¹⁵⁸ For more on this process, see Edgar C. Taylor, Ashley Brooke Rockenbach and Natalie Bond, ‘Archives and the Past: Cataloguing and Digitisation in Uganda’s Archives’, in *African Studies in the Digital Age DisConnects*, eds. Terry Barringer and Marion Wallace (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 163-178.

¹⁵⁹ Holger Bernt Hansen, ‘Uganda in the 1970s: a decade of paradoxes and ambiguities’, *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 7:1 (2013): 83.

¹⁶⁰ Alicia C. Decker, *In Idi Amin’s Shadow: Women, Gender, and Militarism in Uganda* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014), Kindle edition, location 229.

¹⁶¹ Peterson and Taylor, ‘Rethinking the State’, 59.

¹⁶² This new wave of research is well captured by the special collection entitled ‘Rethinking Idi Amin’s Uganda’, *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 7:1 (2013).

¹⁶³ See Edgar C. Taylor, ‘Histories of an Event: The Ugandan Asian Expulsion of 1972’ (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2015); and Eva Namusoke, ‘Church and State in Post-Colonial Uganda, 1962-1981’ (PhD diss. University of Cambridge, 2015).

research is needed to better understand this period, especially as we begin to bring the continuities across the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s into sharper focus.

Along with this emphasis on the Amin era, there is also a growing interest in histories that have a national and institutional focus.¹⁶⁴ This is best epitomized by Reid's impressive monograph, *A History of Modern Uganda*. Although known for his groundbreaking work on Buganda, Reid makes a convincing case for the relevance of national scales of analysis in the study of Uganda's history. He locates the roots of this shared history in the 'deeper past', arguing that there is a 'precolonial crucible that becomes Uganda, a zone of interconnectedness in which the seeds of "Uganda" are sown'.¹⁶⁵ While this dissertation focuses on much more recent periods, it recognizes the importance of these longer processes in the creation of Ugandan identities. More broadly, Reid also reflects on themes that have animated Uganda's past across different periods and political regimes, including resiliency in the face of turmoil and violence; deep and contested engagement in processes of historical representation; and stories of 'aspiration', 'expectation', and the 'drive for social mobility' – themes which are evident in the history of UPS.¹⁶⁶

Other historians have placed particular institutions at the heart of their explorations of Uganda's past, thereby engaging in cross-regional, and at times explicitly national, analysis. Carol Sicherman's study of Makerere University examines the institution's development from the colonial period to contemporary times, drawing out the impact of political instability on the institution, as well as tensions between Western academic traditions and local desires for a decolonized academy.¹⁶⁷ Along the same lines, Marissa Mika traces the history of the Uganda Cancer Institute, illuminating its innovation, resiliency, and transnational connections in the context of post-colonial

¹⁶⁴ Along with Jørgensen and Mutibwa, the first scholarly works to assess Uganda's national history include Samwiri Rubaraza Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda* (Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980); Samwiri Rubaraza Karugire, *Roots of Instability in Uganda* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1988).

¹⁶⁵ Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 8.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 260.

¹⁶⁷ Carol Sicherman, *Becoming an African University: Makerere, 1922-2000* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2005). See also: Nakanyike B. Musisi & Nansozo K. Muwanga, *Makerere University in Transition 1993-2000* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2003).

politics.¹⁶⁸ Kathleen Vogsathorn's ongoing work on maternity centres in Uganda explores fascinating connections between gender, professional identity, and the provision of maternal care.¹⁶⁹ This dissertation adopts a similar approach, using the history of a national institution to explore major themes in Uganda's relatively recent past.

Imagining Modernity, Building Boundaries: Theoretical Frameworks and Key Arguments

In 1972, Ralph Tanner – a sociologist and the former chair of the East African Institute for Social Research at Makerere – penned an article about the prospects of penal reform on the African continent.¹⁷⁰ While he acknowledged that there were 'worldwide trends towards the more humane treatment of prisoners', Tanner cast doubt on Africans' ability to engage in such movements.¹⁷¹ 'These trends', he argued, 'are determined by the societies that have evolved them; they are not therefore characterized by African aims and they do not express themselves in African forms'.¹⁷² While the penal reform movement in the Western world had 'the respectability which comes from a long-standing concern and professional competence, and is part of the cultural background', Tanner suggested that there was 'no such environment in Africa, and the surrounding culture does not encourage an ambitious or imaginative politician or prison officer to think in reformist terms'.¹⁷³ Ultimately, he felt that prison officers could not grasp the 'practicality and value' of penal reform, as they only had examples of 'political absoluteness and arbitrariness', rather than 'personal inventiveness' in their work.¹⁷⁴ Thus, in Tanner's estimation, the inherited nature of the prison stymied African

¹⁶⁸ Marissa Mika, 'Research is Our Resource: Surviving Experiments and Politics at an African Cancer Institute' (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2015).

¹⁶⁹ Kathleen Vogsathorn, "'Deep, deep, deep in the village': exploring local responses to maternity centres in Karamoja and beyond, c.1921-2017" (paper presented at the Workshop on Emerging Approaches in Uganda Studies, University of London, 29 April 2017).

¹⁷⁰ R.E.S Tanner, 'Penal Practice in Africa - Some Restrictions on the Possibility of Reform', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 10:3 (1972): 447-458.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 447.

¹⁷² Ibid., 447.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 455.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 456.

creativity in the realm of penal policy. He believed that, encumbered with a system that was not of their own design, prison officers would struggle to embrace models of penal modernity developed in the Western world.

This dissertation takes a very different view, and advances four key arguments. Firstly, from the late colonial period onwards, the Service's development was shaped by global visions of the prison as a technical, professional institution with the power to rehabilitate offenders. As will be discussed subsequently, this model – often termed 'penal welfarism' – gained traction in the late nineteenth century and remained dominant until the 1970s.¹⁷⁵ Secondly, this model was combined with post-colonial political imperatives – particularly economic development – to produce a distinct penal philosophy. This emphasis on development began in the late colonial period and accelerated after independence, with a specific emphasis on agricultural and industrial production. Thirdly, the prison's status as a 'monument to modernity' gave the Service a particular imaginative capital, one that was taken up and adapted by local actors for a range of purposes.¹⁷⁶ Officers used it as a resource in order to make claims on the state, assert their membership in transnational networks of penal experts, and attain respectability among their personal and professional communities, while political elites used it to buttress their state's claims to legitimacy and progress. Finally, the history of UPS is characterized by multiple and ongoing processes of 'boundary work'.¹⁷⁷ From its inception, the Service's identity has been entangled with and defined in contrast to the military, the police, local government prisons, informal detention sites, and paramilitary organizations, resulting in boundary-making processes that have been both contested and urgent.

At the heart of these arguments is the issue of how modernity was imagined in UPS across these historical moments. As the literature review has demonstrated, this

¹⁷⁵ David Garland, *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Control in Contemporary Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3.

¹⁷⁶ Frank Dikötter, 'Introduction: The Prison in the World', in *Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia and Latin America*, eds. Frank Dikötter and Ian Brown. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 4.

¹⁷⁷ Michèle Lamont and Virág Molnár, 'The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences', *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002): 167-195.

concept casts a long shadow over studies of the prison, the state, and professional groups. Yet, it is often carelessly deployed, serving as a ‘shorthand way to signal that one’s work was *au courant* with broader scholarly discussions’.¹⁷⁸ As Frederick Cooper argues, modernity ‘is now used to make so many different points that continued deployment of it may contribute more to confusion than to clarity’.¹⁷⁹ A particularly fraught word in Africanist scholarship, modernity has been used as an exclusionary category and a justification for imperial rule. By representing Africa as the ‘farthest point of otherness’ in relation to Europe, colonizers and scholars alike have created a powerful dichotomy in which Europe stands for modernity and Africa for ‘tradition’.¹⁸⁰ Accounts of the post-colonial state have been profoundly shaped by this polarity, with many scholars insisting on the fundamental incompatibility of Africa and modern statehood. Thus, while the concept of ‘modernity’ is central to this dissertation, a clarification of its framing and analytical usage is essential.

Africanist scholars have offered some of the most innovative and productive approaches to this contested concept.¹⁸¹ For this dissertation, two stand out in particular. The first, from Lynn Thomas, reminds us of the importance of grounding abstract examinations of modernity in studies of specific institutions and categories. Thomas exhorts scholars to focus on ‘mid-level analytical concepts’, tying their research to ‘what have classically been viewed as the ideological and institutional formations that make up modernity’.¹⁸² Her approach rejects notions of modernity as a predetermined bundle of institutions and ideas, and instead ‘seeks to subject formations long associated with modernity to fresh scrutiny’, tracking their ‘circuitous routes and jagged political terrains’.¹⁸³ While Thomas’s intervention traces modern girlhood across time and space,

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¹⁷⁹ Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), Kindle edition, location 113.

¹⁸⁰ Chinua Achebe, *The Education of a British Protected Child* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), Kindle edition, location 961.

¹⁸¹ See for example: Jan-Georg Deutsch, Peter Probst & Heike Schmidt, eds., *African Modernities: Entangled Meanings in Current Debate* (Oxford: James Currey, 2002).

¹⁸² Thomas, ‘Modernity’s Failings’, 737.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 738.

the prison is another example of an ‘institutional formation’ of modernity that has moved ‘between and through colonies, metropolises, empires and nations’.¹⁸⁴

This approach is evident in Heaton’s work on psychiatrists. Recognizing the ‘situational’ quality of modernity,¹⁸⁵ Heaton explores how ‘political and professional elites bought into the project of transforming their underdeveloped colonies into “modern” nation-states’.¹⁸⁶ This entailed engaging with certain ‘universalizing ideologies’ – such as capitalism, industrialization, and scientific knowledge – and adapting them to fit local contexts.¹⁸⁷ Within the context of the psychiatric profession, this meant contributing to the new field of ‘transcultural psychiatry’, which advocated for a ‘universal theory of human psychology based on the ideas of racial and cultural equality’.¹⁸⁸ Thus, these actors positioned themselves as ‘gatekeepers who negotiated and blurred the boundaries between indigenous/colonized and Western/colonial knowledge bases and power structures’.¹⁸⁹

Similarly, the history of UPS must be set in the context of the prison’s ‘institutional formation’ in the middle decades of the twentieth century. While there was certainly diversity in penal forms across continents at this time, there were also many common ideas about what a ‘modern’ prison system entailed. As David Garland writes, approaches to crime and criminology in this period were unabashedly ‘modernist’, rooted in an ‘unquestioning commitment to social engineering’; a ‘confidence’ in the state, science, and government intervention; and a valuing of criminological expertise.¹⁹⁰ Beginning with the Gladstone Report of 1895, rehabilitation became the ‘hegemonic, organizing principle’ of prison policy, providing an ‘all-embracing conceptual net that could be cast over each and every activity in the penal field’.¹⁹¹ Overall, Garland argues that a specific approach to criminal justice emerged between the 1890s and the 1970s,

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 739.

¹⁸⁵ Heaton, *Black Skin, White Coats*, location 257.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., location 312.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., location 313.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., location 74.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., location, 245.

¹⁹⁰ Garland, *The Culture of Control*, 40.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 35.

which he terms ‘penal welfarism’.¹⁹² At its core, this model was premised on the belief that ‘penal measures ought, where possible, to be rehabilitative interventions rather than negative, retributive punishments’, and that such interventions should be shaped by ‘scientific’ knowledge gained through research in criminology and related fields.¹⁹³ For prisons, this meant stressing their ‘re-educative purposes’, and moving towards ‘specialist custodial regimes’, such as ‘youth reformatories’ and ‘training prisons’.¹⁹⁴ Although this model has now engendered considerable cynicism in contemporary scholarly and policy circles, it still held much promise in the mid-twentieth century, particularly for new governments eager to tackle crime, demonstrate their legitimacy, and produce ‘good’ citizens.¹⁹⁵

For political elites and prison officers in Uganda, their vision of penal modernity was firmly anchored to this transnational model from the late colonial period onwards. However, this was not a straightforward process of transposing Western ideas onto a Ugandan context. Like the Nigerian psychiatrists or scientific researchers in Tanzania, prison officers were involved in a creative process of adapting external norms, one shaped by the expectations and tensions that animated the early post-colonial period. While there was not a wholesale reconceptualization of the prison as an institution, the Service’s history was deeply intertwined with questions of economic development, national unity, and political legitimacy, as well as much more intimate concerns about respectability, morality, family, and community.

While Thomas’s approach helps us to recognize the historical specificity of ‘modernity’ in relation to the mid-twentieth century prison, Frederick Cooper’s work provides a useful lens for understanding how prison officers in Uganda engaged with these imaginaries. Rather than trying to find a ‘slightly better definition’ of modernity, Cooper has urged scholars to track its usage, listening ‘to what is being said in the world’.¹⁹⁶ ‘If modernity is what they hear’, he argues, ‘they should ask how it is being

¹⁹² Ibid., 3.

¹⁹³ Garland, *The Culture of Control*, 34.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 34-35.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 53.

¹⁹⁶ Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, location 114-115.

used and why’,¹⁹⁷ considering both the ‘anxieties and aspirations’ it evokes.¹⁹⁸ Rather than using modernity as a strict analytic category, this approach helps historians to view it as a ‘means of claim-making, of aspiring to a better future and of worrying about the dangers posed by social and economic change’.¹⁹⁹ It pays credence to the experiences of local actors and approaches modernity in part as a ‘native’s category’, rather than simply imposing external understandings of this concept.²⁰⁰ For example, James Ferguson’s work on mineworkers in Zambia reminds us how modernity had very ‘concrete meanings’, such as access to education, pensions, and health care.²⁰¹ Focusing more on intellectual history, Emma Hunter has demonstrated the importance of studying vernacular concepts used to ‘express a concept of change towards a position of equality within the world’.²⁰² In the Swahili-language public sphere of the 1940s and 1950s, *maendeleo* – variously translated as ‘modernity’ or ‘progress’, but most often translated as ‘development’ – became an important ‘site at which modernity could be argued over’.²⁰³ Like Cooper, Hunter also reminds us of the ‘anxieties’ surrounding modernity in these contexts, turning our attention to the ‘darker story of ambivalence, fear and disagreement about social change’.²⁰⁴

Prison officers used the Service’s imaginative capital in various ways. Senior officers – led by Fabian Okwaare, the first Ugandan Commissioner of Prisons – became deeply engaged in transnational networks of criminology researchers and penal practitioners. This group, here termed the Okwaare generation, spoke in a transnational vernacular of penal expertise and embraced the core tenets of penal welfarism. These officers explicitly articulated their goal of creating a ‘modern’ prison service, giving their work a gravitas within Uganda and overseas. However, this emphasis on bureaucratic ideals, rehabilitation, and professional expertise extended beyond senior officers,

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., location 115.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., location 118.

¹⁹⁹ Emma Hunter, *Political Thought and the Public Sphere in Tanzania* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 36.

²⁰⁰ Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, location 113.

²⁰¹ Quoted in Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, location 131. See: James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

²⁰² Hunter, *Political Thought*, 36.

²⁰³ Ibid., 36.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 63.

pervading the Service's wider institutional culture. Even if officers did not always practice such ideals in their day-to-day work or directly articulate their commitment to 'modernity', they drew on discourses of discipline, public service, equality, dignity, 'freedom', and 'respect'. They also experienced the 'darker' side of progress, struggling in particular to manage their familial and communal commitments.²⁰⁵ Thus, while Ugandan prison officers broadly embraced the principles of penal welfarism, meanings of 'modernity' in the Service were refracted through the expectations and experiences of prison officers.

Finally, while a particular imaginary of the Prisons Service was created from the late colonial period onwards, it was constantly shifting in relation to broader political changes. Officers had to continuously rethink what it meant to be a professional prison officer and work in a 'modern' prison service. To explore these processes, we can turn to the concept of 'boundary work', one that has gained increasing traction in the social sciences in recent years, but is rarely used by historians.²⁰⁶ 'Boundary work' refers to the exploration of 'typification systems, or inferences concerning similarities and differences', that specific groups 'mobilize to define who they are'.²⁰⁷ Put more simply, it provides an entry-point for examining how groups identify themselves in relation to others groups and demarcate 'worthy' identities.²⁰⁸

This concept has been used in a range of studies, from sociologist Michèle Lamont's work on class in France and the United States, to Jan Beek's study of the Ghanaian Police force. As one of the first scholars to use the concept, Lamont's scholarship has been particularly significant for clarifying its uses and meaning. In *Money, Morals, and Manners: The Culture of the French and the American Upper Classes*, she discusses 'symbolic boundaries', or 'the types of lines that individuals draw when they categorize people'.²⁰⁹ Similarly, in *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of*

²⁰⁵ Hunter, *Political Thought*, 63.

²⁰⁶ For a discussion of this concept and its use by academics, see Lamont and Molnár, 'The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences'.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 171.

²⁰⁸ Michèle Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and The Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 4.

²⁰⁹ Michèle Lamont, *Money, Morals, and Manners: the Culture of the French and the American Upper Classes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992): 2-3.

Race, Class, and Immigration, Lamont illuminates ‘the mental maps of American working men’, exploring ‘how workers construct similarities and differences between themselves and other groups’.²¹⁰ Boundary work, she avers, is both an ‘intrinsic part of the process of constituting the self’, and ‘a way of developing a sense of group membership; it creates bonds based on shared emotions, similar conceptions of the sacred and the profane, and similar reactions towards symbolic violations’.²¹¹ Thus, boundary work unfolds within internal and external reference points, a process of both ‘ourselves-ing’ and also ‘othering’.²¹² While often applied to studies of class and race,²¹³ this concept has also been useful for illuminating ‘how professions came to be distinguished from one another’, and how ‘different models of knowledge are diffused across countries and impact local institutions and identities’ – processes that are central to the study of UPS.²¹⁴

This dissertation draws on boundary work to explore how prison officers created meanings about their profession, the morals and principles that anchored these meanings, and the groups or institutions which served as a foil to the Service’s identity. While archival materials and interviews reveal that prison officers have a range of experiences and perspectives, they shared certain ideals that helped them to perform boundary work. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, officers understood their organization in bureaucratic terms: as an institution with a defined role, guided by rules and regulations, staffed by specialists, and committed to political neutrality and public service. These ideals were manifested in different ways, from the language used in correspondence between different ranks to the proper wearing of a uniform. Secondly, prison officers ascribed worth to their profession by asserting its ability to build better people, in terms of rehabilitating offenders, their own personal character development, and the benefits

²¹⁰ Lamont, *The Dignity of Working Men*, 3-4.

²¹¹ Lamont, *Money, Morals, and Manners*, 11-12.

²¹² John Lonsdale, ‘Moral & Political Argument in Kenya’, in *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa*, ed. Bruce Berman, Dickson Eyoh, and Will Kymlicka (Oxford: James Currey, 2004), 76.

²¹³ For example, Carola Lentz has applied this concept to the study of the African middle classes. See Carola Lentz, ‘African middle classes: lessons from transnational studies and a research agenda’, in *The Rise of Africa’s Middle Class: Myths, Realities and Critical Engagements* ed. Henning Melber (London: Zed Books, 2016), 17-53.

²¹⁴ Lamont and Molnár, ‘The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences’, 177.

that they provided to their social networks as a result of their professional status. This worthiness was also understood in relative terms, as officers measured themselves against the military, the police, local government prisons, and Amin's paramilitary organizations.

While it can be argued that boundary work is indeed a feature of all professional groups, UPS provides a particularly fascinating case study for several reasons: its colonial origins, its early entanglement with the military and the police, its position as one of three prison services in the country, and the challenges it faced during Amin's dictatorship. Throughout the period under study, boundaries were constantly being negotiated and refashioned in response to shifting political fault-lines: colonial and post-colonial, central and local, and civilian and military. Through tracing these processes from the emic perspective of prison officers, we can better illuminate the meanings of modernity and professionalism within the Prisons Service, while also exploring wider questions about the nature of the state in the late colonial and early post-colonial periods.

Methods and Sources

Historians have approached Africa's early post-colonial period with considerable caution, wary of the piecemeal nature of evidence and the research challenges posed by contemporary political dynamics. For those who venture into this new territory, methodological concerns often shift from how to 'read against the grain' of colonial sources to 'how to find any archives at all'.²¹⁵ Initially, such concerns shaped this research project, which was originally envisioned as a study of the colonial prison system. Although a viable and worthwhile endeavour, the project ultimately shifted to focus on the post-colonial period, as it became apparent that a wealth of material for the 1960s and 1970s was available, even if it was of a more haphazard nature.

This dissertation draws on a wide array of sources – archives, newspapers, memoirs, oral histories, and visual materials – gleaned over the course of three years of

²¹⁵ Luise White, 'Hodgepodge Historiography: Documents, Itineraries, and the Absence of Archives', *History in Africa* 42 (2015): 310.

research in Uganda, the United Kingdom, and South Africa. The most crucial work was conducted during a series of trips to Uganda between October 2014 and August 2016. While Kampala provided a base, I also went to Jinja, Fort Portal, and Kabale – districts with well-organized archival collections. Although I was briefly in Gulu, and consulted a handful of archives from the district remotely, evidence on this and other districts in Northern Uganda was largely gleaned through central archives. It was impossible to visit archives in all districts for many reasons, especially due to time constraints and the relatively poor organization of most archives. While the project would certainly be enriched by the addition of more district records, the material collected nevertheless came from across the country.

Overall, this dissertation draws on twenty official, institutional, and personal archival collections. No single archive emerged as a focal point of the research; it was instead shaped by a ‘hodgepodge’ of documentary sources.²¹⁶ Significantly, only a random collection of official files was located within UPS, with the rest found in government archives or those of educational and religious institutions. Nevertheless, the Service’s administration was incredibly supportive, giving me unfettered access to documents as well as official approval for my research. Through them, I was able to view personnel files, material at the Prisons Training School Library, and documents from the personal collection of a records officer. Whilst these were preserved in a very unsystematic way, they were very illuminating, and going through these materials gave me an opportunity to observe the contemporary operations of the Service and speak to current personnel on a more regular basis.

The Service’s limited archival collection is mainly stored at the Prisons Training School, located on the outskirts of Kampala. With the help of one records keeper, I was able to find twenty personnel files for officers who had worked in the 1960s and 1970s. Other files from this period appear to have been destroyed in the Uganda-Tanzania War or simply lost. The school’s library has a tantalizing though erratic set of materials – including a photo album belonging to Fabian Okwaare and the minutes of the inaugural conference of technical staff in 1965 – but much of it was looted following the war. The

²¹⁶ White, ‘Hodgepodge Historiography’, 310.

available material appears without context: there is no logical sequence of files and no catalogue to help us trace a document's provenance or position in wider chains of information. Thus, the archives of UPS have to be creatively triangulated with a wide range of sources.

For historians of the post-colonial period, colonial documentary holdovers such as annual departmental reports are incredibly instructive. While often viewed as dull and uninspiring, they are one of the only regular sources of information produced by the post-colonial state, allowing one to track changes over time and to interrogate a department's self-representation to an official audience. The Africana Collection at Makerere had the most comprehensive – although still incomplete – collection of the Service's annual reports from the post-colonial period, including those from 1962-1969, and 1973-1975. The files at Makerere appear to be the only existing versions of these reports: UPS did not have copies, and did not have a sense of their whereabouts. This is particularly concerning given the precarious status of the reports within the Africana collection: they did not show up in the catalogue, and had been misplaced when I returned to view them a second time.

Most of the remaining official material was found in district archives. Along with documents on local government prisons, these sites proved to be useful repositories of correspondence from the Service's headquarters. Much of this material was nowhere to be found in Kampala, but had been preserved on the peripheries. The existence of such documents illuminates the capillaries of post-colonial bureaucracy, demonstrating how information moved from the capital to the rest of the country. It also speaks to the seriousness with which local government officials approached paperwork, carefully producing, circulating, and preserving documents.²¹⁷

These post-colonial archives present two key challenges. The first is their haphazard nature. In contrast to the carefully preserved files of the colonial period, documents from the Obote and Amin governments often appear in an incoherent manner. Loose sheets of paper with no date or author provide intriguing material but lack contextual details, and files often appear to be missing sections. Thus, the historian

²¹⁷ Peterson and Taylor, 'Rethinking the State', 71.

is left with a far more fractured picture of the post-colonial years, making unofficial and oral sources essential, as well as a wide range of research sites. As Jean Allman writes, ‘This postcolonial archive is not the easy and direct descendant of the colonial archive project. It is not a “national archive.” It does not reside in one place, or even two or three. It is a global, transnational archive’, which introduces a new range of ‘linguistic, logistic, financial, and conceptual challenges’.²¹⁸ Yet, this marked contrast from the colonial source base opens up new possibilities. In Allman’s words,

...if we seek out those fragments of evidence not just by perusing the archival categories and lists but by scouring the strange unlabeled files, tracing the expansive and often surprising networks of people, and following the unexpected pathways through that globally dispersed shadow archive, we might catch glimpses of some of the phantoms within – faint, but in all of their human dimensions.²¹⁹

Secondly, the official material that is available is often exaggerated or fabricated in the extreme. As Peterson and Taylor argue, the archives of the Amin regime were filled with ‘exhortatory propaganda, inflated statistics, self-regarding reportage and other fictions’.²²⁰ However, while this can in part be dealt with by triangulating with other types of sources, we must not lose sight of the more unremarkable aspects of this paperwork, such as reminders for prison officers to wear their uniforms neatly or requests for leave to visit one’s family. By reading these documents along the archival grain as well as against it, we can peer at the pathways of power and the bureaucratic logic of the post-colonial state, teasing out both the exhortations and the everyday banalities.²²¹ Even when studying the 1970s, we must not forget how the ‘spectacular hides the mundane’, obscuring the wide range of ways in which military rule was experienced and how some aspects of normalcy persisted despite extreme circumstances.²²²

²¹⁸ Jean Allman, ‘Phantoms of the Archive: Kwame Nkrumah, a Nazi Pilot Named Hanna, and the Contingencies of Postcolonial History-Writing’, *American Historical Review* 118:1 (2013): 126.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 129.

²²⁰ Peterson and Taylor, ‘Rethinking the State’, 73.

²²¹ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), Kindle edition, location 954.

²²² Annie Bunting, Benjamin N. Lawrance, and Richard L. Roberts, ‘Introduction: Something Old, Something New? Conceptualizing Forced Marriage in Africa’, in *Marriage by Force? Contestation over Consent*

Colonial records were found in more predictable places. The Uganda National Archives had the most systematic collection of Protectorate Government files. The most important material was in the uncatalogued library section, which holds official publications for both colonial and post-colonial governments. Information on the colonial period was also found in district archival collections and the archive of Rubaga Cathedral, the main site of Catholic worship in Kampala. The remaining material was found in the Royal Commonwealth Society collection at the University of Cambridge and the United Kingdom National Archives, both of which hold a wide range of official reports.

Along with archives, media sources and memoirs were indispensable. The *Uganda Argus* and the *Voice of Uganda*, the main government newspapers in the 1960s and the 1970s, were the most crucial. In some cases, they provided useful anecdotal details, featuring stories on ceremonies honoring prison staff or biographical information on a particular officer. However, they were not viewed strictly as ‘journals of record’, but were instead used for discerning the official representations of prisons.²²³ As Stephen Ellis argues, ‘the press produced under single-party governments cannot be considered an accurate reflection of the political landscape of an African country, but only as a partial record of official thinking... This is valuable enough’.²²⁴ For the 1970s, this is particularly true, as the Amin state turned to the official press as ‘a medium with which to address, exhort, and summon the Ugandan public’.²²⁵ Some of the most graphic stories about the Amin regime were found in the Bailey’s African History Archive in Johannesburg, which holds the entire collection of *Drum Magazine*. The *Drum* material provided eyewitness accounts of state atrocities, while also offering insight into how these were presented to a wider audience. The contemporary Ugandan media was also useful, featuring articles with interviews of numerous former detainees, retired ministers, prison officers, and military personnel, and providing insight into the framing

and *Coercion in Africa*, eds. Annie Bunting, Benjamin N. Lawrance, and Richard L. Roberts (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2016), 2.

²²³ Stephen Ellis, ‘Writing Histories of Contemporary Africa’, *The Journal of African History* 43:1 (2002): 16.

²²⁴ Ibid., 17.

²²⁵ Peterson and Taylor, ‘Rethinking the State’, 64.

of the Obote and Amin years within public memory.²²⁶ In a similar vein, memoirs from former detainees and prisoners were also very useful. While prison memoirs are most commonly associated with South Africa or Kenya, Ugandans are increasingly writing about their experiences of incarceration.²²⁷ As Luise White argues, memoirs ‘give us personal accounts that are no less messy than archives and no less constructed and constrained than official documents’,²²⁸ illuminating how individuals ‘engage with the official version of events’ and ‘argue with received histories’.²²⁹

Grey literature was also vital. Non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists provided some of the earliest and most detailed accounts of the state’s abuses in the late 1960s and 1970s. The CIVHR was also very valuable. Like all truth commissions, it had certain limitations, which were compounded by the lack of wider reconciliation efforts by the NRM government. Nevertheless, it is a significant historical source, bringing together hundreds of witnesses’ testimonies and providing fascinating evaluations of the involvement of various state security institutions in the violence of this period. The density of material in the CIVHR is rare, allowing the historian to compare and contrast accounts from Ugandan men and women of different backgrounds, professions, and generations. To a lesser extent, the Commission of Inquiry into the Disappearances of People in Uganda since 25 January 1971 – which was set up by the Amin government in 1974 – was also helpful in this regard.²³⁰

²²⁶ Examples include: Henry Lubega, ‘I survived Nakasero death camp, says Kawalya’, *Daily Monitor*, 19 October 2014, accessed 2 May 2016, <http://www.monitor.co.ug/Magazines/PeoplePower/I-survived-the-Nakasero-death-camp--says-Kawalya/689844-2490656-f9okbi/index.html>; Isaac Mufumba, ‘Day Luwum was Killed: Henry Kyemba tells the story from inside Amin government’, *Daily Monitor*, 16 February 2017, accessed 4 May 2016, <http://www.monitor.co.ug/SpecialReports/Day-Luwum-was-killed/688342-3815348-nb2ocf/index.html>.

²²⁷ See for example: James Kahigiriza, *Bridging the Gap: Struggling against Sectarianism and Violence in Ankole and Uganda* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2001); George W.K.L. Kasozi, *Assault on the Spying Church of Uganda: The Violation of the Right to Freedom of Religion and Worship* (Maseru: GWKLG, 2001); Wycliffe Kato, *Escape from Idi Amin’s Slaughterhouse* (London: Quartet Books, 1989); Apollo WodOkello Lawoko, *The Dungeons of Nakasero: A True Story and Painful Experience as Written* (W.Lawoko, 2005), Kindle edition; P.M.O. Onen, *The Diary of an Obedient Servant During Misrule* (Kampala: Janyeko Publishing Centre, 2000).

²²⁸ White, ‘Hodgepodge’, 315.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 315.

²³⁰ Republic of Uganda, *Commission of Inquiry into the Disappearances of People in Uganda since 25 January 1971* (Kampala: June 1974), United States Institute of Peace, accessed 30 April 2017, <https://www.usip.org/publications/1974/06/truth-commission-uganda-74>.

Finally, this dissertation draws on oral histories. Historians of Africa have done groundbreaking research using oral sources, embracing their subjectivity and changing perceptions of their value within the academy. The use of these sources has enriched many social histories, providing new insight into the ‘emotionality, the fears and fantasies carried by the metaphors of memory’.²³¹ As Alessandro Portelli argues:

The importance of oral testimony may not lie in its adherence to fact, but rather in its departure from it, as imagination, symbolism and desire emerge. Therefore, there are no ‘false’ oral sources... ‘wrong’ statements are still psychologically ‘true’ and this truth may be equally as important as factually reliable accounts.²³²

Thus, in the case of retired Ugandan prison officers, their presentation of themselves as professionals is tremendously significant in itself. Interviews with these individuals are not simply meant to fill the ‘gaps of the archive’, but rather to illuminate how they represent the past and their role within the Service’s history.²³³

I conducted formal interviews with twenty individuals, and had many more informal discussions. Locating prison officers who had worked in the 1960s and 1970s was exceedingly difficult. When I asked my interviewees if they knew of any colleagues whom I could speak to, the usual response was that they had died, either killed at the hands of the state or having passed away due to natural causes. Despite this, I interviewed thirteen prison officers. Overall, they had a remarkably diverse range of backgrounds and experiences. Three each came from the southern, western, and central regions of the country, while two each were from the northern and eastern regions. Two had started working in the 1950s, nine in the 1960s, and two in the 1970s. Amongst them, they had worked in UPS, the Buganda Government prisons, and local government prisons. One was currently working for UPS, and the rest were retired. Amongst them, they represented a wide range of ranks. With one exception, all of my interviewees were male, reflecting the wider gender disparities within the Service’s ranks.

²³¹ Raphael Samuel and Paul Richard Thompson, ‘Introduction’, in *The Myths We Live By*, eds. Raphael Samuel and Paul Richard Thompson (London: Routledge, 1990), 2.

²³² Alessandro Portelli, ‘What makes oral history different’ in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 1998), 68.

²³³ Sean Field, *Oral History, Community, and Displacement: Imagining Memories in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), Kindle edition, location 303.

Multiple strategies were used to locate the officers. In some cases, I was connected to them through current prison staff. At times, I went to the UPS headquarters with a list of names from the archive, and they would then try to find specific contact details. This not only helped me to reach more officers, but it also avoided simply relying on the Service's recommendations, which could lead me to particularly biased sources. In two cases, retired prison officers referred me to their colleagues, while another two were found with the help of research assistants who were not associated with UPS. A final contact was found through the help of a journalist. Thus, the interviewees were not simply selected through a 'snowball' referral process, but were sought out in a variety of ways to ensure diversity.

The remaining interviews were conducted with people who had a more indirect connection to UPS. These included a former government minister who had worked for Obote and Amin, a retired policeman, two former soldiers – one whose father was detained and killed during the Amin years, the other who had been in the army in the 1960s and 1970s and was detained following Amin's overthrow – a lawyer who was detained, an academic based at Makerere, and a magistrate. They provided valuable outsider perspectives, which were then combined with eyewitness accounts from media reports and grey literature. In most cases, these interviewees had very similar assessments to the prison officers, a harmony that was ultimately very instructive.

All of the formal interviews had a broadly similar structure. I used a standard set of questions for each category of interviewees, while also allowing the conversation to take its course and prompt new lines of inquiry. Due to the sensitive nature of the subject material, interviewees were not initially asked about state-sponsored violence, but were rather invited to comment on this if they chose to through much more open questions. However, most wanted to talk about it directly, as well as other challenges that they had faced, including corruption in the criminal justice system, the murder of colleagues by paramilitary organizations, and their own heightened feelings of vulnerability. In the cases where interviewees were more reticent, I did not press them for fear of bringing up unwanted traumatic memories.

Most interviews were conducted in the interviewee's home. Many of the interviewees were elderly and preferred not to travel, or they simply felt most comfortable in their home environment. Conducting interviews in these spaces provided invaluable insight into interviewees' personal lives and the significance of their professional background within their families. While some interviews were conducted one-on-one, most were done in the presence of family members. Although they did not participate in the interview directly, their presence and body language were useful for discerning the impact of the interviewee's career on the household. At times, a translator or research assistant was present. With one exception, they knew the interviewee directly. In addition to making the interviewee feel more at ease, the assistants also helped to clarify any exchanges that were lost in translation. All of my interviewees spoke English – a necessity given their professional background – but several interviews involved a combination of languages. Although I speak Luganda at an advanced level, it was helpful to have a native speaker to explain certain concepts. Some of my interviewees also spoke languages other than Luganda, making it especially important to have a translator.

All interviewees signed a consent form that had been approved by an ethics committee at Makerere University and the Uganda National Council of Science and Technology. As part of this, they were asked for permission to use their full name in the dissertation, which all but two agreed to. However, pseudonyms were ultimately used to protect interviewees' safety and privacy, with the exception of those who are already published authors. The names of officers who appear in the personnel files have also been changed, especially as the documents deal directly with disciplinary issues.

Along with these formal interviews, I had many conversations with current and former members of the Prisons Service, as well as other Ugandans who experienced the 1960s and 1970s. However, they did not want to formally participate in the interview process. These discussions will be referred to as 'Field Notes' in the footnotes. The specific dates of the conversations will be referenced, but the participants will not be named in order to honour their wishes and protect their privacy.

Structure and Chapter Outline

This dissertation is divided into three sections, comprising nine chapters in total. Part I outlines the Ugandan state's changing conceptions of penal modernity over time, demonstrating how the Service's development was ultimately shaped by a vision of the prison that combined transnational ideas of 'penal welfarism' with economic development. Chapter 1 explores the early colonial period, introducing the three different prison services, the key legislation and policies, and the debates about prisons in the 1930s. This was a decade of intense reckoning, as colonial officials wrestled over the appropriateness of applying modern penal principles to an African populace, which ultimately resulted in a conceptual shift from a punitive penal philosophy to a more rehabilitative one. Chapter 2 turns to the late colonial years. After WWII, the colonial state embarked on a series of penal reforms, leading to the expansion, diversification, and professionalization of the Service. Although these reforms were undercut by the political upheavals of decolonization – which led to an intensification of repressive punitive measures and a deterioration of prison conditions due to overcrowding – they led to a firm adoption of transnational models of the prison as a site of rehabilitation and technical expertise, which was also adapted to suit colonial development agendas. Chapter 3 examines how Obote and Amin adopted many of the approaches from the late colonial period while tying their vision of penal modernity to specific policy agendas. Significantly, both leaders promoted the Service's economic role, and used representations of the Service to try and enhance perceptions of their state's modernity and legitimacy.

Part II turns to understanding how this vision of penal modernity shaped prison officers' identities, and how they used the Service's imaginative capital as a resource in their professional and personal lives. Chapter 4 introduces the post-colonial prison officer. It considers officers' lives before joining the Service, their motivations for choosing prison work, recruitment policies, training, experiences of working and living at UPS, and their struggles to manage their personal commitments. Thus, it brings together officers' social histories with their experiences at the Prisons Service, illuminating the dynamics between their personal and professional identities. The

‘Okwaare generation’ – the officers who took over the leadership of the Service following independence – are the focus of Chapter 5. In the eyes of many officers, Okwaare was a visionary leader, and became deeply enmeshed in international networks of penal experts and practitioners, as did many senior officers. Along with Okwaare, these men and women led the charge of modernizing the Service, and played a crucial role in cementing its institutional identity. Moving to a more holistic approach, Chapter 6 considers the wider professional culture of the Service. Engaging with cross-disciplinary literature on bureaucracies, it explores officers’ embrace of Weberian ideals in constructions of their professional identity. However, such identities were not only shaped by abstract ideals, but also rooted in moral concerns, questions of respectability, and personal relationships.

Finally, Part III examines processes of boundary work within the Service’s history. Chapter 7 discusses local government prisons and the identities of the *askaris* who worked there. Beginning in the late colonial period, these individuals sought increasing recognition and formalization of their professional status. Although local government prisons were initially outside the remit of UPS, the boundaries between these two services were constantly blurred in terms of spaces, policies, and personnel – a connection that was briefly formalized with the integration of the two systems in 1977. Chapter 8 looks at the Amin regime’s use of informal detention sites – often referred to as ‘safe houses’ – which were run by paramilitary organizations. These sites were entirely separate from UPS, yet popular and scholarly portrayals of the Amin years fail to recognize the distinction between these two arenas of incarceration. Finally, Chapter 9 looks at officers’ experiences of and responses to military rule in the 1970s. It outlines the various changes wrought by Amin’s regime, and the manifold consequences of militarization for UPS. While the values of the Service were profoundly undermined, officers continued to draw on imaginaries of professionalism in order to condemn the practices of the military state and also to navigate the myriad challenges that they faced. Taken as a whole, these chapters not only trace the Service’s historical development over decades of acute political change, but they also explore the various ways in which this was tied to aspirations of modernity and imaginaries of professionalism.

PART I – VISIONS OF PENAL MODERNITY

CHAPTER 1

THE 'CINDERELLA' SERVICE: THE COLONIAL YEARS

In 1936, the Governor of Uganda, Sir Phillip Mitchell, established a Prisons Committee to review Uganda's penal system. Since the introduction of prisons in the late 1890s, evaluations had been bleak, with officials decrying the unsanitary conditions and the failure to segregate offenders of different types. In a note attached to the Committee's final report, Mitchell outlined his own views on Uganda's prisons. While he felt that pre-colonial punishments were characterized by a 'severity...which to modern eyes amounts to ferocity', Mitchell argued that colonial punitive policies had not initially led to a rupture in terms of the violent nature of punishment.¹ Instead, the colonial state had '...at first in effect continued the native practice, except that instead of mutilating thieves etc., we flogged them usually with great severity. I have seen sentences of 75 and 50 lashes imposed and men bound to a wooden frame for the purpose', he wrote with disgust.² Although Mitchell welcomed the gradual restriction of corporal punishment over the early twentieth century, he had grave reservations about the direction of the penal system: '...what we have done is to copy what, without much knowledge of the subject, we thought was the practice in England some thirty or forty years ago'.³ The result, he contended, 'is that we have a vast and expensive machine for the administration of justice' which 'has no properly thought-out means of dealing with the social problems with which it has to cope', and was 'admirable up to the point of acquittal or conviction, but after conviction is sadly defective'⁴ In closing, he emphasized the importance of the Committee's role:

...perhaps the gravest social problem before us in East Africa today is the problem of punishment, for it is the foundation of social discipline without

¹ Rubaga Cathedral Archives (RCA), D:37:6, Sir Phillip Mitchell, 'Note by the Governor for the Prisons Committee', 2 April 1936, 1.

² Ibid., 1.

³ Ibid., 2.

⁴ Ibid., 2.

which no stable society can be established. We need to have courage and twentieth century spectacles in tackling it.⁵

Mitchell's note captures the tensions between the violence of colonial rule and its civilizing claims, one that marked the early decades of the Service's history. This chapter examines the creation and development of UPS between the 1890s and the 1930s. During this period, colonial officials had a vexed relationship with penal modernity, which proved to be both a source of anxiety and aspiration. Although the prison's introduction was framed within the rhetoric of the civilizing mission, the Service's early history was tied to the consolidation of colonial control, epitomized by its subordination to the military and the police. However, there was a significant shift in the colonial state's approach to prisons in the interwar years, marked by a growing commitment to rehabilitation and increasing doubts about the merits of corporal punishment. The 1930s were thus a watershed decade, as the purpose of imprisonment – in principle – shifted from violent punishment to rehabilitation through 'scientific' means.

Punishment in Pre-Colonial Uganda

Before turning to the history of the Service, it is worth briefly considering the concepts and practices of punishment that existed prior to British rule. As was the case throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, the introduction of prisons to Uganda represented a shift in punitive methods.⁶ The information available for this period is decidedly limited and of varying reliability, found in anthropological texts, the travel writings of Europeans, works by Baganda elites and scholars, and, more recently, popular accounts from the tourist industry. Although pre-colonial punitive forms are outside the scope of this dissertation, a brief survey of the existing material is useful for underscoring the novelty of the prison, the justifications for its introduction, and British perceptions of pre-colonial punitive practices.

⁵ RCA, 'Note by the Governor for the Prisons Committee', 5-6.

⁶ Bernault, 'The Politics of Enclosure', 2.

The most formalized – and often considered the most brutal – punitive system was in Buganda, although this view may be skewed by the disproportionate degree of scholarly interest in this kingdom. Europeans visiting Buganda decried the apparently horrific nature of punishments meted out by successive rulers. In *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*, Speke recounted numerous episodes of the brutality of Mutesa I – the final *kabaka* to rule before the advent of colonialism – portraying him as someone who ‘was indifferent to others’ suffering almost to the point of madness’.⁷ Dr. Karl Peters provided one of the most sensational descriptions of punishment in Buganda:

In Uganda we are within the limits of the dark despotism of Central Africa. The stranger marvels at the number of human beings he encounters who have lost one eye, or both ears, or their noses, or lips; but the missionaries have stories to tell of much worse things...He [the ruler] commands, and hundreds of his subjects are dragged off to the place of execution, and there put to death with fearful tortures.⁸

Despite its hyperbolic nature, Peters’ account highlights the painful and often public nature of punishment in this kingdom and in other pre-colonial communities. Collective punishment was an important governing tool for Baganda rulers, especially in the volatile second half of the nineteenth century. The *kimendo*, a periodic mass slaughter in which members of the lower classes were killed, was used to symbolize the *kabaka*’s ‘supreme authority over the kingdom’.⁹ Arguably the most infamous use of spectacular punishment occurred under Kabaka Mwanga II in the late 1880s, when a group of Christian converts were burned alive for their religious beliefs.¹⁰ Characterized by one author as an ‘African Holocaust’, these killings have been upheld as an example of royal brutality, and are commemorated yearly at the Uganda Martyrs’ Day.¹¹ A similar tone is evident in accounts of Bunyoro. British explorer Samuel Baker decried the use of public executions in this kingdom, which he felt were driven by the ‘tyranny, deceit and

⁷ Quoted in Richard Reid, ‘Images of an African Ruler: Kabaka Mutesa of Buganda, ca. 1857-1884’, *History in Africa* 26 (1999): 296.

⁸ Quoted in E.S. Haydon, *Law and Justice in Buganda* (London: Butterworths, 1960), 5.

⁹ Low, *Fabrication of Empire*, 58-59.

¹⁰ Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 154-155.

¹¹ John F. Faupel, *African Holocaust: The Story of the Uganda Martyrs* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2007).

brutality' of Kamurasi,¹² the *omukama* of Bunyoro in the 1850s and 1860s.¹³ Writing about Kabaleega – Kamurasi's son and successor – former Governor of Uganda Frederick Jackson noted his 'reputation for horrible cruelties, and cold blooded butchery'.¹⁴

The views of these Europeans are somewhat dichotomous: on the one hand, they were impressed with the level of civilization attained by Buganda and other kingdoms, but they were also deeply repulsed by the scale and nature of violent punishment. Thus, punitive practices served as a key marker of distance between these kingdoms and their foreign visitors, reinforcing both Europeans' sense of superiority and their argument that prisons were a necessary component of the civilizing mission.¹⁵ Echoes of these accounts emerged over half a century later in depictions of the Amin regime, further underscoring the entanglement of punishment and civilization in the Western imagination.

While much of the existing literature focuses on capital punishment, torture, and mutilation, references to 'prisons' appear in a variety of sources. Former colonial official James MacDonald wrote about a 'small conical islet' in Lake Victoria, 'thickly clad with trees, on which, in the days of M[u]tesa, prisoners used to be confined, to die a lingering death from starvation, or a rapid one in the jaws of the crocodiles which haunted its rocky margin'.¹⁶ A.H. Cox, the Provincial Commissioner of Buganda in the 1930s, insisted that 'native prisons, or their equivalent, had existed in Buganda from time immemorial'.¹⁷ Today, tourists frequently visit Akampeine or 'Punishment' Island in Lake Bunyonyi in Southern Uganda, the site where unmarried pregnant women were allegedly banished,¹⁸ or Katereke 'Prison' Ditch, a piece of land on the outskirts of

¹² Quoted in Low, *Fabrication of Empire*, 35-36.

¹³ Doyle, *Crisis and Decline in Bunyoro*, 50.

¹⁴ Quoted in Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 102.

¹⁵ I would like to thank Dr. Stacey Hynd for drawing this point to my attention.

¹⁶ James MacDonald, *Soldiering and Surveying in British East Africa, 1891-1894* (London: Edward Arnold, 1897), 155

¹⁷ RCA D: 37.6, 'Statement of the Honourable A.H. Cox, Provincial Commissioner, Buganda', 20 May 1936, 'Notes on Prison Policy and System in Uganda', 15.

¹⁸ 'Lives change as tourism thrives at Lake Bunyonyi', *New Vision*, 10 June 2008, accessed 20 October 2016, http://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1188077/lives-change-tourism-thrives-lake-bunyonyi.

Kampala encircled by a moat that was supposedly used as a prison for the *kabaka's* enemies.¹⁹ Although the framing of these various sites as 'prisons' is anachronistic, these accounts nevertheless help us to track forms of pre-colonial confinement. The 'islet', island, and 'prison ditch' all suggest that offenders were physically removed from their communities, which was a common form of punishment in pre-colonial Africa.²⁰

Ernest Balintuma Kalibala's doctoral thesis – a study of the social structure of the Baganda completed at Harvard in 1946 – offers one of the most extensive accounts of pre-colonial concepts of justice in Buganda.²¹ Kalibala, who spent much of his life abroad in America, writes as an intellectual intermediary, assessing his kingdom's philosophies of punishment and justice in light of half a century of colonial rule.²² While there was no legal code before colonialism, Kalibala argues that the Baganda were guided by 'recognized moral and ethical concepts of right and wrong, of clan and tribal rules and regulation, and above all the king's orders'.²³ Punishment – *okubonereza* – was based on two principles: to ensure that the guilty party compensates the victim for the wrongful act, and to serve as a deterrent for potential offenders.²⁴ A range of punishments existed, including the payment of fines, property confiscation, selling the offender into serfdom, corporal punishment, confinement in stocks or *amasamba*, and capital punishment.²⁵ The *amasamba* were the most common form of confinement – 'practically universal all over the country' – and were often used as a form of torture that could lead to death.²⁶ In Kalibala's view, these stocks – which were banned after the

¹⁹ Wilber M. Ahebwa, John Aporu and Jockey B. Nyakaana, 'Bridging community livelihoods and cultural conservation through tourism: Case study of Kabaka heritage trail in Uganda', *Tourism and Hospitality Research* 16:2 (2016): 108.

²⁰ Bernault, 'The Politics of Enclosure', 7.

²¹ Ernest Balintuma Kalibala, 'The Social Structure of the Baganda Tribe of East Africa' (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1946), 106. I would like to thank Dr. Carol Summers for introducing me to this resource.

²² Carol Sicherman, 'Makerere and the Beginnings of Higher Education for East Africans', *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* 29:1 (2002): 95.

²³ Kalibala, 'The Social Structure of the Baganda Tribe', 76.

²⁴ Ibid., 93.

²⁵ Ibid., 98.

²⁶ Ibid., 104.

British took power – were the closest Buganda came to having prisons. In his view, ‘There were no prisons in Buganda, but prisoners were plentiful’.²⁷

While the information on Buganda is somewhat limited, we know even less about punitive practices in other pre-colonial communities. Roscoe’s study of the Banyankole notes that disputes were usually dealt with through fines, the confiscation of cattle, confinement in stocks, or capital punishment.²⁸ Read suggests that the Bakiga in Southern Uganda generally settled disputes within their family unit, but that a case of witchcraft ‘excites the whole community’ and would result in death through the ‘mob action of stoning’.²⁹ Recently, there has been a rising scholarly interest in ‘traditional’ punitive methods in Northern Uganda as part of wider transitional justice efforts following the war between the LRA and the Uganda government. However, such efforts have tended to reify dynamic cultural practices, particularly among the Acholi.³⁰ As Adam Branch argues, ‘The history of Western instrumentalization of imagined notions of African tradition as the basis of indirect-rule colonialism should itself give pause to those promoting this new phase of transitional justice’.³¹ There is, however, certainly ample scope for further research into philosophies of punishment in Uganda’s diverse pre-colonial communities, the extent to which they remained meaningful during the period of British rule, and how they shaped local views of the prison.

The Introduction of Prisons

Despite the limited research into pre-colonial punitive forms, it is clear that the introduction of prisons represented a break with past practices. The first penal institutions were set up by Buganda elites shortly after the kingdom became a British Protectorate in 1894.³² As former Buganda Judicial Advisor E.S. Haydon wrote:

²⁷ Kalibala, ‘The Social Structure of the Baganda Tribe’, 106.

²⁸ John Roscoe, *The Banyankole: The Second Part of the Report of the Mackie Ethnological Expedition to Central Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), 19.

²⁹ Read, ‘Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda’, 105.

³⁰ Adam Branch, ‘The Violence of Peace: Ethnojustice in Northern Uganda’, *Development and Change* 45:3 (2014): 621.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 614-615.

³² Read, ‘Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda’, 108.

There were no real prisons until after the advent of the British administration...in the closing years of the nineteenth century two main prisons had been established, one by the Katikkiro Apolo Kagwa under the custody of a certain Njabule and the other on Rubaga Hill by the Catholic Katikkiro Stanislaus Mugwanya under the custody of a certain Mugatira.³³

These prisons merged in 1900 to become the Kabaka's Government Remand Prison Njabule, which remained one of the main penal institutions in Buganda.³⁴ Based on these accounts, it appears that Uganda's first prisons were created through a collaborative process that engaged local political elites – a theme that would continue to resonate throughout the colonial period. While the contours of this process are unclear from the material available, it reflects Baganda elites' willingness to embrace new institutional frameworks as they embarked on their relationship with the British.

The first Protectorate Government prisons also emerged in the late 1890s. Records indicate that the 1896/97 budget included provisions for policemen and *askaris* to be posted at Port Alice Prison in Entebbe and Kampala Prison.³⁵ In the 1889/1900 budget, money was allocated for warders who were 'employed to cater exclusively for the needs of prisoners'.³⁶ In the estimation of Uganda's Public Service Salaries Review Commission, this marked the formal creation of UPS.³⁷ Conversations with current prison officers affirmed this narrative, with Port Alice identified as the Service's first penal site.³⁸

As mentioned previously, Uganda's prison system encompassed three separate services – a degree of division and decentralization that was unique within colonial Africa. While colonies such as Nigeria and the Gold Coast had local government prisons, Uganda was the only one to have a tripartite structure.³⁹ This was a

³³ Haydon, *Law and Justice in Buganda*, 296.

³⁴ Read, 'Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda', 108; United Kingdom National Archives (UKNA) Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) 141/18398, 'Uganda: Law and Order in Buganda'.

³⁵ Personal Collection of M. Kamugisha (PMK), *Report of the Public Services Salaries Commission, 1973-1974, Under the Chairmanship of Mr. John Bikangaga* (Kampala: Public Services Salaries Commission, 1974), 22.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁸ Field Notes, Meeting at Uganda Prisons Service Headquarters, 7 April 2016.

³⁹ Bernault, 'The Politics of Enclosure', 11. For an excellent study of the local government prisons in the Gold Coast see Erin Braatz, 'Governing Difference: Prison and Colonial Rule on the Gold Coast, 1844-1957', (PhD diss. New York University, 2015).

consequence of the unprecedented autonomy given to Buganda in comparison to other powerful pre-colonial kingdoms in British Africa. The *kabaka* had total control over the management of prisons and other institutions associated with law and order, including – until 1917 – capital punishment.⁴⁰ The Protectorate Government could not intervene directly in the administration of Buganda Government prisons; rather, it could only make suggestions as to how they should be run. Most offenders were imprisoned due to the non-payment of taxes, thus usually serving short sentences.⁴¹ At smaller prisons, chiefs would use prison labour for various public and private works, and the *kabaka* also used prison labour on his palace grounds.⁴²

In terms of the number of penal sites, Buganda was the largest of the three services: by the mid-1930s, there were 190 prisons under its domain.⁴³ Most of these were *gombolola* prisons, which were under the authority of sub-county chiefs and held prisoners with maximum sentences of three months.⁴⁴ These often held a high number of immigrants who had come to Buganda in search of economic opportunity.⁴⁵ *Ssaŋa* or county prisons were slightly larger and held offenders for six months, and Mengo Prison served as the site for long-term offenders.⁴⁶ ‘Habitual and refractory convicts’ were transferred to UPS institutions.⁴⁷ Buganda maintained its own prison service throughout the colonial years, only shutting down as a consequence of the abolition of the kingdoms in 1967.

Local government prisons were introduced to Uganda very early on in the colonial period. All of these prisons were funded and administered through their respective local government authorities, and were generally under the direct purview of

⁴⁰ Alan Milner, ‘Introduction’, in *African Penal Systems*, ed. Alan Milner (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul), 97.

⁴¹ RCA, *Report of the Prisons Committee*, 10.

⁴² RCA D:37.6, ‘Statement of the Katikkiro of Buganda’, 26 May, 1936, ‘Notes on Prison Policy and System in Uganda’, 22.

⁴³ RCA, Statement of A.H. Cox.

⁴⁴ RCA, *Report of the Prisons Committee*, 5.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

the chief, who also served as the de-facto officer-in-charge of the prison.⁴⁸ Individuals were sent to local government prisons after being tried in a 'native' court, which administered 'the native law and custom prevailing in the area of the jurisdiction of the court, so far as it is not repugnant to justice or morality and inconsistent with the provisions of any order of the King in Council or with any other law in force in the Protectorate'.⁴⁹ The majority of the prisoners were incarcerated due to the non-payment of poll taxes, failure to meet *luwalo* commitments, and for adultery.⁵⁰ These prisons were seen as a useful way to deal with non-criminal offenders who had transgressed township rules or committed other minor offences.

Overall, local government prisons were highly decentralized, with significant variation across prison sites. Along with smaller 'lock-ups', prisons were set up in the major headquarters of 'native' government, including Masindi, Hoima, Toro, and Ankole.⁵¹ The number of local government prisons had expanded greatly by the mid-1930s, with eighty-one prisons in the Eastern Province, twelve in the Northern Province, and fourteen in the Western Province – a discrepancy that can be partially explained by the colonial state's uneven presence in the early twentieth century.⁵² The facilities ranged from mud and wattle huts to larger structures made with brick or cement.⁵³ For much of the colonial and early post-colonial periods, there was no singular penal code applied to local government prisons, but rather a range of ad-hoc rules imposed by chiefs or senior prison staff. The *askaris*, or junior officers, received minimal formal training, and were generally drawn from either policing or military backgrounds. There was little in the way of rehabilitative services, with offenders spending most of their time engaged in communal works.⁵⁴ There was no separate accommodation for female offenders; thus the Protectorate authorities urged that they

⁴⁸ Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) L.45.T2.1951, *Annual Report for the Treatment of Offenders for the Year Ended 1951* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1952), 21.

⁴⁹ Uganda National Archives (UNA), C Series, Box 17, C. 1855 'Native Courts Ordinance, 1930-1'.

⁵⁰ RCA, *Report of the Prisons Committee*, 11-12.

⁵¹ UNA Provincial Papers, Eastern Province, Box 18, 'Prisons Under Native Government', H.R. Wallis to Chief Secretary's Office, 29 June 1913.

⁵² RCA D:37.6, Untitled table, *Report of the Prisons Committee*, no page.

⁵³ RCS.L.45.T2.1946, *Annual Report of the Prison Department for the Year ended 31st December, 1946* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1947), 17.

⁵⁴ RCA, *Report of the Prisons Committee*, 8.

be sent to prisons run by UPS.⁵⁵ The existence of these prisons reflected Uganda's embrace of indirect rule, as well as the administration's initial ambiguity about the appropriateness of creating a European-style penal system.

UPS was the most formalized of the services. The 1903 Prisons Ordinance provided the original legislative framework for the Service, offering the first blueprint of the government's plan to create more modern prisons.⁵⁶ It mapped out a strict hierarchy for prison officers; a dense clerical infrastructure; dietary scales differentiated by race; and guidelines for the separation of different types of offenders.⁵⁷ It also outlined the duty of a prison officer as follows: to 'enforce discipline with justice, firmness, and humanity'.⁵⁸ The vast majority of offenders sent to these prisons had been tried in a Protectorate court. The High Court was established in 1902, and district courts were set up throughout the territory.⁵⁹ The Indian Penal Code and the Indian Criminal Procedure Code initially provided the basis for criminal law, as was the case in other British African territories.⁶⁰ Over the course of the early twentieth century, the Indian codes were replaced with ones specific to East Africa, with new penal and criminal procedure codes passed in Uganda in 1930.⁶¹ These codes provided the legislative foundation for the Protectorate courts. The shift towards codes that rested more on the principles of English law reflected the colonial administration's growing unease with the Indian Penal Code's tolerance of harsh corporal punishment against Africans, especially after a series of scandals involving settlers who had beaten their employees to death yet received only minor sentences.⁶²

⁵⁵ RCA, *Report of the Prisons Committee*, 8.

⁵⁶ 'No. 16 of 1903: Prisons', *Official Gazette of the East African and Uganda Protectorates* V: 76 (Mombasa: His Majesty's Commissioners, 1903), 433.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 433-437.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 433.

⁵⁹ H.B. Thomas and Robert Scott, *Uganda*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935), 249-251.

⁶⁰ H.F. Morris, 'A History of the Adoption of Codes of Criminal Law and Procedure in British Colonial Africa, 1876-1935', *Journal of African Law* 18:1 (1974): 13.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 14. For a discussion of some of these scandals, see David M. Anderson, 'Punishment, Race and "The Raw Native": Settler Society and Kenya's Flogging Scandals, 1895-1930', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37:3 (2011): 479-497.

While there is limited archival material available on the offences that led to imprisonment in the early colonial period, Ugandans were often incarcerated for their violent resistance to the imposition of colonial control. For example, in 1913, the District Commissioner in Gulu imprisoned four locals accused of murdering a local chief, while four others were executed.⁶³ A similar incident occurred in Karamoja in 1924,⁶⁴ leading to the imprisonment and execution of the alleged perpetrators.⁶⁵ As will be discussed in the following section, colonial subjects were also imprisoned for witchcraft and the burning down of government buildings.⁶⁶

Based on the archival material available for the 1930s-1950s, property offences were the most common cause of incarceration, followed by offences against the person. For example, in 1937, a total of 1,189 African offenders had committed property crimes, 439 had committed offences against the person, 54 had committed offences ‘injurious to the public in general’, and 42 had committed offences against the public order.⁶⁷ Other common offences under the Penal Code included those against the administration of lawful authority; malicious injuries to property; forgery, coining and counterfeiting; and ‘Attempts and Conspiracies and Accessories after the fact’.⁶⁸ Individuals could also be sent to the Service’s prisons for violations of local ordinances – such as those relating to townships, traffic, vagrancy, and liquor – but these made up a much smaller proportion of the inmates.⁶⁹

In contrast to the Buganda Government and local government prison services, UPS was characterized by a much more standardized set of larger penal institutions. By 1912, there were fifteen Protectorate prisons throughout the country and one ‘judicial

⁶³ Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 164.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 165.

⁶⁵ J.Barber, ‘The Karamoja District of Uganda: a Pastoral People under Colonial Rule’, *Journal of African History* III:I (1962): 117-118.

⁶⁶ Elizabeth Hopkins, ‘The Politics of Crime: Aggression and Control in a Colonial Context’, *American Anthropologist* 75:3 (1973): 731-742.

⁶⁷ UNA Library, *Annual Report of the Uganda Prisons for the Year ended 31st December, 1937* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1938), Appendix II, 15.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 15.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 15.

lock-up' in Tororo.⁷⁰ The majority of these were district prisons, which were intended to hold offenders serving sentences of no more than six months.⁷¹ Luzira Maximum Security Prison, which was opened in 1927, was the largest penal institution in the Protectorate.⁷² Originally built to hold just over 500 prisoners, it regularly housed more than double that number.⁷³ All of the most serious offenders were held at Luzira – including those transferred from Buganda Government or local government prisons – as well as European and Asian offenders, regardless of the offence. Furthermore, all capital punishments were carried out within this facility.⁷⁴ The Luzira site, which came to be known as Murchison Bay Prison grounds, expanded significantly throughout the colonial period, as separate prisons were built to accommodate female offenders, Europeans, Asians, prisoners on remand, and 'lunatics'. Generally, prisoners were held in association wards – which held up to eighty prisoners – unless they were put into solitary confinement as a form of punishment.⁷⁵

The Service's personnel were racially divided, with British officers generally serving in the senior positions, Asians in clerical roles, and Ugandans in the lower ranks.⁷⁶ The British personnel were largely concentrated at Luzira. By 1910, there were a total of 82 individuals working in the Service,⁷⁷ and the number had expanded to over 400 by the mid 1930s.⁷⁸ In the 1920s, the lowest ranking members of the African staff received 30 shillings per month, while officers holding the rank of Chief Warder, Grade I received 106 shillings over the same period.⁷⁹ By the 1950s, Chief Warders were

⁷⁰ UKNA CO 685/1, Major W.F.S. Edwards, *Inspection Report of the Uganda Protectorate Prisons for the Year 1912* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1913), 2.

⁷¹ Thomas and Scott, *Uganda*, 262.

⁷² UKNA CO 685/11, 'Administration Reports: Prisons', 1927, 5.

⁷³ UKNA CO/536/175/14, *Annual Report on Uganda Prisons for 1931* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1932), 1.

⁷⁴ UKNA, CO 685/20, *Annual Report of the Uganda Prisons for the Year ended 31st December, 1935* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1936), 5.

⁷⁵ RCS.L.45.T2.1956, *Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year Ending 31st December 1956* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1957), 10.

⁷⁶ RCS.L.45.T2.1952, *Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year Ended 31st December, 1952* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1953), 3.

⁷⁷ PMK, 'Prison Estimates, Requirements for 1910-1911'.

⁷⁸ UNA Library, *Annual Report of the Uganda Prisons for the Year ended 31st December, 1937*, (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1938), 10.

⁷⁹ PMK, *Report of the Public Services Salaries Review Commission, 1973-1974*, 26.

receiving a base salary of 190 shillings per month, while the recruit warders were paid 68 shillings on a monthly basis.⁸⁰ Generally, officers earned a comparable salary to Police Force personnel.⁸¹

The Service's ethnic composition was partially dictated by the labour recruitment policies of the colonial state, which had designated the central and eastern regions as cash-crop production areas and the rest of the territory as a labour reserve.⁸² Initially, Ugandans from Northern communities dominated the Service's ranks, as was the case with other security forces.⁸³ The colonial army was primarily drawn from northern regions, with people from Acholi, Langi, Teso, and West Nile frequently recruited as soldiers.⁸⁴ In the case of the Acholi, for example, their 'superior physique, habits of discipline, and unsophisticated outlook' were cited as ideal qualities for policing, prisons, or military work.⁸⁵ Retired prison officers were aware of these discrepancies: 'The colonial policy was that police, you needed certain class [of education], army, you didn't need any education, prisons department you needed very little education', remarked Isaac, an officer who began working at the very end of the colonial period.⁸⁶

Most of the Service's initial recruits were from the Northern regions, were illiterate, and had a background in military service.⁸⁷ However, by the 1930s, its personnel had diversified somewhat. In 1931, forty percent of the warders were classified as 'Bantu', (largely concentrated in the central, eastern, and western regions), and fifty-two percent as 'Nilotic', (Acholi and Langi from Northern Uganda).⁸⁸ By 1938, the gap had shrunk further, with forty-five percent of the staff being classified as 'Bantu'

⁸⁰ RCS, *Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders 1952*, 3.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸² Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence*, 53.

⁸³ Jørgensen, *Uganda: A Modern History*, 56.

⁸⁴ Hansen, 'Uganda in the 1970s', 85.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Ronald R. Atkinson, *The Roots of Ethnicity: The Origins of the Acholi of Uganda Before 1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 6.

⁸⁶ Isaac, Personal Interview, 30 May 2016.

⁸⁷ UKNA CO 536/165, *Prisons Report 1929* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1930), 26.

⁸⁸ UKNA CO 536/175/14, *Annual Report on Uganda Prisons for 1931*, 18.

and forty-nine percent as 'Nilotic'.⁸⁹ The remaining warders were categorized as 'Congolese' – which referred to the Madi, Lugbara, and Bakiga peoples from the far northwest or southwest of the country – or 'Hamitic', indicating the Iteso and the Karamajong of the eastern and northeastern sections of Uganda.⁹⁰ However, in 1941, it seems that an effort was made to recruit more 'Nilotic' warders, as it was noted in the annual report that 'assistance received from District Commissioners in recruiting these men is much appreciated', and their percentage in the staff went up to fifty-five.⁹¹ In part, this preference for individuals from the Northern region can be explained by the Service's subordinate status to the military and the police in the early colonial period.

Entangled Identities

Although prisons were introduced shortly after the advent of colonial rule, the Service remained intertwined with and inferior to the military and the police in the first decades of its existence. Prior to the passage of the Prisons Ordinance in 1903, Kampala and Port Alice prisons were staffed by a combination of soldiers from the King's African Rifles and police officers.⁹² A degree of autonomy from the military was achieved with the passage of the Armed Constabulary Ordinance in 1903, but it left both the prisons and the police under the authority of the Officer Commanding the Troops.⁹³ Further separation occurred in 1906 with the creation of the rank of Inspector General of Police, and was finalized in 1908 with the passage of the Police Ordinance and the introduction of the position of Commissioner of Police.⁹⁴ However, this did not fundamentally change the martial approach in the Service, as the Police Force was highly militarized during the early colonial period, maintaining its own battalion until

⁸⁹ Jinja District Archive (JDA) Justice, Law, Security, Order (JLOS) 41:22, *Annual Report of the Uganda Prisons for the Year ended December 31st, 1938* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1939), 11-12.

⁹⁰ JDA JLOS 41:22, *Annual Report of the Uganda Prisons for the Year ended December 31st, 1938*, 12.

⁹¹ UNA, *Annual Report of the Uganda Prisons for the year ended 31st December, 1940* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1941), 4.

⁹² PMK, *Report of the Public Services Salaries Review Commission, 1973-1974*, 22.

⁹³ Thomas and Scott, *Uganda*, 265.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 269.

1917.⁹⁵ Thus, the Service's origins were deeply intertwined with the military institutions of the colonial state.

The Prisons Service remained under the authority of the Commissioner of Police until April 1938.⁹⁶ Calls for the separation of these departments were frequently raised, but financial constraints prevented this from occurring. Not even an intervention by the Secretary of State for the Colonies could secure the independence of the Service. After requesting the division of the police and prisons services in 1929, he received the following reply from the Acting Governor of Uganda:

The separation of the Police and Prisons Services is a matter which will be kept in view, for action as soon as the financial position permits; but at present I am unable to recommend that the other activities of the Protectorate Government should be reduced or restricted in order to provide for it.⁹⁷

The relationship between the two services was highly unequal, with policing work given priority. All recruits were trained in the Police Depot Training School, and the training was heavily skewed in favour of policing duties.⁹⁸ The prioritization of policing was evident throughout the country: the British police officer in charge of a given district would be the 'ex-officio' superintendent of the prison, and recruits were not required to have any prison experience.⁹⁹ Police officers often resented these additional duties. In his memoir, former British police officer Christopher Harwich characterized his prison work as something that he 'disliked intensely'.¹⁰⁰ The Ugandan officers posted in prisons had little knowledge of their tasks and were often drawn from the bottom of the recruit pool. As the authors of the 1936 *Report of the Prisons Committee* remarked, 'It appears that the tendency at present is for the pick of recruits to pass into Police Service, the Prison Department a Cinderella taking what is left'.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ Ibid., 269.

⁹⁶ JDA JLOS 41:22, *Annual Report of the Uganda Prisons for the Year ended December 31st, 1938*, 1.

⁹⁷ UKNA CO 536/161, P.W. Perryman to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30 July 1930.

⁹⁸ Thomas and Scott, *Uganda*, 269.

⁹⁹ Christopher Harwich, *Red Dust: Memories of the Uganda Police, 1935-1955* (London: Vincent Stuart Ltd, 1961), 35.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 35.

¹⁰¹ RCA, *Report of the Prisons Committee*, 27.

The impact of this entanglement with the Police Force was far-reaching. Rather than embracing the philosophies of a ‘modern’ prison administration, Uganda’s prison personnel had a military background. This was true for both Ugandans staffing the prisons and their British superiors: for the majority of this period, the only British prison officers in the Service were based in Kampala, and in the early years of colonial rule they lacked any specific instruction in prison administration.¹⁰² Mr. Heaton from the Home Prisons Service was brought to Uganda in 1927,¹⁰³ followed by the appointment of Mr. H.P. Robertson – who had previously served in Kenya – as the Superintendent of Luzira in 1932.¹⁰⁴ However, many of their colleagues were still more familiar with the military than they were with prisons.

For some observers, this martial quality was viewed as a source of strength. In his 1939 report on prisons in East Africa, Alexander Paterson – the Commissioner of Prisons for England and Wales – praised the efforts of the ‘seasoned soldiers’ who had peopled East African prisons throughout the early colonial period, remarking that their ‘habit of discipline and cleanliness’, ‘sense of fairness’, and ‘sense of humour in dealing with Africans’ were ‘valuable assets’ in a prison environment.¹⁰⁵ While he welcomed the arrival of British officers who had a ‘wider and more progressive view of prison method’, he called for a ‘merger’ between them and the older generation, as the latter group possessed a deep ‘knowledge of the country, its people and their language’.¹⁰⁶

Amongst Ugandans, perceptions of the Service’s military origins are more mixed. In a document outlining the Service’s history provided by an officer at the Prisons Training School, the following assessment is provided:

Uganda Prisons Service started as a small British protectorate branch of the Kings African Rifles (KAR) of 1896... Soldiers of KAR were militaristic in approach in the handling of offenders, with a paramilitary structure, military ranks, drills and parade and a military command structure integrated into

¹⁰² UKNA CO 685/7, ‘Uganda Departmental Reports’, 1924, 3.

¹⁰³ UKNA: CO 685/11, ‘Administrative Reports: Annual Report for Kampala and Luzira Temporary Prisons, 1927’, G.H. Heaton to Commissioner of Prisons, 20 January 1938, 7.

¹⁰⁴ UKNA CO 685/19, *Annual Report on the Uganda Prisons for the Year 1934* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1935), 2.

¹⁰⁵ UNA Library, Mr. Alexander Paterson, *Report on a Visit to the prisons of Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Aden and Somaliland during 1937* (Moriya: Morija Print Works, 1944), 7.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

training...The training therefore had a punitive ideology that instilled fear in the trainees and centered more on punishments, fear and ensuring security and confinement without paying attention to rehabilitation.¹⁰⁷

Retired officers provide similar accounts. 'The British officers' type of training was more military', Isaac remarked. 'I find that that type of training was not really meant for prisons'.¹⁰⁸ Luke, who joined the Service in the mid-1960s, suggested that the Service's philosophy under the British was 'more about punishment than rehabilitation'.¹⁰⁹ Such reflections provide valuable insight into the way in which the early years of the Service are remembered today, and were crucial in defining perceptions of its role after independence.

The Service's martial origins reflect the vexed relationship between violence and civilization that animated colonial policies at this time. On the one hand, prisons were an important tool for the assertion and consolidation of British control, evident in the Service's subordination to the military and the police. On the other hand, the prison represented an important index of the civilizing mission. British officials had decried the brutality of Mutesa and Kabaleega, insisting that prisons represented a more humane alternative. Yet, Uganda's prisons were a far cry from their metropolitan counterparts, becoming little more than an extension of the military for much of the early colonial period.

The messy lines drawn between policing, prisons, and the military remind us that prisons in Uganda were part of a much wider 'coercive network' of the colonial state.¹¹⁰ Incarceration was one of many punitive possibilities faced by colonized subjects. Protectorate courts handed out a range of other formal punishments, including the payment of fines, compensation of the injured party, corporal punishment, and capital punishment.¹¹¹ Although executions were increasingly hidden from view over the course

¹⁰⁷ Prisons Training School Library (PTSL), 'History of UPS', no date.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Isaac.

¹⁰⁹ Luke, Personal Interview No.1, 28 April 2016.

¹¹⁰ Sherman, 'Tensions of Colonial Punishment', 660.

¹¹¹ H.G. Bushe, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Administration of Justice in Kenya, Uganda and the Tanganyika Territory in Criminal Matters, May 1933 and Correspondence Arising out of the Report* (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1934), 58-66.

of the interwar period, public executions were occasionally used in response to certain outbreaks of disorder.¹¹² Deportation was another important punitive tool. In 1899, Mwanga and Kabaleega were exiled to the Seychelles for their resistance to British rule.¹¹³ As mentioned, a similar fate befell Mutesa in 1953. During the political upheavals of the late colonial period, a number of nationalist leaders were deported to remote regions of the country in the wake of strikes, protests, and trade boycotts.¹¹⁴ These later deportations were carried out using the Deportation Ordinance, which was passed in 1908.¹¹⁵ It gave the Governor the power to deport individuals either to a different region of the Protectorate or outside its territory if he was 'satisfied by evidence on oath that any persons are conducting themselves so as to be dangerous to peace and good order in Uganda'.¹¹⁶

The number of offences under the Penal Code was increased in response to outbreaks of anti-colonial activity. This was evident in the enactment of the Witchcraft Ordinance of 1912. In the ordinance, 'witchcraft' was deliberately conceived as a broad category that could 'encompass any seditious activity in which political ascendancy over the British was claimed on the basis of superior supernatural power'.¹¹⁷ The effects of this ordinance were apparent in 1917,¹¹⁸ when the British used it to detain the leaders of the Nyabingi spiritual cult in Kigezi, who were seen to be sowing 'disaffection' against British rule.¹¹⁹ Similarly, the Incendiarism Ordinance of 1926 was passed following an upsurge in the burning down of local government buildings as a form of protest against colonial authority in the 1920s, particularly in Ankole.¹²⁰ While conviction under the 1926 ordinance carried a sentence of seven years, incendiarism was also incorporated

¹¹² Stacey Hynd, 'Killing the Condemned: The Practice and Process of Capital Punishment in British Africa, 1900-1950s', *Journal of African History* 49 (2008): 410.

¹¹³ Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 100.

¹¹⁴ Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence*, 27.

¹¹⁵ Ogenga Otunnu, *Crisis of Legitimacy and Political Violence in Uganda, 1890 to 1979* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan 2016), 106.

¹¹⁶ House of Commons (HC) Debate (DEB) 07 November 1945 Vol 415 CC1419-1W, 'Uganda (Deportations)'.

¹¹⁷ Hopkins, 'The Politics of Crime', 732.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 734.

¹¹⁹ Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 165-166.

¹²⁰ Hopkins, 'The Politics of Crime', 738.

into the Collective Punishments Ordinance, which could lead to the imposition of fines against the community.¹²¹

Local authorities and non-state actors also carried out their own violent punishments. For example, the flogging of women who refused to cultivate cotton was a common punishment imposed by Native courts in the 1920s.¹²² Ugandans who worked on the larger industrial plantations were also subjected to coercive punishment at the hands of their superiors.¹²³ Mission stations and schools were also sites of violence and coercion. For example, in 1926, the Catholic Mill Hill mission was embroiled in a major scandal in Teso District, charged with having ‘beaten and imprisoned natives and intimidated them into compliance with canonical directions’.¹²⁴ Strict and sometimes violent discipline was also present in mission schools, the leading centres of education within colonial Uganda.¹²⁵ Thus, while prisons were an important locus of colonial punitive policies, they were embedded within a much wider system of punishment and coercion.

Early Misgivings

The tension inherent in the colonial state’s approach to prisons is illustrated by evaluations of prisons in the first decades of the twentieth century. Of particular importance is the *Inspection Report of the Uganda Protectorate Prisons for the Year 1912*.¹²⁶ Written by W.S.F. Edwards, the Inspector General of Police and Prisons, it is one of the first major reviews of Uganda’s prisons, and foreshadowed many of the debates and critiques of the 1930s. While Edwards was repulsed at the unsanitary conditions present in Uganda’s prisons, which he viewed as a clear deficit of civilization, he was also a strong advocate for the maintenance of corporal punishment, insisting that it was

¹²¹ Ibid., 738.

¹²² See Carol Summers, ‘Force and Colonial development in Eastern Uganda’, in *East Africa in Transition: Communities, Cultures and Change* eds. J.M. Bahemuka and J.L. Brockington (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2002): 181-207.

¹²³ Andrew Byerley, *Becoming Jinja: the production of space and making of place in an African industrial town* (Stockholm: Department of Human Geography, Stockholm University, 2005), 182.

¹²⁴ Summers, ‘Force and Colonial Development in Eastern Uganda’, 194.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 200.

¹²⁶ See: UKNA CO 685/1, *Inspection Report*.

suitable for Africans. Thus, Edwards' report illustrates the limits of the colonial state's willingness to adopt modern penal principles or uphold the promises of the civilizing mission.

The majority of Edwards' report focused on the prisons run by UPS, highlighting particularly pressing cases throughout. Upon inspecting Hoima Prison in Western Uganda, Edwards was shocked to find the intermingling of healthy prisoners with those suffering from sleeping sickness, leprosy, or mental instability. This arrangement, he argued, was utterly antithetical to the modern penal principles:

At the time of my inspection I found a leper prisoner to be incarcerated whose hands were a mass of running sores. To intern the demented, the diseased and those in full possession of their health and sense in one and the same building...is a measure so diametrically opposed to the precepts both of Prisons and Medical administration that I should be shrinking from duty and responsibility if I failed to deal with the matter in this Report.¹²⁷

Similarly, Gulu and Nabiese prison in Northern Uganda were seen to be 'so dark, squalid, and badly ventilated', that their status as prisons was deemed to be 'iniquitous'.¹²⁸ He characterized Kampala Prison as being filled with 'bad characters and truculent spirits', who were not adequately separated from less serious offenders.¹²⁹ Such 'contamination', he argued, was unacceptable, and he urged the authorities to 'protect the non-habitual and amateur [offender] from the baser instincts of the human animal as represented by the confirmed and incurable [*sic*] criminal'.¹³⁰ The images summoned in this report – the 'mass of running sores', the 'dark and squalid' prison, the 'truculent sprits', the 'baser instincts of the human animal' – all spoke to Edwards' revulsion towards the supposed primitivism that lingered in Uganda's penal spaces. While he noted a few positive steps towards the goal of creating 'an efficient, up-to-date, and humane Prison System' – such as the launch of an industrial training program at Kampala Prison – he was highly critical of UPS overall.¹³¹

¹²⁷ UKNA, *Inspection Report*, 2-3.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

Edwards' report is also notable for its defence of corporal punishment. Although he praised the creation of 'up-to-date' and 'humane' prisons for serious offenders, he defended the necessity of alternative punitive methods.¹³² This was especially important, he argued, for criminals incarcerated for minor offences. A total of 666 prisoners had been imprisoned for sentences of fewer than 3 months in 1912, a situation which he deemed catastrophic.¹³³ Edwards blamed the courts for having 'failed to realise the uselessness and danger of Short Sentences', which were the 'most potent recruiting factor for the ranks of the habitual criminal'.¹³⁴ As an alternative, he suggested the 'judicious application of the cane, in a way that it would not soon be forgotten'.¹³⁵ A similar recommendation was made to reduce disciplinary offences amongst prison staff, which had more than tripled in the past year. Edwards was firmly convinced that the abolition of corporal punishment as a tool of staff discipline – which occurred in 1911 – was 'alone to blame' for the increase.¹³⁶ Towards the end of his report, Edwards remarked: 'I trust that the Colonial Department will no longer disregard the opinions of those on the spot since their practical knowledge should be such as to ensure them proffering none but sound advice'.¹³⁷

Local government prisons were also critiqued. After inspecting these prisons in 1911, Edwards characterized them as being 'defective in light, badly ventilated, insanitary, dirty and tick infested', making them ultimately 'nothing better than the foci for the dissemination of disease'.¹³⁸ He noted the remarks of Dr. Albert Cook, who had criticized a local prison in Toro as 'a blot on civilization'.¹³⁹ However, by the time of the 1912 inspection, Edwards acknowledged that many local government prisons had been replaced with newer buildings and were receiving monthly inspections from district commissioners and medical officers.¹⁴⁰

¹³² Ibid., 31.

¹³³ UKNA, *Inspection Report*, 6.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 6.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 6.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 28.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 28.

¹³⁸ UNA Provincial Papers, Eastern Province, Box 18, Z.1258, 'Excerpt from the Inspector General of Police and Prisons Annual Report for 1911 on the Uganda Protectorate Prisons', 1913, no page.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ UKNA, *Inspection Report*, 19.

While the archival material is rather sparse for these early decades, the evidence available indicates many issues within Uganda's prisons, including dietary diseases, the poor state of the buildings, and overcrowding. For example, in the 1926 annual report, Lira prison in Northern Uganda was described as a 'collection of temporary and rat-ridden mud and wattle buildings'.¹⁴¹ That same year, the prison was condemned, having been deemed a 'menace to the convicts and the township generally' after an outbreak of plague among the inmates.¹⁴² By the 1930s, a sense of despair was apparent, clearly articulated in the 1931 annual report: 'It must be admitted that a perusal of this Report...leaves an impression that prison conditions in Uganda are very bad'.¹⁴³ Thus, there was a growing consensus about the dismal state of Uganda's prisons following the first few decades of colonial rule. However, there was a significant emphasis on sanitation, cleanliness, and effective custodial control, all of which rested on a very limited definition of civilized standards.

Penal Reform in the Interwar Years

The 1930s ushered in a period of profound reckoning for the Service. Three official reviews were conducted. Henry Gratton Bushe, the legal advisor to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs and the Colonies, oversaw the first review in 1933. Of the three, it had the broadest focus, considering the wider legal arena and only devoting minor attention to prisons. The aforementioned Prisons Committee produced a second evaluation in 1936. It provided the most detailed and scathing assessment, and also effected the greatest changes. Paterson conducted the final investigation in 1939. While he raised some important concerns, he was overall the most positive about the state of prisons in Uganda, focusing mainly on the efforts made to professionalize local staff. Together, these reviews represent some of the key ideological and structural shifts that affected the Service in the 1930s and considerably altered its trajectory in the years that followed. They also reflected the growing use of 'expert' knowledge by the Colonial

¹⁴¹ UKNA CO 685/10, 'Administration Reports, Prisons', 1926, 10.

¹⁴² UKNA, 'Administration Reports, Prisons', 1926, 10.

¹⁴³ UKNA CO 536/175/14, *Annual Report on Uganda Prisons for 1931* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1932), 1.

Office in the interwar years, a period marked by the proliferation of commissions of inquiry and investigations into colonial affairs.

The reports were microcosms of the much wider debates about punishment unfolding in the interwar years. In Britain, fundamental questions were being raised about the aims and forms of punishment, with a growing adherence to penal welfarism.¹⁴⁴ Doubts were also being raised about the appropriateness of corporal punishment, evident in the Home Office's establishment of a Committee on Corporal Punishment in the 1930s.¹⁴⁵ Greater attention was also being devoted to the state of punishment across the Empire. The interwar period was characterized by a 'reorientation of colonial penology', with officials increasingly drawing on 'emerging networks of professional knowledge'.¹⁴⁶ At an institutional level, this was apparent in the creation of the Colonial Penal Administration Committee, a group composed of penal and legal experts (including Paterson and Bushe), abolitionists, and colonial administrators.¹⁴⁷ This outward looking approach was further manifest in the numerous imperial reviews of colonial penal systems, such as the *Indian Jails Committee Report* in 1920 and the 1923 *Native Punishment Commission* in Kenya.¹⁴⁸ The reviews were supplemented by external inspections, such as Paterson's visits to Burma in the mid-1920s and the West Indies in 1937.¹⁴⁹ Networks were also being forged between colonial prison services. For example, the inaugural Conference of East African Prison Commissioners was held in Mombasa on the 28 April 1939.¹⁵⁰

Beyond the British Empire, transnational organizations and global governance institutions were taking an interest in colonial prisons. The Howard League for Penal

¹⁴⁴ Garland, *The Culture of Control*, 34.

¹⁴⁵ Robert Adams, *The Abuses of Punishment* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), 124.

¹⁴⁶ Hynd, "'Insufficiently cruel" or "simply inefficient"? Discipline, punishment and reform in the Gold Coast prison system, c.1850-1957', in *Transnational Penal Cultures: New Perspectives on Discipline, Punishment and Desistance*, eds. Vivien Miller and James Campbell (London: Routledge, 2015), 27.

¹⁴⁷ Abosede George, *Making Modern Girls: A History of Girlhood, Labor, and Social Development in Colonial Lagos* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014), Kindle edition, location 1463.

¹⁴⁸ David Arnold, 'India: The Contested Prison', 179; Read, 'Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda', 111.

¹⁴⁹ See Ian Brown, 'A Commissioner Calls: Alexander Paterson and Colonial Burma's Prisons', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 38:2 (2007): 293-308; Martin Thomas, *Violence and Colonial Order: Police, Workers and Protest in the European Colonial Empires, 1918-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 239.

¹⁵⁰ UKNA CO 859/19/1, 'Report of the Proceedings of the Conference of the East African Commissioners of Prisons held at Mombasa on 28th April, 1939'.

Reform, one of the leading civil society advocates of prison reform in Britain, set up a Colonial Sub-Committee in the interwar years.¹⁵¹ The International Prison Commission, a body of penal experts founded in 1878, was also turning its attention to colonial prisons.¹⁵² In 1929, it developed the first set of universal standards for the treatment of offenders, in response to the realization of the ‘distressing barbarities in the penal systems of a great many foreign countries’.¹⁵³ Further rules were drawn up through a collaborative effort between the Howard League for Penal Reform, the Society of Friends, and the League of Nations Union.¹⁵⁴ By 1934, the League officially adopted a set of ‘Standard Minimum Rules’ for the treatment of offenders, a product of these earlier processes.¹⁵⁵

Evaluations of Uganda’s prison system unfolded within these wider networks and negotiations. The reviews were a product of significant metropolitan shifts in prison policy, rising concerns about the state of prisons in the colonial world, and greater global attention to the treatment of offenders. They also illuminate the tensions present in colonial penal policy at this time, especially between the imperatives of indirect rule and the promises of the civilizing mission.

Reckoning and Review in the 1930s

The Bushe Commission’s primary mandate was to ‘inquire into the administration of criminal law in Kenya, Uganda and the Tanganyika territory’.¹⁵⁶ The report was very detailed, based on seventy-seven submitted memoranda and the evidence of eighty-six witnesses.¹⁵⁷ While the Commission focused mainly on the judicial system, imprisonment was discussed in the chapter on ‘Procedure from Arrest to Trial’, and was considered alongside other forms of punishment.¹⁵⁸ A few concerns

¹⁵¹ Julius Lewin, ‘Uganda’s Prison Problem’, *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 4:4 (1937): 409-410.

¹⁵² Sir Leon Radzinowicz, *Adventures in Criminology* (London: Routledge, 1999), 85.

¹⁵³ Marjorie O. Candler, ‘The International Charter for Prisoners’, *Transactions of the Grotius Society* 16 (1930): 109.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁵⁵ Rubin Kraiem, ‘Prisoners’ rights and the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Offenders’, *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 22:2 (1978): 156.

¹⁵⁶ Bushe, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Administration of Justice*, 5.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 29-47.

were raised about prisons, such as whether imprisonment was actually a deterrent for Africans due to the perceived lack of stigma around incarceration, and the relatively good conditions in prisons compared to offenders' homes.¹⁵⁹ The most significant debate in this section, however, was on the suitability of corporal punishment, an issue for which the Commission had received 'diametrically opposed views'.¹⁶⁰ Many 'men on the spot' argued that it was 'the most suitable punishment for all Africans for all offences'.¹⁶¹ For example, the District Commissioner of Entebbe argued that imprisonment was not a serious enough punishment for theft, and contended that 'the natives would pay more regard to a whipping'.¹⁶² When asked about corporal punishment, another official responded, 'I think there would be nothing to touch it. It would get over all the difficulties. If the native is worth whipping, whip him...I consider their character goes up 50 per cent if treated rightly in this way. It is the one thing they understand'.¹⁶³

Officials carrying out the inquiry raised concerns about the expansion of corporal punishment, arguing that 'a large proportion of people' in Uganda were 'living up to a certain standard of civilization', and therefore should not be caned or flogged.¹⁶⁴ They directly challenged the witnesses, evident in the following exchange:

Chairman: If this punishment were inflicted more frequently you think it would be helpful? To be useful the cane must be sufficiently severe so that the man does not like it.

Witness: No matter how few the strokes, it is beneficial.

Chairman: Surely the native has self respect. Is it wise constantly to expose him to the indignity of caning? Is it going to improve his outlook?

Witness: I do not think it is going to deteriorate it, at any rate.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 58-59.

¹⁶⁰ Bushe, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Administration of Justice*, 58.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 61.

¹⁶² Ibid., 55.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 61.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 61.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 62.

Ultimately, the commissioners declared themselves ‘unable to subscribe to the view that caning and flogging should be made legal as a punishment for adults...for any but the most serious crimes’.¹⁶⁶ Corporal punishment, they argued, ‘must be damaging to self respect’ for those Africans who had ‘advanced to a certain stage of civilisation’ and would ‘brutalize’ its victims.¹⁶⁷ Thus, any ‘extension’ of corporal punishment was regarded as ‘a retrograde step’.¹⁶⁸

The Prisons Committee provided a much more focused assessment of Uganda’s prisons. The penal system was by then composed of 297 prisons across the 3 prison services and held a total of 19,263 prisoners.¹⁶⁹ Mitchell set up the committee to ‘review the existing Prisons policy and organization’ for all three services, asking the committee to make ‘recommendations for their improvement’.¹⁷⁰ Justice Gamble chaired the committee, which was composed of two colonial officials and a representative from both the Catholic and Anglican churches.¹⁷¹ A total of thirteen memoranda were submitted as evidence, and ten witnesses – including district commissioners, prison officers, and Buganda Government officials – contributed testimonies.

The Committee’s findings were largely negative. Overall, the Protectorate Government institutions were strongly criticized. Luzira was characterized as a ‘grandiose scheme’ that was overly expensive and too large to permit the ‘personal touch’ necessary in modern prisons.¹⁷² The remaining prison sites were viewed as ‘old fashioned, insanitary and ruinous buildings’, the majority of which should be ‘condemned’.¹⁷³ The Committee decried the lack of segregation in the prisons and stressed the ‘urgent need for improving the type of native prison warder’, characterizing them as ‘guards and nothing else’, who took ‘no interest in the mental welfare or the psychology of those under their charge’.¹⁷⁴ As Julius Lewin, a member of the Howard

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 63.

¹⁶⁷ Bushe, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Administration of Justice*, 63.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 63.

¹⁶⁹ RCA, Untitled table.

¹⁷⁰ RCA, *Report of the Prisons Committee*, 1.

¹⁷¹ RCA D: 37:6, Chief Secretary to Reverend Father Hughes, 2 May 1936.

¹⁷² RCA, *Report of the Prisons Committee*, 2.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 4.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 27-28.

League's Colonial Sub-Committee, wrote in a review of the Committee's findings: 'The facts disclosed in the Report do not make for pleasant reading'.¹⁷⁵

In contrast, local government prisons were praised for their 'lighter' and 'more paternal' discipline, which enabled greater flexibility in dealing with minor offenders.¹⁷⁶ However, the inconsistencies of sentencing created unease, as offenders charged with penal code offences in a native court would receive a lesser sentence than those charged in a Protectorate court. This, the Committee argued, was against the League of Nations guidelines, which proclaimed the following: 'Prisoners in the same category should, on principle, be given identical treatment'.¹⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the 'elastic' nature of these prisons was deemed useful when dealing with prisoners serving shorter sentences.¹⁷⁸ Some concerns were raised about the Buganda system, which was characterized as a 'mess of petty prisons'.¹⁷⁹ However, while the need for improvements was acknowledged, the *Katikkiro* insisted that offenders preferred being sent to Buganda's prisons, as 'the discipline in Protectorate prisons was more severe and prisoners received less news from their homes'.¹⁸⁰ Overall, the Committee was adamant that the local government and Buganda Government prisons should remain outside of the Service.

At the heart of the Committee's investigation was the question of the purpose of a colonial prison. While the Committee felt that the current state of Uganda's prisons was deplorable, there was uncertainty about the extent to which they should create a British-style penal system. This is most clearly reflected in one of the report's appendices, in which the unnamed author offers searching reflections on the Service's future:

A visit to the Central Prison at Luzira provokes the question – what is the good of it all? What are we aiming at, and what are we achieving, in keeping all these men locked-up – some of them for many years – in an atmosphere

¹⁷⁵ Lewin, 'Uganda's Prison Problem', 410.

¹⁷⁶ RCA, *Report of the Prisons Committee*, 6.

¹⁷⁷ RCA, *Report of the Prisons Committee*, 6.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 29.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 9-10.

¹⁸⁰ RCA, 'Statement of the Katikkiro of Buganda', 22.

as different as possible from that to which they are accustomed, and at considerable expense to the Government?¹⁸¹

On the one hand, the author insisted that it was vital to recognize that ‘the principal value of imprisonment lies in the opportunity which it offers for training for citizenship a varied collection of people whose standards in that respect have not, on the whole, hitherto been very high’.¹⁸² However, Uganda’s prisons were currently ‘doing nothing whatever to achieve this end’.¹⁸³ On the other hand, the author insisted that a ‘slavish imitation’ of the British system was not suitable, and that prisoners should instead be required to perform manual labour.¹⁸⁴ ‘So far as is possible, every moment of the prisoners’ time, not necessarily spent asleep, should be fully occupied by physical and mental exercise’.¹⁸⁵ This would make them more ‘industrious and alert’ and lay the foundation for ‘citizenship’ after release.¹⁸⁶ Although buried in the appendices, this note captured many of issues that shaped colonial penal philosophy at this time, while foreshadowing the vision of penal modernity that would be embraced in subsequent decades.

The Committee made several key recommendations. It suggested the establishment of four provincial prisons within UPS, each of which would be staffed by professional prison officers. These were to be built in rural areas in order to keep prisoners away from ‘public view’ and to shelter warders from the ‘distractions and temptations of town life’.¹⁸⁷ At these prisons, it recommended training prisoners in agriculture rather than industrial skills: ‘Uganda being primarily an agricultural country we consider that prison occupations should be directed towards keeping natives on the land and not to turning out artizans’.¹⁸⁸ More broadly, the Committee called for greater differentiation within the Service, including the creation of separate wings for female

¹⁸¹ RCA, ‘Note on the Treatment of Long-Term Offenders’, 1.

¹⁸² RCA, ‘Note on the Treatment of Long-Term Offenders’, 5.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 5.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 7.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 8.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 8.

¹⁸⁷ RCA, *Report of the Prisons Committee*, 21.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 23.

offenders in provincial prisons, and the construction of juvenile reformatories based on the borstal model in England.¹⁸⁹

The Committee also suggested creating a cohort of more professional prison officers. It suggested that sixty percent of the staff would be 'guards', who would be 'armed with rifles', and would be employed 'solely for sentry work and guarding convicts employed extra murally [*sic*]'.¹⁹⁰ In contrast, the 'prison officers', who made up the remaining forty percent, 'should be men of a higher character and of a degree of education', would carry batons rather than arms, and 'should be encouraged to take an interest in the mental development and the welfare of those under their charge'.¹⁹¹ As will be discussed in the next chapter, these changes were increasingly implemented from the late 1930s onwards.

The most important recommendation, however, was the separation of the police and prison services. To make their case, the Committee cited the minutes of the 1930 Colonial Office Conference, where the issue had been discussed in depth:

The problem of prisons is distinct and separate from that of the police, and it will only be faced and studied and solved if those in charge of the prisons are given a definite status in the Colony where they serve...The prison service of any Colony should be staffed from top to bottom by men who are carefully selected, suitably trained and adequately paid. Prison administration is a science, and those who are accorded a place in it should be accorded also the status that the difficulty of their task demands.¹⁹²

The division of the two services finally occurred in 1938, making the Service an autonomous institution for the first time in its history.¹⁹³ The transition was only completed in 1959, when the final police officer in charge of a district prison was replaced with a prison officer.¹⁹⁴ Despite this slow implementation, the creation of an independent Service was the most important legacy of the 1936 report. Furthermore,

¹⁸⁹ John Warder and Reg Wilson, 'The British Borstal Training System', *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 64:1 (1973): 118.

¹⁹⁰ RCA, *Report of the Prisons Committee*, 28.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 26-27.

¹⁹³ JDA JLOS 41:22, *Annual Report of the Uganda Prisons, 1938* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1939), 1.

¹⁹⁴ RCS.L.45.T2.1959, *Annual Report for the Treatment of Offenders for the Year Ended 31st December, 1959* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1960), 4.

the fact that this change had been justified because of the scientific nature of prison administration indicated the growing embrace of penal welfarism within Uganda, a phenomenon that would be much more evident from the 1940s onwards.

Paterson's review in 1939 thus came at a moment of significant transformation for the Service. Overall, Paterson identified many problems with the various penal systems across East Africa, but also made it clear that prisons were indispensable. While he acknowledged that 'crime and conscience should not coincide when a penal code that is founded on a European ethic is imposed upon an African people whose ideals of right and wrong are so completely different', he insisted that this new 'ethic' was necessary.¹⁹⁵ The alternative, he argued, was to 'codify the African theories of right and wrong into a law', thus allowing 'murder and mutilation on quite a liberal scale'.¹⁹⁶ Paterson also challenged the view that prisons had a limited deterrent effect. 'The African', he argued, 'hates the idea of going to prison...he may suffer no social stigma, but he suffers very acutely social separation'.¹⁹⁷ Paterson's primary critiques of prison systems in East Africa lay in the lack of a rehabilitative ethos, the failure to adequately deal with short-term offenders, and the poor quality of African warders, thus echoing many of the concerns expressed by the other assessors.

Although Paterson glossed over the specifics of each colony's penal system, Uganda featured relatively prominently in his report. He praised the local government prisons, characterizing them as an effective solution for dealing with non-criminal offenders. Most significantly, he singled out Uganda as having 'led the way' in the creation of a professional class of African prison officers.¹⁹⁸ Paterson commended the introduction of the rank of Assistant African Gaoler, which had been created in 1936.¹⁹⁹ It was intended for 'Africans of superior education' who were capable of holding senior leadership positions within the Service.²⁰⁰ These new officers, Paterson argued, would

¹⁹⁵ Paterson, *Report on a Visit to the Prisons of Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Aden and Somaliland during 1937*, 1.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁰⁰ UNA Library, *Annual Report of the Uganda Prisons Service, for the Year ended 31st December, 1939* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1940), 8.

serve as intermediary figures between the African staff and the British administrators. 'Trained for the most part at Makerere College, they can grasp the policy of the Administration, still African at heart, they can understand the reaction of the staff', he wrote.²⁰¹ 'It is for them to interpret the European and African mind to each other'.²⁰² Paterson felt that these recruits 'need not be great scholars, ringed with academic honours, expert at examinations', but should instead be 'human beings with such distinction of character and personality as to ensure their control of others'.²⁰³ Despite the paternalistic nature of this commentary, it did point to the growing professionalization of the Service in the 1930s.

Conclusion

Originally hailed as a vehicle for 'civilization', the Service's development in the early colonial years was severely hampered by its subordination to the military and the police. Officials wrestled with competing aims, weighing their preference for the stinginess of indirect rule and the coercive aspects of colonial control against the promises of the civilizing mission. These tensions collided in the 1930s, with many 'men on the spot' defending the use of corporal punishment while metropolitan officials advocated for the humanity of the custodial sentence. In contrast to Bernault's assertion that theoretical debates about penal policy were 'remarkably sparse' in colonial Africa, the 1930s was a time of profound reckoning and reflection about the universality of 'modern' penal principles.²⁰⁴ Buttressed by the growing aversion to corporal punishment within the Colonial Office, this debate was largely settled in Uganda by the Bushe Commission, and further reinforced by the Prisons Committee report and Paterson's review. Thus, from the 1930s onwards, there was an increasing consensus that UPS should be guided by the principles of penal welfarism.

²⁰¹ Paterson, *Report on a Visit to the Prisons of Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Aden and Somaliland during 1937*, 8.

²⁰² Paterson, *Report on a Visit to the Prisons of Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Aden and Somaliland during 1937*, 8.

²⁰³ Ibid., 8.

²⁰⁴ Bernault, 'The Politics of Enclosure', 24.

CHAPTER 2

‘A NEW SPIRIT IS ABROAD’: PENAL REFORM IN THE LATE COLONIAL PERIOD

In January 1962, the Deputy Governor of Uganda gave a speech at the Prisons Service’s annual dinner.¹ Held at the Imperial Hotel in downtown Kampala, it was a formal affair, and also a time for celebration and reflection. Addressing the staff, the Deputy Governor expressed his ‘admiration’ of their work and complimented the Service’s ‘steady progress’ over the colonial period.² This, he acknowledged, had been achieved despite tremendous ‘difficulties’ and constrained government support.³ ‘You must, in fact, feel a forgotten service’, he remarked.⁴ ‘It is a job which produces no headlines unless there is trouble. Yours is not a service on which governments wish to spend a great deal of money’.⁵ Mr. Cameron, the Commissioner of Prisons, also shared some remarks. Although he acknowledged the obstacles to penal reform, he spoke proudly of the Service’s ‘progress’, which he attributed to the ‘unstinted service of the officers in the field’.⁶ Looking to the future, Cameron urged the expatriate staff to give their Ugandan counterparts ‘every assistance’ in working towards the achievement of ‘modern’ penal standards.⁷ Emphasizing this goal, Cameron remarked, ‘The accepted treatment of the offender is based on the fact that he has been sent to prison not for punishment. And no one is more conscious of this than us. Public visions of clanging doors and flogging, conjured up a century ago, were utterly false’.⁸

Speaking in the twilight of colonial rule in Uganda, these speeches encapsulated many of the challenges, philosophies, and opportunities that animated the Service’s history in the late colonial period. This chapter provides a broad overview of its

¹ ‘Prisons – the “forgotten service,”’ *Uganda Argus*, 29 January 1962, 3.

² *Ibid.*, 3.

³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

development between the 1940s and independence in 1962. Following the reviews of the 1930s, a much more robust attempt was made to modernize and professionalize Uganda's prisons, combining tenets of penal welfarism with colonial economic imperatives. Although these reforms were undercut by the political instability of the late colonial years, they represented a reframing of the state's approach to the prison.

The 'Second Colonial Occupation'

The penal reforms of the late colonial period unfolded in the context of a wider reorientation of Britain's approach to colonial governance. Spurred on by the shifting views of the role of the state in Britain, the victory of the Labour Party in the 1945 election, and the growing transnational aversion to colonial rule, the Colonial Office significantly altered its philosophy of colonial governance from the 1940s onwards. At the heart of this change was the notion that development and welfare were the responsibility of the state. In the imperial arena, this entailed setting aside the expectation that colonies should be financially self-sufficient and broadening development agendas 'beyond narrow economic concerns'.⁹ This change in attitude was marked by a 'great intensification of government activity', leading historians John Lonsdale and D.A. Low to characterize this period as the 'second colonial occupation'.¹⁰

The passage of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act in 1940 was an important marker of this new style of governance, bringing an end to colonial financial self-sufficiency through at least a fivefold increase in the funds available for development.¹¹ Proponents of this act, such as the Secretary of State for the Colonies Malcolm MacDonald, framed it in existential terms: '...if we are not now going to do something fairly good for the Colonial Empire, and something which helps them to get proper social services, we shall deserve to lose the colonies and it will only be a matter

⁹ George, *Making Modern Girls*, location 270.

¹⁰ D.A. Low and J. Lonsdale, 'East Africa: towards the new order 1945-1963', in *Eclipse of Empire*, ed. D.A. Low (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 173.

¹¹ HC Deb 21 May 1940 vol 361 cc41-125, 'Colonial Development and Welfare Bill', accessed 10 October 2016, <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1955/feb/02/colonial-development-and-welfare-bill>.

of time before we get what we deserve'.¹² Ultimately, these arguments won out over those posed by politicians worried about the financial drain on Britain, and the act was passed in 1940. More funds were made available after 1945 following the end of wartime financial constraints.¹³

Gardner Thompson contends that the reorientation of the colonial state in Uganda led to 'social and economic development on an unprecedented scale'.¹⁴ The Protectorate Government spent 'great sums of money' to 'promote the greater social and material well-being' of the Ugandan population.¹⁵ Funds from the CDW scheme were used on a range of activities, including agriculture, health care, water supplies, forestry, and education.¹⁶ Although many of these initiatives failed to achieve considerable economic gains, their significance lay in 'the trend which they confirmed and set for the future: that of the central government assuming responsibility for the prosperity of all'.¹⁷ A similar argument can be made about the reforms initiated in the Service: while they perhaps fell short of the goal of creating modern prisons, they generated new expectations about the purpose and possibilities of imprisonment. As Howard League activist Margery Fry wrote of colonial penal reform in 1951, 'an enormous amount remains to be done', but 'what can be said with confidence is that a new spirit is abroad'.¹⁸

Prison reform was an important aspect of the colonial state's new approach, as 'the provision of social justice, prisons and the administration of justice', were viewed as important aspects of welfare.¹⁹ As Labour politician George Jeger argued in 1950: 'with all the money that we are to vote for the Colonies for the development of material

¹² Frederick Cooper, 'Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backward Africans, and the Development Concept', in *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge*, eds. Frederick Cooper and Randall M. Packard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 67.

¹³ Timothy H. Parsons, *The Second British Empire: In the Crucible of the Twentieth Century* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 95.

¹⁴ Thompson, *Governing Uganda*, 333.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 333.

¹⁶ See: UKNA CO 822/973, 'Progress Reports on the Uganda Development Plan Revision (10 Year)'.

¹⁷ Thompson, *Governing Uganda*, 335.

¹⁸ Margery Fry, 'Penal Reform in the Colonies', *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 8 (1951): 95.

¹⁹ HC Deb 'Colonial Development and Welfare Bill', 09 November 1950 vol 480 cc1135-251, accessed 27 October 2016, <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1950/nov/09/colonial-development-and-welfare-bill>.

resources, we shall not gain the respect and support of the friendly and loyal people there if they are to be subjected to the maladministration of justice’.²⁰ Evidence of this could be seen in specific colonies. Nigeria’s Ten Year Plan for Social and Economic Progress – the money for which came from the CDW funds – allocated specific financial resources to improve the prison system.²¹ In Uganda, the Protectorate service benefited from the use of prison labour in some of the new ventures set up with CDW money, including the Namulonge Cotton Growing Research Station, which had over 200 convict labourers by 1959,²² the Kigumba Agricultural Experimental Farm, and anti-malarial and drainage works.²³ Overall, the annual expenditure on the Service increased significantly in the late colonial years, from £55,944 in 1946 to £707,388 in 1960.²⁴

As was the case in the 1930s, this shift in the approach to imprisonment reflected – and was reinforced by – wider changes within Britain and its empire. One of the most notable changes in England was the passage of the 1948 Criminal Justice Act, which brought an end to penal servitude, flogging, and hard labour in prisons.²⁵ It also resulted in greater differentiation in the penal system – with the expansion of alternative options to incarceration such as borstal institutions for youth – and a much greater emphasis on rehabilitation.²⁶ Policies were also enacted in the Colonial Office, namely the creation of the Advisory Committee on the Treatment of Offenders in the Colonies, which ‘espoused a universal reformist model for colonial penalty’.²⁷ Pressures for penal reform also increased amongst civil society groups such as the Aborigines Rights’

²⁰ HC Deb ‘Colonial Development and Welfare Bill’.

²¹ George, *Making Modern Girls*, location 278.

²² RCS, *Annual Report 1959*, 21.

²³ Stacey Hynd, “...a Weapon of Immense Value”? Convict Labour in British Colonial Africa, c.1850-1950s’, in *Global Histories of Convict Labour*, eds. Christian De Vito and Alex Liechtenstein (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 271.

²⁴ RCS, *Annual Report 1946*, 12; UNA Library, *Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year Ended 31st December, 1960* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1961), 25.

²⁵ David Hirschel, William Wakefield, and Scott Sasse, eds., *Criminal Justice in England and the United States*, (Sudbury: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 2008), 250.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 250.

²⁷ Hynd, “Insufficiently cruel” or “simply inefficient”?’, 32.

Protection Society, the Anti-Slavery Society, the Fabian Colonial Bureau, and the Howard League.

Penal Reform in Late Colonial Uganda

Building on the momentum of the 1930s, colonial administrators in Uganda embarked on an ambitious set of penal reforms in the final decades of colonial rule. Two major obstacles to creating ‘modern’ prisons – the entanglement with the Police Force and the desire to expand corporal punishment – had been removed, and preliminary steps at professionalization had taken place. Thus, the terrain was ripe for creating meaningful reforms within the Service.

To an extent, the Second World War put some of the reformist impulses on hold. The war led to a ‘crisis’ in colonial administration in Uganda, as many British officials were released to join the war effort, leaving Uganda’s already undermanned civil service stretched dangerously thin.²⁸ Despite being outside the theatre of war, Uganda was still deeply affected: it had European prisoners of war and refugees,²⁹ enlisted approximately 77,000 recruits,³⁰ and ‘contributed considerable sums of money to the British war effort’ through taxation and the harnessing of export profits.³¹

Like many public service institutions, the Service was affected by the war. It contributed to the running of the railway, the East African Power and Lighting Company, and the Kampala and Entebbe Township Authorities.³² At least 50 warders and 150 prisoners were engaged in such efforts in Kampala and Entebbe, with more being employed in other parts of the country.³³ Prison industries were also harnessed to aid the war effort: in 1941, the Service manufactured 17,000 military uniforms, and also produced materials for internment camps.³⁴ Following the war, the colonial

²⁸ Thompson, *Governing Uganda*, 82.

²⁹ Carol Summers, ‘Ugandan Politics and World War II (1939-1949)’, in *Africa and World War II*, eds. Judith A. Byfield, Carolyn A. Brown, Timothy Parsons, and Ahmad Alawad Sikainga (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 490.

³⁰ Thompson, *Governing Uganda*, 96.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 117.

³² RCS, *Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year Ended 1946*, 14.

³³ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁴ UNA Library, *Annual Report of the Uganda Prisons for the Year ended 31st December 1941* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1942), 3.

administration applauded the Service for helping 'so cheerfully in this emergency', and gave all prisoners involved in the war effort a remission on their sentences.³⁵ The war also resulted in a wave of new prison recruits, as the Ugandan Civil Reabsorption Office provided jobs for the 'better type' of demobilized soldiers within the Service.³⁶

Following the war, a number of penal reforms were enacted. Firstly, more emphasis was placed on prisoners' well-being. In contrast to numerous reports of dietary deficiencies in the earlier colonial period, balanced dietary scales were adopted in the 1950s with assistance from WHO 'nutrition experts'.³⁷ Dietary differences based on race were also abolished.³⁸ The use of corporal punishment for offences committed while in prison also went down significantly: whereas it had been used 73 times in 1912 for a population of 1,726 prisoners,³⁹ it was awarded 4 times in 1956 for a population of over 4,000 prisoners.⁴⁰ There was also a greater emphasis on prisoners' recreation and rehabilitation. In the late 1940s, mass literacy classes were introduced in the largest prisons under the guidance of the Public Relations and Social Welfare Department.⁴¹ Activities such as football, volleyball, and music were offered, as the Service sought to 'occupy prisoners as much as possible during non-working hours and interest them in activities which benefit them both physically and mentally'.⁴² Libraries, radios, and cinema shows were brought in to provide prisoners with 'contact with the outside world'.⁴³ The Service also made efforts to connect prisoners with civil society groups, such as the Red Cross, missionary societies, and women's organizations, which was perhaps seen as a less expensive way to provide welfare services in prisons.⁴⁴ Further

³⁵ UNA Library, *Annual Report 1941* (3).

³⁶ Summers, 'Ugandan Politics and World War II', 492.

³⁷ RCS, *Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders 1956*, 30.

³⁸ RCS.L.45.T2.1958, *Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year Ended 31st December 1958* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1959), 19.

³⁹ UKNA, *Inspection Report*, 11.

⁴⁰ RCS, *Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders 1957*, 38.

⁴¹ RCS.L.45.T2.1949, *Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year Ended 31st December 1949* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1950), 12.

⁴² RCS, *Annual Report 1956*, 28.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁴ RCS, *Annual Report 1958*, 21-22.

rehabilitative training was provided on prison farms and through the expansion of prison industries, which will be discussed in the next section.

Another area of significant change was in the differentiation of the Service's institutions. In 1946, there were thirteen Protectorate prisons, including one central prison, one prison farm, and eleven district prisons.⁴⁵ In contrast, there were twenty-nine penal institutions in 1959.⁴⁶ These included industrial training prisons, agricultural training prisons, detention camps, prisons with different levels of security based on the type of offender, a women's prison, a youth prison, a lepers' prison, district prisons, prison farms, a women's prison farm, and schools for juvenile offenders.⁴⁷

One of the most significant aspects of this differentiation was the growing attention paid to female and juvenile offenders. The ACTOC encouraged this, reflecting the official concern that the poor treatment of these groups would lead to public outcry – an issue that was particularly pronounced in debates regarding detention policies during the Mau Mau Rebellion in Kenya.⁴⁸ One of the most important developments was the opening of a women's prison at Luzira in 1954 and the appointment of a female superintendent of prisons.⁴⁹ Several other new positions were introduced in the years that followed, including Woman Jailor, Matron, and Assistant Matron.⁵⁰ In the late 1950s, Butabika Prison Farm was opened for women who were convicted of less serious offences, while juvenile female offenders were sent to a special section of Victoria Prison.⁵¹ Male juvenile offenders went to Mubende Reformatory School, which was opened in 1950.⁵² Prior to this, juvenile offenders had been held in prisons for adults, and were segregated when possible.⁵³ In 1956, a former officer in the British

⁴⁵ RCS, *Annual Report 1946*, 9.

⁴⁶ RCS, *Annual Report 1959*, 2.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁸ Katherine Bruce-Lockhart, 'The "Truth" About Kenya: Connection and Contestation in the 1956 Kamiti Controversy', *Journal of World History* 26:4 (2015): 815-838.

⁴⁹ RCS.L.45.T2.1954, *Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year Ended 31st December 1954* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1955), 10.

⁵⁰ RCS, *Annual Report 1957*, 10.

⁵¹ RCS, *Annual Report 1958*, 13; RCS, *Annual Report 1959*, 13.

⁵² RCS.L.45.T2.1950, *Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year Ended 31st December 1950* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1951), 2.

⁵³ RCS, *Annual Report 1952*, 23.

borstal service was appointed to be the superintendent of Mubende School.⁵⁴ A year later, Kampiringisa Boys' School was opened to relieve Mubende of overcrowding.⁵⁵ Considerable official attention was devoted to juvenile offenders in this period, evident in the creation of the McKisack Committee of Enquiry into the Problem and Treatment of Juvenile Delinquency in Uganda. Appointed by Sir Andrew Cohen in 1957, it was meant to provide greater attention to 'the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency, and also the treatment of children and young persons'.⁵⁶ It was one of the most extensive investigations into issues of juvenile offenders in any British African colony. In contrast, much less attention was paid to 'lunatics' or 'prisoners of unsound mind', who were often sent to prisons despite the Service's protestation that it was 'not properly equipped for the custody of the insane and prison officers are not trained in their treatment'.⁵⁷

Another key change was the creation of a probation service. Efforts to introduce probation in Uganda had begun in the early 1930s, when the Chief Justice Sir Charles Griffin had issued a High Court Circular calling for a more modern and rehabilitative penal system.⁵⁸ However, it was not until 1947 that the first probation officer arrived in Uganda.⁵⁹ Probation was envisioned as both an alternative to imprisonment that would provide offenders with guidance to lead them away from crime, and as a service to aid offenders who had been released from prison.⁶⁰ The introduction of this service was seen as crucial to ensuring the successful reform of prisoners. Writing in 1955, the head probation officer remarked: 'It cannot be too strongly stressed, that unless there is a proper aftercare organization which can assist

⁵⁴ RCS, *Annual Report 1956*, 21.

⁵⁵ RCS.L.45.T2.1952, *Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year Ended 31st December 1952* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1953), 26.

⁵⁶ UNA Library, *Report of the McKisack Committee of Enquiry into the Problem and Treatment of Juvenile Delinquency in Uganda* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1958), 1.

⁵⁷ RCS, *Annual Report 1956*, 32.

⁵⁸ RCS, *Annual Report 1954*, 43.

⁵⁹ RCS.L.45.T2.1947 *Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year Ended 31st December 1947* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1948), 19.

⁶⁰ RCS, *Annual Report 1958*, 57.

prisoners in their problem of rehabilitation on release from prison, much of the value of reformatory training in prison can be lost'.⁶¹

The development of the probation service reflected the much more outward looking approach of the prison administration in Uganda at this time. In 1948, the probation officer visited Kenya and made contacts with similar officers in Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Zanzibar, and Cyprus.⁶² Writing in 1955, he commented: 'So far the endeavor has been to aim for the international standard of probation work', with the eventual goal that an 'officer in Uganda could compare equally with the high standard of officers, for example, in the United Kingdom'.⁶³ The administrators charged with developing the probation system in Uganda thus saw themselves as part of a broader movement of penal reform, to which they would slowly contribute. The Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society, a voluntary organization that was set up in Uganda in 1957, also contributed to offenders' reintegration efforts following their release from prison,⁶⁴ including building a hostel in which former prisoners could stay as they transitioned back into society.⁶⁵

'To Encourage Them to Lead a Good and Useful Life': Prison Labour

While many of these reforms centered on bringing colonial prisons into line with British practices, there was also an emphasis on the prison as a driver of economic development. While Britain had increasingly moved away from penal labour in any form – beginning with the Gladstone Report and fully realized in legislation with the 1948 Criminal Justice Act – it was seen as a vital aspect of colonial penal policy.⁶⁶ Beginning in the interwar years, colonial officials began to strongly advocate for the civilizing value of prison labour across British Africa. As Stacey Hynd argues, this was set in the context of the gradual abolition of slavery within the colonies; the growing metropolitan

⁶¹ RCS.L.45.T2.1955, *Annual Report Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year ended 31st December, 1955* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1956), 26.

⁶² RCS.L.45.T2.1948, *Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year ended 31st December, 1948* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1949), 20.

⁶³ RCS, *Annual Report 1955*, 63.

⁶⁴ Gulu District Archive (GDA) Box 551, 'Patron Speech', 'Minutes of the Inoguration [*sic*] of the Discharged Prisoners Aid Society, Acholi Branch Held on Friday, 31st August, 1984 in the District Council Hall, Gulu'.

⁶⁵ RCS, *Annual Report 1959*, 28.

⁶⁶ Terence Morris, 'British Criminology: 1935-48', *British Journal of Criminology* 28:2 (1988): 21.

aversion to forced labour or ‘compulsory’ labour through mechanisms such as the master and servants legislation⁶⁷; and the economic effects of the Depression.⁶⁸ In Uganda, *kasavu* labour was abolished in 1923 and *lunalo* in 1934, although in practice chiefs still extracted unpaid labour from their populations.⁶⁹ Thus, there was a growing need for prison labour in the interwar years, but colonial officials were aware that they had to tread carefully, especially in light of passage of the Forced Labour Convention of 1930 by the International Labour Organization.⁷⁰

However, many colonial officials insisted that there was no fundamental incompatibility between prison labour and the civilizing mission, arguing that agricultural and industrial training in prisons was a useful rehabilitative tool. This was manifested in different ways across the colonies, including industrial training workshops within prisons, prison farms, and extra-mural camps or detention camps for short-term offenders.⁷¹ Prison labour had multiple purposes: to train prisoners in new skills that could prevent them from lapsing into crime upon their release; to make prisons more self-sufficient through the provision of food, thereby cutting government costs; to serve as a labour force for public works projects; and to generate public revenue through the sale of prison products. In Uganda and elsewhere, prisoners’ labour was thus deemed to be an asset, rather than a hindrance in the creation of more ‘modern’ prison systems. As Hynd writes, the late colonial period was marked by the embrace of an ‘increasingly universalist colonial penal model’, which emphasized ‘the need to reform offenders rather than punish them’, and insisted on the ‘widespread introduction of industrial training to create modern, economically productive, and disciplined colonial subjects’.⁷²

In Uganda, there was a particular emphasis on prison farms and industries. Although smaller farm sites had long been attached to prisons, the first prison farm was

⁶⁷ See for example David M. Anderson, ‘Master and Servant in Colonial Kenya’, *Journal of African History* 41:3 (2000): 459-485.

⁶⁸ For a discussion of these changes, see Hynd, “‘...a Weapon of Immense Value?’” 253-261.

⁶⁹ Jones, *Beyond the State in Rural Uganda*, 69.

⁷⁰ ‘CO29 – Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No.29)’, International Labour Organization, accessed 8 June 2017, http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312174:NO.

⁷¹ See for example, Read, ‘Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda’.

⁷² Hynd, “‘...a Weapon of Immense Value?’”, 252.

opened in Busoga in 1942, with the dual objective of increasing food production in response to wartime needs and the education of offenders in ‘agricultural methods’.⁷³ At least three more farms were added in the late colonial years, which was followed by further expansion after independence.⁷⁴ Prison industries, which had been in place since the early twentieth century, also expanded significantly. While initial efforts had been focused on ‘self-sufficiency’, industrial production in the late colonial period was increasingly tied to providing government revenue and enhancing prisoners’ rehabilitation through the provision of skills.⁷⁵ Whereas only carpentry, tailoring, mat production, and basket production were offered in 1931, over twenty industrial crafts were available by 1956.⁷⁶

The colonial administration promoted prison goods in order to enhance perceptions of the prison as a site of rehabilitation. This was most apparent in the ‘Prisons’ Week’ held in Kampala in December 1959, which included an exhibition of prison products in Lugogo Stadium.⁷⁷ Government officials and members of the public flocked to the event, which was meant to ‘give employers an excellent opportunity to see for themselves what is being done in Protectorate prisons as regards trade training.’⁷⁸ The Service hoped that ‘the high standard of work shown will encourage the employment of discharged prisoners’.⁷⁹ Photographs of this event provide a striking visual representation of the Service’s performance of penal modernity. In the photos, throngs of expatriates and colonial officials dressed in military uniforms, white dresses, and tailored suits inspect the myriad prison goods on display. A sign perched in front of an embroidery exhibit reminded the audience of the purpose of such activities in the prison: ‘The object of the training and treatment of prisoners is to encourage them to lead a good and useful life on discharge and to fit them to do so’.⁸⁰ Thus, prisoners’

⁷³ PMK, *Report of the Public Services Salaries Review Commission, 1973-1974*, 35.

⁷⁴ RCS, *Annual Report for 1959*, 2.

⁷⁵ PMK, *Report of the Public Services Salaries Review Commission, 1973-1974*, 34.

⁷⁶ RCS, *Annual Report 1956*, 34.

⁷⁷ RCS, *Annual Report 1959*, 4.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁸⁰ UKNA CO 1069/192, ‘Exhibition of prison industries and handicrafts’, 1959.

involvement in agricultural and industrial production was framed as a vital part of their rehabilitation.

A ‘Superior’ Prison Officer

One of the most important changes initiated in this period was the ‘Africanisation’ and professionalization of the Service’s personnel. As discussed by Paterson, Uganda was a regional leader in this regard – a phenomenon likely borne out of necessity due to the Service’s earlier subordination to the Police Force and the lack of European personnel in Uganda. Motivations aside, the drive for ‘Africanisation’ represented one of the most significant reforms of the late colonial years, creating a cadre of Ugandan prison officers who began to see themselves as skilled professionals.

Efforts to professionalize Ugandan prison officers intensified in the 1930s. In 1932, the training of recruit constables and recruit warders was finally differentiated: after undergoing common training for three months, the recruit warders were then provided with an additional stage at Luzira, which consisted of ‘practical instructions in a Warder’s duties’.⁸¹ A ‘promotional course’ was created in 1933, and involved training on the supervision and classification of prisoners, guard duties, search and adjudication procedures, and the treatment of prisoners.⁸² These advances in training were enhanced by the opening of the Prisons Depot Training School at Luzira in 1938.⁸³

As noted by Paterson, one of the key innovations in Uganda’s path towards ‘Africanisation’ was the introduction of senior ranks for Ugandan officers. While it seems that most administrators were in agreement about the importance of the new rank of African Assistant Gaoler, there was disagreement about the qualifications needed. The debate rested on the degree of education necessary for the job. Some officials recommended recruiting from King’s College Budo, St. Mary’s College Kisubi, and Makerere, all elite educational institutions.⁸⁴ Others felt that well-educated

⁸¹ PMK, *Report of the Public Service Salaries Commission, 1973-1974*, 29.

⁸² PMK, *Report of the Public Service Salaries Commission, 1973-1974*, 29.

⁸³ Ibid., 28.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 29.

Ugandans did not have the necessary disposition for a career in the Service. As one official remarked, their 'gentle upbringing' and 'qualities of refinement' might not be well suited to the prison environment.⁸⁵ 'Highly educated people do not have the qualities both positive and negative necessary for prison work', he insisted.⁸⁶ However, the Deputy Chief Secretary countered that the Service would be strengthened by recruits who were 'superior in type and intelligence' and possessed the 'wider outlook which one expects to result from better education'.⁸⁷ The Commissioner of Prisons echoed this, concurring that 'the qualities of refinement brought about by good family upbringing and higher education were the very ones necessary for the proper administration of a prison'.⁸⁸

As a result, highly educated Ugandans were chosen to fill this rank. The first two candidates were selected in 1937, and more positions were opened up in subsequent years.⁸⁹ By 1939, two of the African Assistant Gaolers had been posted to district prisons, where they assumed 'a degree of control and responsibility in excess of anything heretofore entrusted to an African Warder'.⁹⁰ That year, a cautiously favourable assessment of the gaolers was given: 'They are far from perfect but show such steady progress that in the course of time they should prove a valuable asset to the Prisons Service'.⁹¹ Along with Paterson, the Colonial Penal Advisory Committee praised Uganda's leadership, noting 'with satisfaction that several educated Africans are employed in the Uganda Prisons service', and expressing its hope 'that the desirability of employing such men in suitable posts in the Prisons services in other territories would not be lost sight of'.⁹²

'Africanisation' made notable strides in the final years of colonial rule. In 1955, Mr. J.L. Bosa was promoted to Assistant Superintendent of Prisons, which was the highest

⁸⁵ Ibid., 29.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 29.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 30.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 30.

⁸⁹ UNA Library, *Annual Report 1937*, 11.

⁹⁰ UNA Library, *Annual Report 1939*, 8.

⁹¹ Ibid., 8.

⁹² UKNA CO 859/19/1, 'Note of the comments of the Colonial Penal Administration Committee on the proceedings at the Conference of East African Commissioners of Prisons, April 1939'.

rank achieved by an African in an East African prison administration at the time.⁹³ The Service hoped this would ‘encourage local candidates of high calibre’ to apply for higher-ranking jobs.⁹⁴ In 1957, the rank of ‘cadet jailer’ was introduced.⁹⁵ These officers were provided with thirteen months of training, and were meant to form ‘the pool of officers’ from which to draw the Service’s senior leadership.⁹⁶ By 1959, Ugandan officers made up a quarter of all superintendent posts within the Service.⁹⁷ Further progress was evident in the 1960 Annual Report, which noted that ‘suitable candidates’ were coming forward for the cadet post.⁹⁸ Towards the end of the colonial period, senior officers were being provided with unprecedented opportunities abroad. For example, Assistant Superintendent of Prisons Leonard Kigonya was sent to the Prison Staff College at Wakefield Prison in Yorkshire to attend a course in prison administration in 1960, in which the College staff reportedly singled him out as ‘the best of the 20 officers who attended the course’.⁹⁹

The Service also tried to improve officers’ working conditions in order to encourage higher quality recruits to join the Service. As outlined in the 1956 annual report, ‘The standard of the majority is low and there is little interest in making the Service a career...the number of experienced warders is small, the staff is continually changing, and recruitment is continuous’.¹⁰⁰ The Service’s desire to reverse this trend was evident in a recruitment pamphlet published that same year. It framed prisons work as an ‘interesting and attractive career’, for those who are ‘fit and of exemplary character’.¹⁰¹ All recruits were expected to have a minimum of seven years of primary schooling, but they would be provided with literary allowances to improve their English language or Kiswahili skills if needed.¹⁰² The ‘free living quarters’ and ‘paid leave’ were

⁹³ RCS, *Annual Report 1955*, 6.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 6.

⁹⁵ RCS, *Annual Report 1957*, 2.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 2.

⁹⁷ RCS, *Annual Report 1959*, 4.

⁹⁸ UNA Library, *Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders 1960*, 4.

⁹⁹ Ibid; UKNA CO 822/2725, O.V. Garratt, ‘Tour of Uganda’, (London: Colonial Office, 1960), 4.

¹⁰⁰ RCS, *Annual Report 1956*, 6.

¹⁰¹ Kabarole District Archives (KRDA) Judicial (JUD) 44:1, ‘Uganda Prisons Service’, 1956.

¹⁰² Ibid.

also advertised as key benefits of a career in prison administration.¹⁰³ It was hoped that these various perks would make the Service as a much more attractive place of work for young Ugandans.

Assessing the Late Colonial Period

Although it is clear that official attitudes to prisons changed in the late colonial years, the practical impact of these reforms is more difficult to assess. Certainly, concrete changes were made to the Service's structure and its personnel, such as the introduction of farms and the creation of senior ranks for Ugandan officers. However, these changes were undercut by the volatile politics of the late colonial period, which led to crippling overcrowding and also disciplinary issues in various prison sites. As was the case across much of the continent, Ugandans increasingly agitated for better political representation and economic opportunity in the late colonial years. While the anti-colonial disturbances had 'complex and confused roots', and did not coalesce into a forceful nationalist movement, they nonetheless provoked considerable chaos and concern for Protectorate officials.¹⁰⁴ The first major incident occurred in January 1945.¹⁰⁵ A general strike unfolded throughout the country, motivated by a range of issues including the payment of war bonuses, low wages, and the frustration of certain groups in Buganda towards the elite classes.¹⁰⁶ Violent demonstrations occurred in multiple regions, involving the sabotage of transport infrastructure, attacks on shops, and assaults on Asian businessmen and the police.¹⁰⁷ In response, the government brought in the KAR to support the police, arrested several hundred people, detained trade union officials, and deported several of the key leaders of the strike.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ D. Anthony Low and R. Cranford Pratt, *Buganda and British Overrule 1900-1955. Two Studies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 281.

¹⁰⁵ See: Gardner Thompson, 'Colonialism in Crisis: The Uganda Disturbances of 1945', *African Affairs* 91 (1992): 605-624.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 605-624.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 606.

¹⁰⁸ Phraes Mukasa Mutibwa, *A History of Uganda: The first 100 years, 1894-1995* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2016), 123; Thompson, 'Colonialism in Crisis', 610.

In April of 1949, mass violence broke out in Buganda Province.¹⁰⁹ As Thompson writes, there were ‘strikes, intimidation, riots, looting, hijacking of vehicles, violence against persons and property, and illegal gatherings of crowds of up to 8000 people’.¹¹⁰ In response, the government declared Buganda a ‘disturbed area’, the KAR was called in again; 8 Ugandans were killed, and 2000 arrested.¹¹¹ As Andrew Byerley argues, this violence revealed the frustration towards chiefs, ‘whom were perceived as turncoat agents working on behalf of the colonial authority and for their own financial gain’.¹¹²

Turmoil arose again in the years just before independence. In 1959, the Uganda National Movement launched a boycott of non-African products in an attempt to force the Asian community of Uganda to ‘declare’ their allegiance to either Ugandans or the British.¹¹³ The police and the KAR were deployed to quell the riots, over 200 agitators were arrested, and several ringleaders were deported.¹¹⁴ The final crisis came in 1960. Major riots erupted in Bukedi District in Eastern Uganda, sparked by the ‘arbitrary and inequable’ tax assessment made by the chiefs.¹¹⁵ Rioters attacked government property and personnel.¹¹⁶ In total, 12 people were killed, over 1,200 arrested, and significant damage was done to government property.¹¹⁷

This wave of instability had a profound impact on the Service. The Protectorate authorities were dealing with mass political resistance on an unprecedented scale, provoking swift disciplinary action and an upsurge in the prison population. Strikers and rioters were put behind bars, with thousands squeezed into an already overstretched Service. Consequently, strikes and other disciplinary issues became more common

¹⁰⁹ Thompson, ‘Governing Uganda’, 306.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 306.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 306.

¹¹² Byerley, *Becoming Jinja*, 219.

¹¹³ ‘The plan of campaign: the ‘Tree of Liberty’ meeting, 28 February 1959’, in *The Mind of Buganda: Documents of the Modern History of an African Kingdom*, ed. D.A. Low (London: Heinemann, 1971), 195.

¹¹⁴ HC Deb ‘Uganda (Disturbances)’ 07 July 1959 vol 608 cc1315-26, accessed 27 October 2016, <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1959/jul/07/uganda-disturbances>.

¹¹⁵ Michael J. Macoun, *Wrong Place, Right Time: Policing the End of Empire* (London: Radcliffe Press, 1996), 44.

¹¹⁶ ‘400 arrests for burning houses in Uganda’, 21 January 1960, *The Guardian*, 11.

¹¹⁷ ‘Disturbed Area again: More Arson in Uganda’, *The Guardian*, 4 March 1960, 1.

within prisons.¹¹⁸ A sense of crisis was apparent in 1956, when the annual admissions of prisoners to the Service surpassed 10,000 for the first time.¹¹⁹ Officials expressed deep concerns about the ramifications of this dramatic increase in population at Luzira in particular:

The overcrowding at the Central Prison, Luzira, was such that the conditions were cause for grave anxiety....There was ever present a real danger of a breakdown of discipline caused by the events during the year, the overcrowding and lack of suitable occupation of prisoners.¹²⁰

A commission was appointed to investigate the issues at Luzira. Its findings were worrying, and indicated that the reforms of the late colonial period had been stymied. There was a severe shortage of trained staff, which had led to European and Asian prisoners assuming staff roles.¹²¹ There was evidence of considerable anarchy in Luzira, including 'extensive trafficking in food, cigarettes, alcohol, and unauthorized correspondence', and it was clear that prisoners 'had no difficulty bribing warders'.¹²² The senior officers were heavily criticized, and both the Commissioner of Prisons and the Deputy Commissioner lost their jobs as a result.¹²³

Overcrowding did not abate in the following years. There were 11,439 prisoners admitted in 1957, 14,227 in 1958, and 16,677 in 1959.¹²⁴ In the aftermath of the Bukedi riots, a total of 19,480 people were incarcerated in UPS institutions.¹²⁵ This resulted in 'serious embarrassment' for the Service, and greatly hindered its operations.¹²⁶ The impact of the political unrest on the Service was well-summarized by O.V. Garratt, a former Commissioner of Prisons in Uganda who later became the 'Adviser on Prison Administration' for the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Garratt reflected the cadre of professional prison staff who circulated throughout the empire: he was the

¹¹⁸ See for example: RCS.L.45.Z61, *Statement by the Protectorate Government on incidents in the Upper Prison, Luzira, in July and August, 1960* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1960).

¹¹⁹ RCS, *Annual Report 1956*, 4.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹²¹ UKNA CO 822/1686, 'Colonial Office, Advisory Committee on the Treatment of Offenders in the Colonies, Background Note on the Uganda Prisons', September 1959.

¹²² 'Prison laxity disclosed in Uganda', *The Times*, 21 August 1956, 7.

¹²³ 'Prison laxity disclosed in Uganda', *The Times*, 7.

¹²⁴ UNA Library, *Annual Report 1960*, 7.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

Commissioner of Prisons in the Gold Coast and Malaya prior to taking up his position in Uganda.¹²⁷ He returned to Uganda in 1960 to conduct a review of the Service, one of many colonial inspections that he conducted in the early 1960s.¹²⁸ In his report, Garratt acknowledged the acute difficulties that prison officials had faced in the late colonial years, especially as the Bukedi riots had ‘resulted in a kind of chain reaction’ throughout the Service.¹²⁹ As a result, the prison system was ‘bogged down’, and Garratt warned colonial officials of the ‘danger of a complete breakdown of the classification, segregation, and training system’.¹³⁰

However, Garratt also had many encouraging comments. He praised the ‘sound’ foundation of the Service, and said that it had been able to meet the demands made upon it by the political disturbances.¹³¹ He applauded the Prisons Standing Orders, noting that they ‘set out in unequivocal terms the rules for the proper treatment of prisoners and the administration of prisons’.¹³² Like Paterson, Garratt also remarked on the professionalization of the staff, commenting on their improved ‘turn out, discipline and efficiency’.¹³³ In his view, this could be largely attributed to the ‘influence of training and the higher standard of education’ among prison recruits.¹³⁴ He was particularly pleased by the rapid pace of Africanisation, noting that Ugandans accounted for nearly half of all Assistant Superintendents, which was both a ‘cause for considerable satisfaction’ and ‘an example to other territories’.¹³⁵ In light of these changes, Garratt declared that Uganda’s prison policies now conformed to ‘modern ideas’.¹³⁶

¹²⁷ Braatz, ‘Governing Difference’, 259; ‘Central Chancery of the orders of Knighthood’, *Supplement to the London Gazette* No. 40787, 3123, 31 May, 1956, accessed 8 June 2017, <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/40787/supplement/3123/data.pdf>.

¹²⁸ For some examples, see: UKNA CO 1031/3794, ‘Visit by Mr. O.V. Garratt, Colonial Office Adviser on prison administration’, 1960; UKNA CO 1031/3793, ‘Visit to British Guiana by Mr. O.V. Garratt, Colonial Office Adviser on Prison Administration’, 1960-1961; UKNA CO 822/2724, ‘Report by Mr. Garratt, Prisons Adviser, on visit to Tanganyika and matters arising’, 1960-1961; UKNA CO822/2722, ‘Report by Mr. Garratt, Prisons adviser, on visit to Kenya’, 1960-1961; UKNA CO 822/2726, ‘Report by Mr. Garratt, Prisons Adviser, on visit to Zanzibar’, 1960-1961.

¹²⁹ UKNA, Garratt, ‘Tour of Uganda’, 6.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹³¹ UKNA, Garratt, ‘Tour of Uganda’, 1.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 3.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

Conclusion

As Garratt's report indicates, the Service changed significantly over the course of the late colonial period. Following the Second World War, the desire to create a modern prison service was actively pursued, with international penal concepts and practices applied in Uganda with a new intensity. From the development of institutions for juvenile offenders to the introduction of probation, the Service asserted its desire to develop along British lines. These reforms were also shaped by colonial development imperatives, evident in the introduction of prison farms and expansion of prison industries. Uganda had also become a regional leader in the 'Africanisation' and professionalization of its prison personnel. Although these reforms were tested by the political turmoil of the late colonial period, they nevertheless marked a shift in approach and policy, one that would carry over after independence.

CHAPTER 3

‘...A DEVELOPING COUNTRY SUCH AS OURS’: THE PRISONS SERVICE AND THE POST-COLONIAL STATE

On the morning of the 28 January 1971, thousands of Ugandans made their way to Kololo Airstrip in Kampala. Three days earlier, Idi Amin had come to power in a military coup. As one of his first acts as president, Amin released fifty-five political prisoners incarcerated by Obote.¹ The ceremony, held at the airstrip, was an opportunity to celebrate this release and also a chance for Amin to set the tone for his new presidency. Reflecting on the significance of the prisoners’ amnesty, one journalist writing in the *Uganda Argus* commented:

One of the most touching gestures since the takeover on Monday was the release of a number of prisoners who have been detained for political or unspecified reasons. Many of the thousands who gathered at the site where Uganda got her independence over eight years ago must have seen the touching deed as a symbol of a new era of freedom...The occasion rhymed well with the words Major-General Idi Amin addressed to the jubilant people he was setting free: “In Uganda there is no room for hatred and victimisation; our aim must be love, brotherhood and unity”.²

Drawing mainly on official newspapers, this chapter examines how the Obote and Amin governments framed penal modernity and harnessed the Service’s imaginative capital to serve their own political agendas. In part, the emphasis on newspapers is due to the lack of official documents on the prison in this period. In contrast to the colonial years, very few governmental reports or inquiries into the Prisons Service are available. However, through examining the press as well as documents such as the Service’s annual reports, this chapter illuminates the continuities and ruptures regarding ideas of penal modernity between the late colonial state and the Obote and Amin regimes. Most significantly, the Service’s role as a source of labour and a producer of industrial and

¹ ‘The Day of Freedom: Crowds cheer release of detainees’, *Uganda Argus*, 29 January 1971, 1.

² ‘Viewpoint’, *Uganda Argus*, 29 January 1971, 2.

agricultural products was maintained. Both leaders also linked the Service to their wider visions of progress. Obote in particular promoted the incorporation of criminological perspectives into prison policy and the Service's engagement in transnational professional networks, while Amin used the Service to try and advance particular policy agendas and assert his regime's humanity and legitimacy. By tracing how political elites in Uganda portrayed the Service and used its imaginative capital, we can better understand the development of UPS in this period and its place in the 'infrastructure of official discourse'.³

Imagining the Post-Colonial Prison

In order to understand how Obote and Amin represented the role of the Prisons Service, it is important to consider how prisons were being conceived across newly independent nations in Africa and elsewhere in the Global South following decolonization. While understandings of justice, law, and social order in post-colonial settings are increasingly being interrogated, the prison has been relatively understudied, instead fitting into wider narratives of state failure.⁴ Thus, we know very little about how African politicians thought about prisons, prison administrations, and penal modernity.

While the lack of literature on post-colonial prisons hinders our understanding of penal cultures in this period, it is clear that political elites closely associated the prison with visions of modernity. This took different forms across former colonies, from more abstract appeals to efforts to incorporate the prison into economic modernization plans. In her work on Guinea, Mairi MacDonald illuminates how the treatment of political prisoners was tied to the Touré regime's 'self-characterization' as a modern state, with representations of prisoners occupying an important position in the regime's 'discursive field'.⁵ While deploying some of the penal approaches introduced during the colonial period, Touré used political imprisonment to draw the boundaries of citizenship in the

³ Peterson and Taylor, 'Rethinking the State', 59.

⁴ See for example John L. Comoroff and Jean Comoroff, 'An introduction', in *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*, eds. John L. Comoroff and Jean Comoroff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

⁵ MacDonald, 'Colonial Models, Postcolonial Innovation', 910.

national community. As MacDonald argues, 'By denying their dignity, and thereby their membership of the independent nation of Guinea, Touré may have been signaling that his political prisoners were also excluded from the ambit of the formalities of the modern state, including its civil rights'.⁶ Furthermore, the regime's harsh treatment of political prisoners – which included forcing them to read fabricated confessions over the radio and torturing them using electrical equipment – was presented as an embrace of 'newly available technologies', thereby symbolizing the state's determination to 'modernize from the baseline established by the French'.⁷ Although she focuses on the violence of the post-colonial state, MacDonald argues that the government 'chose the instruments of their repression carefully, calculating how they would resonate among Guineans as signs of power exercised within the realm of what a modern state might conceivably deploy'.⁸

The association between the prison and modernity was also expressed in relation to economic development. Partly a holdover of late colonial policies and partly a product of post-colonial modernization agendas, the link between prison labour, rehabilitation, and modernization continued to be promoted by prison administrators. For example, Nigeria's third 'national development plan', launched in 1975, emphasized the role of prison farms to 'permit easier and smoother reintegration of prisoners on their discharge'.⁹ O.K. Rugimbana – the first Tanzanian Commissioner of Prisons – argued that the independent prison administration had to 'do some rethinking on its policies to fit in with the dynamic upsurge and aspirations of the nation', and as part of this needed to 'deploy every available convicted prisoner' in 'nation-building and revenue-earning' work.¹⁰ As David Williams argues, TANU political elites embraced the role of the prison in agricultural production, even mentioning prison farms in the Iringa Declaration of 1973, where it was noted that prison farms could help train 'leaders and

⁶ MacDonald, 'Colonial Models, Postcolonial Innovation', 911.

⁷ Ibid., 911.

⁸ Ibid., 911-912.

⁹ Adewale R. Rotimi, 'Prison Administration in Modern Nigeria', *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice* 6:1 (1982): 80.

¹⁰ David Williams, 'The Role of Prisons in Tanzania: An Historical Perspective', *Crime and Social Justice* 13 (1980): 32.

peasants in the villages' in terms of modern agricultural approaches.¹¹ In post-colonial Sudan, prison labour was linked to the economy through the participation of prisoners in major national development schemes and 'prison shows' that displayed industrial products produced by prisoners.¹² However, it had a darker side, as the state began to 'criminalize' urban migrants and use their labour on mechanized farming developments.¹³ While the lack of research into post-colonial prisons hinders our knowledge of the various manifestations of this phenomenon, it is clear that many independent nations tied their version of penal modernity to economic development.

The Obote I Years

The national Uganda Prisons Service was established with the Prisons Act of 1964, which replaced all previous prison ordinances.¹⁴ Like the Police Force, it was under the authority of the newly established Ministry of Internal Affairs, and was overseen by the Public Service Commission.¹⁵ Overall, its structure was similar to the late colonial period with the exception of its personnel, as the vast majority of the expatriate prison staff had returned to Britain. The most significant change came in July of 1964, when the long-serving Commissioner of Prisons, Mr. N.A. Cameron, left UPS and was replaced by Fabian Okwaare, the first Ugandan to hold the position.¹⁶

The Service entered the national stage on 9 October 1962, the day of independence. As part of the celebrations, all political prisoners were released, including those who had been sentenced in the Bukedi riots and the trade boycotts.¹⁷ A total of 3,477 prisoners were granted their freedom – the first of many amnesties in the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁸ Additionally, the majority of criminal prisoners were also given significant

¹¹ Ibid., 32.

¹² Berridge, 'The frailties of prisons', 386-388.

¹³ Ibid., 388.

¹⁴ PTSL, *The Prisons Act, Chapter 313, Revised Edition, 1964* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1964), 4994.

¹⁵ Ibid., 4994.

¹⁶ Makerere University Africana Collection (MUAC) GEAU I64 (058) 1, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report, 1964* (Uganda, Government Printer).

¹⁷ MUAC GEAU I64 (058) 1, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report, 1962* (Uganda, Government Printer).

¹⁸ Ibid.

remissions on their sentences.¹⁹ Commenting on the amnesty, Obote drew on discourses of nation-building:

I very much hope that this generosity on the part of the new Government will encourage prisoners when released to be of good behavior and to help the Government and the people of the new Uganda. When prisoners are released they should work hard to assist in the maintenance of law and order, without which our country will not go forward.²⁰

Throughout the Obote years, such messages of nationalism and citizenship were linked to the prison's rehabilitative approach and its professionalism. In September 1963, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Mr. Felix Onama, attended the passing-out ceremony of prison recruits. In his speech to the new recruits, Onama proclaimed, 'The days of prison officers being simply guards or "turn-keys" are over'.²¹ Instead, prisons personnel were 'expected to guide and encourage the prisoners, and by personal example lead them to respect authority and learn the pleasure and pride to be gained from their own efforts', thereby ensuring that prisoners were able to 'become better citizens on their release'.²² Obote delivered a similar message at another passing-out ceremony a year later. Addressing a group of over one hundred new officers, the prime minister spoke about the value of their work, commenting that their career was not only 'exciting' but also 'worthwhile', as they were 'assisting not only in the rehabilitation of prisoners, but also your Government and country in halting the advance of crime'.²³

Along with promoting the goal of rehabilitation, Obote's government also emphasized the significance of the Service's contribution to Uganda's economy. During the 1960s, the Service built on the colonial policy of prison industrial and agricultural production. In 1965 there were a total of twenty-three prison farms covering an area of 5,000 acres.²⁴ By 1969, the number of farms had not expanded significantly, but the total

¹⁹ "Act of grace" for Independence: Prisoners will get remission', *Uganda Argus*, 6 October, 1962, 1.

²⁰ "Act of grace" for Independence: Prisoners will get remission', *Uganda Argus*, 1.

²¹ '108 New Prison Officers', *Uganda Argus*, 30 September 1963, 4.

²² *Ibid.*, 4.

²³ 'Dr. Obote inspects cadets, Premier defies rain at prisons parade', *Uganda Argus*, 14 September 1964, 3.

²⁴ PTSL, 'The Minutes of the First Conference of the Technical Staff of the Uganda Prisons Department, Held at the Senior Prison Officers Mess, Murchison Bay, Kampala, from the 1st to the 6th October, 1965, on Concepts of Prison Labour'.

acreage had risen to 70,000— a remarkable fourteen-fold increase.²⁵ These were divided into rural farms, urban farms, and pilot schemes in which more intensive farming methods were tested.²⁶ Cash crops and food crops were grown – including cotton, tobacco, sugar cane, millet, maize, and sorghum – and livestock, poultry, and fish were also raised.²⁷ It should be noted that although prison farms certainly did exist in some Western nations, they were generally a much more peripheral part of penal systems, and were largely phased out over the first half of the twentieth century.²⁸

Industrial production was also a key priority during the 1960s. By 1966, there were forty industrial workshops within the Uganda Prisons Service, in which prisoners were trained in activities such as tailoring, carpentry, printing, and book-binding.²⁹ Tailoring was the most significant industry, as it made up eighty percent of the total output by 1969.³⁰ Products made in the prison workshops were sold to various government ministries and private firms, and also on the open market. Most of the work came from government contracts, particularly from the Uganda Police, various ministries, the army, and local government authorities.³¹ Prisoners were also employed in building works on prison sites and in other government ministries, and could earn trade test certificates.³² Although the statistics are somewhat inconsistent in this period, in 1969, the Service reported revenues of 4,058,907 shillings from prison industries and 2,266,653 shillings from farms.³³

²⁵ MUAC GEAU I 64 (058) 1, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year 1969* (Uganda, Government Printer).

²⁶ MUAC GEAU I 64 (058) 1, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year 1965* (Uganda, Government Printer).

²⁷ MUAC GEAU I 64 (058) 1, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year 1967* (Uganda, Government Printer).

²⁸ See for example: John A. Conley, 'Prisons, Production, and Profit: Reconsidering the Importance of Prison Industries', *Journal of Social History* 14:2 (1980): 257-275; Philip Goodman and Meghan Dawe, 'Prisoners, Cows and Abattoirs: The Closing of Canada's Prison Farms as a Political Penal Drama', *British Journal of Criminology* 56 (2016): 793-812; Jane Zimmerman, 'The Penal Reform Movement in the South During the Progressive Era, 1890-1917', *The Journal of Southern History* 17:4 (1951): 462-492.

²⁹ MUAC GEAU I 64 (058) 1, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year 1966* (Uganda, Government Printer).

³⁰ MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report, 1969*.

³¹ Ibid; MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report, 1965*.

³² MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report, 1965*.

³³ MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report, 1969*.

Obote and his ministers actively encouraged the Service's economic role. As Basil Bataringaya, Obote's second Minister of Internal Affairs, remarked in a speech to prison staff in 1965: '...in a developing country such as ours we should aim both at the production of food-stuffs for inmates, revenue to the Government and the training on the job for inmates' social rehabilitation on discharge'.³⁴ Obote also promoted this view. Speaking to a conference of senior prison officers later that year, he underscored the need to integrate 'the institutional treatment of prisoners' with the 'economy of the country'.³⁵ Prisons, he remarked, 'represented a considerable labour force' that should be used to produce 'revenue and food to offset the costs of maintaining the prisons'.³⁶ The goal was to 'train prisoners in the modern methods of agriculture so that after discharge they could to return to their homes and earn an honest living'.³⁷ This meant working in rural agriculture, not 'running about in urban areas and creating artificial unemployment' where one could face 'the danger of lapsing into a life of crime'.³⁸ While these initiatives were framed as part of Uganda's modernization, they were also meant as tools of social control that would encourage criminals to return to a rural lifestyle. However, a possible shift in the government's approach was apparent in a speech delivered by Bataringaya in 1970 to a group of senior prison officers. While he acknowledged that Uganda was 'primarily a country relying on the economy of agriculture', he suggested that the Service should also contribute to the country's industrialization.³⁹ 'The economy of any country in the world cannot depend on any one single activity and if you look around you will see that we are well aware of this', he remarked.⁴⁰ 'The prisoners – especially the urbanized prisoner – must be trained to take his place within the changing industrial face of Uganda....modern manufacturing techniques must be taught and he must be conditioned to the discipline and monotony of modern industry'.⁴¹

³⁴ PTSL, 'The Minutes of the First Conference of the Technical Staff'.

³⁵ 'Four-point plan for the prisons: Premier opens conference', *Uganda Argus*, 5 December 1965, 5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁹ 'Farms, industry backbone of prison service', *Uganda Argus*, 6 April 1970, 3.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

The government was eager to showcase the Service's industrial and agricultural output on a national and international stage. The Service regularly participated in district shows around the country, in which participants displayed their agricultural products and industrial crafts in competitions. In January 1967, the Service hosted its own show at the Murchison Bay prison grounds. According to the annual prisons report for that year, the show enabled attendees to view the 'range, quality, and achievements' of this branch of the Service.⁴² Obote gave a speech at the show's opening, signifying its importance within official circles. That same year, delegates of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Congress conference – which was hosted in Kampala – were invited to visit Patiko Prison Farm, and were reported to be 'very impressed at the excellent condition of the mixed farm and the obvious training which it afforded to the inmates'.⁴³ All delegates received gifts that had been manufactured in prisons workshops, and the flags used to decorate Kampala during the conference had also been made in prisons.⁴⁴

Obote's promotion of the Service's industrial and agricultural capacity was in keeping with his wider approach to economic development. Adopting a 'statist' approach, he emphasized an interventionist role for the government and promoted the intensification of local production, leading to the nationalization of certain sectors of the economy.⁴⁵ Such trends were encapsulated in his 'move to the left' and the declaration of the Common Man's Charter in 1969.⁴⁶ In particular, Obote celebrated the importance of agriculture as a mainstay of Uganda's development, with a move away from cash crops produced for export abroad.⁴⁷ Instead, he called for greater research into 'peasant farming technologies and the use of labour'.⁴⁸ This shift was reflected in the Service: while prison labour had been used extensively in the growth of cotton in

⁴² MUAC GEAU I 64 (058) 1, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year 1967* (Uganda: Government Printer).

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 235.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 235.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 234.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 235.

the late colonial period, there seemed to be a gradual shift to food crops in the 1960s, as well as increasing experimentation with farming techniques at UPS institutions.

The Obote regime also espoused the adoption of academic expertise within the Service. This was particularly evident at a conference for technical staff within UPS, held in 1965. Opening the event, Bataringaya remarked, 'This Conference is an indication of the importance we attach to the role you can play in the battle against repetition of crime', he remarked.⁴⁹ 'The old theories that criminality was heredity, and the Lombroisan doctrine that criminals have certain physical features, could not stand the test of a scientific age and have therefore been discarded...the trend now is to regard and treat a human being and criminality as two separate things'.⁵⁰ A similar tone was adopted as the 'Criminological and Penological Conference of Senior Uniformed Prisons Officers', held that same year.⁵¹ In his opening address, Obote noted how the 'role of the prison officer had changed as the concept of prison and imprisonment had changed'.⁵² He urged UPS to follow the example set by 'advanced countries' in their approach to crime prevention, which was not only tackled by 'legislators, law enforcement officers and the judiciary', but also by 'experts in such disciplines as sociology, anthropology, psychology'.⁵³ As a scholar who was widely travelled, it was not surprising that Obote promoted this more cosmopolitan outlook.

Thus, the Obote regime's vision of the Prisons Service combined transnational discourses and methods with his state's vision of modernity and development. The government consciously framed the prison's mission within a wider discourse of citizenship, tying its rehabilitative aims to goals of creating a 'better' Ugandan public. Obote also celebrated the expansion of technical and academic expertise within the Service, promoting this as part of its embrace of modernity along transnational lines. Yet, while the government encouraged the Service to adopt many of the philosophies of 'advanced' countries, it also actively promoted prison farms and industries, and insisted

⁴⁹ PTSL 'The Minutes of the First Conference of the Technical Staff of the Uganda Prisons Department'.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report 1965*.

⁵² 'Four-point plan for the prisons', *Uganda Argus*.

⁵³ Ibid., 5.

that prisoners were a ‘considerable labour force’ that could be put to work for the nation.⁵⁴

The Amin Years

Although Amin’s presidency brought many changes in terms of the state’s punitive policies, he still used the Service to enhance his regime’s image. In comparison to Obote, Amin focused less on the technical and academic aspects of prison work. However, he still explicitly emphasized the modernity, morality, and professionalism of the Service, while also promoting its economic role and tying it directly to his wider policies. This is especially clear in press coverage of Amin’s official visits to the Service or ceremonies related to UPS, which provided him with a public platform in which to communicate his vision of the Service and, by extension, his government.

During his first year in power, prisoner amnesties were an important aspect of Amin’s ‘discursive field’. Between 1971-1972, there were at least six ceremonies relating to prisoner amnesties. They took a variety of forms – including the release of individual prisoners, group amnesties, and generalized celebrations – and occurred in a range of venues, from sports stadiums to places of worship. Amin used these ceremonies to distance himself from Obote and assert the humanity of his regime. For example, at a ceremony honouring the release of Sir William Wilberforce Nadiope, the former *Kyabazinga* of Busoga who had been incarcerated by Obote, Amin proclaimed: ‘Action in releasing prisoners should not be regarded as a way to condone crime, but as an indication of the spirit of love, brotherhood, forgiveness and respect’.⁵⁵ He demanded that ‘old quarrels and old enmities must die with the Old Republic’ and urged people to work together for the ‘benefit of our beloved Uganda’.⁵⁶ Similarly, at a ceremony granting amnesties to prisoners to mark the first anniversary of the coup, Amin advised

⁵⁴ Ibid., 5.

⁵⁵ ‘Spirit of Love and Forgiveness, Nadiope a Free Man’, *Uganda Argus*, 19 February 1971, 1.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1.

the prisoners to be of 'good character', and to try to rehabilitate themselves, 'as quickly as possible into the mainstream of society as useful citizens working hand in hand with others in the economic development of Uganda'.⁵⁷

While these ceremonies illustrate Amin's strategic use of prisoner amnesties as a symbol of hope and renewal, he also connected the wider work of the Service to his regime's messages of modernity. In his inaugural visit to Luzira in March 1971, Amin attended the graduation ceremony of 240 staff.⁵⁸ This was the first group of recruits to graduate under the government of the Second Republic, and thus it was imbued with special significance. In his speech, Amin emphasized two key themes: the modern orientation of the Prisons Service, and the importance of moral behaviour amongst the prison staff. He portrayed the staff as highly trained professionals, commenting on the 'comprehensive' and 'carefully designed' nature of their schooling, and remarking that their job required 'special training, skill, aptitude and ability'.⁵⁹ He also drew attention to the broader aims of their work, remarking that the staff were 'responsible not only for the secure confinement of inmates, but also for their reformation, correction and return to society as better citizens'.⁶⁰ Amin emphasized the need for moral behavior, which, as will be explored in later chapters, was a common refrain amongst prison officers, and had also been promoted by Obote.⁶¹ 'For your control to be effective', he remarked, 'it must derive not from your uniform but from your qualities as a man or woman and a leader'.⁶² He then provided officers with a specific set of practices to adopt in order to uphold their personal integrity, reflecting the wider 'politics of exhortation'⁶³ that characterized his regime's governing strategy:

Be firm but calm. Never shout. While you must be interested in your charges as people to be understood and helped, you must always be fair and consistent and avoid even the slightest appearance of favouritism. Never let misplaced sympathy lead you to do a prisoner any material favour; the

⁵⁷ Ibid., 1.

⁵⁸ 'Always be Fair and Consistent: Gen Amin at Luzira', *Uganda Argus*, 22 March 1971, 1.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 1.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 1.

⁶¹ Ibid., 1.

⁶² Ibid., 1.

⁶³ Peterson and Taylor, 'Rethinking the State', 70.

slightest deviation from absolute integrity may lead you on a slippery slope from which you cannot recover.⁶⁴

These sentiments were echoed in later visits to Luzira. In March 1972, another graduation ceremony was held for prison staff. Addressing the officers, the Minister of Internal Affairs praised the Service's high standards and diversity, remarking that the staff had been selected from different ethnic groups across the country. He stressed, the importance of upholding these standards, emphasizing that his Ministry wanted to 'maintain the country's reputation as one of those developing countries whose penal systems have been acknowledged internationally'.⁶⁵ Amin also delivered a speech, again preaching moral behavior and evoking a sense of a social contract. 'A tax-payer who has sponsored you on this course expects much from you', he commented.⁶⁶ 'And in return, you must give them assistance, show them a spirit of tolerance, courtesy and patience; be of good conduct and behaviour whenever you are dealing with them.'⁶⁷ He cautioned them against corruption and political motives, remarking that these were the 'worst diseases' in Uganda.⁶⁸

Like Obote, Amin also promoted the Service's role in enhancing Uganda's development. Prison farms and industries continued to be a significant priority within the Service. In part, this was a consequence of Amin's 'economic war'. As Decker has recently demonstrated, while this 'war' had devastating effects on the economy as a whole, it resulted in benefits for many individual Ugandans, especially women who acquired businesses that were forcibly abandoned.⁶⁹ Public service institutions received similar benefits. Over the course of the 1970s, the Prisons Service acquired numerous facilities beyond prison walls, including metal workshops in Jinja, carpentry sites in Kampala and Mbale, a meat packing factory in Soroti, tailoring workshops in Kampala,⁷⁰

⁶⁴ 'Always be Fair and Consistent', *Uganda Argus*.

⁶⁵ 'Role of Prisons', *Uganda Argus*, 11 March 1972, 1.

⁶⁶ 'The Public Must Feel Safe', *Uganda Argus*, 11 March 1972, 1.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁶⁹ Alicia C. Decker, 'An Accidental Liberation: Ugandan women on the front lines of Idi Amin's economic war', *Women's History Review* 22:6 (2013): 954-970.

⁷⁰ MUAC GEAU I62 (058) 1, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year 1973* (Uganda: Government Printer), 8.

and the Kampala-based D.L. Printing Press.⁷¹ Speaking at the opening ceremony for the Uganda Prisons Showroom – which had been created to showcase the products of prison industries to the public on a larger and more permanent scale – Amin celebrated this reallocation of businesses, insisting that he had ordered these transfers in order to ‘make the prison department more productive’.⁷²

In a similar vein, Amin emphasized the Service’s role in promoting his regime’s policy of ‘self-reliance’. A rather vague philosophy that had first been articulated during the 1960s, it centered on the transfer of economic capabilities from foreign to Ugandan hands. Amin explicitly asserted the Service’s role in pursuing these policies during official visits to UPS. This is well illustrated by Amin’s visit to the Prisons Training School Library in November 1974. Speaking to the staff, he urged them to acquire copies of his speeches on ‘self-reliance’, as well books that promote ‘Uganda’s culture, modern methods of farming and obedience to leaders’.⁷³ Amin also demanded a culling of books that ‘cannot help the advancement of Uganda’, including *Nyerere*, which outlined the *ujamaa* system in Tanzania.⁷⁴ Amin expressed his displeasure at the presence of the book, commenting that it had ‘no bearing at all on what Uganda was trying to pursue in order to achieve development’.⁷⁵ Such policy discourses found their way into the rhetoric of the Prisons Service. Speaking to prison officers in Mbale in June of 1974, George William Ssentamu, the Commissioner of Prisons, urged them to maintain the standards of industriousness at the prison, as this was the ‘best way to boost the national economy and fight the economic war effectively’.⁷⁶ Similarly, in the 1975 annual report, prisoners’ ‘vocational training’ was explicitly linked to the ‘national policy of self-reliance’.⁷⁷

As was the case with his predecessor, Amin was eager to showcase the Service’s economic and rehabilitative capacity to international observers. This was particularly

⁷¹ ‘Prison industries impress pressmen’, *Voice of Uganda*, 21 May 1973, 5.

⁷² ‘Prisoners must train to be useful’, *Voice of Uganda*, 16 January 1974, 1.

⁷³ ‘Gen Tours Prisons Training School’, *Voice of Uganda*, 9 November 1974, 1.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁷⁶ ‘Prisons boss in Mbale’, *Voice of Uganda*, 26 June 1974, 1.

⁷⁷ MUAC GEAU I62 (058) 1, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year 1975* (Uganda: Government Printer), 10.

evident in 1975, when Uganda hosted the annual summit of the Organization of African Unity. The summit was an important opportunity for Amin: facing mounting criticism at home and abroad for alleged human rights abuses, he was eager to show off his government's progress to his regional counterparts. One of the key features of the summit was the 'Uganda Today' show, an exhibition of industries, products, and services hosted in Jinja.⁷⁸ Within this large event, the display of the Prisons Service was singled out for being particularly 'impressive'.⁷⁹ In coverage of the show in the *Voice of Uganda*, it was noted that the Service's display 'proved to the visitors that it was not confining people in prisons in order to suffer, but to make them good citizens and self-reliant'.⁸⁰

Along with this focus on industrial and agricultural production, Amin also saw prisoners as a labour force that could be harnessed for other, non-economic purposes. This is most apparent in his campaign to 'keep Uganda clean'. Ostensibly an urban renewal policy, this campaign was used as a cover for more repressive agendas.⁸¹ However, it was presented to the public as an urgent collective effort to keep the country's cities clean and framed as an act of patriotism. City-dwellers were encouraged, and often forced, to participate in massive cleaning up operations, which were often declared in advance of impending visits from international delegations.⁸² Unsurprisingly, the prison was seen as a vital pool of captive labour that could assist in these operations. This was concretely spelled out in a letter from the District Commissioner of South Kigezi to the officer-in-charge of Ndorwa Government Prison in October 1978.⁸³ In anticipation of the arrival of foreign delegates who were attending the celebrations for Uganda's sixteenth anniversary of independence, Amin ordered that inmates clean up the White Horse Inn, Lake Bunyonyi Hotel, and the local hospital.⁸⁴ It was expected, the

⁷⁸ 'National show attracts hundreds at Jinja', *Voice of Uganda*, 29 July 1975, 4.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 4.

⁸⁰ 'National show attracts hundreds at Jinja', *Voice of Uganda*.

⁸¹ Alicia C. Decker, 'Idi Amin's Dirty War: Subversion, Sabotage, and the Battle to Keep Uganda Clean, 1971-1979', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 43:3 (2010): 490.

⁸² Ibid., 494.

⁸³ Kabale District Archive (KDA) Justice, Law, Order, Security (JLOS) 5, 'Kabale/Kigezi District - Prisons & Police', Joram Ndiwa-Ndikorra, District Commissioner South Kigezi to Officer-in-Charge Ndorwa Government Prison, 11 October 1978.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

district commissioner wrote, that this directive would be implemented ‘without delay’.⁸⁵ Furthermore, prison personnel were expected to uphold these standards of cleanliness at prisons. In a letter entitled ‘General Cleanliness at Hoima Central Prison’, the officer-in-charge warned the staff that inspections of the staff quarters and the prison would henceforth be happening ‘at any time’.⁸⁶ He demanded that the staff ‘put vigour on this procedure of cleanliness so that we may see that we are matching...the appeal which was made of [*sic*] to ‘KEEP UGANDA CL[E]AN’.⁸⁷

Amin’s discursive presentation of the Prisons Service was thus marked by both continuity and a degree of rupture from previous governments. Overall, he continued to promote the Service’s image as a professional, modern, and disciplined organization, while also echoing earlier messages about the Service’s capacity to contribute to Uganda’s economic development. However, Amin’s representations of the Service were shaped by his specific policies such as the economic war, ‘self-reliance’, and the ‘keep Uganda clean’ campaign.

Conclusion

By shifting our focus from the coercive to the discursive significance of the Prisons Service, we can better understand the meanings of penal modernity in the early post-colonial period. Perhaps surprisingly, there is a high degree of similarity between the late colonial state’s approach to the Service and the approach of the Obote and Amin governments. In their public rhetoric, both leaders broadly embraced the model of the prison developed prior to independence. Thus, while Obote and Amin drew on the Service’s imaginative capital to assert their legitimacy and promote a particular vision of progress, they did so by engaging with longstanding discourses and trends in penal policy. As will be discussed in Part II, this vision of the Service was not simply a top-

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Hoima District Archive (HDA) Arms and Ammunition (ARMS) 584:4, John B. Senturo, Officer in Charge Prisons to No.12 Sgt/Warder E. Kyomba, the In-Charge Central Prison Hoima, ‘General Cleanliness at Central Prison Hoima’, 21 January 1974.

⁸⁷ HDA, John B. Senturo, Officer in Charge Prisons to No.12 Sgt/Warder E. Kyomba, the In-Charge Central Prison Hoima.

down approach imposed by political elites, but was rather created in conjunction with, and given meaning by, prison officers.

PART II: THE POST-COLONIAL PRISON OFFICER

CHAPTER 4

LANDSCAPES OF LABOUR, LEISURE, AND THE NATION: LIVING AND WORKING AS A PRISON OFFICER

On the morning of 14 September 1964, Prime Minister Milton Obote visited the grounds of the Prisons Training School to witness a passing-out ceremony for the latest cohort of prison officers.¹ Despite the pouring rain, 138 officers paraded in front of him for inspection, marching with a precision honed over months of instruction. Arranging themselves into neat lines, they stood tall and motionless with rifles at their sides. Flanked on either side by senior officers, Obote walked past each recruit in turn. With his sleek suit, wristwatch, and elegant cane, the Prime Minister stood out amongst the sea of uniforms, marking his role as a civilian authority.

In Obote's estimation, it was the largest group of senior and junior officers to have passed out of the Prisons Training School, and was thus a historic occasion. Addressing the new officers, Obote implored them to hold themselves to the highest personal and professional standards as they embarked on their careers. Each of them, he continued, had been chosen after 'the most careful selection for character', standing out for their 'qualities of leadership, devotion to duty and a private life above criticism'.² He reminded the officers that 'character is greater than all the knowledge acquired through study', and urged them to master 'self-discipline' so that they could impart it to the prisoners.³ Through combining 'discipline with humanity', they could help ensure that the Service was both 'contented' and 'efficient'.⁴

The passing-out ceremony provided an important stage upon which the idealized version of a prison officer could be performed. The recruits and cadets, in their choreographed movements and appearance, sought to embody their transition from civilian to prison officer. Their uniforms, comportment, and carefully rehearsed parade evoked the key values that the Service sought to instill in its officers, such as

¹ 'Dr. Obote inspects cadets', *Uganda Argus*.

² *Ibid.*, 3.

³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

discipline, unity, and respect for authority. The senior staff stood by watchfully, carrying out their role as the arbiters of the Service's mores and values. The government officials who stood by watching also played a part, with their mere presence suggesting the gravity of the occasion. Finally, Obote, as the highest authority, sought to impart his version of a good prison officer, anchoring it on personal values and integrity.

This chapter introduces the figure of the post-colonial prison officer. Using personnel files, prison reports, newspapers, and oral histories, it traces officers' lives before they entered the Service, their motivations for joining, the process of recruitment and training, their working environment, and the dynamics between their professional and personal commitments. In some cases, reasonably comprehensive stories of individual officers are available, especially for those who agreed to be interviewed. In other instances, we have only snippets of their lives, such as a handful of letters in their personnel file, or a newspaper clipping advertising their promotion. Yet even in this fractured and partial source base, we can still begin to understand the lives of the prison officers who worked in post-colonial Uganda.

Life Before the Service

The men and women who worked in the Prisons Service in the 1960s and 1970s came from all corners of the country. A glimpse at the recruit warder application forms reveals a long list of locales from which officers hailed, from Semuliki in the far western region of the country, to Kisoro in the south, Arua in the north, and Teso to the East. Although we do not have comprehensive figures on the ethnicities of officers after independence, the Service's heterogeneity is apparent in the archival materials and interviews. For example, the senior officers whom I interviewed came from Gulu, Arua, Kabale, and Bushenyi, while those who began in the junior ranks were from Fort Portal, Kisoro, Tororo, Pallisa, and various communities within the Buganda region.

Many of the officers came from relatively well-off households that had benefited from the select opportunities available to Ugandans in the colonial period. Malcolm, a senior officer in the 1960s, was the son of a former *mwot adwong* – colonial county chief –

in Lango District.⁵ His father was evidently of high standing within the colonial governance apparatus, as he was awarded the Order of the British Empire in June 1955.⁶ Anne, an officer from Arua, had a father who was the head of a Church of Uganda primary school in the district.⁷ His position was noted on her application form, deemed to be a favourable asset as it showed that she came from a family of good standing. The families of Malcolm and Anne had risen through a rather exclusive educational system in early colonial Uganda, and likely had ambitious plans for their children.

Many senior prison officers attended elite missionary schools, which provided the top tier of educational institutions in colonial Uganda. Malcolm went to Gulu High School, originally set up by the CMS in 1914, and widely considered the premier secondary school in Northern Uganda at the time.⁸ With its high fees, this and other similar schools in the region was 'mostly limited to the sons and protégés of county chiefs'.⁹ He later enrolled in Busoga College, Mwiri, another elite school run by the CMS.¹⁰ We know much less about Theodore, another Busoga College graduate who applied to be a recruit warder in 1971.¹¹ Originally from Kigezi District, Theodore had done exceptionally well academically, attaining a high standing in Chemistry, Biology, and Physics, and receiving a Higher School Certificate, which was required to enter university.¹² In the view of his training officer, Theodore was 'rather weak physically', but 'quietly takes good decisions and always gets on very well with his fellow officers. If he continues with this kind of behavior, he may do well in the field'.¹³ The description

⁵ 'Prison officers promoted', *Uganda Argus*, 16 July 1965, 9; Tosh, *Clan Leaders and Colonial Chiefs*, 178-179.

⁶ 'Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood, St. James's Palace, S.W.1. 9th June, 1955', *Supplement to the London Gazette* No. 40497, 3 June 1953, 3283, accessed 12 February 2017, <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/40497/supplement/>.

⁷ Uganda Prisons Service Headquarters Archive (UPSA), Uganda Prisons Record of Conduct and Service of 'Anne', 'Uganda Prisons: Application Form for Recruit Warders', 21 February 1964.

⁸ Julius Ocungi, 'Gulu High School: Celebrating 100 years', *Daily Monitor*, 18 October 2014, accessed 1 February 2017, <http://www.monitor.co.ug/artsculture/Reviews/Gulu-High-School--Celebrating-100-years/691232-2489688-o5vw6fz/index.html>.

⁹ Tosh, *Clan Leaders and Colonial Chiefs in Lango*, 197.

¹⁰ 'Prison officers promoted', *Uganda Argus*.

¹¹ UPSA, Uganda Prisons Record of Conduct and Service of 'Theodore', 'Uganda Prisons: Application form for Recruit Warders', 2 August 1971.

¹² Ibid; J.C.S. Musazizi, *Planning and Development in Education: African Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2014), 194.

¹³ UPSA, 'Theodore', 'Board Report', 10 February 1972.

evokes the colonial administration's debates over whether or not the 'gentle upbringing' and 'qualities of refinement' that such colleges produced in their pupils would be suitable for prison work.¹⁴ In Theodore's case, these were seen as a source of strength rather than a limitation.

As already mentioned, the Service sought out recruits from King's College Budo, arguably the most prestigious secondary school in Uganda. Sepiriya Kisawuzi Masembe-Kabali, the founder of the *Kabaka Yekka* party, attended both Budo and Makerere before joining the Service.¹⁵ Although he retired shortly before independence, his trajectory is reflective of many post-colonial prison officers' educational paths. St. Mary's College, Kisubi was also a training ground for future prison staff. A male boarding school run by the White Fathers, it was founded in 1906.¹⁶ Leonard Kigonya, the second Ugandan to hold the position of Commissioner of Prisons, was a graduate of the college.¹⁷

Although women had fewer educational opportunities in this period, some female prisoner officers attended mission schools. Margaret, who joined the Service in 1957, had gone to a missionary school during her youth, although she did not specify which one.¹⁸ Anne attended St. Monica's Girls Junior Secondary School, also run by the CMS, and completed secondary school elsewhere in the region.¹⁹ In a reference letter supporting her application, Anne's former headmistress described her as a 'pleasant, friendly, cheerful girl', who was 'outstanding in English', thus making her a suitable candidate for UPS.²⁰ Officers such as Anne, Margaret, and their male counterparts were

¹⁴ PMK, *Report of the Public Services Salaries Commission, 1973-1974*, 29.

¹⁵ I.R. Hancock, 'Patriotism and Neo-Traditionalism in Buganda: The Kabaka Yekka ("The King Alone") Movement, 1961-1962', *Journal of African History* 11:3 (1970): 421.

¹⁶ Carol Summers, 'Young Buganda and Old Boys: Youth, Generational Transition, and Ideas of Leadership in Buganda, 1920-1949', *Africa Today* 51:3 (2005): 125.

¹⁷ 'Prison officers promoted', *Uganda Argus*.

¹⁸ Margaret, Personal Interview, 4 August 2016.

¹⁹ UPSA, 'Anne', Letter from Miss A.Morgan, Morara Senior School, 14 October 1963; Archives of the Church of Uganda Online, 'Schools/Institutions', accessed 9 June 2017, <http://primarysources.brillonline.com/browse/archives-of-the-church-of-uganda/educational-secretary-general/schoolsinstitutions>.

²⁰ Ibid.

thus steeped in the mores of British missionary education, which likely served them well as they entered into Service's disciplined environment.

In contrast, many junior officers had only received a primary school education, which lasted seven years.²¹ Grace was twenty years old when she joined the Service, having completed her primary education at a government school in Soroti.²² The same was true for Edward, a Mutoro, who joined the Service in 1974.²³ Both of these officers had completed seven years of primary schooling, which was intended to 'establish literacy, impart knowledge and skills, develop individual personality and produce useful citizens'.²⁴ Although they did not have the same opportunities as their colleagues who attended mission schools, they were nevertheless considered relatively educated, as fewer than sixty-five percent of children had the opportunity to attend school in this period, and many who attended primary school did not complete it.²⁵

In some cases, officers had pursued other careers prior to joining the Service. Luke, from Gulu, had attended university and worked as an assistant town clerk,²⁶ while Albert, from Busoga, was employed in a *ssaza* chief's office.²⁷ Isaac had attended nursing college, and went on to work in Mbarara Hospital prior to becoming a prison officer.²⁸ Geoffrey, a warder from Soroti, had served in the army, a path that was much more common in the early colonial years.²⁹ Others officers had pursued technical training, ultimately foregoing a career in trades or agriculture in favour of the Prisons Service.

²¹ Musaazi, *Planning and Development in Education*, 175.

²² UPSA, Uganda Prisons Record of Conduct and Service of 'Grace', 'Uganda Prisons: Application Form for Recruit Warders', 25 September 1974.

²³ UPSA, Uganda Prisons Record of Conduct and Service of 'Edward', 'Uganda Prisons: Application Form for Recruit Warders', 26 September 1974.

²⁴ National Commission for UNESCO, *Educational Development in 1971/72 in the Republic of Uganda* (Kampala: Ministry of Education, 1973), 7, accessed 4 February 2017, http://www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/Uganda/nr_mf_ug_1973_ef.pdf.

²⁵ UNESCO, *Educational Development in 1971/72*, 9.

²⁶ Interview with Luke, No.1.

²⁷ UPSA, Uganda Prisons Record of Conduct and Service of 'Albert', D.A. Ward to The Saza Chief, Busiki Busoga, 17 April 1954.

²⁸ Interview with Isaac.

²⁹ UPSA, Uganda Prisons Record of Conduct and Service of 'Geoffrey', 'Application for Transfer', 9 March 1966.

Derek, from Semuliki District, trained at one of Uganda's technical schools,³⁰ where one could receive a certificate in trades such as carpentry, joinery, and electrical installation.³¹

Education was thus a primary marker of prison officers in the early post-colonial period. While the degree of education varied, all staff had completed primary school, and many had attained significantly higher levels of education. This suggests that the Service was viewed as a reasonably respectable place of employment in the late colonial and early post-colonial years, as educated Ugandans – many of them the products of elite mission schools and coming from economically successful families – deliberately pursued it as a career option.

Joining the Service

Prison officers had a range of motivations for joining the Service. One of the most commonly cited reasons was the desire to wear a uniform. Reflecting back on his decision to enlist, an officer by the name of Martin commented, 'I saw those boys were very smart in their uniform, that is what attracted me most'.³² Isaac was similarly enamored with the professional dress: 'During my stint at Mbarara Hospital I admired the uniform of two in my friends in the Prisons Service', adding that they were 'very smart'.³³ Although this does not explain why officers chose prisons over other uniformed professions, it indicates that they desired to be part of a collective unit, and that the uniform was for them an important marker of professionalism.

Officers were also drawn to the sporting opportunities in the Service. Physical activity and competitive sport were highly valued within the Service's institutional culture. 'From when I was at school, I had an interest in Uganda Prisons Service, because they had sport by then', recalled Matthew, who joined as a warder in the late 1960s.³⁴ 'And being a youth and liking sport, it was my choice to go to Uganda Prisons'. The police had also sought to recruit him, but Matthew felt that the Prisons Service was

³⁰ UPSA, Uganda Prisons Record of Conduct and Service of 'Derek', 'Uganda Prisons: Application Form for Recruit Warders', 25 September 1974.

³¹ UNESCO, *Educational Development in 1971/72*, 32.

³² Martin, Personal Interview, 12 August 2016.

³³ Interview with Isaac.

³⁴ Matthew, Personal Interview, 19 May 2016.

a better place to pursue his athletic goals. In his view, the Service had been at the forefront of sporting development in the country: ‘since prison was created, it was a powerful strong sporting department, in almost — in all disciplines: boxing, athletics, football, basketball, netball, taekwondo. The first in the country it was in prisons’. Charles, who joined the Service in the late 1970s, was also drawn to the sporting culture. ‘I was interested because being a sportsman, I joined there as a footballer’, he explained.³⁵

Others framed their motivations as ideological or moral. ‘I wanted to protect some people’, remarked an officer by the name of Benjamin, who joined in the mid-1960s.³⁶ ‘And I liked the prison [staff] by then, when I used to see them, I was happy with them’. Isaac also linked moral considerations to his prison work. In his view, his varied professions – which included nursing, prison work, and a position in the Church of Uganda – were all linked to a ‘divine plan’ guiding him to work in ‘restoration’.³⁷ ‘As a nurse, you have to restore life health wise, and then I joined the Prisons Department, which is also restoring people from one side, the criminal side, to the side of the innocent and the safe people...So it is social, spiritual’. Although it may be difficult to disentangle these retired officers’ stated reasons for joining from their idealized perceptions of prison work, they nevertheless emphasize the moral aspect of their profession, which – whether in hindsight, at the time of joining, or both – was an important part of their professional identity.

Others saw the Service as offering a path to respectability. Patrick, who joined in the mid-1970s, dropped out of school in order to pursue his career. ‘I hoped that prisons could...bring me up’, he commented, noting that the Service had many ‘smart people’, and that it was ‘bringing up somebody very fast’, referring to the training process and potential for promotion.³⁸ His parents, however, were not pleased by this decision. ‘It was [a] good job to me, but my parents didn’t want, because I was still studying. I had reached O-level, they wanted me to continue, but I said no’, he

³⁵ Charles, Personal Interview, 12 August 2016.

³⁶ Benjamin, Personal Interview, 29 July 2016.

³⁷ Interview with Isaac.

³⁸ Patrick, Personal Interview, 28 July 2016.

explained. William, from Kisoro, needed a job to make ends meet, and felt that the Service offered a quick route to the professional class. 'First of all, the training itself was short. Secondly, the salary was attractive. Thirdly, I would have wished to join later, but then I was handcuffed with some financial [problems]', he explained, adding that he wanted 'a good job, to enable me to just, you know, keep on'.³⁹ Before joining the Service, he had left his hometown to try and find work in Kampala along with some former schoolmates, and managed to find temporary clerical work at Makerere. It was only enough, he said, to enable him to 'survive in Kampala', and thus he sought out a job at UPS. As in William's case, the financial benefits of a career in the Service were an important factor for many officers. In 1966, a recruit warder received a base salary of £192 per year, the CASPs received a minimum of £687 as their annual salary, while the senior superintendents received at least £1440.⁴⁰ This was particularly attractive given Uganda's economic situation at independence: in 1963, less than six percent of adults in Uganda were earning wages or salaries.⁴¹

Women's decision to join the Service was often tied to domestic considerations. For Elizabeth, a mother of six, the work provided much needed income. She had enlisted as a recruit wardress after undergoing considerable 'difficulties', explaining, 'I joined the service so as to enable me to care for my children since I am their mother & father as well'.⁴² For others, a career in prisons was an avenue to free themselves of marital commitments. 'Most of the women I found in the prison were not educated, but just tired of being married, so they joined to help', commented Margaret.⁴³ The Service would have been rather unique in this regard: in contrast to nursing or teaching, it allowed women to be posted far away from their home areas, thus escaping unwanted domestic situations.⁴⁴

³⁹ William, Personal Interview, 22 August 2016.

⁴⁰ UNA Library, *Choose Your Career: No. 1 Prison Service* (Ministry of Education, 1966), 22.

⁴¹ Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 234.

⁴² UPSA, Uganda Prisons Record of Conduct and Service of 'Elizabeth', 'Petition on the Irregular Conduct', 22 September 1975.

⁴³ Interview with Margaret.

⁴⁴ I would like to thank Nakanyike Musisi for drawing this point to my attention.

In most cases, officers had relatively positive reasons for joining the Service, whether they were attracted to the discipline, the uniform, or the salary. This is somewhat surprising, as the ‘coercive trades’ have often been looked down upon in other contexts or joined out of desperation.⁴⁵ For example, in his study of police officers in Ghana, Beek found that most officers joined as a last resort. They turned to policing due to pressing financial needs, and were often ashamed to tell their parents about their new line of work due to the ‘image of the corrupt police service’.⁴⁶ In contrast, only one interviewee suggested that he had joined the Service for negative reasons, having been disheartened after performing poorly on his school exams.⁴⁷ Perhaps this speaks to officers’ positive conceptions of the Service in hindsight, or it suggests the relatively favourable perceptions of it during the early post-colonial period. As Andreas Eckert writes regarding Tanzania, the 1950s and 1960s were in some ways a ‘golden age’ of public service, as it entailed a career with ‘training, social security and social prestige’.⁴⁸ A similar phenomenon was apparent in Uganda at this time. While some officers joined out of financial need, others actively chose to pursue a career in prisons, staking their ambitions on this government service. A sense of the enthusiasm some officers felt around this time is captured in a comment from Isaac:

My time as a young man in the Prisons Service was very ambitious. I thought we’d see [the] Prisons Department improving. We had the British who were here, would tell us about the British prisons and the life in prisons, and then I wondered why here cannot be the same?⁴⁹

Recruitment

After independence, recruitment became a much more formalized process. Positions were advertised in the press, on Radio Uganda, and through ‘recruitment

⁴⁵ Mark Leopold, *Inside West Nile: Violence, History & Representation on an African Frontier* (Oxford: James Currey, 2005), 70.

⁴⁶ Beek, *Producing Stateness*, 50-51.

⁴⁷ Simon, Personal Interview, 30 May 2016.

⁴⁸ Andreas Eckert, “‘We must run while other walk’: African Civil Servants, State Ideologies and Bureaucratic Practices in Tanzania, from the 1950s to the 1970s”, in *States at Work: Dynamics of African Bureaucracies*, eds. Thomas Bierschenk and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan (Boston: Brill, 2014), 217.

⁴⁹ Interview with Isaac.

safaris', which were first initiated in 1964.⁵⁰ Whereas District Commissioners and local prison officers had overseen recruitment during the colonial period, these safaris represented a more systematic, direct approach.⁵¹ The 'safaris' took place on at least an annual basis, and were carried out by senior officers, who travelled around the country to meet and interview potential recruits. Advance notice was sent from Prisons Headquarters to the senior officers around the country, encouraging them to 'give wide publicity' to the upcoming safari, and asking them to circulate the news to District Commissioners, local administrators, and chiefs.⁵² This strategy was adopted to make sure the Service reached the widest possible scope of applicants. As one such notice explained, 'Although there will be several announcements in Radio Uganda and the Press, this method alone is not considered sufficient enough for publicity, as in some cases applicants may be living in distant areas from the towns and may therefore have no access whatsoever to the newspapers or may have no radios'.⁵³ In trying to extend their reach to remote areas of the country, the Service was thus deliberately trying to recruit a diverse applicant pool.

The rhetoric and visual imagery used in the recruitment process provided an arena in which to communicate the values and vision of the Service. This is evident in a pamphlet entitled *Choose Your Career: The Prisons Service*, published by the Ministry of Education in 1966.⁵⁴ The pamphlet's contents informed potential recruits of the behavior needed for success, with phrases and words such as 'discipline is of paramount importance', 'industry and good conduct', 'robust', and 'character' interspersed throughout the text. A series of photographs was also included. In part, this was used to advertise the Service's modern approach, with images depicting industrial workshops and exhibitions. Others photographs focus specifically on prison officers, providing particularly stylized portrayals of the ideal employee. In one photo, male recruits stand at attention in their hostel, while a senior prison officer demonstrates the features of a

⁵⁰ MUAC GEAU I 64 (058) 1, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year 1964* (Uganda, Government Printer).

⁵¹ RCS, *Annual Report 1952*, 2.

⁵² KRDA JUD 2:1, A. Owor to All Senior Superintendents of Prisons, 8 July 1966.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ See: UNA Library, *Choose Your Career*.

properly made bed.⁵⁵ Another depicts a particularly muscular officer performing on a pommel horse as part of physical training.⁵⁶ A third shows the CASPs standing in neat lines, likely preparing for inspection.⁵⁷ A final photo focuses on female officers chatting in their canteen, thus locating them in a much more domesticated frame of reference.⁵⁸ The women sit in a bright room, enjoying a meal on a table laid with a fresh white tablecloth and a vase of flowers. In these striking and somewhat gendered images, the officers appear as disciplined members of a community of shared values.

Recruits and cadets were assessed in terms of their education and physical attributes. All new officers, regardless of rank, had to meet certain height requirements, with men reaching a minimum of five feet, eight inches and women a minimum of five feet, six inches.⁵⁹ They had to fall between the ages of twenty-three to thirty-five, have 'normal vision without spectacles', and be free of any criminal offences.⁶⁰ The only exceptions to these general requirements were candidates who had been discharged from UPS, the police, or the army with 'very good character', a remnant of the Service's entangled origins.⁶¹ Finally, only Ugandans were eligible for recruitment.⁶² This represented a shift from the colonial years, when non-citizens (mainly of British origin) could hold positions, and also reflected the government's emphasis on 'Ugandanisation'.

Officers could join one of the Service's two sections: civilian and uniformed.⁶³ Although these two broad divisions carried over from the colonial years, the number and type of positions within each section changed considerably after independence. The civilian staff included those who worked in farming and industrial instruction, building projects, clerical duties, and welfare programmes. These ranks were filled through the

⁵⁵ Ibid., 4.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 12.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 25.

⁵⁹ UNA Library, *Choose Your Career*, 3.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 3.

⁶¹ PTSL, 'Chapter 3: Appointments, Enlistments, Re-Engagements, Transfers and Discharges', The Uganda Government Prisons Standing Orders, Part I (The Republic of Uganda), 1. There is no date provided for this document, but it refers to the Public Service Commission Regulations of 1964, suggesting that it was produced in during the Obote years.

⁶² Ibid., 1.

⁶³ UNA Library, *Choose Your Career*, 1.

Public Service Commission, rather than internally.⁶⁴ The uniformed staff was divided into senior and junior ranks. As of 1966, there were nine junior ranks and seven senior ones.⁶⁵

Educational attainment was the primary criterion separating the uniformed entry ranks. Initially, recruit warders and wardresses had to have completed primary school, although many of them attained higher levels of education.⁶⁶ Cadet Principal Officers who joined the Service directly were required to have a Cambridge School Certificate or a General School Certificate,⁶⁷ meaning that they had completed secondary education.⁶⁸ However, long-serving officers who had an 'exemplary record of discipline and ability to command and control men' could be exempted from these requirements.⁶⁹ Cadet Assistant Superintendents were expected to have a minimum of Cambridge School Certificate, Grade I, although many came to the Service with university degrees.⁷⁰

Over the course of the 1960s, the quality and quantity of applications for the Service rose considerably. Whereas an average of just over 100 trainees were enrolled at the outset of 1963, by the end of 1964 the average number had risen to 300.⁷¹ As the 1966 Annual Report suggested, 'many of the well educated school leavers of today were keen and interested to take up the Prisons Service as a career'.⁷² In 1968, over 3000 applicants were interviewed for approximately 240 recruit warder posts, and there were 800 applications for 17 CASP positions.⁷³ Towards the end of the decade, nearly a quarter of the recruit warders had a Cambridge School Certificate, despite requiring only primary education to qualify for the position.⁷⁴ In 1969, individuals who held Higher Schools Certificates applied for the recruit warder position for the first time in the

⁶⁴ PTSL, 'Chapter 3', Prisons Standing Orders, 2.

⁶⁵ UNA Library, *Choose Your Career*, 1-2.

⁶⁶ MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report, 1965*.

⁶⁷ UNA Library, *Choose Your Career*, 7.

⁶⁸ Musaazi, *Planning and Development in Education*, 194.

⁶⁹ UNA Library, *Choose Your Career*, 7.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷¹ MUAC GEAU I 64 (058) 1, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year 1963* (Uganda, Government Printer); MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report 1964*.

⁷² MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report 1966*.

⁷³ MUAC GEAU I 64 (058) 1, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year 1968* (Uganda, Government Printer).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Service's history.⁷⁵ Thus, the combination of enhanced conditions and more vigorous recruitment contributed to an improvement in the quantity and quality of applicants, drastically changing the nature of the Service's personnel from the early colonial days.

Training

All recruits and cadets were required to complete a period of training before entering the Service. This was carried out at the Prisons Training School, located on the Murchison Bay Prison grounds. A senior officer was appointed to serve as the School's commandant, while other uniformed and civilian staff served as the lecturers. In some cases, outside lecturers would be brought in from Makerere or government departments.⁷⁶ During the course, recruits stayed in dormitory-style dwellings, with multiple single beds placed together in rows in a large room.⁷⁷ CASPs had their own hostel,⁷⁸ as did the female recruits.⁷⁹ Overall, the Training School could hold about 250 recruits and 40 training officers at one time.⁸⁰

Recruit warders and wardresses underwent the shortest period of training. In the early 1960s, they were trained for a period of six months.⁸¹ Recruits were taught the fundamentals of prison administration – including the rules, ordinances, and standing orders – first aid, Kiswahili, parade, the proper care of arms, and musketry.⁸² In addition, they were provided with a range of activities to enhance their character and skills, including obstacle courses, sports, expeditions to 'place of importance', and drama.⁸³ By 1969, the training had been extended to twelve months, and included

⁷⁵ MUAC GEAU I 64 (058) 1, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year 1969* (Uganda, Government Printer).

⁷⁶ United Nations Social Defence Research Institute, *Social Defence in Uganda: A Survey for Research* Publication No. 3 (Rome: UNSDRI, 1971), 68, accessed 10 February 2016, http://www.unicri.it/services/library_documentation/publications/unicri_series/Social_Defence_in_Uganda_A_Survey_for_Research_UNSDRI_Rome_1971.pdf.

⁷⁷ UNA Library, *Choose Your Career*, 4.

⁷⁸ MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report 1966*.

⁷⁹ MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report 1964*.

⁸⁰ UNSDRI, *Social Defence in Uganda: A Survey for Research*, 67.

⁸¹ MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report 1963*.

⁸² UNA Library, *Choose Your Career*, 4-5.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 5.

instruction in fire-fighting, foot drill, judo, and taekwondo.⁸⁴ Upon completion of their training, recruit warders had to pass an exam.⁸⁵ A board consisting of senior prison staff then assessed the recruits, evaluating them on fourteen criteria, including 'Judgment', 'Initiative', 'Application', 'Department', 'Job Knowledge', 'Control', and 'Leadership'.⁸⁶ Notes were also made about any unique aptitudes in areas such as trades, sports, or typing.⁸⁷

The training for Cadet Principal Officers was, unsurprisingly, more advanced. As of 1966, they were required to complete a nine-month training course, which was presumably extended as the training for the other ranks lengthened.⁸⁸ The curriculum was somewhat more sophisticated, as it included lectures on penal law and 'preliminary principles of criminology and penology' in addition to the material that was taught to the recruit warders.⁸⁹ Like the recruits, the cadets also needed to pass an exam before finishing their training. Upon successful completion, these men and women became Principal Officers, the highest position within the uniformed junior ranks. They were eligible for promotion up to the rank of Assistant Superintendent of Prisons.⁹⁰

CASPs received the most rigorous training. In 1966, it consisted of a twelve-month residential course at the Training School, and was gradually lengthened along with the training for other ranks.⁹¹ In their training, the CASPs learned about a wide range of ordinances pertaining to criminal law in Uganda, as well as criminology, penology, and the physical and weapons training done by the other ranks. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, all CASPs were also required to undergo a period of training overseas. Upon completion of the training, all CASPs were immediately appointed to the position of Assistant Superintendent of Prisons, and could be promoted up to the

⁸⁴ MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report 1969*, 12.

⁸⁵ UPSA, 'Theodore', 'Results of Written Examination', 10 February 1972.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ UNA Library, *Choose Your Career*, 8.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 8.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 8.

⁹¹ Ibid., 11.

rank of Commissioner of Prisons.⁹² It was these men and women who went on to play the most prominent roles in shaping the Service's post-colonial development.

Officers remember the training as a very intensive experience. Their physical limits were tested on a daily basis. 'You learn, of course, the physical fitness', remarked William.⁹³ 'You need to run up and down, this and that. You also learn parade, is the most important thing to make you fit...that was almost a daily thing, yes, almost twice in a day'. Parades, stemming from the Service's military heritage, were an important aspect of the daily routine, providing senior officers with the chance to inspect recruits' appearance and assess their general progress.

Although officers found the physical aspect of training difficult, many spoke animatedly about the classroom instruction. For Martin, it was the classroom work, rather than the physical training, that was particularly compelling. In his reflections on the training, Martin emphasized the new lexicon and skills that he had learned: 'You are trained on how to handle those inmates. The language used, and the way you approach...because you cannot use a rough language because they're human beings'.⁹⁴ William provided a similar response when asked what he had learned in training, underscoring the new way of thinking that was promoted among the recruits:

There are so many things. About the law, you learn the law so that you are conversant with it, cause you are going to work with some different types of people. Once you are conversant with everything, you have to come back to security. Most important thing...And you learn how to be friendly to the prisoners. You don't need to become their enemies. They are human beings, they're like other people.

Regardless of their individual experiences, interviewees emphasized the importance of the training process. Matthew repeatedly stated that training was imperative if one wanted to be a uniformed officer: '...you cannot go to work without passing under the training school, where you learn regulation, admin, all the work of custodian duties. You definitely have to pass under the training school'.⁹⁵

⁹² 'Vacancy: Cadet Assistant Superintendent of Prisons', *Uganda Argus*, 28 April 1964, 7.

⁹³ Interview with William.

⁹⁴ Interview with Martin.

⁹⁵ Interview with Matthew.

The passing out ceremonies, such as the one presided over by Obote in 1964, marked the transition from civilian to prison officer. They were also an opportunity to impress upon the new officers the importance of adhering to the Service's ideals. Awards were given out for 'smartness' to officers who wore their uniform immaculately. Wristwatches were a common prize, providing officers not only with a classic symbol of the professional class, but also reminding them of the importance of keeping time, an important aspect of the Service's bureaucratic culture.⁹⁶ Thus, from the moment they entered the training school to the day of their graduation, new recruits were steeped in the mental, moral, and physical orders of the Prisons Service.

Working as a Prison Officer

After completing the training, recruits and cadets were posted around the country to various prison sites. For much of the post-colonial period, there were four types of institutions: reception and allocation centres, district prisons, prison farms, and specialty prisons, such as those for women, young offenders, persistent offenders, and prisoners on remand.⁹⁷ The headquarters were in Kampala, and it was here that the Commissioner of Prisons and the other highest-ranking members of the Service were based. The rest of the country was split into four administrative regions: Buganda, the Eastern Region, the Western Region, and the Northern Region.⁹⁸

While officers' duties varied according to rank and prison site, their work environment was structured around routine, regulations, and paperwork. The Prisons Act provided the legislative framework for the Service, but it was the Prisons Standing Orders that structured the Service's daily administration. Created by the Commissioner of Prisons, these orders were enforced by the officer-in-charge of each institution. The orders were incredibly dense and precise, providing instructions on everything from where officers should mark their initials on their uniforms, to lists of punishments for

⁹⁶ 'Prison School Tour, President praises the services', *Uganda Argus*, 14 December 1964, 3.

⁹⁷ UNDSRI, *Social Defence in Uganda*, 57.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

disciplinary offences. They were intended to ensure uniformity across prison sites, and all officers were expected to know them inside and out.

Officers' work was constantly being measured and evaluated. All junior officers were required to use service recorders in order to precisely track their movements and hours of work. Failure to use the service recorder properly would result in a disciplinary inquiry and often lead to strict punishment.⁹⁹ As Benjamin recalled, time-keeping governed officers' daily movements: 'Time, time factored – the place we worked... Time management it was up to date'.¹⁰⁰ Officers' performance was also tracked. Evaluations were submitted at least twice a year, in which 'official conduct', 'turn out', 'ability to learn new duties', ability to control the staff and prisoners, 'intelligence and understanding', 'integrity and power of leadership' and the level of respect commanded amongst the staff and prisoners were assessed.¹⁰¹ Senior officers were then invited to write more general comments and discuss the officer's suitability for promotion. Most officers received several promotions while working at the Service.

Officers' careers were also characterized by a great degree of physical mobility. In order to minimize their level of familiarity with the local population, they were posted at a considerable distance from their families and home communities. As Isaac explained, 'They don't allow you to work in your home area, because the prisoners that are coming to prisons, some may be your relatives'.¹⁰² They were also regularly transferred over the course of their careers, a policy that was in part tied to promotions, but was also intended to further limit bias and local connections. Thus, officers' work environments shifted regularly. For example, Geoffrey, a warder from Soroti, worked in Moroto, Namalu, Gulu, Lira, and Kibarua prisons before finally ending up in Soroti in

⁹⁹ UPISA, Uganda Prisons Record of Conduct and Service of 'Joshua', Letter to The Commissioner of Prisons, 3 March 1964.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Benjamin.

¹⁰¹ UPISA, Uganda Prisons Record of Conduct and Service of 'Jeremiah', 'Half-Yearly Confidential Report, Junior Prison Officers', Officer I/C U.G. Prison Bihanga to The Commissioner of Prisons, 1 July 1977.

¹⁰² Interview with Isaac.

the 1970s.¹⁰³ As the next section will discuss, officers' frequent transfers and distance from home meant that the Service was an important source of community.

A Space of Home

Studies of prisoners in Africa and elsewhere have often focused on the unique social dynamics that animated spaces of incarceration. Much of this has been written in reference to nationalist movements. For example, Peter Zinoman's work on prisoners in colonial Vietnam has demonstrated how the prison system fostered the growth of the Vietnamese Communist party.¹⁰⁴ Within African historiography, scholars have examined the communities within Mau Mau detention camps, Robben Island, and the prisons of Rhodesia.¹⁰⁵ In contrast, there has been very little interest in the lives of prison staff, despite the fact that officers often lived at prison sites.

In Uganda, officers were required to live on the prison grounds. In most cases, staff quarters were provided free of charge. At times, senior staff and some officers who worked at larger prisons were able to bring their families along, but space was often at a premium. The quarters were variable in type and quality, although a concerted effort was made in the 1960s to raise the standards, as many warders had lived in 'mud and wattle huts' during the colonial period.¹⁰⁶ The original building plans for Luzira indicate that the staff lived in ten blocks made up of sixteen quarters each.¹⁰⁷ In district prisons, officers often lived in small houses clustered together. These were usually sociable spaces.¹⁰⁸ For example, documents on Mbale Women's Prison suggest that the female staff could be found sitting together on their verandahs drinking tea and chatting after

¹⁰³ UPSA, 'Geoffrey', 'Application for Transfer'; UPSA 'Geoffrey', 'Uganda Prisons: Report of Disciplinary Action Against a Subordinate Officer', 8 August, 1967; UPSA 'Geoffrey', 'Standing Orders, Part II 07, 19.4.73'; UPSA, 'Geoffrey', 'Standing Orders, Part II of 21/12/73'.

¹⁰⁴ See Zinoman, *The Colonial Bastille*.

¹⁰⁵ See for example: Derek R. Peterson, 'The Intellectual Lives of Mau Mau Detainees', *Journal of African History* 49 (2008): 73-91; Fran Buntman, *Robben Island and Prisoner Resistance to Apartheid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Jocelyn Alexander, 'Nationalism and Self-government in Rhodesian Detention: Gonakudzingwa, 1964-1974', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37:3 (2011): 551-569.

¹⁰⁶ UKNA CO 685/16, *Annual Report on the Uganda Prisons for the Year 1932* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1933), 3.

¹⁰⁷ UKNA CO 536/154, 'Luzira Gaol: Layout of Site', 13 November, 1928.

¹⁰⁸ UPSA, 'Anne', 'Confirmation of the Charge Being Absent From Duty From 8th to 13th September', Letter to Commissioner of Prisons, 29 October 1971.

work.¹⁰⁹ In other prison sites, such as Moroto, officers lived in ‘uniports’: small aluminum huts that were commonly used to house members of the police and the army.¹¹⁰ Senior officers were often given relatively spacious homes, some of which included ‘servants quarters’.¹¹¹ When space permitted, officers were allowed to have small plots upon which to grow their own food, which was particularly common on prison farms.¹¹² Many prisons had staff recreation halls, in which officers could ‘purchase refreshments and play a variety of recreational activities which are meant for relaxation from [the] long odious duties of a prison officer’.¹¹³

For most officers, the prison site was their primary social world. This was by design, as the Service did not want its officers engaging in close contact with the surrounding community. The reality of placements far from home and regular transfer encouraged camaraderie amongst the staff, as they were frequently working in unfamiliar parts of the country, often where the local population spoke a different language. Officers worked, lived, ate, slept, and engaged in recreational activities with their colleagues, making the prison an important space of social interaction.

In interviews, officers often mentioned the close relationships that they had forged during their careers. Matthew characterized relations within the Service as ‘friendly’ and said the officers were like a ‘family’.¹¹⁴ For Benjamin, the Service was his most important community. ‘We were all friends, we work together’, he remarked.¹¹⁵ ‘In fact, I don’t think whether there is any ministry or any department which people would love...each other like prisons. There isn’t. This is a really complete family. A family more than your own family’. Government officials encouraged this collegial atmosphere. Speaking to a group of technical staff in 1965, the Minister of Internal Affairs remarked, ‘All employees of Prisons Department are brothers and sisters and

¹⁰⁹ UPSA, ‘Anne’, ‘Statement of Wds.’, 21 11 1967.

¹¹⁰ UPSA, Uganda Prisons Record of Conduct and Service of ‘Helen’, B.Kizito to Commissioner of Prisons, 15 May 1975.

¹¹¹ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 67.

¹¹² Interview with Patrick.

¹¹³ MUAC GEAU I62 (058) I, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report on the Treatment of Offenders for the Year 1974* (Uganda: Government Printer), 15.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Matthew.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Benjamin.

they must all work as members of one team and one family, they must all work in harmony'.¹¹⁶

While living in close proximity encouraged deep bonds, it also resulted in tensions. Personnel files hold many disciplinary reports in which officers accused each other of gossip, insult, and physical violence. Such behaviors were actively discouraged. For example, the dangers of gossip were specifically outlined in the Standing Orders: 'Idle rumours or criticism, personal or otherwise, are readily exaggerated or twisted into assorted facts, which, being passed from person to person, may result in great harm to individuals'.¹¹⁷ There were also some conflicts between the technical and the uniformed branches of the Service, with the uniformed staff at times adopting an 'unco-operative attitude towards the civilian technical staff'.¹¹⁸

Prison sites were also spaces of romantic relationships. The geographies of intimacy within the Service often involved multiple spaces, persons, and locales. Most of the officers whom I interviewed or came across in the personnel files were married with children, but it was not uncommon for officers to have extra-marital relationships, especially when they were posted far from home. For example, Bob Kenneth Oketta, a principal officer at the Prisons Training School, was married to a female prison officer stationed in Gulu.¹¹⁹ They had six children, although it is not clear from the archival material where the children lived.¹²⁰ In addition, Bob had a 'girlfriend' by the name of Regina, with whom he had another three children.¹²¹ Okomi Okol, a Principal Officer at Lira prison in the 1970s, lived with his mistress Sophia in the prison barracks, while his wife lived with the couple's children in a nearby village.¹²² Vincent Mulondo, a superintendent in the Western region in the 1970s, was married to a nurse whom he lived with in staff quarters at Katojo Prison along with their three children.¹²³ According

¹¹⁶ PTSL, 'Minutes of the First Conference of the Technical Staff'.

¹¹⁷ PTSL, 'Chapter 3', Prisons Standing Orders, 9.

¹¹⁸ PTSL, 'Minutes of the First Conference of the Technical Staff'.

¹¹⁹ Republic of Uganda, *Commission of Inquiry into the Disappearances*, 434.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 434.

¹²¹ Ibid., 434.

¹²² Ibid., 346.

¹²³ Ibid., 64-65.

to his wife, Mulondo had three children with another woman.¹²⁴ Evidence of these relationships are difficult to find in the archival material, and do not come up in interviews. The few examples that are available appear in the commission of inquiry that examined the disappearances of Ugandans, as the wives of prison officers often served as witnesses, and had sought out their husbands' other partners in order to try and locate the missing men.

Finally, the officers' quarters were in many ways 'national' spaces, bringing together people from different ethnicities and regions of the country to work together. 'We were supposed to work [in] the whole country', Patrick explained.¹²⁵ 'Not only in your home area, but you are supposed to work the whole of Uganda'. Robert, who was from Arua, said there were 'not many' officers from his hometown working alongside him.¹²⁶ 'There were just quite a few in the lower ranks...higher ranks it was only me', he recalled. Similarly, Charles recounted working with 'all the tribes'.¹²⁷ In Benjamin's view, the diversity of personnel and placements had a constructive social effect. 'It makes you learn to stay with other people who are not of your culture. Or of your tribe. To transact with people. You become friend[s] and you learn each other's behavior...it is a very good thing'.¹²⁸ While there were at times tensions between different ethnic groups, overall the Service tried to promote camaraderie and a sense of shared purpose that transcended ethnic identity. Furthermore, by working in diverse regions of the country, the officers also acquired a much stronger sense of the nation, engaging with different locales and populations.

Leisure

The prison administration recognized the importance of recreation and leisure for prison officers very early on in the Service's history. In the 1926 annual report on H.M. Prison Kampala, it was noted that officers were being overworked: they were

¹²⁴ Ibid., 64-65.

¹²⁵ Interview with Patrick.

¹²⁶ Robert, Personal Interview, 13 July 2016.

¹²⁷ Interview with Charles.

¹²⁸ Interview with Benjamin.

paraded daily at six o'clock in the morning, and often worked twelve hour shifts, leaving them 'little time for recreation or personal affairs'.¹²⁹ Some attempts were made to provide spaces for leisure during the colonial period, such as the opening of a recreation hall at Luzira in 1940.¹³⁰ Following independence, there was an expansion of staff welfare programmes and recreation facilities. Welfare committees, first introduced in 1957,¹³¹ had been installed at all prison sites by the mid-1970s.¹³² They were under the direction of the officer-in-charge of each institution.¹³³ Officers charged with overseeing staff welfare were meant to advocate for the establishment of recreational facilities and common eating areas,¹³⁴ and also to ensure the provision of education for any staff children on prison sites.¹³⁵ Such spaces were especially important in more isolated regions. For example, a recreation hall was opened at Moroto Prison in August 1971 so as to 'enable officers to enjoy social and cultural activities so that they can feel at home in remote areas like Moroto'.¹³⁶

Sport was the most important outlet for recreation, an aspect of the institutional culture that had begun in the colonial period. In his 1939 report, Paterson encouraged the Service to recruit warders who were athletic, noting 'skill at games is a distinct asset' for prison work.¹³⁷ Following independence, the Service expanded the range of sporting opportunities. An annual prisons sports day was created, in which officers competed in various events at the Murchison Bay Prison grounds.¹³⁸ The Service also created sport-specific clubs to compete in regional and national competitions.¹³⁹ Officers who demonstrated excellence in sport were encouraged to pursue elite athletic ambitions. Prisons Service athletes competed in the 1964 and 1968 Olympics Games, and various

¹²⁹ UKNA CO 685/10, 'Administration Reports, Annual Report: Her Majesty's Prison Kampala', 1926, 11.

¹³⁰ UNA Library, *Annual Report of the Uganda Prisons 1940*, 7.

¹³¹ RCS, *Annual Report 1957*, 3.

¹³² MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report 1973*, 10.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹³⁴ PTSL, 'Chapter 10: Welfare of Staff, Prisons Standing Orders, 1.

¹³⁵ MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report 1973*, 10.

¹³⁶ 'Prison Social Hall Opened', *Uganda Argus*, 31 August 1971, 1.

¹³⁷ Paterson, *Report on a Visit to the prisons of Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Aden and Somaliland during 1937*, 8.

¹³⁸ 'Prisons athletes show improvement at sports day', *Uganda Argus*, 3 January 1964, 3.

¹³⁹ MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report 1964*.

other international events including the East Africa Athletics Championships, football matches for the national team, and the Commonwealth Games.¹⁴⁰ This was true of both male and female prison officers. For example, in 1966, Recruit Wardress J. Bawaya represented Uganda in the Commonwealth Games and was named Sportswoman of the Year in Uganda.¹⁴¹ Stephen Kiprotich, a prison officer and the winner of the gold medal in the London 2012 marathon, epitomizes this legacy of sporting prowess within UPS. The Service has rewarded Kiprotich for his sporting success, promoting him to the rank of Assistant Commissioner of Prisons to recognize his achievements.¹⁴²

Non-sporting outlets for recreation and spiritual welfare were also available. There was a Prisons Service band and a Director of Music within the Service.¹⁴³ Upon joining the Service in 1968, an officer by the name of Frank immediately applied to join the band, citing his guitar and vocal skills, as well as his interest in learning ‘how to play the electric guitar’, as the band also had a jazz component.¹⁴⁴ The majority of prison sites had chapels and offered services for multiple faiths.¹⁴⁵ According to Isaac, who was a senior prisons chaplain in the 1970s, the officers ‘needed a lot of spiritual support’ to enable them to carry out their work.¹⁴⁶ He was particularly pleased when some officers ‘became spiritual leaders within the prison’, volunteering their time to engage in religious activities.

Officers also turned to alcohol as a source of relaxation. In some stations, alcohol was available for purchase through a licensed provider in recreation halls on the prison grounds.¹⁴⁷ Not surprisingly, however, there were strict regulations regarding its consumption. Although officers were technically not forbidden to ‘drink in public bars

¹⁴⁰ MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report 1966*.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Abdu Wasike and Stephen Otagi, ‘Kiprotich promoted to assistant Superintendent of Prisons’, *Daily Monitor*, 7 September 2012, accessed 12 February 2017, <http://www.monitor.co.ug/Sports/Athletics/Kiprotich-promoted-to-Assistant-Superintendent-of-Prisons/690274-1499280-f3bgd0/index.html>.

¹⁴³ ‘Keep up the good work, Minister tells Prisons staff’, *Uganda Argus*, 17 July 1967, 3.

¹⁴⁴ UPSA, Uganda Prisons Record of Conduct and Service of ‘Frank’, ‘Application for joining the Uganda Prisons Band’, 18 August 1968.

¹⁴⁵ MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report 1974*, 7.

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Isaac.

¹⁴⁷ PTSL, ‘Chapter 10’, Prisons Standing Orders, 3.

in uniform' when they were off duty, it was 'not a practice which reflects any credit on the individual or the Service' and was thus 'considered undesirable and will be avoided save in exceptional circumstances'.¹⁴⁸ However, drinking on the prison grounds or in 'private clubs' was tolerated.¹⁴⁹ While the Standing Orders do not elaborate on what is meant by a 'private club', it suggests a respectable place in which to consume alcohol, one that was appropriate for professionals. For many post-colonial professionals – especially those who worked for the government – 'socially exclusive drinking' was an important marker of status in this period.¹⁵⁰

Along with regulations about where an officer could drink, the Service's main concern was unsurprisingly whether or not drinking affected an officer's job performance. An officer by the name of Walter was charged multiple times with being intoxicated while on duty, and was criticized as 'an out and out drunkard' by a senior officer.¹⁵¹ Discussing Walter's behavior, the officer wrote, 'I shall stand no more such nonsense from him...He has a most disgraceful record for "Drunkenness" and "Sleeping on duty," in addition he is abusive and insolent to Senior members of the staff'.¹⁵² In contrast, a report on Kenneth noted that he 'drinks considerably, but is quiet', suggesting that his drinking did not interfere with his ability to perform his work effectively.¹⁵³ However, after praising Kenneth's 'mature and sensible' nature and 'good control over prisoners', the officer-in-charge suggested that he 'learn to moderate his drinking habits', perhaps in order to pre-empt any future issues.¹⁵⁴ While the archival evidence permits only glimpses into this world of leisure, it hints at the ways in which respectable relaxation was tied to notions of professionalism within the Prisons Service.

Competing Communities

¹⁴⁸ PTSL, 'Chapter 3', Prisons Standing Orders, 7.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 7.

¹⁵⁰ Justin Willis, *Potent Brews: A Social History of Alcohol in East Africa, 1850-1999* (Oxford: James Currey, 2002), 177.

¹⁵¹ UPSA, Uganda Prisons Record of Conduct and Service of 'Walter', W.E.E. Kirkham to Officer in Charge, Uganda Government Prison Patiko, 10 April 1969.

¹⁵² UPSA, 'Walter', W.E.E. Kirkham to Officer in Charge, Uganda Government Prison Patiko.

¹⁵³ UPSA, Uganda Prisons Record of Conduct and Service of 'Kenneth', 'Board Report', 26 April 1968.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

While some officers embraced the intense social environment of the Service, others struggled to balance professional and personal commitments. In most instances, officers were expected to put their professional duties ahead of their personal ones. As stated in the Standing Orders, 'All officers of the Service must understand that they are always liable to transfer and that the exigencies of the Service must override any purely domestic considerations'.¹⁵⁵ The orders also reminded officers that getting married would not affect their chance of being transferred to their home region.¹⁵⁶ This firm belief in the transfer policy was echoed in the rhetoric of senior officers. Speaking to a group of officers at the remote Patiko Prison Farm, Ssentamu implored them to stop requesting transfers to other districts. He reminded them of the importance of placing public servants away from their home areas in order to enhance 'the smooth running of government' and urged them to 'love Uganda and to forget tribalism'.¹⁵⁷

Officers had very mixed views about the tension between personal and professional commitments. For some, personal sacrifices were seen as part of the job. When asked about his experience of working far from home, Stephen responded, 'It wasn't very difficult...when we were joining, you'd first say that you would serve anywhere in Uganda'.¹⁵⁸ Others accepted the principle of being posted far away from home and frequent transfer, but were grateful to have only been minimally affected by this policy. For example, Isaac was thankful for the relative stability of his placements, commenting: 'one of the frustrating areas was transfers of staff... I served only in three stations...But others of my colleagues would serve in about ten stations within that short time'.¹⁵⁹ William revealed that he had used a 'trick' in order to be posted in his home district, ranking it low on his list of preferred placements in the hopes that this would make it seem undesirable to him.¹⁶⁰

For the majority of officers, however, distance from loved ones and frequent transfer was a part of their professional reality. In many cases, this resulted in significant

¹⁵⁵ PTSL, 'Chapter 14: Personnel – General Instructions', Prisons Standing Orders, 2.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 2.

¹⁵⁷ 'Ssentamu calls for patriotism', *Voice of Uganda*, 14 November 1974, 2.

¹⁵⁸ Stephen, Personal Interview, 24 August 2016.

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Isaac.

¹⁶⁰ Interview with William.

anxiety over how to manage one's home from afar. Posted a considerable distance from home, and granted up to a few weeks of leave per year, many officers found it impossible to provide their families with anything beyond material support. As a result, one of the most frequent forms of correspondence in the personnel files were requests for transfers to or near an officer's home area. Such requests often came in times of familial crisis. For Jeremiah, a warder who worked in Mbarara, the death of his parents prompted him to request a transfer for the first time in his nearly twenty year career. In a letter to the Commissioner of Prisons, Jeremiah wrote:

I have lost all my parents who have been helping me to keep my home together with my family. Now the home is without any one to keep even my children who are at school, they are now staying together with my aunt who she is also reached [*sic*] to the state of death...I have been cut off from my family because a [*sic*] distance is very far...My poor house which I built eight years ago it has now reached the state of collapsing, and my wife she has written to me several letters threatening to leave my home and children because of home problems e.g. no one to help her at home.¹⁶¹

Derek, who joined the Service in the mid-1970s, was particularly concerned about his siblings. 'I lost my father in 1975 while I was still in the Prisons Training School', he explained in a letter requesting a transfer.¹⁶² 'My mother is too old [and has] nobody to support her at home...I have four young brothers who are schooling and I am only the elder son who is taking care of them paying school fees and all necessary support at home is on me'. For Martin, one of the main concerns was maintaining his property, explaining that 'people come and encroach', when an officer did not return home frequently.¹⁶³

Such fears are reminiscent of letters from prisoners, both within Uganda and elsewhere. One of the most profound concerns for Kenyan men detained during the Mau Mau Rebellion was the management of their home affairs.¹⁶⁴ Worried that their wives would leave them or that their relatives would impinge on their property, detainees wrote letters back home to 'ventriloquize their voices and extend their

¹⁶¹ UPSA, 'Jeremiah', 'Application for Transfer to Home District Prison or Nearest', 10 May 1976.

¹⁶² UPSA, 'Derek', 'Application for transfer to home district', 4 July 1977.

¹⁶³ Interview with Martin, 12.

¹⁶⁴ Peterson, 'The Intellectual Lives of Mau Mau Detainees', 76.

influence'.¹⁶⁵ While there are no records of prison officers' correspondence to their family members in the Service's archives, we can surmise that this was an important strategy. In a slightly different vein, prisoners in Uganda would regularly write to prison authorities to request remission on their sentences, evoking familial concerns as their primary motivation for being released. A prisoner by the name of Bonifasio, who was imprisoned for fraud and obtaining goods by false pretences, begged the Governor of Uganda to consider the 'difficult' situation of his family, discussing how two of his children were unable to return to school due to his imprisonment.¹⁶⁶ 'You will be able to redeem my poor family which is starving', he exclaimed.¹⁶⁷

While prison officers certainly had more options available to them than prisoners, they too struggled with isolation, restrictions on movement, and family concerns. Managing their home lives was challenging and often contingent on the sympathy of senior officers. In many cases, this was not forthcoming. Grace, who applied for a transfer to Soroti or Lira in order to better take care of her children and siblings, was told to remain at her current station. In responding to her request, the Provincial Prisons Commissioner dismissed Grace's 'domestic concerns', explaining, 'almost everybody had a problem of one kind or the other. If we are to consider each and everyone's problems there would be no transfers'.¹⁶⁸

Familial commitments also entered into an officer's concern when facing dismissal. When petitioning for re-engagement, Phillip reminded his senior officers that he needed to 'maintain and educate his children'.¹⁶⁹ Closing his letter, Phillip wrote, 'Sir, I am crying for [one] more chance to be offered to be a guard for my future as well as my children and brothers and make the best of it'.¹⁷⁰ Elizabeth, a single mother who was facing dismissal after stealing prison property, adopted a similarly desperate tone. '...if at all I am discharged or dismissed from the Service', she wrote, '...how will I bring the

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 81.

¹⁶⁶ UNA, Secretariat Minute Papers, Bonifasio Mulindwa to Governor of Uganda, 29 May 1943.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ UPSA, 'Grace', N.Y. Okello-Elefu to The Officer in Charge, Uganda Government Prison Mbale, 30 November 1977.

¹⁶⁹ UPSA, Uganda Prisons Record of Conduct and Service of 'Phillip', 'Petition for Re-Engagement', 13 June 1972.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

six children I have got to life, so far there are four of them at school without the help of anybody, my parents are now aged and that they [*sic*] can hardly help to bring up my children...'¹⁷¹ However, an officer's personal obligations were seen as less important than protecting the moral order of the Service. While there is no record of whether or not Elizabeth was dismissed, Phillip's family concerns were rejected: 'This officer remembers the financial assistance he gives to his family only when he is in trouble', wrote a senior officer, concluding, 'I feel this officer has ceased to be efficient and does not deserve any more mercy'.¹⁷² Officers often had to either accept such hardships as a reality of their profession or leave the Service.

Conclusion

For young, educated Ugandans, UPS was an increasingly attractive career option after independence. The Service deliberately sought to attract a wide range of recruits and to inculcate the values of discipline, service, and professionalism in them. The recruitment and training processes were vital platforms on which to communicate the moral order of the Service and create an imaginary of the ideal prison officer. In contrast to the colonial years, during which the Service had struggled to overcome its entanglement with the police and the military, as well as being destabilized by political tensions during the decolonization process, it now envisioned itself as a professional institution. Prison officers worked in an environment characterized by discipline, routine, bureaucracy, and also sociability. The Service was an important space of home, but officers also struggled to balance personal and professional commitments. Thus, although the Service offered young Ugandans a place to pursue certain 'aspirations' associated with post-colonial modernity, they also had to contend with the challenges that their professional status entailed.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ UPSA, 'Elizabeth', 'Petition on the Irregular Conduct'.

¹⁷² UPSA, 'Phillip', John A. Kabandize to The Commissioner of Prisons, 15 June 1972.

¹⁷³ Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, location 118.

CHAPTER 5

THE OKWAARE GENERATION: SENIOR PRISON OFFICERS

Upon walking into the Prisons Training School library, one is immediately struck by the range of books lining the shelves. Old prison files from the colonial era mingle with crisp new criminology texts. Faded prison reports from other countries rest alongside classic works written by British prison reformers. In one folder, a jumble of book request forms can be found for titles such as George Sabine's *A History of Political Theory*¹ and *An Introduction to Economics for East Africa*, published by Heinemann Educational.²

On the bottom of one shelf towards the front of the library, a large photo album is tucked away under a pile of files. Its weathered pages contain photos of impressive industrial machines, smartly dressed prison officers, and imposing prison walls. The album documents Fabian Okwaare's tour to Canada and New York State in 1967.³ This was one of many international trips that Okwaare took while serving as Commissioner of Prisons, during which time he visited at least three continents and several other African countries. Okwaare was not the only member of the Service to go abroad in the 1960s: senior prison officers also travelled to courses and conferences with the aim of enhancing their professional development. Within UPS, this group of senior prison staff – here termed the 'Okwaare generation' – was the most deeply engaged in a transnational community of penal experts and practitioners.

This chapter explores the experiences of the Okwaare generation, considering the identities, ambitions, and career paths of this unique cadre of officers. It draws on archival records from Uganda, the United Kingdom, Canada, and various intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations; visual sources; and oral histories of officers who worked with Okwaare. This group was bound by many shared experiences: most of them joined UPS in the 1960s, trained overseas, and went on to

¹ PTSL, 'The Republic of Uganda Prisons Staff College Library, Book Suggestion Form', 28 October 1974.

² PTSL, Untitled request form, 29 August 1974.

³ PTSL, 'Commissioner's Tour of Canada Album'. While the title only refers to 'Canada', the album also contains photos of the New York visit.

have prestigious careers as prison officers. As will be explored in later chapters, they were also targets of Idi Amin's security agencies in the 1970s. In the years immediately following independence, however, theirs was an experience largely characterized by ambition and possibility.

For this group, the question of what made a 'modern' prison or a professional prison officer was firmly tied to international norms. As Luke commented, 'We were trained in this United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Offenders...We had to be trained properly and we had to know it on our fingertips'.⁴ Yet, they were also engaged in a process of experimentation, balancing concepts learned elsewhere with local circumstances and political agendas. Like many of their counterparts in other developing nations, they helped to forge a unique model of the post-colonial prison, one that adopted the core tenants of 'penal welfarism' while also emphasizing the prison's role in enhancing development. Despite the fact that the Okwaare generation spoke proudly about their contributions, they also expressed an awareness of the Service's limitations. Through exploring their careers and formative professional experiences, we can better understand the diverse influences shaping visions of the Service in the early post-colonial period.

Transnational Penal Networks in Transition

Within scholarship on the global history of the prison, there is a recent shift away from the study of specific countries to the examination of transnational cultures of penalty. In keeping with the wider interest in networks within the field of world history, scholars have examined the diverse spaces in which 'penal cultures have been interpreted, challenged, adapted, transformed and translated'.⁵ The early stirrings of a transnational penal reform community were unsurprisingly focused on Western nations. While organizations such as the International Penitentiary Commission, the International Society for Criminology, and the International Union of Penal Law

⁴ Interview with Luke, No.1.

⁵ Vivien Miller and James Campbell, 'Introduction', in *Transnational Penal Cultures: New Perspectives on Discipline, Punishment and Desistance* eds. Vivien Miller and James Campbell (London: Routledge, 2015), 1.

explored questions of penal reform across countries in the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, they focused specifically on Europe and North America. Debates about penal reform beyond the West were filtered through an imperial lens, discussed in official bodies such as the ACTOC, as well as civil society groups such as the Howard League for Penal Reform.

As decolonization took hold, transnational penal networks began to diversify. This was evident in the UN Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders, which was first held in 1955.⁶ 512 participants from 51 governments and 43 NGOs attended the inaugural congress in London.⁷ At the next congress, there were over 1000 participants from 68 governments and 50 NGOs.⁸ These meetings continued to be held at five year-intervals, and the diversity of participants steadily increased over time. The International Society of Criminology and its partner institution, the International Centre for Comparative Criminology at the Université de Montréal, also created opportunities for international collaboration, especially through the provision of conferences and courses.⁹ While it is difficult to discern the actual degree of equality between different actors in these forums, the rising presence and standing of professionals from the Global South suggests a marked change from penal reform bodies during the colonial period.

Within these forums, Stanley Cohen argues that a 'benign transfer' approach to the dissemination of perspectives on crime and prisons was adopted, viewed as part of a package of modernization.¹⁰ Newly independent nations were encouraged to 'turn aside from punitive and irrational methods of control and satisfy their aspirations for justice, progress, and security by building a scientific crime-control programme into their development plans'.¹¹ Overall, Cohen argues that organizations such as the UN

⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *United Nations Congresses on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice 1955-2010: 55 years of achievement* (Austria: United Nations Information Service, 2010), accessed 10 January 2017, http://www.un.org/en/conf/crimecongress2010/pdf/55years_ebook.pdf.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Stanley Cohen, 'Western Crime Control Models in the Third World: Benign or Malignant?' in *Crime: Critical Concepts in Sociology, Volume III*, ed. Phillip Bean (London: Routledge, 2003), 274.

¹⁰ Ibid., 276.

¹¹ Ibid., 276.

possessed 'little questioning or self-doubt' in regards to the merits of the penal welfare model and broader Western approaches to crime.¹²

Many nations in the Global South actively participated in these forums, and embraced key tenets of penal welfarism. For example, Anthony Gorman has shown how Egyptian prison staff had a strong 'rhetorical commitment to international norms' in the 1950s, participated in the UN Congresses, visited Western prisons, hosted regional seminars on crime, and engaged with the Institute of Criminology in Cairo in 1953.¹³ In Côte d'Ivoire, a similar institute was set up at the University of Abidjan in 1969, following a much longer process of international collaboration, which included the hosting of the sixteenth International Course of Criminology in 1966.¹⁴ A wider regional criminology network developed in West Africa at this time, evident in the holding of the West African Conference in Comparative Criminology in 1972.¹⁵ At Makerere, studies of crime were first undertaken at the East African Institute of Social Research, and the first 'Conference on Penal Problems in East Africa', was held at the University College, Dar es Salaam, in January of 1966.¹⁶ While this chapter will examine how Uganda prison officers engaged in these various networks and forums, there is considerable scope for further research on the circulation of penal ideas and practices in the aftermath of decolonization.

Fabian Okwaare

When retired prison officers reflect on their career, many pause to give special mention to Okwaare. As the first Ugandan to become Commissioner of Prisons, he is remembered both for his professional achievements and his character. Robert, who referred to Okwaare as his 'mentor', called him a 'very good man'.¹⁷ In his estimation,

¹² Cohen, 'Western Crime Control Models in the Third World', 275.

¹³ See: Anthony Gorman, 'Regulation, Reform and Resistance in the Middle Eastern Prison', in *Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia, and Latin America*, eds. Frank Dikötter and Ian Brown (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 127-129.

¹⁴ Suzanne Arcand and Yves Brillon, 'Comparative Criminology: Africa', *Acta Criminologica* 6 (1973): 209.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 202.

¹⁶ James S. Read, ed., 'Introduction', 'Record of the Conference on Penal Problems in East Africa, January 1966', Special First Anniversary Issue, *East African Law Journal* 2 (1966), 1.

¹⁷ Interview with Robert.

Okwaare ‘aggressively took on his duties’, undertaking a flurry of activities which included the opening of new prisons, the ‘expansion of the farms’, the recruitment of individuals with ‘better education’ for the Service, and the introduction of subjects such as criminology and penology into the training curriculum.¹⁸ Isaac recalled Okwaare’s ‘ambitious nature’, while Luke declared him a ‘proper reformist’.¹⁹ In Stephen’s estimation, Okwaare was one of the ‘greatest commissioners’ in the Service’s history.²⁰

Okwaare joined the Service in the early 1950s.²¹ We do not know much about his life beforehand, other than the fact that he was from Tororo District, and was born in 1932.²² At minimum, he must have completed primary school, and it is likely that he had further schooling beyond this stage. Okwaare’s rapid rise within the Service suggests a career that flourished from its inception. Originally a probationary jailer, he had reached the position of Deputy Commissioner of Prisons in 1962,²³ the highest rank to be achieved by a Ugandan in the Service at the time.²⁴ This position brought with it new opportunities, as he was invited to attend the East African Prison Commissioners Conference in Dar es Salaam in November of 1963.²⁵ At the conference, he would have met both British and African penal experts, with many of the latter having recently assumed the leadership of their respective prison services. Okwaare became the Commissioner of Prisons in July 1964, breaking the final ceiling in the process of ‘Africanisation’. Upon receiving this promotion, he was praised by his colleagues for the ‘hard work and long hours of study’ that had led to his career advancement.²⁶ News of his promotion was met with jubilation in his home district: Okwaare’s motorcade escort was met by ‘cheering school children’ on the road into Tororo Prison, where the staff held a reception in his honour.²⁷

¹⁸ Interview with Robert.

¹⁹ Interview with Isaac; Interview with Luke, No.1.

²⁰ Interview with Stephen.

²¹ PTSL, *Staff List, as of 1st July 1961* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1961), 12.

²² Ibid., 12.

²³ ‘Prisons Chief is honoured’, *Uganda Argus*, 5 October 1964, 4.

²⁴ MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report 1962*.

²⁵ MUAC, *The Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report, 1963*.

²⁶ ‘Prisons Chief is honoured’, *Uganda Argus*.

²⁷ Ibid., 4.

A diverse range of influences shaped Okwaare's penal philosophy. He had been trained in a period during which colonial prisons were increasingly held to higher standards and measured against transnational frameworks. After independence, Okwaare became involved in the growing global community of penal and criminology experts. One of his first major appearances on the international stage was at the third UN Congress, held in Stockholm in 1965. Over a thousand delegates attended, and groups such as the ILO, UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the League of Arab States, and the WHO were represented.²⁸ Okwaare seemed to have considerable standing within this community, as he was elected to be the Vice-Chairman of one of the key agenda items, 'Social Change and Criminality'.²⁹ His team included the Director of the National Centre of Social and Criminological Research in Cairo, a professor of Sociology from the University of Wisconsin, a reader in Forensic Psychiatry from the United Kingdom, the Director of the Criminology Programme at the University of Puerto Rico, the Director of the Office of Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Development in the United States government, the Head of the Institute of State and Law of the Academy of Sciences in Moscow, a professor of Criminology at the University of Leiden, and a representative of UNESCO.³⁰ Undoubtedly, this diverse group came with a range of understandings of criminality and penal administration. One can imagine the conversations that Okwaare may have had about crime in the USSR or prisons in Puerto Rico. Interestingly, it was Okwaare and the representative from Egypt who were called upon to serve as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of this unit, indicating the increasing prominence of professionals from the Global South in this forum.

Okwaare's itinerary that year was particularly full. Following his time in Stockholm, he proceeded to Britain for a tour of penal institutions.³¹ He then attended

²⁸ UNODC, *United Nations Congresses on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice 1955-2010*.

²⁹ UNODC, *Third United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Stockholm, 9-18 August 1965* (New York: United Nations Secretariat, 1967), 3, accessed 6 January 2017, https://www.unodc.org/documents/congress/Previous_Congresses/3rd_Congress_1965/007_ACONF.26.7_Third_United_Nations_Congress_on_the_Prevention_of_Crime_and_Treatment_of_Offenders.pdf.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report 1965*.

the fifth meeting of the International Society of Criminology in Montréal'.³²

Approximately 1,700 delegates were in attendance, representing 44 countries.³³ Okwaare was elected to be Vice-Chairman of the meeting, a position he shared with delegates from Canada, the Netherlands, Venezuela, Japan, and the United Arab Republic.³⁴ Delegates were invited to visit St. Vincent de Paul, a large maximum-security prison, as well as several other prisons in the area.³⁵ At the close of the meeting, the General Secretary of the Society emphasized the emergence of an 'unquestionable unity' amongst the participants in terms of their emphasis on the 'scientific humanization of treatment'.³⁶ By the close of 1965, Okwaare had thus worked with penal experts from numerous continents, assumed a leadership role in both the UN Congress and the International Society of Criminology, and visited prisons in Canada and Britain.

In January of 1966, Okwaare and Leonard Kigonya, the Assistant Commissioner of Prisons, attended the Conference on Penal Problems in East Africa.³⁷ Along with prison administrators, experts in criminology and law attended, including James S. Read of the University of East Africa and Tanner of the East African Institute of Social Research.³⁸ At the conference, Okwaare served as the chair of the panel on 'penal problems in East Africa',³⁹ and offered to be the chairman of the newly launched East African Society of Criminology.⁴⁰ Although it is unclear if this society ever materialized, its intended purpose was to promote the 'exchange' of criminological ideas, to 'stimulate research' in the field, to organize meetings, and to 'form liaisons with international and other organizations overseas active in the field of criminology'.⁴¹

Okwaare's next round of international travel came in 1967. He returned to Montréal, this time to attend the seventeenth International Course in Criminology, which offered lectures on topics such as 'The Administration of Criminal Justice', 'The

³² Claude A. Bouchard, '5th International Criminological Congress', *Federal Corrections* 4:4 (1965): 11-15.

³³ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁷ Read, 'Record of the Conference on Penal Problems in East Africa', 3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

Prevention and Treatment of Crime’, and ‘The Viable Future of Criminology’.⁴² There were a total of 218 participants, representing 27 countries.⁴³ However, the vast majority of them were from Europe and North America. Okwaare was also in the minority in terms of his profession, as only eighteen of the participants were currently working in prison administration. His participation in this event suggests his admiration of scholarly perspectives, as this was not a forum focused on practitioners.

Upon completing the course in Montréal, Okwaare embarked on a tour of prisons in Canada and New York State, documented in the photo album mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.⁴⁴ The album is one of the only traces of the trip, which is discussed in no more than a few lines in the 1967 annual prison report.⁴⁵ It has over fifty pages of photographs, providing an intimate look into the trip from Okwaare’s perspective. A colleague – possibly Basil Bataringaya – is with him in many photos. The placement of the photo album in the Prisons Training School suggests that it had a didactic purpose, intended to inspire and instruct new recruits and provide a visual representation of penal modernity.⁴⁶

While in Canada, Okwaare went to Ottawa and Kingston. In the latter, he toured the Staff Training College and met with Murray Millar, the Officer-in-Charge of the College. In a photo of the meeting, the two men – who had likely met during Okwaare’s previous trips to Canada – appear to be engaged in an animated conversation, and seem at ease with one another. Okwaare also visited the Kingston Maximum Security Prison, the Kingston Women’s Prison, Joyceville Prison, and Collins Bay Prison, where he had the opportunity to view the large-scale industrial and agricultural projects. At Collins Bay, Okwaare examined poultry and dairy operations run as part of the prison’s farm. The photos hint at the Commissioner’s admiration of such facilities, providing close-ups of specific machines and more panoramic shots of large workshops.

⁴² Denis Szabo, ed., *XV/IIth International Course in Criminology, Criminology in Action* (Montréal: Les Presses De L’Université De Montréal, 1968): 448-450.

⁴³ Ibid., 463.

⁴⁴ PTSL, ‘Commissioner’s Tour of Canada Album’.

⁴⁵ MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report 1967*.

⁴⁶ I would like to thank Dr. Stacey Hynd for drawing this to my attention.

New York was the next stop. In photos, Okwaare is seen posing on the steps of a building in Albany – which served as the prison headquarters for the state – along with several other prison officials. He also visited the New York Staff College, and met the Commissioner of Prisons. As was the case in Kingston, a sense of professional camaraderie is apparent, with the caption of the meeting reading: ‘Two Commissioners discuss their problems’. This was certainly a time of considerable change within the state’s prisons, as the Governor had appointed a ‘Special Committee on Criminal Offenders’ in 1965 in order to shift the system from ‘custodial to a rehabilitative basis’.⁴⁷ Its report was delivered in 1968; thus the inquiry was still underway during Okwaare’s visit.⁴⁸ His final stop was the UN headquarters, where he met with Uganda’s ambassador.

Two more trips appear in the archival record. In 1969, Okwaare attended the Preparatory Regional Meeting of Experts in Social Defence for Africa.⁴⁹ Originally developed in the nineteenth century, ‘Social Defence’ promoted the view that ‘society would be protected best through the treatment of the offender’ rather than ‘insistence on his or her moral responsibility’.⁵⁰ In particular, it advocated that scientific principles guide the treatment of offenders. The UN adopted this approach, broadly defining it as the ‘prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders’.⁵¹ At this regional meeting, African penal practitioners convened in Addis Ababa for four days of discussions.⁵² Okwaare was one of twelve participants, joined by a Ugandan minister, colleagues from Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Somalia, and Ethiopia, and representatives from the UN and the

⁴⁷ I would like to thank Professor Rhiannon Stephens for drawing this point to my attention; Paul D. Meunier and Howard D. Schwartz, ‘Beyond Attica: Prison Reform in New York State, 1971-1973’, *Cornell Law Review* 58:5 (1973): 930.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 930.

⁴⁹ UNODC, *Report of the Preparatory Regional Meeting of Experts in Social Defence (African Region)*, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 3rd – 7th November 1969 (United Nations General Assembly, 1969), accessed 7 January 2017, https://www.unodc.org/documents/congress//Previous_Congresses/4th_Congress_1970/012_ACON_F.43.RM.1_African_Regional_Report.pdf.

⁵⁰ Patricia O’Brien, ‘The Prison on the Continent, Europe, 1865-1965’, in *The Oxford History of the Prison: The Practice of Punishment in Western Society*, eds. Norval Morris and David J. Rothman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 195.

⁵¹ Marc Ancel, *Social Defence: A Modern Approach to Criminal Problems* (London: Routledge, 1965), 166.

⁵² UNODC, *Report of the Preparatory Regional Meeting of Experts*, 1.

Economic Commission for Africa.⁵³ The meeting was framed as a space to emphasize ‘regional considerations’ and the development of a ‘common approach’ to crime prevention.⁵⁴ Delegates considered the challenges of applying the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners in their respective countries and emphasized the ‘need to relate prison industry and agriculture to national development plans’.⁵⁵ Overall, the meeting concluded that African nations should try to ‘increase the scope of prison services and industry, so that they could contribute more directly to national development and also satisfy the needs of the communities in which they were located’.⁵⁶

At the fourth UN Congress, held in Kyoto in August 1970, Okwaare was part of a large Ugandan delegation. Along with representatives from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Uganda High Court, and the Criminal Investigation Department, three other members of UPS were in attendance.⁵⁷ All three held the rank of Senior Superintendent of Prisons, and were likely a product of the more intensified training developed during Okwaare’s time as Commissioner.⁵⁸ This larger contingent of Ugandan representatives also suggests the growing consideration of crime prevention and penal philosophies with Uganda’s public service at this time.

In the eyes of many of his colleagues and contemporary observers, Okwaare’s most important legacy was the expansion and professionalization of prison farms and industries. Although such policies were initiated by the colonial state, Okwaare’s colleagues credited him with having cemented their importance within the Service’s philosophy. As Robert remarked, ‘...he opened the farms, he opened industries, and he involved prisoners to manufacture things, both for the government and for themselves to sell’.⁵⁹ This praise for Okwaare is echoed in a recent article in the *Daily Monitor*,

⁵³ UNODC, *Report of the Preparatory Regional Meeting of Experts*, 21.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 1-2.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 20.

⁵⁷ American Society of Criminology, ‘Provisional List of Delegations’, Fourth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (1970), 75, accessed 9 January 2017, 75-76, https://www.asc41.com/UN_Congress/4th%20UN%20Congress%20on%20the%20Prevention%20of%20Crime/011%20ACONF.43%20Provisional%20list%20of%20Delegations.pdf.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 75.

⁵⁹ Interview with Robert.

Uganda's leading national newspaper. In it, he is featured as one of the '100 most influential Ugandans'.⁶⁰ Along with Joseph Etima, another former Commissioner of Prisons, he is one of only two members of UPS to be included in this list. The authors credit him with 'having opened a number of prison farms across the country', and commented that the 'prisons industry also expanded under his watch'.⁶¹ Evaluating the significance of these achievements, the article highlights the Service's productivity and apparent spirit of collaboration:

During his time, Uganda prisons was the only government department that was self-sustaining in terms of feeding, and it was the prisons that fed the police and army. Its manufacturing section was responsible for making police uniforms and shoes. It was the prisons carpentry that produced all government furniture across the country.⁶²

Thus, his contributions are largely remembered in reference to the Service's ability to produce for the nation.

Okwaare's career in UPS ended shortly after Amin's coup. In 1972, Amin appointed Okwaare to be the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, and Cooperatives.⁶³ At a passing-out ceremony that year, Amin thanked Okwaare for the 'high standard he had attained for the Prisons Service' noting that he had 'contributed greatly to the development of the country'.⁶⁴ While this decision to shift Okwaare's role could be interpreted as a reflection of Amin's admiration of Okwaare's success in prison agricultural production, it could also have been a more instrumental move to limit Okwaare's influence over the Service. Either way, Okwaare's time as a minister was brief, as he was one of many government officials to 'disappear' in this period. Much mystery surrounds his death. Testifying to the CIVHR, former Vice-President Mustafa Adrisi indicated that Okwaare was one of many officials who 'disappeared' early on in

⁶⁰ Eriasa Mukiibi Sserunjogi, Henry Lubega and Gillian Nantume, '100 most influential Ugandans, Part VI', *Daily Monitor*, 30 August 2015, accessed 10 January 2017, <http://www.monitor.co.ug/Magazines/PeoplePower/100-most-influential-Ugandans--Part-VI/-/689844/2851306/-/item/2/-/tflgpa/-/%2523>.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ 'The Public Must Feel Safe', *Uganda Argus*, 1.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 1.

the 1970s and indicated that Amin ‘showed an unco-operative spirit in investigating these killings’.⁶⁵ No other details regarding his death appear in the archival records available.

The Okwaare Generation

Although Okwaare’s life ended abruptly, many of the senior officers whom he worked with tried to continue applying his approach to the Service. They fell into two categories: those who had risen alongside him in the ranks, and those who joined afterwards. The former included officers such as Kigonya – Okwaare’s successor – and Alex Owor, one of the officers who attended the UN Congress in Kyoto. However, it is the latter group who formed the mainstay of the ‘Okwaare generation’, as they knew no other commissioner in the formative stages of their career, and had not worked at UPS in the colonial period.

This section focuses specifically on those officers who entered the Service at the rank of Cadet Assistant Superintendent of Prisons. The first class of CASPs joined in 1963, recruited as part of the official ‘Ugandinisation scheme’.⁶⁶ The initial CASP class was made up of fourteen individuals and represented diverse regions of the country.⁶⁷ Over the course of Okwaare’s tenure, at least seventy CASPs were recruited, with several others receiving the position after being promoted from lower ranks.⁶⁸ CASPs were encouraged to ‘strive hard for promotion’, and entered into the Service with the expectation that they would one day fill its highest positions.⁶⁹

The uniqueness of this particular group was in part due to the training they received. They spent twelve months in a very intensive program at the Prisons Training School, covering a wide range of theoretical and practical elements of prison work.⁷⁰ By 1966, the curriculum had over twenty individual subject areas, which ranged from

⁶⁵ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 44-45.

⁶⁶ Arne Bigsten and Steve Kayizzi-Mugerwa, *Crisis, Adjustment and Growth in Uganda: A Study of Adaptation in an African Economy* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), 7.

⁶⁷ PMK, Moses Kamugisha, ‘History of the Uganda Prisons Service Since 1886 to date’, accessed 30 October 2016, Baraka Consulting, barakaconsult.com/uploads/historyOfPrisons1886.pdf, 20-21.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 20-33.

⁶⁹ UNA Library, *Choose your Career*, 13.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 11.

fundamentals such as the Prisons Ordinance to lectures on ‘Principles of Criminology and Penology’.⁷¹ It also retained aspects of physical and weapons training, including sports, judo, musketry, and parades.⁷² Thus, the course reflected Okwaare’s promotion of scholastic perspectives while also retaining core elements of the older training curriculum.

In addition to the training in Kampala, all of the CASPs had at least one experience of professional development abroad. They were required to attend a three-month course at the Prisons Staff College in Wakefield.⁷³ This program was funded through the Special Commonwealth African Assistance Plan, which enabled professionals in former British colonies to attend a period of specialized training in the United Kingdom.⁷⁴ In 1964, thirty prison officers from eight countries attended the course.⁷⁵ During the training, the cadets received classroom instruction in the principles of prison administration, toured local prisons, did placements in prisons, and had the opportunity to meet local families and experience life in Yorkshire.⁷⁶ A similar course was made available to Ugandan police officers at the Police College in Wakefield.⁷⁷

Beyond Wakefield, other opportunities were also available. Throughout the 1960s, the majority of cadets participated in an Outward Bound course at the Loitokitok School in Kenya.⁷⁸ It was one of many schools run by the international non-profit group founded by German educator Kurt Hahn in 1941, designed to promote character building through outdoor education.⁷⁹ Over the course of a month, cadets engaged in ‘mountain craft’, map reading, physical training, leadership, ‘man-management’, and first aid.⁸⁰ For senior staff at UPS, this course allowed them to ‘evaluate an officer’s character

⁷¹ UNA Library, *Choose your Career*, 11-13.

⁷² Ibid., 13.

⁷³ ‘Impressed by U.K. Prison Methods’, *Uganda Argus*, 5 June 1964, 7.

⁷⁴ MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report 1965*.

⁷⁵ ‘Impressed by U.K. Prison Methods’, *Uganda Argus*.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁷⁷ Michael J. Macoun, *Wrong Place, Right Time: Policing the End of Empire* (London: The Radcliffe Press, 1996), 40-41.

⁷⁸ MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report 1963*.

⁷⁹ Mark Freeman, ‘From “character-training” to “personal growth”: the early history of Outward Bound, 1941-1965’, *History of Education* 40:1 (2011): 21-43.

⁸⁰ MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report 1969*.

and personal potential'.⁸¹ Still others were able to pursue higher education. In 1969, two cadets were admitted to Southern Illinois University to undertake a four-year degree in Criminology.⁸² Isaac indicated that this promotion of higher education continued in the Service after Okwaare's time as commissioner had ended. 'I think the late seventies, I think mid-seventies, even, prisons department would send some of the staff to go to the university', to study courses such as economics and statistics.⁸³

Technical staff also sought out further education. The career of Noah, a Jopadhola from Eastern Uganda, illuminates the type of training and expertise of the technical staff in this period.⁸⁴ Noah joined the Service just before the end of Okwaare's time as commissioner.⁸⁵ He had previously attended secondary school and done training in agriculture and forestry work.⁸⁶ In the early years of his career, Noah worked on several prison farms and became a welfare assistant.⁸⁷ In the mid-1970s, he completed a two-year diploma program in Social Work and Community Development at Nsamizi Training Institute.⁸⁸ In an application to join to the Uganda Prisons Research Bureau in 1975, Noah framed himself as a product of the Okwaare generation. He noted how he had 'widely travelled all over Uganda', could speak at least seven languages, was a 'keen reader' who was 'quite interested in research work', and had studied both statistics and criminology.⁸⁹ The following year, Noah requested permission to apply for a course in adult education at the University of Nairobi, noting that it was 'quite relevant to my type of work'.⁹⁰

Officers in the lower ranks expressed an appreciation for the knowledge they received from senior officers. As Isaac commented, 'after independence, they were able

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report 1967*.

⁸³ Interview with Isaac.

⁸⁴ UPSA, Uganda Prisons Record of Conduct and Service of 'Noah', 'Application for the post of Asst. Research Officer', 10 March, 1975.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ UPSA, 'Noah', 'Application forms for a One year Diploma Course in Adult Education', 16 March, 1976.

to take some of our prison officers to UK and Canada for some training, so they would come back and train us within the prisons and improve the situation'.⁹¹ William described the officers who returned from training in England as being very 'well-equipped with the whole administration' of prisons.⁹² Discussing the importance of rehabilitation and treating the prisoner as a 'human being', Martin remarked, 'Actually that idea was brought back to us', referring to the officers who went abroad.⁹³

Retired members of the Okwaare generation were relatively easy to locate for interviews, as they are widely known amongst contemporary prison staff and many have remained involved in the Service in an advisory capacity. The five individuals of this group whom I interviewed – Robert, Luke, Stephen, Margaret, and Simon – were very willing to discuss their careers. In the interviews, they spoke with a mixture of pride, nostalgia, and sadness, reflecting on individual and collective achievements, as well as the many hardships they faced. Through their oral histories, we are provided with a much more nuanced and intimate account of the experiences of the Okwaare generation. While later chapters will illuminate the challenges these officers dealt with in the 1970s, this section will focus mainly on their first few years of employment.

Stephen, from Kabale, joined UPS in the mid-1960s. 'This was immediately after independence, so they wanted young men who had been to school, who could replace the officers who were going back to Britain. And that's how I came', he remarked.⁹⁴ Although he did not speak directly about his own educational experience, his recruitment to the rank of CASP suggests that he had attended secondary school. After joining the Service, Stephen went to Wakefield with the other CASPs in his cohort. Overall, Stephen's reflections about this experience were very positive. 'It was nice staying there', he remarked. 'We loved it'. After completing the training at Wakefield, he did placements at H.M. Wetherby Prison and H.M. Winchester Prison.

Stephen's career spanned a wide range of institutions. One of his first jobs was serving as the officer-in-charge of Masaka Prison, which was followed by an

⁹¹ Interview with Isaac.

⁹² Interview with William.

⁹³ Interview with Martin.

⁹⁴ Interview with Stephen.

appointment at Tororo Prison Farm. Next, Stephen became the Commandant of the Training School, and then went on to serve as the Senior Superintendent of Prisons for the Western Region during the Amin years. This stage of his career was marked by adversity, and he decided to temporarily leave the Service in the late 1970s due to concerns about his safety. He returned after Amin's overthrow in 1979. When Stephen retired in the 1990s, he held the rank of Assistant Commissioner of Prisons.

Luke, another former Assistant Commissioner of Prisons, was born in Gulu. Prior to joining UPS, he attended university and served as a clerk in the local government. Luke was familiar with prison work, as he was friendly with the officer-in-charge at Gulu Prison. Like many others who joined the Service, Luke was initially drawn to the atmosphere of professionalism. 'As a young man, I was impressed with the smartness of the prison officers when they were in uniform', he explained.⁹⁵ 'I was attracted by the way they work, said right, why don't I take my career there? So when I saw the advertisement in the newspaper...I said well, why don't I give it a try?'

Like Stephen, Luke joined the Service in the mid-1960s. He too enjoyed his time in England, finding it 'helpful' to 'see how the prison service in England works'. However, the experience raised some doubts and concerns, as Luke realised that UPS was 'not as advanced' as the British system and faced many 'constraints'. At a farewell party, Luke spoke to the group of trainees about the challenges of applying their newfound knowledge back home. 'I remember stating that we have learned a lot of modern things here in England, but what we have learned, some of them we cannot apply in our social setting in my country Uganda'. In contrast to the somewhat mixed experience in Wakefield, Luke was overwhelmingly positive about his time in Kenya for the Outward Bound course. As part of the training, he had the opportunity to climb Mount Kilimanjaro. 'I think that was the best experience I ever had, to be on top of Kilimanjaro', he exclaimed.

After completing his training, Luke quickly rose within the Service's ranks. During his nearly forty-year career, he worked in multiple regions of Uganda, posted to prisons in places such as Adjumani, Jinja, Bunyoro, Masindi, Soroti, and Fort Portal.

⁹⁵ Interview with Luke, No.1.

The majority of his time, however, was spent in Kampala, where he served as both the Commandant of the Training School and the officer-in-charge of Murchison Bay Prison. During the Amin years, he was posted to Soroti to run the meat-packing factory given to the Prisons Service. 'Running the factory was exciting', he recalled, emphasizing that the 'prisoners were enjoying themselves'.⁹⁶ However, the experience was often tense. Luke recalled a visit from 'diplomats from the Soviet Union', who had come as part of Amin's attempt to 'interest the Eastern countries' in Uganda's development. Interestingly, Luke suggests that the diplomats visited Soroti to establish whether or not the factory was using prison labour, which 'could not be accepted internationally' at the time. Recalling the exchange with the diplomats, Luke positioned himself as a defender of the Service's approach: 'of course I ably told them that I'm a prison officer and this is part of prison industries, we are training the prisoners, and that's all'. Luke claimed that the State Research Bureau also came to the factory and accused UPS of selling the meat on the black market. While such anecdotes were recounted without much context, Luke's decision to share them in the interview demonstrates his desire to appear as a champion of prison industries.

Luke greatly admired Okwaare and the changes he brought to UPS. In his opinion, it was Okwaare, rather than the British, who laid the foundation for a rehabilitative penal philosophy in Uganda. 'In the pre-independence days', he commented, 'prison officers were trained in a way such that the use of force was...you know, the order of the day, let me say'.⁹⁷ This changed, in Luke's view, 'because we had our first black commissioner of prisons, the late Okwaare. He designed the proper policy because he was very keen on, especially, training us the officers in, you know, criminology, and penology. He was...a reformist'. Luke also emphasized the collaborative nature of Okwaare's leadership. 'Whenever he was going out [of Uganda], he would pick a number of officers to go with him', Luke recalled.

Reflecting on his career, Luke spoke wistfully of the impact of the Okwaare group. 'Of course, I am proud that our generation who took over...we were running the

⁹⁶ Luke, Personal Interview No. 2, 3 May 2016.

⁹⁷ Interview with Luke, No.1.

prisons according to the rules'. For him, the importance of discipline was sacrosanct, and pervaded his approach to working at the Prisons Training School. Luke was, however, also careful to point out that these changes had not happened overnight. When asked about the philosophy of the Service in the 1960s, he replied, 'The purpose was of course, [the] rehabilitation of offenders. And there was a lot about reformation, and you know all this [*sic*] criminological terms'. Yet, for much of his career, he felt that such ideas were applied inconsistently. 'The majority [of prisoners] were just simply locked up', he commented. 'Taught the discipline of the regimentation of prisons... You follow the orders, and that was all at the end of the day. When you complete your sentence, off you go'. While Luke praised the opportunities provided on prison farms and in industrial workshops, he felt that only a minority of prisoners benefitted from these. 'The few lucky prisoners were taught tailoring and carpentry, so those, to my own opinion... were the lucky ones who would... on release, be able to have something to do'.

Robert, who joined the Service in the mid-1960s, was also from Northern Uganda. Born in Arua, his childhood was spent participating in the boy scouts, an organization that was very active in Uganda during the colonial years.⁹⁸ It was this experience that led him to join UPS. 'During my school days, I was a boy scout', he remarked.⁹⁹ 'And you know, boy scouts have got some kind of militarism in them. And I searched, I thought of the army, the police, but I found prisons was better, it was handling people, rehabilitating them'.

In his experience, the training was difficult and very military focused. 'It was a bit rough but we had to manage it', Robert commented. Along with drills, they spent time in the classroom, learning 'administrative law', 'prisons standing orders', and 'criminal procedure'. In his view, rehabilitation was 'not the focus' at that time. However, Robert suggested that the Service's philosophy had shifted during his time as the Commandant of the Prisons Training School in the 1970s. The 'approach was different', he insisted,

⁹⁸ Timothy Parsons, *Race, Resistance, and the Boy Scout Movement in British Colonial Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), 119-120.

⁹⁹ Interview with Robert.

and the 'subjects covered were wide', with 'good management of staff and prisoners' as the primary focus.

Although Robert felt that rehabilitation was not always embraced in the 1960s, he credited Okwaare with changing the overall philosophy of the Service. The British, in his view, were always 'looking down upon the Africans, they didn't treat them with seriousness'. Moreover, the colonial system was very punitive in his opinion. 'Punishment was the major thing', he commented. 'It changed because first of all, there was Fabian Okwaare, who changed it through attending overseas meetings and bringing the ideas to the Uganda Prisons...I thought he did a lot'.

The early years of Robert's career were mostly spent at the Training School. Initially serving as a lecturer, he became the Deputy Commander, and then the Commandant. This was the beginning of a very difficult time in his career, as he was charged with helping the school to navigate the 1970s. Following this, Robert continued to ascend the Service's hierarchy. His career trajectory was in many ways closely tied to the philosophies and programs introduced by his mentor, Okwaare. Robert travelled extensively, attending criminology conferences and training programmes abroad. He eventually rose to one of the highest ranks in the Service, and remained there for nearly two decades. To this day, he holds a senior leadership position in the public service.

Margaret, one of the few female CASPs, had a rather different experience. She had initially joined UPS in the late 1950s, recruited by a British prison officer who had taught her in a mission school. At the time of her recruitment, Margaret was employed in the Uganda Bookshop. Initially, she did not receive any training. 'By that time...we just joined and start[ed] work. My training came after I'd been in the Service', she recalled.¹⁰⁰ After two years, she was appointed to the rank of Principal Officer, and worked in the women's prison at Luzira. When the rank of CASP was introduced, Margaret was promoted to this new position. She then underwent proper training, 'We learnt administration, we learnt remission, we learnt how to treat prisoners', she commented.

Margaret was among small group of educated women who acted as leaders within

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Margaret.

the Service. Initially, she worked at Luzira and Mbale women's prisons, and then moved to Fort Portal to serve as a deputy officer-in-charge in the 1970s. This was a position of significant standing, especially as she was working in a prison dominated by male officers and prisoners. After her retirement in the early 1980s, Margaret continued to work in penal administration, serving as a district prison officer and helping to oversee the development of local government prisons. Although she did not go abroad like many of her colleagues – likely because she was promoted to CASP after she had already started working as a prison officer – Margaret shared many of Okwaare's views. She emphasized the importance of rehabilitation, commenting, 'I think we learnt the prison is not a punishment, but the training had to [be about] become[ing] a good citizen'. Margaret was also in favour of the farms and industries. 'Most of the time, the prisoner learnt', she explained. 'Many were making, they were having capital, they were [using] good sewing machines, so they were not punished'.

Not all CASPs, however, were enamored with the experience of working at UPS. Simon joined in the late 1960s after underperforming on his school examinations.¹⁰¹ He saw an advertisement for the Service in the paper, and decided to apply. Like the others, Simon attended training at Wakefield, which he characterized as a turning point in his life. Staying up late one night during the Wakefield course, he pondered his future within the Service. Having seen the approach in Britain, Simon felt that Uganda's system had too many limitations. Anticipating the challenges ahead to be insurmountable, he decided to resign upon returning home and pursue a career in business instead. When speaking about his decision to leave, there is no trace of regret in his tone. Simon is very complimentary about his former colleagues and the overall direction of the Prisons Service, but does not lament his decision to step out of it.

The memories of these officers provide a glimpse into the experiences of the Okwaare generation. They spoke in a transnational professional vernacular and used their training abroad to shape the trajectory of UPS in its formative years after independence. For Stephen, Luke, Margaret, and Robert, the goal of modernizing the Service was deemed to be a worthy – if difficult – endeavour. In Simon's view, catching

¹⁰¹ Interview with Simon.

up to the British prison system seemed like an impossible task, and he took his ambitions elsewhere. These former officers' reflections thus remind us of both the optimism and the obstacles facing UPS in the early post-colonial period.

Conclusion

What can we learn from the stories of the Okwaare generation and the figure of Okwaare himself? Their careers – which took them across continents – speak to the outward looking approach of UPS, especially amongst the ranks of its senior leadership. Okwaare was enmeshed in a transnational network of experts and practitioners, and embraced the principles of penal welfarism. He pushed his staff to do the same, introducing an entirely new rank to bolster the intellectual standard of the Service. Yet his influence went much further than the senior ranks, apparent in the rise in the number of technical staff and the adoption of the rehabilitative philosophy amongst many junior officers. In the estimation of his colleagues, Okwaare fundamentally changed the Prisons Service, introducing a rehabilitative ethos and a scientific approach to prisons work, with a particular emphasis on agriculture and industrial production. Many of his officers adopted his approach and sought to implement it throughout their careers. Yet, while they embraced the tenets of a more transnational penal modernity – staking their careers on it – they recognized the many challenges in the way of achieving such an ideal. In their view, they worked to keep such a possibility alive, bringing in new perspectives and adapting them to their local circumstances.

Thus, the story of the Okwaare generation reminds us of the significance of the early post-colonial period in terms of the global history of the prison. At international forums, Egyptians and Venezuelans worked alongside Americans and the French, redefining notions of criminality and contesting penal norms. While the 'complex cultural negotiations' that shaped penal policy in the imperial years were usually worked out in colonial offices, such deliberations shifted to new, more diverse arenas in the late colonial and early post-colonial periods.¹⁰² Ugandan officers such as Robert and Margaret had inherited a colonial institution, but now had the opportunity to make it

¹⁰² Dikötter, 'Introduction: The Prison in the World', 1.

their own, blending international norms with local considerations. This sense of possibility was powerful, and helped propel a generation of officers into a long career of public service.

CHAPTER 6
‘THERE’S NO DEPARTMENT IN UGANDA WHICH IS BETTER THAN
PRISONS’:
OFFICERS’ PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES

I first met Margaret in her family home on the outskirts of Kampala. As we sat together in her living room for an interview, my eyes were drawn to a black and white photograph, hung in a green and gold frame on the wall. It depicted Margaret as a young woman, dressed in the crisp white uniform of female prison officers. On her head rested the signature maroon cap of UPS, complete with the emblem of a golden crane. In the photograph, Margaret appears self-assured, exuding an aura of authority with her posture and expression. The image hangs alone on the wall, accorded a place of honour and visibility in this family space.

Similar photographs can be found in many living rooms across the country, providing a stylized snapshot of long and varied careers. Like the passing out ceremonies or the recruitment advertisements, these photographs serve as a stage upon which ideals of professionalism can be performed. The officers always appear immaculately dressed, with their uniform displaying markers of promotions or awards. They generally wear a fairly neutral expression, intended to demonstrate the formality of their position. The location of the photographs – usually a prominent spot on the living room wall or mantle – also serves as a signifier. For visitors, it advertises the householder’s contribution to Uganda’s public service, sparking questions that the retired officers are usually eager to answer. For the family, it provides a reminder of the importance of the profession in the making of the home. These photographs are thus important spaces of memory, pride, and performance.

What did it mean to be a professional prison officer in post-colonial Uganda? While Chapter 4 illuminated prison officers’ backgrounds and everyday experiences, and Chapter 5 looked at the careers of senior officers, this chapter examines officers’ professional identities in a more holistic manner. It focuses specifically on officers’ self-representations, using oral histories and personnel files to explore how the men and

women of UPS understood their profession and assigned meaning to it. Ultimately, officers drew on a common set of ideas and discourses, evoking a particular professional imaginary that resonated across time and space. A junior officer in Fort Portal had a broadly similar notion of what it meant to be a 'good' prison officer as did a lecturer at the Prisons Training School in Kampala, or an officer-in-charge in Gulu. This was also true of different generations: officers who had begun working either shortly before or after independence drew on similar ideas as did those who had joined in the throes of military rule. It was this professional imaginary that guided the quotidian workings of the Service in the 1960s and 1970s, shaping the word choices used in correspondence between ranks, giving weight to decisions regarding promotions, and framing disciplinary actions. It was also an important narrative resource, providing officers with a set of discourses through which to frame their careers at the time and in retrospect. Although this imaginary was not always reflected in officers' everyday actions and could provoke tensions, it nevertheless provided a shared set of expectations about what it meant to be a professional prison officer.

Officers' professional imaginaries were made up of multiple elements. The first was an abstract set of institutional ideals that aligned closely to Weberian bureaucratic principles. The professional 'persona' of a prison officer entailed an actor who adhered to rules and regulations, possessed particular expertise, and demonstrated political neutrality. Secondly, professionalism was a moral category. For many officers, the worthiness of their work stemmed from its focus on the rehabilitation of criminals, which they felt contributed to the common good of the country as well improving offenders' lives. To do this properly, officers insisted that they themselves had to be people of considerable discipline and personal integrity. One of the most consistent refrains in the interviews was the idea that the Service produced 'good' or 'decent' people through its standards of discipline and commitment to character development. Finally, officers' professional identities rested on much more interpersonal factors. The value of their work was often measured in terms of the status it conferred on them within their families or communities, the interpersonal skills they developed, and how it enabled them to pursue respectability in their own lives.

Reimagining Bureaucracies in Africa

Scholars interested in African bureaucracies are paying increasing attention the moral and personal dimensions of professional identities. Instead of simply demonstrating the salience of bureaucratic norms in the working environment, there is a growing interest in how such professional imaginaries are bound up in wider questions of community, respectability, and notions of goodness or worth. By pursuing these lines of inquiry, scholars are increasingly intertwining studies of bureaucracy with broader themes in social history.

This is evident in Carola Lentz's examination of public servants in Ghana. Along with discussing her interviewees' embrace of Weberian ideals, she situates their professionalism in the context of their personal lives. All of them came from a particular region in Northern Ghana, and thus had relatively similar backgrounds in terms of religion, schooling, and ethnicity. The majority of her interviewees 'regarded their strict Catholic upbringing as crucial for the formation of their ideas of a meritorious life'.¹ This was inculcated in particular at mission schools, a trend that was also similar in Uganda. These public servants also framed their professional values in relation to the core principles of their communities, citing 'hard work' and 'honesty' as being particularly important amongst the Dagara ethnic group from which they mostly hailed.²

In a much broader way, Beek's study of Ghanaian police officers also emphasizes the moral dimensions of public service. Even though many officers were reluctant to join the police in the first place, most have come to view their profession as a 'collective, utopian, and moral project'.³ Beek argues that because of the fragility of bureaucracy in the Global South, it 'emerges more clearly as a moral order that people believe in'.⁴ This moral order thus becomes a 'grand scheme', something that can be 'called and acted upon', and will not be shaken by 'contradictions and setbacks'.⁵ Thus, even when police officers act in an immoral or unjust way, they can still see their work

¹ Lentz, "I Take and Oath to the State," 200.

² Ibid., 201.

³ Beek, *Producing Stateness*, 7.

⁴ Ibid., 209.

⁵ Ibid., 7.

as having inherent moral worth. While Beek does not explore officers' personal lives to the same degree as Lentz, his work is still useful for thinking about how public servants frame their work in moral terms.

A final example is George Karekwaivanane's work on lawyers in Zimbabwe. Focusing in particular on the first generation of legal professionals, Karekwaivanane emphasizes how notions of 'public good' were fundamental in shaping their actions.⁶ Rather than adopting the 'formalism' of their white counterparts, these lawyers were guided 'by a set of personal and professional ethics that were grounded in concerns about the welfare of the wider communities to which they belonged'.⁷ Their social and familial networks, as well as notions of honour and masculinity, greatly informed their approach to legal work. While Karekwaivanane recognizes that these lawyers were not 'faultless heroes', he uses their experiences to 'highlight the need to avoid a default cynicism' towards professionals in this period.⁸ Thus, such scholars have reminded us of the importance of studying how post-colonial professionals generate meanings about their work, assigning its worth in relation to notions of public service, morality, community, and family.

'By the book': Bureaucratic Ideals

As mentioned earlier, the structure and philosophy of the UPS was characterized by a high degree of continuity with the late colonial period. The institutional set-up of the Prisons Service from 1962 onwards largely aligned itself with Weberian principles of bureaucracy. It was a public service institution, meant to work in the interests of the state rather than any particular government. It had a defined jurisdiction – the custody and rehabilitation of inmates – that made it unique relative to other arms of the public service. The Service was ordered in a hierarchal manner, with a clear chain of command and well-defined ranks. It maintained extensive documentation of its quotidian workings, even if much of this material was later destroyed. All officers

⁶ Karekwaivanane, "Through the Narrow Door," 60.

⁷ Ibid., 60.

⁸ Ibid., 74.

had to go through a period of training in order to develop their professional expertise. Any officer could eventually be admitted to the pensionable establishment, with the higher ranks automatically receiving a salary and pension. Finally, the Service was governed by a set of written regulations, which were set by a public service body rather than a specific office holder. In interviews, former and current officers positioned themselves within this bureaucratic tradition, using this to assert their professionalism.

Knowledge of and adherence to prison regulations was one of the most important markers of a professional prison officer. 'To bring a civilian into a prison warder...we trained them, they learned the law, the rules and regulations pertaining to prisons, and how to run the prison as a professional', Luke commented.⁹ Discussing his own career, Luke spoke proudly about his and his colleagues' commitment to these regulations. Referring to the early post-colonial period, he remarked, 'we were running the prison according to the rules and regulations...we were doing as they say, by the book'. Similarly, Matthew argued that the corpus of regulations created unity within the Service, as the officers shared 'one language of coordination...it is one language and it remained the same even if you went anywhere in Uganda Prisons Service, it is one language, one word...It is rooted'.¹⁰

An officer's archival imprint was in many ways a record of his or her adherence to these rules. Any violation of the prison regulations became a permanent feature of his or her record. In addition to the report discussing the original incident, the number of disciplinary offences was listed on each officer's performance evaluation, and was weighed as a factor in decisions regarding promotions. The code of conduct for officers was outlined in the Prisons Act of 1964, and was closely linked to the Service's emphasis on rigid discipline. Offences ranged from threatening or assaulting a senior officer to smuggling letters for prisoners.¹¹ Furthermore, the Prisons Standing Orders provided careful guidelines for officers on how to remain neutral in all aspects of their work, setting aside personal, financial, and political interests in favour of their

⁹ Interview with Luke, No.1.

¹⁰ Interview with Matthew.

¹¹ PTSL, *The Prisons Act*, 4997-5000.

professional ones. Officers who contravened these regulations were punished with up to a year in prison or through a fine.¹²

When charged with disciplinary offences, officers were quick to pledge their future commitment to regulations. For example, Phillip promised to mend his ways if he was allowed to rejoin the Service. 'I have fully understood and realised the significance of my utterly blameworthy conduct and behavior', he wrote.¹³ He assured his senior officers that he would 'do everything in me to satisfy my superiors with my good conduct and behavior and would never give a ground for any cause of complaint against me'.¹⁴ Thus, even though officers ignored or defied the regulations, they recognized their importance in shaping definitions of professionalism and leveraged promises of good behavior in order to avoid dismissal.

Senior officers were swift to condemn those who breached the regulations. Paul, a warder who had joined in the late 1950s, committed multiple offences, one of the most serious of which was being intoxicated while operating a UPS vehicle.¹⁵ In various letters discussing Paul's conduct, senior officers remarked on his 'unstead[i]ness', his 'bad record of service', and his reputation for being a 'lazy worker'.¹⁶ In his bi-annual evaluation in 1973, Paul's officer-in-charge described him as a 'crook' a 'drunkard', and a 'slippery snake', deeming him to be 'totally unsuitable for prison work' and calling him a 'thorn in the disciplinary Service'.¹⁷ Similarly, senior officers described Phillip's record as 'thick and filthy', referring to the eight offences he had committed in the span of ten months.¹⁸ In a letter denying his request to re-engage in the Service, Phillip was told he was 'unreliable', 'untrustworthy', and a 'security risk' – a common set of criticisms used to announce the end of an officer's career in UPS.¹⁹ After clashing with her officer-in-

¹² Ibid., 4997-5000.

¹³ UPSA, 'Phillip', 'Petition for Re-engagement'.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ UPSA, Uganda Prisons Record of Conduct and Service of 'Paul', M.S. Matovu to The Commissioner of Prisons, 21 March 1973.

¹⁶ UPSA, 'Paul', S. Ochen to The Officer in Charge, Uganda Government Prison Moroto, 12 November 1970.

¹⁷ UPSA, 'Paul', 'Official Confidential Report', 21 July, 1973.

¹⁸ UPSA, 'Phillip', J.A. Kabandize to The Commissioner of Prisons.

¹⁹ UPSA, 'Phillip', W.E.E. Kirkham to The Officer-in-Charge, Uganda Government Prison Soroti, 18 August 1972.

charge, Anne – who was a Principal Officer at the time – was strictly scolded by the Commissioner of Prisons’ office for her ‘unbecoming behavior’.²⁰ ‘As you are well aware’, a senior officer wrote in a letter to Anne, ‘you are the Head of the Uniformed Junior Staff at that Institution and you are, therefore, expected to be the paragon of discipline amongst the Staff’.²¹

A very different vocabulary was used to describe officers who were recommended for promotion. Dennis, who joined as a warder just prior to independence, was described as ‘conscientious’,²² ‘disciplined and mature with high integrity’²³ and ‘hardworking’²⁴ in various reports. Jeremiah was characterized as a ‘responsible officer who needs no supervision’, and a ‘good leader who commands the respect of all’.²⁵ An officer by the name of Anthony was described as being ‘very responsible’ and ‘receptive’ to learning.²⁶

Merit-based promotion was another key principle of the Service. When discussing their career trajectories, retired prison officers emphasized the many opportunities for promotion. Those who had started in the junior ranks were eager to point out how high they had risen in the Service’s hierarchy. Patrick, who had entered the Service in the mid-1970s as a warder clerk, was incredibly proud to have ended his career as an officer-in-charge. From his clerical position, he moved to ‘corporal, sergeant, chief [warder], I was principal [officer] II, then I was given a post as officer-in-charge...that’s where I retired from. So I was happy with prisons’, he explained.²⁷ Similarly, William spoke with pride about his ‘rapid promotions’.²⁸ Whereas Patrick

²⁰ UPSA ‘Anne’, Alex Owor to ‘Anne’, 10 September 1971.

²¹ UPSA ‘Anne’, Alex Owor to ‘Anne’, 10 September 1971.

²² UPSA, Uganda Prisons Record of Conduct and Service of ‘Dennis’, ‘Recommendation on Suitability for Promotion, Warder Grades - General Duties’, T.O. Omal, SSP, 7 April, 1972.

²³ UPSA, ‘Dennis’, ‘Half Yearly Confidential Reports, Junior Prison Officers’, T.O. Omal to The Commissioner of Prisons, Received February 1974.

²⁴ UPSA, ‘Dennis’, ‘Half-Yearly Confidential Reports, Junior Prison Officers’, Officer in Charge U.G. Prison Ruimi to Commissioner of Prisons, Received 30 December 1976.

²⁵ UPSA ‘Jeremiah’, ‘Half-Yearly Confidential Reports, Junior Prison Officers’, Officer I/C U.G. Prison Bihanga to The Commissioner of Prisons, 1 July 1977.

²⁶ UPSA, Uganda Prisons Record of Conduct and Service of ‘Anthony’, ‘Half-Yearly Confidential Reports, Junior Prison Officers’, Nathan Ochen to the Commissioner of Prisons, 1 July 1976.

²⁷ Interview with Patrick.

²⁸ Interview with William.

simply provided a summary of his trajectory, William underscored the significance of his work ethic and skills. Beginning his career in Masindi, he initially worked as a storekeeper, but 'because of [being] hardworking I was promoted to the next rank'. To get this promotion, William explained, 'you must be hardworking, a disciplined person, to follow your progressive examination'. While at Masindi, he was once again promoted to the rank of sergeant. Just over a decade into his career, William was moved to Kisoro to serve as an officer-in-charge, and eventually became Assistant Commissioner of Prisons. 'Because of my capability, I was selected among the rest', he explained. Thus, William emphasized his own performance in shaping his career mobility, arguing that his promotions had been earned through hard work and his performance on the job.

Along with their work ethic and conduct, officers also underscored the importance of expertise. Prison officers all had a certain minimum standard of education and had to undergo a training process to learn the principles and practices of prison work. In addition to a common body of knowledge, they also had highly specialized skills depending on their specific role within the Service. Martin spent most of his career working on prison farms. He had considerable experience in farming prior to joining UPS, and was thus posted to work on Adjumani Prison Farm after completing his training. On the farm, he was in charge of 'crop spraying' and he later learned further skills in 'poultry and piggery'.²⁹ Due to his farming skills Martin was posted to a team that went around the country opening up new prison farms. Isaac, who had a similar experience, explained, 'we had team of officers and they would come, we would get together, orient ourselves and go and open prison farms'.³⁰ As discussed in Chapter 5, expertise in criminology, statistics, and other disciplines was particularly valued amongst the Okwaare generation, evident in the emphasis placed on overseas training and the professional development conferences held for officers in Uganda.

The final key bureaucratic principle guiding officers' understanding of professionalism was political neutrality. This was enshrined in the Public Service Commission's ethos, as well as the Prisons Act. In a document outlining the

²⁹ Interview with Martin.

³⁰ Interview with Isaac.

‘philosophy’ of Uganda’s Public Service Commission, ‘neutrality’ was the first major heading.³¹ Public servants were expected to ‘deliver goods and services to the people’, and to do so with ‘impartiality’.³² UPS provided detailed regulations surrounding officers’ political engagement, which extended to their lives outside of their working hours. No member of the Service was allowed to ‘join or be associated with any organization or movement of a political character’.³³ They were also barred from joining ‘clubs, associations, trade unions or societies other than those existing for purposes of recreation, sport, or education for social intercourse’.³⁴ Officers were not allowed to express their political views publicly, and were prohibited from ‘making speeches or joining in demonstrations in favour of any political person, party or propaganda’.³⁵ Adherence to the principle of neutrality extended to an officers’ appearance, as they were prohibited from wearing ‘clothing, badges or emblems indicating adherence to or support of political parties’.³⁶

In interviews, officers presented this neutrality in a reflexive way. All of the officers worked under multiple governments, and while they acknowledged that politics had some effect on the Service, they insisted that its core purpose and institutional structure remained the same regardless of the government. Patrick, who had joined in the midst of the Amin years, insisted that the Service kept on ‘moving’ despite political changes.³⁷ ‘You see in Prisons Service...we don’t engage ourselves in other activities, but with our work, we are perfectly working nicely’. This was true, he insisted, throughout the 1970s and after Amin was overthrown. Discussing the period after Amin’s military defeat, Patrick remarked, ‘The prison, it continued, it continued...When peace was restored, we continued with our work normally’. For Benjamin, this commitment to neutrality was enhanced by the Service’s custodial role, one that he viewed as more passive than the police. ‘Prisons don’t arrest people from outside. They

³¹ UPL, *Report of the Uganda Public Service Salary Commission, 1980-1982*, 5.

³² UPL, *Report of the Uganda Public Service Salary Commission, 1980-1982*, 5.

³³ PTSL, ‘Chapter 3’, *Prisons Standing Orders*, 5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁷ Interview with Patrick.

are brought to them'.³⁸ Since prison officers' role was 'just custodian', they 'didn't have problems with anybody', he suggested. Matthew, who worked under all of Uganda's presidents, presented the Service's commitment to neutrality as steadfast and fundamental: 'Prisons has never gone into politics...with prison officers where there is any change, where there is anything, we continue with our work. We are taught, we signed for it...we don't change'.³⁹ While it is perhaps easy to be cynical of such declarations, they allow us to heed Lentz's call to examine how public servants 'produce, defend, or modify' institutional norms.⁴⁰

Prison officers' professional identities thus rested in part on their adherence to bureaucratic principles. This meant honouring the regulations, developing expertise through training, working conscientiously in the hopes of being promoted, and asserting one's loyalty to the Service and the state ahead of any particular president. While officers did not always adhere to these principles in their everyday actions – as is the case with public servants everywhere – they nevertheless drew on them as both a guide for and marker of their professionalism.

Moral Accounts of Professionalism

Officers' professional identities extended beyond these abstract bureaucratic principles; they were also intertwined with their moral codes and personal lives, and anchored to the belief that their work was valuable because it helped build better people. This was deeply tied to the Service's rehabilitative ethos, as officers believed that they were helping offenders become productive citizens. However, along with service to the nation, officers' professional identities were also intertwined with their sense of self and wider network of relationships. For some, the value of their work was measured in terms of the development of their character and interpersonal skills. For others, it derived from being able to provide a better life for their families or gain respect within their community. Thus, officers experienced the worthiness of their work at different

³⁸ Interview with Benjamin.

³⁹ Interview with Matthew.

⁴⁰ Lentz, "I Take an Oath to the State", 178.

scales – individual, familial, communal, and national – ultimately making meanings about their profession in human terms.

For many officers, the Service's emphasis on rehabilitation made the work particularly valuable. Overall, their approach to criminality represented a clear departure from racialized views in the early post-colonial period, and from Lombrosian ideas of criminality as a hereditary feature. Instead, prison officers expressed their belief that all offenders could be rehabilitated, and did not seem to have fixed views of certain 'deviant' categories. For example, Margaret spoke about working with women who were 'rough' and 'terrible', but attributed this to their social circumstances.⁴¹ Discussing women who were imprisoned for murdering their husbands, she acknowledged that many had committed the crime because the men had forced them 'to work hard' and that these men didn't 'care' about the women or give them any money. Similarly, when discussing one woman who was a 'vagrant', Margaret recalled how the woman's 'son was mistreating her', and had forced her to move from Bunyoro to Entebbe. The woman confided in Margaret that she had 'become [a] vagrant so that the government can take her back to her home'. In her experience, female prisoners became '*pole pole*' – they softened – over the course of their stay in prison and tried to become 'good women'. While Margaret was particularly attuned to how social circumstances could affect a person's behavior, male officers also expressed their belief that all offenders could be reformed. 'Our work is to make sure that whoever makes maybe a mistake, we try to train him fully so that when he goes back, he fits into society', commented William.⁴² Patrick characterized the prison as a 'centre of rehabilitation'.⁴³ Referring to the inmates, he remarked, 'when they go back, they become good people, most of them, after release'. Today, if he comes across a former prisoner, he will 'interact with them', and maybe join them for a 'cup of tea, a soda...you just cooperate with them. They're not our enemies'.

⁴¹ Interview with Margaret.

⁴² Interview with William.

⁴³ Interview with Patrick.

To transform offenders from criminals into well-behaved citizens, it was widely believed that a prison officer had to be a 'good' person. Charles, who joined the Service towards the end of the Amin years, insisted that all prison officers had to be 'disciplined so as to discipline the inmates'.⁴⁴ Similarly, Benjamin expressed the view that officers were people of sound character. 'They were very decent people, and people with discipline', he remarked.⁴⁵ 'Up to now, when I meet a prison officer I respect him...the senior or the junior, I respect him. They are the best, and they know what they are doing'. Speaking with pride, Benjamin commented. 'There's no department in Uganda which is better than prisons'. In part, he argued that this was because of the culture of the Service. Referring to the senior staff, he remarked, 'They are watching you...they will watch your behavior, integrity, ethics, they watch you'. The importance of character was also emphasized in conversations with current prison officers, who suggested that the staff were all 'good people'.⁴⁶

As officers looked back on their careers, they reflected on their own personal development over the course of their employment. 'Prisons taught me so many things', remarked Charles.⁴⁷ Along with discipline, it instilled in him the importance of being 'focused on what you are doing'. Additionally, Charles felt that the Service had enhanced his self-control and self-knowledge. 'I have learned that I should never be a person who cannot guide myself', he commented. For Patrick, who became a prison officer at a very young age, the Service had been an important space of personal growth. 'I'm happy with prisons', he remarked. 'It trained me, I was a young boy, I left school, it actually gave me money, it gave me a foundation'.⁴⁸ Discussing the Service, Benjamin remarked, 'They lifted [me]. I was taught things in my life which I would not have known in my life'.⁴⁹ For these officers, their professional identities were intimately

⁴⁴ Interview with Charles.

⁴⁵ Interview with Benjamin.

⁴⁶ Field Notes, Meeting at Uganda Prisons Service Headquarters, 7 April 2016.

⁴⁷ Interview with Charles.

⁴⁸ Interview with Patrick.

⁴⁹ Interview with Benjamin.

intertwined with their personal ones. As William remarked towards the end of an interview, 'I am who I am because of who? That Service'.⁵⁰

Officers also emphasized the interpersonal skills they had acquired. Martin was particularly proud of his 'community management'⁵¹ abilities, while Margaret felt that her work had taught her the importance of 'sympathizing with people'.⁵² Samuel, who emphasized his 'love' of prison work, was grateful for the lessons he had learned through working in the Service:

I benefited from my work, I liked it so much. Because you can understand people's mentality. Those who are bright and those [who] are not, those who are educated and those who are not. We imprison the educated and those who are not educated, the thieves, the drunkards, those who rape people, the women, the murders, all those whom you collaborate with. You have to know how they work...it helps one to collaborate with people.⁵³

Although personal commitments were often a source of intense anxiety, many were very grateful for the home life that the Service had enabled them to achieve. Sitting in his family home, Patrick reflected on how his career had enabled his family to have a good standard of living: 'I married, I got land, I built...it gave us some school fees, my children studied, I have my madame here...I'm a *mzee* now!⁵⁴ William had used his earnings to build his home and send his children to school. 'As I talk now, I am having not less than five graduates...so you can see that's some achievement', he said with pride.⁵⁵ William also credited the Service with having enhanced his status within the community, helping him to gain positions on educational boards and business organizations. Similarly, Benjamin felt that his professional standing had helped him to secure his position as the chair of the local council court. Referring to his work in the community, he remarked, 'Even the respect here I get is from prisons...it was because of the department I was in'.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Interview with William.

⁵¹ Interview with Martin.

⁵² Interview with Margaret.

⁵³ Samuel, Personal Interview, 6 August 2016.

⁵⁴ Interview with Patrick.

⁵⁵ Interview with William.

⁵⁶ Interview with Benjamin.

Others focused more on abstract notions of respectability. ‘My family recognized me as a big person’, remarked Margaret. ‘And up to now, I’ve got people who have called [*sic*] me *Affende*’.⁵⁷ Robert, who spent nearly fifty years in the Service, felt that his work was appreciated amongst his fellow Ugandans. ‘They liked the prisons and up to now, when they meet me, they give me very big respect’.⁵⁸ When I asked Benjamin what he liked most about his work, he immediately replied, ‘The respect. Prison officers respect the public, and the public respect prison officers’.⁵⁹ When looking back on their careers, it was the moral and interpersonal dimensions of prison work that ultimately made it worthwhile for these officers. This could be measured in terms of rehabilitating inmates, developing one’s own character, sending one’s children to school, or getting respecting in one’s community.

Conclusion

The men and women of UPS imagined their professional identity in multiple dimensions, envisioning themselves as loyal public servants, disciplined bureaucrats, domestic providers, and community leaders. The Service and its personnel embraced Weberian bureaucratic ideals, using these to define institutional notions of a ‘good’ prison officer. Professional identities were not only understood in relation to these bureaucratic principles, but were also represented in terms of the value brought to human lives: prisoners could be reformed and released back into society as productive citizens; officers could strengthen their interpersonal skills and integrity; and families and communities could benefit from the knowledge, status, and earnings of officers. While this does speak to the ‘ethical formation’ of bureaucrats, it is also embedded within much more local and intimate histories.⁶⁰ Although these ideals were often undercut in officers’ daily practices, they nevertheless formed a firm foundation upon which the Service’s personnel could anchor their sense of self and measure the worthiness of their work. In foregrounding these emic perspectives, we can better

⁵⁷ Interview with Margaret.

⁵⁸ Interview with Robert.

⁵⁹ Interview with Benjamin.

⁶⁰ Bierschenk and de Sardan, ‘Studying the Dynamics of African Bureaucracies’, 13.

understand officers' visions of the state and public service, both of which would be profoundly challenged in the 1970s.

PART III – CONTESTED BOUNDARIES

CHAPTER 7

MODERNITY AT THE MARGINS: *ASKARIS* AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT PRISONS

On the afternoon of 9 April 1975, a group of ‘distinguished guests’ gathered in Toro District to hear the District Commissioner speak.¹ The purpose of the event was to honour a group of prison officers from Toro, Rwenzori, and Semuliki districts who had just completed a five-week ‘promotional course’.² Calling the day a ‘historic occasion’, the District Commissioner praised the officers’ ‘exemplary discipline’ and ‘long service’ to the government.³ He reminded them that their new ranks were not ‘honorary’, challenging them to ‘work harder’ than ever before.⁴

The language, formality, and tone of the event were reminiscent of the passing-out ceremonies of UPS. However, the officers were not part of the Service, but rather members of the *Askaris* and Prisons Force of the Toro Government. They worked in ‘District Administration’ prisons, the term used to describe what had been known as ‘Native Government’ or ‘African Local Government’ prisons in the colonial period. These institutions had persisted after independence, continuing to exist outside the remit of UPS. This made Uganda’s penal set-up unique: of the few former colonies that had multiple prison systems during European rule, Uganda appears to have maintained this structure the longest following decolonization.⁵ These prisons were a prominent and enduring feature of Uganda’s post-colonial penal landscape, remaining in existence until 2006.⁶ As mentioned, the prisons of Buganda Government ceased to exist following the abolition of the kingdoms in 1967. Thus, while the Buganda Government prisons will be discussed briefly, local government prisons and their personnel will be the main focus of this chapter.

¹ Tooro Kingdom Archive (TKA) 144:2, ‘Speech, The Ag. District Commissioner, Tooro’, 9 April 1975.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Rotimi, ‘Prison Administration in Modern Nigeria’, 76.

⁶ Act 17, ‘The Prisons Act, 2006’, Acts Supplement No. 6 to the *Uganda Gazette* 42: XCVIX, 14 July 2006, 55.

Throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods, government officials tried to draw a clear boundary between local government prisons and those run by UPS. As discussed in Chapter 1, this distinction was at times seen in a positive light, with local government prisons praised as an ‘elastic’ option for dealing with non-criminal offenders.⁷ From the late colonial years onwards, however, these institutions were increasingly viewed as a stain on the state’s reputation. For example, upon inspecting Kiryandongo Prison in Bunyoro in 1958, the Assistant District Commissioner expressed his disgust at the ‘squalor of the buildings and the ragged garments of the prisoners’, and suggested that the prison was ‘unfit for human occupation’.⁸ In interviews, former UPS officers and other government officials articulated similarly disparaging views. Speaking about the *askaris*, Isaac commented, ‘they would just recruit anybody and put him there, educated or uneducated, as long as he’s able to lock and open the prison’.⁹ Jacob, a former magistrate, described these prisons as places of abuse that were removed from government oversight. ‘Inside there they had their own rules’, he remarked, listing off a range of punishments which included ‘caning’, being forced to consume hot peppers or urine, and being ‘kicked’ by *askaris*.¹⁰ ‘Mistreatment was too much in local prisons’, Jacob lamented.¹¹

Certainly, local government prisons did not have the same standard of training, formal bureaucracy, or degree of regulation as those run by UPS. The archives reveal many cases of mismanagement, lack of discipline, and physical abuse. Yet, this chapter argues that the boundary between these prisons and UPS was constantly being blurred. This was true in practical terms, with prisoners, prison staff, and prison buildings shifting between the two services. It was also apparent on an ideological level, particularly in regards to the staff. *Askaris* and senior officers harnessed discourses of professionalism in order to make claims on government authorities, seeking to be included in the ranks of respectable public servants and contesting their marginal

⁷ RCA, *Report of the Prisons Committee*, 29.

⁸ HDA ARMS 593:1, D. Brown to District Medical Officer, Hoima, 16 December 1958

⁹ Interview with Isaac.

¹⁰ Jacob, Personal Interview, 22 July 2016.

¹¹ Ibid.

position. Exploring these processes helps us to better grasp the ways in which the imaginative capital of the Service was deployed at the peripheries, strengthening our understanding of its potency and malleability.

To explore these arguments, this chapter adopts a holistic approach, assessing broader developments in local government prisons alongside examples from specific regions. Archival traces of these prisons are largely concentrated in district archives, making a balanced account across regions particularly difficult. During the colonial and early post-colonial years, there was no large-scale institutional framework to unite these prisons into a central system; their operations were instead subject to the vagaries of diverse local government authorities. However, in districts with well-preserved records, a relative wealth of detailed information is available. As more district archives are organized and made accessible to researchers, the study of these prisons will greatly enhance our understanding of local government in Uganda, illuminating the range of personalities, authority structures, and concerns that shaped politics at this level. This chapter provides a first step in that direction, while offering a more general overview of the major debates and developments that shaped these institutions in the late colonial and early post-colonial periods.

Reforms in the Late Colonial Period

Having been preoccupied with the dismal state of UPS for much of the colonial period, the Protectorate Government did not begin to make much of an effort to improve local government prisons until the 1950s. In the 1952 Annual Prisons Report, it was admitted that the ‘position of these prisons needs re-examination in order to bring them more into line with modern ideas on the treatment of offenders’.¹² In that year, the Commissioner of Prisons carried out a ‘series of inspections’ of local government prisons, and made ‘recommendations for improving their management and control’.¹³ The poor quality of the staff was cited as the ‘main obstacle to faster

¹² RCS, *Annual Report 1952*, 22.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 22.

development’, but UPS pledged that ‘everything possible is being done to overcome this difficulty and training courses are being organized whenever possible’.¹⁴

Evidence of increased access to training was apparent throughout the 1950s. In February 1954, the Office of the Secretary General in Kigezi District wrote to the *ssaza* chiefs to inform them that places had been made available for *askaris* to attend a six months course at the Prisons Training School.¹⁵ He asked the chiefs to select *askaris* who ‘appear to be useful’, ‘are thought of because of their good services to be permanent in the service’, and ‘who can read and write and are intelligent’.¹⁶ In 1955, training courses for *askaris* were held in each province, and training centres were opened up in Busoga and Entebbe, the latter of which was used to train members of the Buganda Prisons Service.¹⁷ The files on the training for recruits in Busoga outlined instruction in matters such as the Prison Ordinance, the Penal Code, and drill exercises.¹⁸

Many *askaris* embraced these new opportunities. Some would go so far as to request that they be chosen for training, writing letters to government officials to make their case. In one such letter, an *askari* from Kabale implored local officials to send him to the Training School. As justification, he provided an overview of his professional credentials, which included the army, the African Local Government Treasury Office, the office of a *ssaza* chief, and a local court. All of his previous employers, he insisted, could vouch for his ‘integrity and character’.¹⁹ The *askari* claimed that attending the course would allow him to ‘improve prison affairs in the District in future’.²⁰ He promised to use the ‘wide knowledge’ gained through the course to help other prison staff to ‘look after prisoners and other prison affairs in their areas properly’.²¹ In a

¹⁴ RCS, *Annual Report 1952*, 26.

¹⁵ KDA JLOS 5, ‘Prisons – Protocols, Staff Training’, Office of the Secretary General, KLG to all Saza Chiefs, 18 February 1954.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ RCS, *Annual Report 1955*, 29-30.

¹⁸ JDA JLOS 11:2, *Notes for the Instruction of Probationary Recruit Constables and Warders Under Going Training at the A.L.G. Training School Bugembe*, no date.

¹⁹ KDA JLOS 14, ‘Native Administration Prisons’ I, Letter to Secretary General Kigezi District Council from unknown name, 1 February 1961.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

similar letter, a clerk from Ndorwa Prison in Kabale spoke of his desire to 'gain the wide knowledge [sic] available through the course, arguing that local government prisons needed people 'with experience to push the work forward'.²²

As the quality of local government prisons gradually began to improve, employees from UPS started to seek out positions in these institutions. Abuneri K. Buluma, who had worked at UPS for five years, applied for the position of cadet jailer in the Bukedi Local Government Prison Service in 1960.²³ He promised to bring to Bukedi 'all the necessary rules of administration' and the spirit of 'co-operation', learned at UPS.²⁴ Mr. G. Ndubi, who had joined UPS in 1953 and worked at Luzira, Mutukula Prison Farm, and Patiko Prison Farm, applied to take over the post of Chief Warder at Bufulubi Prison.²⁵ Ndubi had been awarded the medal for the best recruit in his class, praised by his senior officers as being 'intelligent, ambitious and a hard worker'.²⁶ He had pursued further professional development after completing his training, becoming a lecturer at the Prisons Training School and attending the British Tutorial Institute in Nairobi.²⁷ These men represented a new class of professional prison officers who increasingly saw local government prisons as a viable place to pursue their career aspirations.

The most significant potential reform in the late colonial period was the integration of local and central government prisons into a single system. This possibility was first raised in 1952, after C.A.G. Wallis of the Colonial Office came to Uganda to carry out an inquiry into the state of local government.²⁸ Overall, his report suggested that local and central government authorities work more closely together in order to accelerate Uganda's development, reflecting the wider zeitgeist of reform in this period. 'In modern times local government cannot be developed in a vacuum', Wallis insisted,

²² KDA JLOS 2 'Native Administration Prisons', Prison Clerk Ndorwa Kikungyiri [sic] to Secretary General, Kigezi District Council, 23 March 1962.

²³ JDA JLOS 58:5, Abuneri K. Buluma to the Secretary General, Bukedi, 17 September 1960.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ JDA JLOS 4:6, O.V. Garratt to District Commissioner, Busoga, 25 January 1958.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ David E. Apter, *The Political Kingdom in Uganda: A Study in Bureaucratic Nationalism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1997), 266.

arguing, 'modern local government needs central Government to give it unity and purpose'.²⁹ In his specific institutional recommendations, Wallis suggested that all local government prisons be brought under the control of UPS. However, several district commissioners disagreed with this suggestion. C. Powell-Cotton of Lango argued that there were 'no reasons why these prisons could not be adequately run', by local authorities, provided that they were regularly inspected and that the staff were given training at Luzira.³⁰ Similarly, P.C. Minns of Busoga insisted that 'prison administration can continue to be effectively discharged by the local authorities'.³¹ The District Commissioner of Acholi, however, was in favour of the proposed amalgamation, commenting, 'I do not believe that any extension of the present Local Government system will ever bring credit to any authority'.³² Ultimately, Wallis's recommendations on prisons were rejected, with the Protectorate officials concluding that integration was 'not feasible' at the current time given funding shortages.³³ This process illuminates the discrepancies between metropolitan officials and some of the 'men on the spot', echoing the debates of the Bushe Commission in the 1930s. Many district administrators were resistant to the professionalization and centralization of local government institutions, and the Protectorate Government remained wary of financial investment in these authorities.

In 1957, Governor Frederick Crawford initiated the next proposal to merge the prison services. In a meeting with provincial commissioners, he summarized the state of Uganda's local government prisons as follows: 'Some African Local authority prisons were good, and some were very bad, and there was no reformatory effort'.³⁴ It was decided that the government could not 'contemplate the cost of taking over all African authority prisons', but that a select number would be taken over by UPS, and more prisoners would be sent to UPS in the meantime.³⁵ The Commissioner of Prisons

²⁹ Apter, *The Political Kingdom in Uganda*, 267.

³⁰ UKNA FCO 141/18377, C. Powell-Cotton, 'Notes on the Wallis Report', no date.

³¹ UKNA FCO 141/18377, P.C. Minns to the Hon. The Chief Secretary, 20 November 1952.

³² UKNA FCO 141/18377, A.H. Russell, 'Comments on the Wallis Report', no date.

³³ RCS, *Annual Report 1953*, 22.

³⁴ KRDA 43:1, 'Extract from the Minutes of the Provincial Commissioners' Conference', December 1957.

³⁵ Ibid.

suggested that any takeover of Buganda's prisons would be met with resistance due to the kingdom's desire to retain the 'prestige' of having a separate prison service; thus it was not included in these proposals.³⁶

The Buganda Government prisons had recently been through their own period of reform. This came on the heels of a crisis in Mengo Prison – the largest penal institution in Buganda – in October of 1955. On 17 October, hundreds of prisoners had rioted after not being released to witness the return of the *kabaka* from exile in Britain.³⁷ The situation escalated significantly when members of the prison staff carried out 'reprisal beatings', leaving sixteen prisoners severely injured and one dead.³⁸ The Protectorate Government launched an inquiry into the incident, and in April of 1956, the Buganda and Protectorate authorities released a joint statement outlining a number of agreed-upon reforms.³⁹ The *kabaka*'s government gave its 'assurance that no effort would be spared in the future to improve the efficiency of the Buganda prison system'.⁴⁰

Along with discussions on integration, debates also ensued over local government prison regulations. In 1958, the Protectorate Government had passed a new Prisons Ordinance, which explicitly stated that its rules would also apply to local government prisons. However, provincial commissioners in the East, West, and North raised concerns that the 'piecemeal' application of the Prisons Ordinance was impracticable given the very 'different set of circumstances' the two services faced.⁴¹ Despite these concerns, colonial officials decided that a separate ordinance for local government prisons could not be created, as this would suggest that there were 'major divergences between the standards' in local and central government prisons, which would result in 'adverse political comment'.⁴²

³⁶ KRDA, 'Extract from the Minutes of the Provincial Commissioners' Conference', December 1957.

³⁷ 'The Kabaka Home, Enters Capital in Triumph', *The Manchester Guardian*, 18 October, 1955, 1.

³⁸ RCS.L.45.Z38, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Disturbances in the Kabaka's Government Prison at Mengo on 17th October, 1955* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1956), 7.

³⁹ RCS.L.45.Z38, *Agreed Statement of Action Being Taken on the Report of the Commission of Inquiry Into Disturbances in the Kabaka's Government Prison at Mengo on the 17th October, 1955* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1956).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ KRDA 43:1, 'Memorandum: Provincial Commissioners' Conference, Application of Prisons Legislation to District Administration Prisons', October 1959.

⁴² Ibid.

Following the decision to maintain the policy of separate systems, significant funds were made available for the improvement of local government prisons. In a letter advertising these funds in August 1961, the Ministry of Local Government drew a link between the continuity in policy and the introduction of more financial resources: 'it is now clear that the Prisons department of the central Government will not be taking over any African Authority prisons, and the policy is that the two separate organizations will continue'.⁴³ Between 1959-1961, a total of £72,000 in grants was made available for local government prisons.⁴⁴ The flow of funds was temporarily cut off in 1960, however, due to problems of extreme overcrowding in UPS, with the result that no new grants were offered in that year.⁴⁵ Although the Minister for Local Government expressed his concern that this would 'cause adverse criticism in political circles', as well as make the 'effective application of the Prisons Ordinance and Rules to African Authority Prisons' nearly impossible, he claimed there was 'no alternative in light of the increasing pressure on prison accommodation and the shortage of funds'.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the grants generally represented a significant influx of funds into local government prisons.

Another issue up for debate was the separation of local police and prison staff. In contrast to the Protectorate Government, many local governments maintained a single force that carried out policing and prison duties throughout the colonial period. By the 1950s, appeals were increasingly being made to divide this force. In 1956, a representative of the District Commissioner's office in Kabarole requested a 'permanent force of prison-warders, whose duties are always the same'.⁴⁷ To achieve this, the Commissioner recommended that the 'prison staff should become an organization quite

⁴³ KDA JLOS 2, 'Native Administration Prisons' I, Office of Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government to Resident Buganda, Provincial Commissioner Eastern Province, Acting Provincial Commissioner Western Province, Acting Provincial Commissioner Northern Province, 25 August 1961.

⁴⁴ Ibid; KDA JLOS 14, 'Native Administration Prisons' I, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government to Resident, Buganda, Provincial Commissioner Eastern Province, Provincial Commissioner Western Province, Provincial Commissioner Northern Province, April 1960.

⁴⁵ KDA JLOS 14, 'Native Administration Prisons' I, Ministry of Local Government to Resident Buganda, Provincial Commissioner Eastern Province, Provincial Commissioner Western Province, Provincial Commissioner, Northern Province, 4 July 1960.

⁴⁶ KRDA JUD 43:1, H.F. Morris for Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government, 21 July 1960.

⁴⁷ KRDA JUD 74:1, M.W.M Walters for DC Toro to Owekitinisa Katikiro, 5 December 1956.

separate from the Native Government Police, whose duties are, after all, different.⁴⁸ This was echoed in 1958 by the Assistant *Katikiro* in Toro Kingdom, who argued that the ‘time is now high’ for this change, as the number of staff working in the local prisons was ‘too small and to the detriment of our Government’.⁴⁹ Based on the evidence available, it seems that most local government administrations continued to run a joint police and prisons service after independence, thus suggesting that these recommendations were not heeded.⁵⁰

As the discussions about reforming local government prisons increased, so too did the criticisms of existing conditions. In the years leading up to independence, there was a growing sense that *askaris* had not received the training, support, or respect required to adequately perform their duties. This was not only raised by the *askaris* themselves, but also by senior officials within the local government and Protectorate Government administrations. Instead of simply lamenting the dismal state of local government prison staff, as had been the case for much of the colonial years, officials began to suggest that expectations of professionalism had to be backed up by greater investment in *askaris*’ training and improvements to their working conditions.

Some of the critiques emerged from within UPS. In 1953, J. Redman, the Assistant Commissioner of Prisons, provided a report of Kikungiri Native Administration Prison that was highly critical of the local government authorities. While Redman was ‘not impressed’ with the *askaris* whom he encountered, he emphasized that they had been given very little support.⁵¹ ‘None of the Prison Staff so far as I could ascertain received any training in prison duties’, he commented, ‘but enlist and pick their knowledge as they go along’.⁵² He argued that the lack of uniforms and the ‘absurdly’

⁴⁸ KRDA, M.W.M Walters for DC Toro to Owekitinisa Katikiro.

⁴⁹ KRDA JUD 74:1, Assistant Katikiro to Owekitinisa Katikiro, 6 December 1958.

⁵⁰ See for example: KDA JLOS 5, ‘Prisons – Protocols, Staff Training’, N.K. Buhwengye, Chief of Askari Force and Prisons, Kigezi District Administration to all Prison Warders and Wardresses, Kigezi District Administration Prisons, 6 September 1973.

⁵¹ KDA JLOS 5, ‘Prisons – Protocols, Staff Training’, J. Redman, Assistant Commissioner of Prisons, ‘Inspection Report, Kikungiri N.A. Prison’, 28 December 1953.

⁵² Ibid.

low salary did not 'improve the situation', and insisted that working conditions must be improved if 'the right type of man' was to be recruited to the Service.⁵³

Similar complaints emerged in other parts of the country. In 1959, D. Brown, the Assistant District Commissioner for Bunyoro, expressed his astonishment that the local government prisons had 'managed to operate on such a meagre budget'.⁵⁴ He emphasized his dissatisfaction regarding the lack of trained staff, commenting, 'I am not at all happy that the day-to day running of the prison should be left to a clerk and a sergeant. Surely the time has come for a Prisons Officer to be appointed'.⁵⁵ The following year, another appeal was made to improve the working conditions at Bunyoro Native Government Prison, echoing many of the discussions that had unfolded regarding UPS personnel in the 1930s. As one inspector who visited the prison remarked:

The prison staff is of a low standard. They lack accommodation. If an improvement of security is necessary, serious consideration must be taken to provide accommodation for the staff. The whole machinery of the prison administration requires significant changes and I feel that a new policy should be drawn up for the future. Staff of the right calibre is required; consideration is needed to raise the standard of the present warders. Ways...must be found of attracting young men of a high educational standard to join the prison service.⁵⁶

The Inspector of Police and Prisons for Toro provided one of the most impassioned appeals on this issue in 1959. Writing to the *Owekitinisa Katikiro*, the leading government official in Toro's local government administration, the Inspector requested greater support for *askaris* and respect for their position. He argued that his staff were 'looked down at as a mere orderlies, errandmen not least houseboys having no initiative in their carrier [*sic*]'.⁵⁷ This attitude, he contended, was a 'great strife and disservice to the detriment of the whole country'.⁵⁸ Moving forward, he argued, all employees needed to

⁵³ KDA, J. Redman, Assistant Commissioner of Prisons, 'Inspection Report, Kikungiri N.A. Prison'.

⁵⁴ HDA ARMS 593:1, DB to District Commissioner, 26 September 1959.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ HDA ARMS 593:1, M. Kisoboyi, 'A Visit to Bunyoro NG Prison', 3 September 1960.

⁵⁷ TKA 99:2, Inspector of Police & Prisons, Toro Government to Owekitinisa, Katikiro of Toro, 30 December 1959.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

be treated with equal dignity: 'For me, I have not seen the difference between a chief, a clerk, and an *askari* since they are all Government servants who must be treated equally'.⁵⁹ The Inspector was very critical of the Toro authorities. 'High officials themselves have not tried to promote this force, and it is purely absurd if one can claim to be running an efficient Government if one has not got an efficient Police and Prisons service', he argued.⁶⁰ To make the service more effective, the Inspector suggested that the government 'recruit men who intend to make the Police and Prisons a carrier [*sic*] and who will expect good returns for the service they will render to the Government and the Country'.⁶¹

By 1961, such complaints were being addressed at higher levels of government. At the District Commissioners Conference for the Western Province in April that year, the District Commissioner of Bunyoro complained that staff in the local government prisons had received no training whatsoever, and as a result had 'very low' standards of performance.⁶² He suggested that more training be offered at Luzira, and the delegates also discussed the possibility of attaching local government staff to UPS institutions for a period of further professional development.⁶³ The latter recommendation was agreed upon, and delegates expressed their satisfaction that it would lead to 'an appreciable raising of both discipline and efficiency'.⁶⁴

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, the conditions and future direction of local government prisons were receiving more official attention. The Protectorate Government voiced its commitment to improving these institutions through facilitating increased training opportunities and also by ensuring greater oversight. The push for reform, however, was not only at a top-down level, but also emerged from the ranks of local government prison staff and government authorities. Overwhelmingly, these actors made it clear that *askaris* needed better institutional support in order to improve

⁵⁹ TKA, Inspector of Police & Prisons, Toro Government to Owekitinisa, Katikiro of Toro.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² KRDA JUD 43:1 'Extract from the Minutes of the District Commissioners' W.P. Conference held on 25th and 26th April, 1961, Minute 4/61.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

their professional standards. As the next section demonstrates, this view was increasingly adopted by the *askaris* themselves. Their demand for greater pay and recognition reveals much more than the concerns of disgruntled employees. Rather, it illuminates a range of expectations and anxieties that were emerging in a time of rapid political change, as many Ugandans began to demand a fair return on the promises of the modernization and progress offered by the colonial state.

The 1957 Bufulubi Prison Strike

On the morning of 3 October 1957, the *askaris* at Bufulubi Prison declared a strike.⁶⁵ They removed their uniforms and refused to work, leaving over 400 prisoners locked in their cells.⁶⁶ When R.F. Roper, the District Commissioner of Busoga, arrived at the prison site with Protectorate police officers in tow, he found the staff seated under the tree, allegedly in a 'riotous mood'.⁶⁷ The head *askari* held copies of a petition, and was said to be 'shouting that nothing would be done until all these grievances as shown were settled on the spot'.⁶⁸ Promising to listen to their complaints, Roper requested that the *askaris* go back to work. However, each of the senior *askaris* continued 'shouting' and became increasingly 'truculent', with one 'shaking his fist' at Roper.⁶⁹ Following this, the remaining *askaris* allegedly went into a state 'beyond any control or reasoning' and volunteered to be arrested with their superiors.⁷⁰ In total, seventy-nine *askaris* – the entirety of the custodial staff with one exception – were arrested, and the officer-in-charge was temporarily suspended.⁷¹ The situation was

⁶⁵ JDA JLOS 4:6, R.F. Roper, District Commissioner, Busoga District to the Provincial Commissioner, Eastern Province, 12 November 1957.

⁶⁶ JDA JLOS 4:6, O.V. Garratt to the Permanent Secretary for Security and External Relations, 9 October 1957, 1; JDA JLOS 4:6, *Commission of Enquiry on the Disturbances at Bufulubi Prison on the 2/3 October, 1957*, To the District Commissioner, Busoga, 8 November 1957, 5.

⁶⁷ JDA, *Commission of Enquiry on the Disturbances at Bufulubi, 1957*, 5.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶⁹ JDA JLOS 4:6, 'Statement of Mr. R.F. Roper', 5 October 1957, JDA 4:6, *Commission of Enquiry on the Disturbances at Bufulubi Prison on the 2/3 October, 1957*, 2.

⁷⁰ JDA JLOS 4:6, 'Statement of Mr. J.T. Fleming', 5 October 1957, JDA 4:6, *Commission of Enquiry on the Disturbances at Bufulubi Prison on the 2/3 October, 1957*, 2.

⁷¹ JDA JLOS 4:6, Regina versus Yafasi Walulenga and 78 Others, Uganda Protectorate in the District Court of Busoga at Jinja, Criminal Case no. 821 of 1957, 2.

unprecedented, representing the largest collective action by a group of prison employees in Uganda's history.

Bufulubi Prison had first opened in March 1956, a mere year and a half before the strike.⁷² It was the largest African Local Government prison in the Eastern Province, occupying nearly 1,000 acres intended to provide food for all prisoners in the district.⁷³ As was the case in UPS at this time, there was an upsurge of farming activities in local government prisons. However, while the UPS prison farms were viewed as sites for prisoners' rehabilitation, the local government farms were mainly seen as a way to reduce costs. The officer-in-charge of Bufulubi was a man with the surname of Bamutire, who was employed by the Busoga African Local Government as the Chief of Police and the Chief of Prisons.⁷⁴ Initially, official reviews of the prison had been very positive. In November 1956, a district officer charged with inspecting Bufulubi commented that 'the general impression of the prison and the work being done there was good'.⁷⁵ He noted that the 'farm is flourishing', and was 'starting to provide food for other prisons in Busoga'.⁷⁶ Overall, he found the prison 'clean and orderly', and said there were 'no serious complaints' from the prisoners.⁷⁷

Between December 1956 and September 1957, this positive perception deteriorated. After another inspection of Bufulubi in December 1956, the same official reported that he had found 'a most disturbing feature', explaining that he had discovered 'three prisoners, without any supervision, picking cotton in a *shamba*' belonging to an *askari*.⁷⁸ He had then run into an *askari* who was 'out of uniform' and a group of three additional prisoners, and the *askari* confessed that they were going to help him build his house.⁷⁹ Bamutire was away from the prison site on that day, and insisted that the infractions were only due to his 'absence'.⁸⁰ He promised to 'take

⁷² JDA, *Commission of Enquiry on the Disturbances at Bufulubi*, 1.

⁷³ Ibid., 1.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 1.

⁷⁵ JDA JLOS 18:21, District Officer i/c Resettlement to District Commissioner, Jinja, 27 November 1956.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ JDA JLOS 18:21, District Officer i/c Resettlement to District Commissioner, Busoga District, 7 December 1956.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

disciplinary action' against the offending staff members.⁸¹ Further concerns were raised in 1957 when large bills began coming in for prisoners' food, despite the extensive area allocated for such a purpose.⁸² Upon inspection in June of 1957, officials found that *askaris* were growing cotton on sixty acres of prison land located behind the officer-in-charge's house.⁸³ The local government officials inspecting the site ordered Bamutire to shut down the illegal cotton growing.⁸⁴

It was clear, however, that the situation had unraveled completely by October 1957. The Protectorate authorities were shocked by what had occurred and rushed to mitigate the crisis. Following the arrest of the Bufulubi staff, the Protectorate Government acted decisively. While a district commissioner and a group of Protectorate police had initially overseen the running of the prison,⁸⁵ UPS formally assumed control of Bufulubi by the end of the month.⁸⁶ This was a significant undertaking, as Bufulubi had a population of over 400 prisoners, and thus required approximately 70 staff.⁸⁷ Officers had to be drawn from other Protectorate prisons, a reallocation that was problematic in a time of rising overcrowding and political unrest. The stakes had been raised even further as 'immediate signs of possible strikes by Warders at a number of County Headquarters in the District' were reported.⁸⁸ A strike was initiated at the nearby Bugembe Prison, but was called off after government officials agreed to hear the *askaris'* grievances.⁸⁹ Although the motivations behind these other strikes are unclear, they affirmed the Protectorate authorities resolve to take action at Bufulubi, and indicated the growing discontent among *askaris* in the Eastern Province.

At the same time, the judicial process was proceeding at a rapid pace. The *askaris'* case was brought to the Busoga District Court, the highest court in the region

⁸¹ JDA 18:21, District Officer i/c Resettlement to District Commissioner, Jinja.

⁸² JDA, *Commission of Enquiry on the Disturbances at Bufulubi*, 2.

⁸³ Ibid., 2.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 2.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 5.

⁸⁶ JDA JLOS 4:6, 'Take-over of Bufulubi Prison by the Protectorate Prisons Department', Permanent Secretary for Security and External Relations to The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government, 25 October 1957.

⁸⁷ JDA, O.V. Garratt to the Permanent Secretary for Security and External Relations.

⁸⁸ JDA JLOS 15:14, H.W. Muloki, R.F. Roper, 'Bufulubi Prison Administration', 5 November 1957.

⁸⁹ JDA JLOS 4:6, 'Diary of Events Concerning the Strike at Bufulubi Prison on 3rd October, 1957', 2.

run by the Protectorate Government.⁹⁰ All of the *askaris* were charged and found guilty of ‘disobeying a lawful order’, while twenty *askaris* within this group – presumably the ringleaders of the strike – were faced with the additional charge of ‘unlawful assembly’.⁹¹ By 18 October, only fifteen days following the strike, a verdict had been reached.⁹² In his judgment, Resident Magistrate K.T. Fuad was highly critical of the *askaris* and the senior staff at Bufulubi. He was wary of Bamutire’s evidence, noting that he had been ‘suspended from his duty’ following the incident – and thus may have had a particular agenda – and that his ‘demeanour’ was ‘far from convincing’.⁹³ Of the two *askaris* who gave testimony, Fuad made the following comments: ‘I cannot say that either accused impressed me that they were witnesses of truth’, providing no further elaboration.⁹⁴ Fuad found all of the accused guilty of disobeying a lawful order and sentenced them to two months imprisonment with hard labour.⁹⁵ From the evidence available, it is not clear how the remaining *askaris* were punished.

Along with the judicial proceedings, the Protectorate government launched a formal inquiry into the incident. It appointed a commission consisting of diverse official authorities, including two Assistant District Commissioners, two *ssaza* chiefs, and the treasurer of the Busoga African Local Government.⁹⁶ The commissioners consulted a range of witnesses to determine the cause of the strike, meeting with African Local Government officials, UPS personnel, the *askaris*, and prisoners at Bufulubi. They produced a nineteen-page report summarizing their key findings, and ultimately concluded that the strike was a ‘red herring’ meant to distract from ‘true state of affairs at the prison’, namely the ongoing illegal cotton growing activities and the unchecked power of the staff.⁹⁷ They blamed Bamutire and the head warder, Balaba, for instigating the strike.⁹⁸ Overall, the report summarized the state of Bufulubi as follows: ‘The

⁹⁰ JDA JLOS 4:6, ‘Uganda Protectorate in the District Court of Busoga at Jinja’, Criminal Case No. 821 of 1957’.

⁹¹ Ibid., 1.

⁹² Ibid., 14.

⁹³ Ibid., 9.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 14.

⁹⁶ JDA, *Commission of Enquiry on the Disturbances at Bufulubi*, 19.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 14.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 15.

warders' food was free, discipline was lax and a reign of terror was established over the prisoners to such an extent that they dare not complain'.⁹⁹

A very different narrative, however, was offered in an appendix attached to the Commission's report: a nine-page letter written by the *askaris* stating their grievances. In the letter, the *askaris* portrayed themselves as professionals seeking proper treatment. They not only outlined their frustrations, but also made clear their aspirations, calling on the government to provide them with the compensation and recognition befitting their position as public servants.

Much of the letter focused on material issues. The *askaris* argued that they did not have sufficient means to meet the basic needs of their families. While this was partially due to low pay, it was also a result of their lack of access to land. They outlined how they had 'just come to Bululubi and we neither have *bibanja* here nor *nsuku* from which we would get food', *bibanja* referring to plots of land and *nsuku* meaning banana plantations.¹⁰⁰ Further on in the letter they acknowledged that some land was provided to them, but explained that they had decided to use it to grow 'some cash crops from which we got money to assist our little salary'.¹⁰¹ The *askaris* also refuted the African Local Government's position that such cultivation was not allowed on prison land, contending, 'Miruka Chiefs, clerks and our fellow *askaris* placed at different places in counties, each individual employee of the A.L.G cultivates cotton, maize, groundnuts, etc. from which one can get cash...they all cultivate on Government Land'.¹⁰²

Further material issues were raised in respect to housing. The *askaris* characterized their accommodation as 'very bad', explaining how they were allocated 'one room which is also very small and we are expected to use it both as the sitting and bed room [*sic*] to be used by us but also our families'.¹⁰³ Such a situation, they argued, was undignified and violated customary housing arrangements:

The mistreatment we are given like animals is that of expecting us to sleep in the same rooms with our...in laws! Should dealing with *askaris* mean

⁹⁹ JDA, *Commission of Enquiry on the Disturbances at Bufulubi*, 16.

¹⁰⁰ JDA, 'Complaint from Employees at Bufulubi', 3 October 1957, 1.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 3.

abolishing customs? Why should we be expected to sleep in the same room with our grown up children? Aren't we like other employees of the government?' ¹⁰⁴

In contrast, they argued that employees at UPS received 'very good houses', furniture, and 'big salaries'. ¹⁰⁵

With their low pay, poor housing conditions, and lack of land, the *askaris* deemed their treatment to be insulting. 'We, employees at Bufulubi, are being treated in a specially very bad way when compared to the treatment given to the other employees of the government', they exclaimed. ¹⁰⁶ 'The starting pay of many *askaris* in other districts is that which our sergeants get. Even many of our "motor boys" and "tractor boys" start with salaries higher than what our corporals get'. ¹⁰⁷ They also contended that chiefs were disproportionately favoured: 'Whenever there is an increase of salary...leaders only increase their salary. When will such selfishness come to an end in this tribe?' ¹⁰⁸ Initially, chiefs had a wide scope for personal enrichment in colonial Uganda: they often received a ten percent rebate on the taxes collected, and had considerable control over unpaid labour. ¹⁰⁹ While their salaries were gradually standardized over the 1920s and 1930s – paid out of a Native Government treasury that was generated from general tax revenue – there were still opportunities for corruption and personal gain, and chiefs also had privileged access to European goods and mission education. ¹¹⁰

In contrast to the chiefs, the *askaris* said they were living in 'poverty'. ¹¹¹ Referring to their low salary, they exclaimed 'How will it suffice clothing our families, to pay school fees for our children, and meet costs of supporting our relatives at home from where you brought us?' ¹¹² Along with material hardship, the *askaris* argued that they were

¹⁰⁴ JDA, 'Complaint from Employees at Bufulubi', 3.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 4.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 2.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰⁹ See: Vincent, 'Colonial Chiefs and the Making of Class', 149-152; Tosh, *Clan Leaders and Colonial Chiefs*, 168.

¹¹⁰ Lloyd Fallers, 'The Predicament of the Modern African Chief: An Instance from Uganda', *American Anthropologist* 57:2 (2009): 298-300.

¹¹¹ JDA, 'Complaint from Employees at Bufulubi', 2.

¹¹² Ibid., 1.

not treated in a dignified manner. This, they claimed, stemmed mainly from the chiefs, who would regularly disrespect the *askaris* by using them to rear goats and serve as 'house boys'.¹¹³ This greatly offended them, as they wanted to 'be counted as *askaris* and employees of the government – not chiefs' house boys'.¹¹⁴

The sense of inferiority was compounded by the treatment they allegedly received from officials in the African Local Government. To illustrate this, the *askaris* referred to the visit of Mr. Walukamba, the local government official who had inspected Bufulubi earlier in the year. During this visit, *askaris* claimed that Walukamba was 'abusing' them – both physically and verbally – in front of the prisoners, and thus disrespecting them by 'rebuking us in the presence of the people we look after & supervise'.¹¹⁵ They resented this arbitrary treatment: 'We think that, like other employees, we have freedom, and we have higher authorities before whom we can be accused or prosecuted and on conviction be punished by them accordingly'.¹¹⁶ Here, the *askaris* positioned themselves as employees embedded within the wider structure of the colonial state, and insisted that this formality be honoured. Overall, they complained that they were 'being differentiated from our fellow government employees and were being treated worse than prisoners'.¹¹⁷ Summarizing their issues at the end of the letter, the *askaris* concluded:

While ending we want our demands to be understood as return of our *shambas* to us and permission to continue cultivating as our fellow employees do...Moreover, although chiefs are given large salaries, we have never seen or heard that they have been prevented from cultivating or that their *shambas* have been taken away from them. Due to the points enumerated above, which include excessive aggression, excessive looking down-upon, and the mistreatment we are given as though we were inhuman, we have simply found ourselves not in a position to bear it any longer and stay at work, certainly not before things are put right.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ JDA, 'Complaint from Employees at Bufulubi', 4.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 4.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 2.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 2-3.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 2.

¹¹⁸ JDA, *Commission of Enquiry on the Disturbances at Bufulubi*, 5.

Throughout the letter, the *askaris* evoked a powerful vocabulary of modernity in order to make their claims heard. This was expressed in more abstract ways, as *askaris* insisted on their right to ‘freedom’ and a fair course of justice while decrying the government’s refusal to recognize their equality and humanity. It was also articulated in more concrete terms, with demands for land, the right to perform agricultural labour, fair wages, and decent housing. The letter also evoked many moral concerns, defending ‘customs’ and denouncing the ‘selfishness’ of the chiefs. Thus, the *askaris*’ letter is not simply a list of grievances, but rather a deep deliberation on inequality and a sharp critique of the corruption of local government authorities. As discussed in Chapter 2, such sentiments were particularly acute in the Eastern Province at this time, resulting in widespread riots and attacks on chiefs and their property.

The Commission addressed the *askaris*’ letter directly in their report. Ultimately, it rejected the letter’s claims, concluding that it was not a reflection of legitimate grievances, but rather meant to besmirch senior officials in the African Local Government. The commissioners went through each complaint in depth, discrediting each of them as ‘untrue or frivolous’.¹¹⁹ Thus, both the commissioners and the magistrate condemned the actions of the *askaris*, characterizing them as little more than deceitful criminals.

What then can we make of the *askaris* claims? Were their grievances simply a smokescreen to distract from the illicit activities at Bufulubi as the Commission’s report suggests? Or do they represent the genuine concerns of government employees who felt undervalued? There is a range of possibilities in between, and it is difficult to entirely discount any of them given the evidence available. Only a handful of files on Bufulubi Prison exist in the Jinja District Archive, and there are few mentions of the strike elsewhere. However, settling issues of culpability is not the primary value of the Bufulubi strike. Rather than legitimizing or dismissing a particular narrative of events, we should instead consider how the *askaris*’ representations reflected both the

¹¹⁹ JDA, *Commission of Enquiry on the Disturbances at Bufulubi*, 14.

‘aspirations and anxieties’ of a particular professional groups in a time of profound political, economic, and social change.¹²⁰

The *askaris*’ representation of themselves as professionals can be explained in two ways. Firstly, it registered their desire for inclusion. Attached to one of the core institutions of colonial modernity, *askaris* insisted on entering into the ranks of public servants and trained professionals. This goal was increasingly within reach in the late colonial period, especially as officials began paying more attention to local government prisons. As *askaris* became more aware of the benefits offered to other prison staff, they too wanted what they deemed to be their fair share of compensation and respect for their work.

Secondly, the *askaris*’ representation signified their fear of exclusion. As they entered into their new profession, there was much that they left behind. Like their counterparts in UPS, *askaris* lived on prison sites, and were thus away from their extended families, land, and local networks. Cut off from the moral and material economy to which they were accustomed, *askaris* were in a high-stakes situation, facing tremendous pressure to secure benefits that made their sacrifices worthwhile. This theme runs throughout the Bufulubi *askaris*’ letter, as they justified their decision to grow cotton by expressing their anxiety about the lack of access to *bibanja*, and relayed their fears about being unable to pay their children’s school fees or provide support for their relatives.

Tied to this was the *askaris*’ expectation that the government would provide them with the support necessary to make ends meet. Throughout the letter, the government is seen as the direct cause of the *askaris*’ struggles, such as when they complained about their salary, remarking: ‘How will it suffice clothing our families, to pay school fees for our children, and meet costs of supporting our relatives at home from where you brought us?’¹²¹ Here, the *askaris* implied that the government must compensate them for the losses they incurred by taking up employment in a public service. In a basic sense, therefore, they invoked the idea of a social contract by

¹²⁰ Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, location 118.

¹²¹ JDA, ‘Complaint from Employees at Bufulubi’, 1.

suggesting that a certain level of return should be expected in exchange for government employment.

Moreover, the *askaris*' desire to grow cash crops and unease about school fees reflected their concerns about navigating a more monetized economy, one introduced during colonial rule. In his work on labour movements in Senegal in the late colonial period, Cooper draws attention to the Senegalese trade unionists' refusal to accept the discrepancy between an African standard of living and a European one; in other words, the workers were embedded within an economic and institutional framework that was being transformed by the colonial state, and thus needed adequate financial resources to operate within these systems.¹²² As one negotiator for the Senegalese workers argued, 'The evolution of this country, the long contact of the African with whites has created needs in him. We have habits that we cannot abandon, needs that must be faced. If we have children, we want to give them a secondary education...just as we want comfort for ourselves'.¹²³ Although unfolding in a different context, the Bufulubi *askaris* made similar claims, demanding a level of compensation that would allow them to better cope with the changing socioeconomic context.

Throughout the late colonial period, *askaris* agitated for a more dignified position within Uganda's penal landscape. The point here is not to assess the extent to which *askaris* transformed themselves into professionals in this period, but rather to examine how they framed themselves as such, using this identity to make claims on the state. Both the act of growing cotton on prison land in order to provide food for one's family and the decision to strike represent the *askaris*' desire for the material and social trappings of professional status. Even though growing cotton was technically a violation of their conditions of employment, it was a way of seeking benefits that the state – in their view – should have provided. Thus, the articulation and breakdown of professionalism could happen concurrently, as *askaris* simultaneously transgressed the boundaries of their position by cultivating a colonial cash crop while also demanding more respect for their work. Ultimately, there were no clear dividing lines between these

¹²² Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, location 204-230.

¹²³ Ibid., location 209.

transgressions and articulations of idealized penal professionalism. Instead, the Bufulubi *askaris* were strategically drawing from the conceptual and material resources at their disposal, making their way in an environment of considerable constraints.

Askaris After Independence

The years immediately following independence were characterized by continuity rather than change, as many of the local government prison reforms that had been initiated in the late colonial period were extended in the early 1960s. An example of these changes can be seen in Kigezi District in southwestern Uganda. The penal set-up in Kigezi was somewhat unique, as it did not have any UPS prisons.¹²⁴ Instead, Ndorwa and Kikungiri prisons held short-term offenders who had been sentenced in the courts of the central government, while long-term offenders were sent to Mbarara or Luzira prisons.¹²⁵ Thus, UPS was more deeply involved in Kigezi than it was in other districts, as it had to provide money to cover the upkeep of central government prisoners, as well as ensuring that they were adequately treated.

Following independence, the Kigezi District prisons were reorganized. Two of the original six penal institutions that had existed in the colonial period were closed, and money was provided to develop Ndorwa and Kikungiri prisons. In 1963, Kigezi District was awarded a grant of £1500 towards improving its prisons, a major boost given that the total spent on these institutions in 1962 was £1240.¹²⁶ Mr. G.A. Otheino, a Principal Officer from UPS, was transferred to work in Ndorwa prison in July 1964 in order to ‘ensure the safe custody of central Government prisoners’.¹²⁷

One of the most significant changes in the 1960s was the closing down of the Buganda Government Prisons Service. As mentioned, this decision was not made explicitly with prisons in mind, but was rather a consequence of Obote’s decision to

¹²⁴ KDA JLOS 14 ‘Native Administration Prisons’ II, F.L. Okwaare to Officer in Charge, Central Government Upper Prison, Officer in Charge, Central Government Prison, Mutukula, 6 July 1964.

¹²⁵ Ibid; KDA JLOS 14, ‘Native Administration Prisons’ I, *Kigezi District Council Prison Report for the Year ending 31st December 1960*.

¹²⁶ KDA JLOS 2, ‘Native Administration Prisons’, D.S. Kaberuka to Commissioner of Prisons, 11 April 1962.

¹²⁷ KDA ‘Native Administration Prisons’ II, F.L. Okwaare to Administrative Secretary, Kigezi District, 6 July 1964.

abolish the kingdoms. UPS took over some of the larger prisons, such as Makindye Remand Prison and Kigo Prison Farm.¹²⁸ The remaining smaller prisons were absorbed by the district administrations. Samuel, an officer who had begun his career in the Buganda Government prison system, was transferred to a district government prison. In his view, the district governments did not have ‘sufficient’ resources to run the prisons properly, and he felt the staff was not well trained compared to the personnel in the Buganda Government prisons.¹²⁹

Much more information is available on the state of local government prisons after Amin’s coup. The exact reasons for this are unclear, although Amin certainly took a particular interest in local government at a broader level.¹³⁰ Early on, there were some efforts made to improve local government prison standards. In September of 1972, the Commandant of the Prisons Training School wrote to the district administrations to announce that the School was ‘preparing to train still a larger number of your officers in the near future’.¹³¹ Earlier that year, district prison officers had been invited to send their staff for a specialized course at the School. It lasted three months, and trainees learned about the ‘modern methods of treatment of offenders’, the ‘powers of dealing with prisoners’, and the ‘importance of Security’.¹³² Along with these broad objectives, the course was structured around a very detailed syllabus, which included over thirty specific aspects of prison work, such as the ‘review of sentences’, the ‘Punishment of Persons in custody’, and ‘Education of Prisoners’.¹³³ The course was free of charge, with district administrations only asked to cover food costs.¹³⁴ In a course offered in the spring of 1972, a total of 108 places were made available to local government prison staff, indicating the considerable opportunities for training available in this period.¹³⁵

¹²⁸ MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report 1968*.

¹²⁹ Interview with Samuel.

¹³⁰ Peterson and Taylor, ‘Rethinking the state’, 58-82.

¹³¹ JDA JLOS 71:7, Joseph Etima to Officer-in-Charge, All District Administrations, 15 September 1972.

¹³² KDA JLOS 3, ‘Kabale/Kigezi District – Prisons & Police’, J.A.A. Etima, Commandant, Uganda Prisons Staff College, to the Officers Commanding Local Administration Prisons, 5 April 1972, 1.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

One possible effect of this expanded training appears to be the creation of a new cadre of high-ranking prison officers. In December of 1975, a meeting of senior prison officers in Busoga District was held.¹³⁶ It served as an opportunity to remind officers of their duties and the importance of their work. In a speech by J. Kisiria, the chairman, officers were exhorted to perform their work with care and discipline.¹³⁷ ‘You should not forget that you are well trained’, proclaimed Kisiria, and that ‘the public expects confidence in you, therefore whenever you stand idle or sit aimlessly you spoil the good reputation and good behaviour of the entire force’.¹³⁸ He implored the officers to ‘Remember that you are a public servant’ and emphasized the ‘importance of discipline and co-operation’.¹³⁹ Concluding his remarks, he urged them ‘to work hard without hesitation or fear in order to uplift the already existing name of Jinja District’.¹⁴⁰ Kisiria’s remarks echoed those of local government prison staff elsewhere, but also UPS officers, Obote, and Amin. Drawing on discourses of public service and patriotism, he thus connected the work of local government *askaris* in Jinja to narratives that had wider political currency in the post-colonial period.

Along with better training, efforts were made to improve the conduct of the staff. In 1973, the *askaris* in Kigezi District were provided with a document entitled ‘The Duties of a Prison Warder and Wardress in a Prison’.¹⁴¹ It outlined specific rules, but also called upon the staff to maintain a high level of discipline and diligence in their work. *Askaris* were encouraged to be ‘co-operative’, ‘alert’ and to always appear ‘smart and fully uniformed’.¹⁴² N.K. Buhwengye, the Chief of the *Askaris* Force and Prisons for Kigezi District, authored the document, and subsequently took it upon himself to ensure that such standards were met.¹⁴³ Writing to local chiefs in March of 1975, Buhwengye informed them that ‘some of your *askaris* don’t bother to clean their

¹³⁶ JDA JLOS 26:11, ‘N.C.Os Meeting held on 16/12/75’.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ KDA JLOS 5, N.K. Buhwengye to All Warders and Wardresses.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ KDA JLOS 5, ‘Kabale/Kigezi District – Prisons & Police’, N.K. Buhwengye to All Gombolola Chiefs, South Kigezi District, 20 March 1975.

uniforms', and lamented that they 'don't even respect their superiors'.¹⁴⁴ He also critiqued *askaris*' conduct after working hours, chastising them for going into bars while in uniform, 'taking Alcohols [*siz*],' and 'fighting with civilians'.¹⁴⁵ Ending his note, Buhwengye declared that *askaris* should be 'smart all the time', and always respect their superiors, warning that those who did not would 'be dealt with accordingly'.¹⁴⁶

Another aspect of significant change in the 1970s was related to the use of prison labour. In 1973, the Ministry of Public Service & Local Administrations announced that 'no prison labour force should be hired out to private individuals or private organizations'.¹⁴⁷ Justifying the decision, the Ministry cited 'penological principles', and 'international conventions and practices', referring specifically to the ILO Convention No.29.¹⁴⁸ The Ministry also explained that such misuse of labour 'deprives the prison institutions of the labour force which should be usefully employed at the prison industries, farms or any other establishments', thereby suggesting that an effort was being made to ensure the efficiency of these activities.¹⁴⁹ The letter announcing the decision was circulated to the Auditor General, the treasurers of all district administrations, and the Principal of the Institute of Public Administration, signifying its gravity.

Despite these many reforms, not all of the *askaris* felt that their conditions were improving. Although there are very few examples of correspondence from *askaris* in the post-colonial period, a letter written by prison officers in Toro in 1970 offers a glimpse into some of their wider concerns. Writing to the Minister of Regional Administrations, the *askaris* complained about their low salaries. 'We *Askaries* of nowadays we are really finding difficulties', they remarked, citing their 'little' salary as the primary cause.¹⁵⁰ The money they received, they argued, could not 'even help us to put our children in

¹⁴⁴ KDA, N.K. Buhwengye to All Gombolola Chiefs, South Kigezi District.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ JDA JLOS 71:7, N.K. Kebba to The Administrative Secretaries, All District Administration, 8 January 1973.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ TKA 144:2, Ask No. 255, Ask.No.53, Warder No. 84, Warder No. 63, Warder No. 117, Warder No. 152 to the Minister of Regional [*siz*] Administrations, 13 April 1970.

schools, and hardly help our family home'.¹⁵¹ The *askaris* begged the government to change the situation: 'we are handing our reasons to you to see to it that our Government is trying hard to welcome our matters, because here in Tooro we are dying'.¹⁵² Like the *askaris* in Bufulubi had done, they compared their situation to other local government prison staff, commenting 'some of the *Askaris* were given [a] good amount...thus we are misunderstanding one another in this Government'.¹⁵³ Although aspects of the letter are somewhat unclear, and there is no reply to provide further context, the tone and language used are reminiscent of the Bufulubi *askaris*' letter. In both cases, the *askaris* demanded sufficient compensation to provide a good life for their families, and asked to be given equal treatment relative to other government employees.

Despite the attempts to professionalize the local government prisons, officers at UPS looked at these sites disparagingly, characterizing them as places of informality, corruption, and personalized authority. 'The standards of administration, the conditions of living were totally different', Stephen explained.¹⁵⁴ Expertise was used as a key marker of distance between the *askaris* and UPS staff. Robert pointed out that most *askaris* were 'not even trained. You would take a relative and take him there [to work]'.¹⁵⁵ William, who worked in a local government prison after it had been integrated with UPS, was also very critical. 'The word local means a lot', he remarked, criticizing the poor quality of the *askaris*.¹⁵⁶ Both Luke and Margaret frowned upon the decentralized use of labour in local government prisons, suggesting that the reforms mentioned earlier were not fully implemented. Prisoners in local institutions 'used to got to the villages and dig for people', Margaret recalled, which was 'not allowed' at UPS.¹⁵⁷ Luke recalled how prisoners would be 'hired out to go and work', which was then used to 'supplement

¹⁵¹ TKA, Ask No. 255, Ask.No.53, Warder No. 84, Warder No. 63, Warder No. 117, Warder No. 152 to the Minister of Riginal [sic] Administrations.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Stephen.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Robert.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with William.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Margaret.

their maintenance within the prisons', rather than going to the government.¹⁵⁸ Thus, in the view of UPS officers, local government prisons did not live up to their standards of penal modernity.

Integration

The most significant development regarding local government prisons in the post-colonial years came in 1977, when Amin's government officially decided to integrate them into UPS.¹⁵⁹ Announced on 15 March, the decision was made without warning and took immediate effect.¹⁶⁰ News of the policy was shared with the provincial prison authorities on 28 March, informing them that 'all district administration prisons formerly under the administration of the Ministry of Provincial Administrations' had officially ceased to exist.¹⁶¹

A significant degree of mystery pervades the documents declaring this decision, which outline the particulars of integration but do not provide any commentary on the motivations behind it. As very few documents on internal government deliberations are available for this period, there is little in the way of archival evidence to consult. Former prison officers who were interviewed remember the integration process, but few could give definite answers as to why it was initiated. Robert suggested that it was driven by the realization that prisoners in local government prisons were 'suffering'.¹⁶² Stephen, however, insisted that the policy 'had been a decision of the United Nations really, it was not Amin'.¹⁶³ While plausible, Stephen was the only officer to suggest this, and there is no corroboration of it in the archival materials available.

Like many of Amin's decisions, the announcement of integration caused confusion amongst *askaris* and also in the Ministry of Provincial Administrations. Writing to the Commissioner of Prisons in May 1977, V.B. Ssekkono, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Provincial Administrations, expressed his office's desire to

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Luke, No.1.

¹⁵⁹ KRDA JUD 4:5, Sentamu to All Provincial Prisons Commissioners, 28 March 1977.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Interview with Robert.

¹⁶³ Interview with Stephen.

‘discuss in detail how best to integrate the Local administration Prison Service into the Uganda Government Prison Service’, as well as the ‘financial implications of the exercise’.¹⁶⁴ He closed his letter by noting, ‘We are anxiously looking forward for [*sic*] such a meeting’.¹⁶⁵ Similar uncertainty was apparent amongst the prison staff. C.E. Kabale, the Principal Agricultural Assistant for prison farms for Busoga, wrote a letter to his superiors seeking clarification: ‘Now that they are being taken over I would wish to know what my position will be and also that of the staff [I] am working with’, he remarked.¹⁶⁶

Although the motivations behind the integration are unclear, the parameters of the process are concretely spelled out in policy documents. All of the local government prisons were to be taken over, along with: ‘all buildings within the Prison authority, land, farms, any plantation whatsoever, machinery, vehicles, livestock, poultry and all movable and immovable property, water works, factories, stores and equipments [*sic*], inmates and staff and their families’.¹⁶⁷ However, only some of the staff was absorbed into UPS, as they were considered to be ‘slightly of lower calibre than those of the Uganda Government Prison department’.¹⁶⁸ While technical personnel – such as farm and animal husbandry officers – were automatically given positions, *askaris* had to go through an interview process.¹⁶⁹ Those who did ‘not measure up to the standards’ of UPS were left to find other positions within the district administrations.¹⁷⁰ By September of 1977, after the interview process was complete, it was revealed that ‘a number of *askaris* and prison staff, who through no fault of their own, have not been absorbed into the Government prison service simply because their training and experience did not measure up with the standards required by the Government prison

¹⁶⁴ JDA JLOS 37:7, V.B. Ssekkono to The Commissioner of Prisons, 9 May 1977.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ JDA JLOS 37:7, C.E. Kabale to The Provincial Commissioner for Agriculture, Busoga Province, 23 June 1977.

¹⁶⁷ KRDA, Sentamu to All Provincial Prisons Commissioners.

¹⁶⁸ KRDA JUD 4:55, Letter V.B. Ssekkono to Treasurers, All District Administrations, 25 May 1977.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

service'.¹⁷¹ These individuals were provided with pensions on an ex-gratia basis, provided that they had served for at least five years.¹⁷²

UPS officers largely remembered integration as an annoyance. William was posted to Kisoro Prison in 1979, which had previously been under the local government authority. In his view, the former local government prisons were of a much lower quality than the UPS institutions. He described the integration process as 'very, very difficult', noting that the staff was 'not fully trained', and that basic equipment and infrastructure were lacking.¹⁷³ Stephen, who was working in the Western province at the time, said that the newly incorporated staff 'became inconvenient. In that, you see we had to bring them up to the standard of the central government'.¹⁷⁴

Ultimately, this integration proved to be temporary. The Uganda-Tanzania War put much of the work of government on hold or under strain, and likely compromised the effectiveness of the integration process. In 1983, the decision was made to return the majority of the former local government prisons back to the district administrations.¹⁷⁵ Again, the motivations behind the decision are unclear, and my interviewees could not offer any insight into why the integration was reversed. In total, ninety-eight prisons were given back to district administrations, while UPS retained eleven, with full integration not enacted again until 2006.¹⁷⁶

Conclusion

Over the course of the late colonial and early post-colonial periods, the boundary between UPS and local government prisons was increasingly blurred. No longer viewed as an 'elastic' alternative, these institutions became the object of a concerted effort to remake them along more modern lines.¹⁷⁷ The impetus for such

¹⁷¹ KRDA JUD 4:5, V.B. Ssekkono to Treasurers, All District Administrations, 2 September 1977.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Interview with William.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Stephen.

¹⁷⁵ KDA JLOS 27, 'Government Prisons', Francis J. N. Mukama to the Administrative Secretaries, 'Hand-over of District Administration Prisons', 22 April 1983.

¹⁷⁶ KDA 27, 'Prisoners General Amnesty – Uganda Government Prisons', Appendix II: Prisons to be Retained by Uganda Prisons Service'.

¹⁷⁷ RCA, *Report of the Prisons Committee*, 29.

changes had come from numerous directions, including the Colonial Office, Governor Frederick Crawford, senior officials in African Local Governments, Amin, and the *askaris*. Throughout the late colonial period and after independence, the *askaris* found themselves in an uncertain position, expected to be upstanding public servants but lacking the material rewards and status that such a position entailed. In response, they contested the boundaries of respectable work, drawing on the imaginative capital of the Service to assert their inclusion within the ranks of professional government employees. While the 1957 strike at Bufulubi Prison represents the most dramatic example of *askaris'* demands for change, it reflects a much wider circulation of discourses, demands, and anxieties amongst local government prison staff in this period. As this chapter suggests, imaginaries of penal modernity were porous, and could be summoned for a variety of purposes by actors on the margins.

Furthermore, the development of local government prisons and the experience of the *askaris* reflect much wider themes in Uganda's history, from tensions over cotton cultivation to debates about the parameters of public service. A product of indirect rule, local government prisons were a source of considerable unease throughout the late colonial and early post-colonial periods, as officials wrestled with the boundary between local and central authorities. Such issues were present not only in the colonial years but also after independence, as political leaders tried to decide if local government institutions were a help or a hindrance in their pursuit of modernity. Prisons were one arena in which these debates played out. Both Obote and Amin ultimately ended up curtailing the diversity of Uganda's penal system, the former through abolishing the Buganda Government prisons, and the latter through the integration of local and central government prisons. Yet, while the Buganda prisons did not re-emerge, local government prisons remained a resilient feature of Uganda's penal landscape until after the turn of the millennium. While the possible reasons for this – financial constraints, a lack of state capacity in the wake of violence and political instability, or a genuine belief in the value of local government prisons – are unclear, it gives us pause to reflect on the parameters of state power in the post-colonial years.

CHAPTER 8

‘DUNGEONS’ AND ‘SLAUGHTERHOUSES’: INFORMAL DETENTION IN THE 1970s

Walking into his office at Radio Uganda on 15 February 1977, WodOkello Lawoko was confronted by men holding pistols and submachine guns.¹ Within a few minutes, he had been arrested on charges of treason.² For 196 days, Lawoko was held in the basement of building in Nakasero, a lush residential neighbourhood in Kampala.³ This basement, which Lawoko characterized as a ‘dungeon’, was part of the infamous headquarters of the State Research Bureau.⁴ In his memoir, Lawoko recalls the utter horror that detainees faced behind these walls:

There were blood soaked shirts, torn bloodstained trousers, bits of human bone, excrement...All were the belongings and remains of people that were no more. The walls were all blood stained and in some places human brain tissue and dung was sprayed, confirming the types of treatment previous occupants had received...The odour was that of death itself.⁵

Nakasero was not an official prison, but was rather one of the numerous informal sites of confinement used by Amin to detain, torture, and kill those perceived to be enemies of his regime. Detention occurred in many places – including private residences, luxury hotels, and military barracks – creating a covert cartography of terror outside of the formal prison system. These ‘safe houses’ were run by the various paramilitary organizations set up by Amin to carry out his regime’s most violent activities, and were completely separate from UPS.

Safe houses have dominated popular and scholarly portrayals of incarceration in Amin’s Uganda. Throughout the 1970s, newspaper headlines such as ‘Dungeon Visit Yields Latest Amin Horrors’ shocked international audiences with tales of brutality.⁶

¹ Lawoko, *The Dungeons of Nakasero*, location 1735-1746.

² Ibid., location 1729.

³ Ibid., location 109.

⁴ Ibid., location 1833.

⁵ Ibid., location 1928.

⁶ Tony Avirgan and Martha Honey, ‘Dungeon Visit Yields Latest Amin Horrors’, *Washington Post*, 14 April 1978, accessed 23 November 2016,

Accounts of these sites were also used by Ugandan exiles calling for Amin's overthrow. In an address to the Joint Subcommittees of the House International Relations Committee in the United States, Remigius Kintu of the Committee of Uganda decried Amin's use of 'concentration camps', in which detainees were treated 'in some of the most barbaric ways this world has seen since Hitler's time'.⁷ More recently, accounts of detention have featured prominently in memoirs of the Amin era, evident in titles such as *Dungeons of Nakasero* and *Escape from Idi Amin's Slaughterhouse*.⁸ Descriptions of detention have also appeared in recent historical scholarship on the Amin years. Although offering far more nuanced portrayals of the 1970s, these scholarly accounts still rely on graphic descriptions and fail to delineate the boundaries of informal and formal incarceration. Safe houses have thus been central in cementing Amin's image as the epitome of a post-colonial dictator.⁹

While representative of real brutality, these accounts fall into a trap so often evident in writing on post-colonial Africa, glossing over empirical evidence in favour of sensational stories. With few exceptions, they neglect to distinguish safe houses from the prisons run by UPS. Yet, as this chapter argues, there was a clear division between these two arenas of incarceration. Government prisons were not the primary sites used for torture and extra-judicial killings in the 1970s. Individuals could be dumped at government prisons without the proper paperwork, and face poor conditions and abuse, but they would not encounter systematic torture or elimination at the hands of state security agents. As a former minister and critic of Amin commented, 'if one was taken to the prison, he had a much greater chance of surviving'.¹⁰ This is not to suggest that violence was absent from UPS in this period, but rather to emphasize that there was a very definite boundary between safe houses and official prisons, one that often tipped

https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1979/04/14/dungeon-visit-yields-latest-amin-horrors/362f4ba4-e26e-429c-9370-e681281bb780/?utm_term=.0b82c7efbcc8.

⁷ Institute of Commonwealth Studies Library (ICS), Uganda Pressure Groups Material (UPG), Committee on Uganda (COU) PG.UG.COU, 'Testimony before Joint Subcommittees of the House International Relations Committee, Remigius Kintu, Secretary, Committee of Uganda, Inc.', 1 February, 1978.

⁸ See: Lawoko, *Dungeons of Nakasero*; Kato, *Escape from Idi Amin's Slaughterhouse*.

⁹ For more on representations of Amin, see Mark Leopold, 'Sex, violence and history in the lives of Idi Amin: Postcolonial masculinity as masquerade', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 45:3 (2009): 321-330.

¹⁰ Henry Kyemba, Personal Interview, 24 May 2016.

the balance between life and death. This is one of the key empirical findings of this research and has important implications for thinking about the nature of the state during military rule.

Drawing on memoirs, oral histories, and grey literature, this chapter explores informal incarceration in the 1970s. Unsurprisingly, there is almost no record of safe houses in official archives, as barely any documentary trace was left of the organizations that ran them. The one exception to this is police reports in the Central Police Station archive. In the cluttered records room of CPS, one can find routine police reports – often scrawled on loose sheets of paper – documenting the actions of State Research Bureau agents. For example, there is a complaint from a man who claimed that State Research Bureau agents had assaulted him and his family at their home for hiding Amin’s photo.¹¹ In another report, a woman describes how SRB agents accused her of stealing, demanded a bribe, and warned her that she would not come back alive if she ended up in Nakasero.¹² Although barely accessible in the mountains of old files and errant papers, these police reports provide a rare documentary trace of Amin’s paramilitary organizations. They also remind us of the power of paperwork, offering a record of Ugandan citizens’ willingness to report such abuses and the police’s decision to write them down.

Therefore, we must look beyond government sources to examine the safe houses, weighing evidence that is often steeped in dramatic rhetoric. This is useful on its own terms, as it helps us to better understand representations of the Amin regime and their reductive nature. It also reminds us of the tremendous violence that Ugandans faced in these years, and the contours of the Amin regime’s ‘coercive network’, which was used to terrorize and kill perceived opponents.¹³ By examining these detention sites, we can better understand the challenges that UPS officers faced in the 1970s and the informal network of terror that many sought to distance themselves from.

¹¹ Central Police Station Archive (CPSA) 2, CRB/2019/76, J. Dema robs A. Binayo, 1976-77.

¹² CPSA, CRB/745/77, M. Nametebi, 1977.

¹³ Sherman, ‘Tensions of Colonial Punishment’, 660.

Amin's Security Apparatus

Amin's takeover brought with it the unchecked power of the military in the political arena. This was made explicitly clear with his first official decree, issued shortly after the coup. It established the 'Defence Council' – composed of Amin, the chiefs of staff for the army and the air force, and any other persons whom they deemed fit to appoint – to take over the machinery of government.¹⁴ This council became 'the only effective decision-making body in Uganda', assuming more power than Amin's ministers.¹⁵ Soon after, Amin issued another decree declaring that all future decrees would be 'promulgated by the military head of state, head of the government and commander-in-chief of the armed forces' thereby placing 'full legislative, executive and military powers' in his own hands.¹⁶ Having established the military's dominance, Amin began to arm it with the power to curb resistance and ensure order. While there are a litany of decrees from the early days of the Amin regime, three are particularly significant when it came to removing restrictions on security agencies. On 13 March 1971, Amin passed the 'Detention (Prescription of Time Limit) Decree'.¹⁷ This legalized the detention of anyone who had been detained during the coup or former GSU personnel for up to six months.¹⁸ It was followed by the 'Armed Forces (Powers of Arrest) Decree', which gave soldiers or prison officers the power to 'arrest any person whom he suspects on reasonable grounds of having committed or being about to commit', offences against 'public order', 'the person', or property.¹⁹ It ushered in a period of unfettered power for security forces to arrest people on the slightest suspicion or even personal vendettas. Finally, in 1972, Amin announced the 'Proceedings against the Government (Protection) Decree'.²⁰ This rendered government officials immune to prosecution for 'anything done or omitted to be done for the purpose of maintaining

¹⁴ UPL, Decree 1 of 1971, 'The Armed Forces Decree', 2 February 1971.

¹⁵ International Commission of Jurists, *Uganda and Human Rights: Reports of the International Commission of Jurists to the United Nations* (Geneva: International Commission of Jurists, 1977), 15.

¹⁶ Ibid., 15-16.

¹⁷ UPL, Decree 7 of 1971, 'The Detention (Prescription of Time Limit) Decree', 13 March 1971.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ UPL, Decree 13 of 1971, 'The Armed Forces (Powers of Arrest) Decree'.

²⁰ UPL, Decree 8 of 1972, 'The Proceedings Against the Government (Protection) Decree', 8 May 1972.

public order or public security', for the 'defence of Uganda' or for the 'enforcement of discipline or law and order'.²¹ Together, these decrees empowered the security organs of the Amin state to arrest and detain people at will without fear of legal repercussions.

While these decrees may appear to have enhanced the power of the Police Force and UPS, in reality these institutions were undercut by Amin's new paramilitary organizations. Intensifying the practice begun by Obote, Amin moved the locus of power into the hands of new agencies that operated outside the scope of the Public Service Commission. The most notorious was the State Research Bureau, formed in June 1971 to replace the GSU.²² It did not have a 'constitutional nor a statutory base', and its 'ultimate head' was Amin himself.²³ It was designed to gather intelligence for the regime, especially when it came to identifying potential dissidents.²⁴ In the estimation of Wycliffe Kato, a former public servant of the Amin regime and SRB detainee, its actual purpose was to 'eliminate, by the most brutal methods possible, all [of] Amin's enemies'.²⁵ One interviewee described the State Research agents as 'gods [un]to themselves, they were not answerable to nobody'.²⁶

According to former minister Henry Kyemba, the SRB was the 'most powerful and the most feared' security force in the 1970s.²⁷ It had approximately 2,000 agents, many of whom were drawn from outside of Uganda.²⁸ They were hardly inconspicuous, known for their bell-bottom trousers, platform shoes, and flashy vehicles.²⁹ The flamboyant nature of their dress was no accident, but rather symbolic of the performative nature of terror in the Amin years. As Decker argues, 'Terror was most useful to the regime when its result were publicly known, since it paralyzed protest and silenced opposition'.³⁰ SRB agents were widely recognized, yet they evaded the boundaries of official visibility, as they were not explicitly marked in a uniform. Rather,

²¹ UPL, 'The Proceedings Against the Government (Protection) Decree'.

²² Decker, *In Idi Amin's Shadow*, location 1156.

²³ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 600.

²⁴ Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence*, 112.

²⁵ Kato, *Escape from Idi Amin's Slaughterhouse*, 3.

²⁶ Robeson Engur, Personal Interview, 24 July 2016.

²⁷ Kyemba, *State of Blood*, 114.

²⁸ Jørgensen, *Uganda: A Modern History*, 284.

²⁹ Decker, *In Idi Amin's Shadow*, location 1183.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, location, 1085.

they occupied a liminal space, serving as agents of Amin rather than members of the state bureaucracy. A similar paradox of the visible and the covert characterized their headquarters: the pink stucco building was an infamous landmark from which nearby residents reported hearing screams, but it was closed off to all but the SRB agents and detainees.³¹

Many memoirs of Amin-era detainees include an encounter with these ostentatiously dressed agents at their home or workplace, which was usually followed by arrest and detention in Nakasero. In his memoir, James Kahigiriza, former Chairman of the Uganda Land Commission, narrated one such incident:

On 15 February 1977, at about 10.00 o'clock in the morning, three young men came to my office opposite the parliamentary buildings. They wore dark glasses and high-heeled boots.... My captors led me from the second floor of the building, down to the pavement at the ministry's parking yard, where their car was waiting. When they opened the door of the back seat for me to enter, I saw machine guns on the floor of the car. It was then that I realised I was heading for slaughter.³²

Kahigiriza was indeed taken to Nakasero, but he was ultimately released after less than a month in detention.³³ This came as a tremendous 'surprise' to him, as many of his government colleagues had been killed there.³⁴ The reasons for his release were not made clear, with the SRB agents saying nothing more to him other than 'you are going but what you have seen here, leave it here'.³⁵ This order echoed the motto allegedly inscribed on the walls of Nakasero: 'Secret what you do here, secret what you leave here'.³⁶

The Public Safety Unit was another organization that carried out arrests, detentions, and extra-judicial killings. According to the evidence of one former commander, it was composed of approximately 1,000 uniformed and plainclothes police officers from the Criminal Investigation Department.³⁷ Created in November of 1971,

³¹ Decker, *In Idi Amin's Shadow*, location 1197.

³² Kahigiriza, *Bridging the Gap*, 47-48.

³³ Ibid., 54.

³⁴ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 82.

³⁵ Ibid., 82.

³⁶ Decker, *In Idi Amin's Shadow*, location 1183.

³⁷ Ibid., location, 258.

its ostensible purpose was to tackle *kondoism*³⁸ – armed robbery – but, in the view of the CIVHR, ‘it soon became synonymous with the torture and murder of detainees’.³⁹ The PSU was given the freedom to shoot those suspected of *kondoism* on sight or to bring them to their headquarters in Naguru, the same neighbourhood that houses the contemporary headquarters of the Uganda Police Force.⁴⁰

Although formally part of the Police Force, the PSU operated entirely outside of its normal parameters. When asked about the PSU’s relationship to the Police Force, Michael, a former officer in the CID commented, ‘They were different from us’.⁴¹ Laughing nervously, he continued, ‘they were sent to arrest people, and a lot of things...’ trailing off without giving further details. Discussing how Amin’s agents looked down upon the police, Michael commented, ‘They used to call us women’. As Decker argues, this feminization of the Police Force, ‘reinforced the masculine supremacy of the military’, enhancing the gendered division of power that was present in Amin’s state.⁴² Of all the security organizations, the police appear to have been the most profoundly undermined by the Amin regime. One former minister remarked that they had been ‘rendered powerless’,⁴³ while the Public Service Commission declared that the Police Force was ‘shattered’ over the course of the 1970s.⁴⁴ In Michael’s view, this went back to the issue of boundaries. Referring to the relationship between the military and the police, he remarked, ‘They meet very much. But with the prisons they send their people, their accused people’. Thus, in Michael’s view, the Service was removed from some of the more damaging interactions with the military.

The final major paramilitary organization was the Military Police. First created by Obote in 1967, the unit was designed to ‘control the behavior of soldiers’.⁴⁵ During the 1960s, it was controlled by some of Amin’s most loyal followers, many of them

³⁸ Decker, *In Idi Amin’s Shadow*, location 6745.

³⁹ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 257.

⁴⁰ Modern Records Centre (MRC) MSS 34/4/1/UG 4, AFR 59/05/78, *Report on human rights in Uganda*, June 1978, 4.

⁴¹ Michael, Personal Interview, 19 July 2016.

⁴² Decker, *In Idi Amin’s Shadow*, location 1127.

⁴³ International Commission of Jurists, *Uganda and Human Rights*, 18.

⁴⁴ UPL, *Report of the Public Service Salaries Commission, 1980-1982*, 256.

⁴⁵ Kasozi, *Social Origins of Violence*, 89.

from his home region of West Nile.⁴⁶ Following the coup, Amin maintained this body, using it to further entrench the dominant position of the military. The Military Police had a broader scope than the PSU, but were similarly engaged in the harassment, torture, and murder of civilians and soldiers. Throughout the 1970s, the Military Police were responsible for detaining and murdering perceived opponents at Makindye Military Prison, one of the most infamous safe houses. Despite its name, neither the military nor the Prisons Service ran this site. It was known in particular for the ‘Singapore’ execution cell, named in honour of the country that Obote was visiting during the coup.⁴⁷

Safe Houses

Makindye, Naguru, and Nakasero are remembered as the epicentres of the Amin regime’s brutality. While testifying to the CIVHR, Henry Kayondo, the former President of the Uganda Law Society, singled out these three spaces as being host to the worst abuses of 1970s.⁴⁸ ‘The violations of human rights, some of them never appeared in courts’, he insisted, ‘they were committed in Naguru, they were committed in “Singapore” cell, they were committed up there in State Research’.⁴⁹ Beyond these three, however, there were untold numbers of informal places of confinement. These included Lubiri military barracks, housed on the grounds of Mengo Palace; cells in police stations; hotel rooms; and private homes.⁵⁰ Informal detention sites were mostly concentrated in Kampala and the central region, but they were also scattered throughout the country.

Of all the safe houses, Nakasero is arguably the most infamous. It was ironically located next to a children’s daycare centre and All Saints Cathedral.⁵¹ Prisoners were held in the basement of the building in one of two cells: the first, known as C1, was for condemned prisoners, whereas the other one was left for those detainees whose fate

⁴⁶ Decker, *In Idi Amin’s Shadow*, location 887.

⁴⁷ Martin, *General Amin*, 213-226.

⁴⁸ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 274.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 274.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁵¹ Lawoko, *Dungeons of Nakasero*, location 1061.

had not yet been determined.⁵² George Kasozi, a lawyer who was detained in the 1970s, recalls being ‘packed like sardines’ with one hundred other detainees in a cell designed to hold fewer than twenty people.⁵³ Like Lawoko, his strongest impressions of Nakasero were visceral: ‘Of course it was so filthy, because there were no toilets, there was a bucket towards the extreme end of the prison cell, where people relieved nature, and it was terrible, the stench was terrible’.⁵⁴

Interrogation, torture, and murder were aspects of daily life in Nakasero. Detainees would regularly be brought into the SRB offices for questioning, often asked to confess their involvement in plots against the regime. If they refused, they would be whipped by SRB guards, who were instructed by senior agents to give the detainees their *kikopo ya chai*, or a ‘cup of tea’, the phrase used to describe this form of torture. The murder of condemned prisoners often took place at night, with detainees awakening to see ‘armed men with sledgehammers, crowbars and bayonets’, some of the instruments most commonly used by the SRB agents for their killing activities.⁵⁵ It was in this detention site that some of the most prominent victims of the Amin regime were allegedly killed, including Archbishop Janani Luwum.⁵⁶

Makindye Military Prison was similarly notorious. Survivors recounted the horror of ‘Singapore’ cell, in which detainees were subjected to particularly perverse forms of torture.⁵⁷ Testifying to the ICJ, former minister Joshua Wakholi described his surroundings in Makindye. Following a brutal murder of an entire cell of prisoners, Wakholi and other prisoners were asked to clean out the cell. ‘In fact, I think the dried blood that was on the floor was almost a quarter of an inch thick’, he remarked, ‘and the whole place was full of pieces of skull bones, teeth, brain tissue and many other pieces

⁵² Lawoko, *Dungeons of Nakasero*, location 1932.

⁵³ Kasozi, *Assault on the Spying Church of Uganda*, 52.

⁵⁴ George Kasozi, Personal Interview, 11 April 2016.

⁵⁵ Lawoko, *Dungeons of Nakasero*, location 2815.

⁵⁶ Ibid., location 1861. See also: Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 81.

⁵⁷ Martin, *General Amin*, 226-227.

of flesh from human beings'.⁵⁸ It was here that the former Chief Justice Benedicto Kiwanuka is believed to have lost his life.⁵⁹

Naguru, the home of the PSU, was another feared killing site. Testifying to the CIVHR, former Superintendent of Police Mathias Ntambi expressed his disgust at the 'inhuman' tortures carried out there, characterizing it as a 'section purposely formed for extracting information from people arrested [but] not going through the normal police procedure'.⁶⁰ In a report on human rights in Uganda, Amnesty International provided a list of torture techniques at Naguru, which included being 'beaten with a rhino hide whip', various forms of sexual abuse, and 'wheel torture', which involved having one's head stuck inside a wheel rim while the wheel was beaten with iron bars.⁶¹

Although Naguru, Makindye, and Nakasero feature the most prominently in accounts of the Amin regime, other sites are also mentioned. Mutukula Military Prison, located near the border with Tanzania, gained its infamy early on in the 1970s as the site of the 'Mutukula Massacre'.⁶² In December 1971, over 400 of the Langi and Acholi soldiers who had been held in Luzira following the coup were moved to Mutukula and killed en masse.⁶³ Former detainee James Namakajo, who was held in multiple detention sites during the 1970s, characterized Mutukula as a symbol of 'the worst that man can do in this world. I have seen the skeletons that are scattered across our country...but I would like to emphasize that Mutukula in my mind symbolizes callousness of a very different nature'.⁶⁴ Originally built as a prison farm under UPS during the colonial period, Mutukula appears to be the only government prison site that was temporarily taken over by the army, and was officially said to have 'opened' as a prison farm in 1973, suggesting that it was transferred back to UPS.⁶⁵ Nile Mansions, a luxury hotel in

⁵⁸ International Commission of Jurists, *Uganda and Human Rights*, 32.

⁵⁹ 'The Tragedy of Ben Kiwanuka', March 1983, in Adam Seftel, ed., *Uganda: The Rise and Fall of Idi Amin* (Lanseria: Bailey's African Photo Archives Production, 1994), 112-113.

⁶⁰ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 265.

⁶¹ MRC, *Report on human rights in Uganda*, 15.

⁶² Alicia C. Decker, "'Sometime you may leave your husband in Karuma Falls or in the forest there': a gendered history of disappearance in Idi Amin's Uganda, 1971-79", *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 7:1 (2013): 132.

⁶³ International Commission of Jurists, *Uganda and Human Rights*, 42; Interview with Stephen.

⁶⁴ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 52.

⁶⁵ RCS, *Annual Report 1959*, 15; MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report 1973*.

downtown Kampala that has today been refurbished as the Serena Hotel, was another infamous safe house. While it was often used as a ‘clearing house’ for processing detainees who were to be moved elsewhere, specific rooms were used for torture and detention.⁶⁶

Some individuals picked up by Amin’s security organizations went to multiple detention sites. George, who was detained for praying at a church that had been banned by Amin, was taken to three places over the course of his detention experience.⁶⁷ After SRB agents arrested George and his fellow churchgoers, they were immediately taken to Nakasero. George appears to have been particularly fortunate, stating that he was only in Nakasero for a total of twenty-two hours. He was then taken to CPS, where he was held in a truck in the parking lot for approximately seven hours. This station had been built before the Amin years and it continued to serve as Kampala’s police headquarters during the 1970s, but its holding cells were also used to carry out interrogations and torture.⁶⁸ Ultimately, George and his colleagues were taken to Luzira. ‘We thought we were going to be taken to Namanve...that’s where they used to dump the bodies after killing them’, he explained, referring to a forest near Kampala.⁶⁹ ‘We thought they were taking us there but luckily, they took us to Luzira Maximum Security Prison’.⁷⁰ He remained there for three months, and while conditions were poor, he said that most prison officers treated him with decency.

Miriam Ogwal, a woman who testified before the CIVHR, recounts an even more complicated chain of arrests and detentions. Ogwal was the wife of a Police Sergeant, and both she and her husband were from the Langi ethnic group.⁷¹ Because they shared an ethnicity with Obote, the Langis were intensely persecuted during the Amin years. Following the arrest of her husband as part of a culling of Acholi and Langi police and prison officers, Miriam attempted to track him down. In the process, she

⁶⁶ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 73.

⁶⁷ Interview with George Kasozi.

⁶⁸ MRC, *Human Rights in Uganda*, 14.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 14.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 14.

⁷¹ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 275.

claims that SRB agents arrested her for ‘bothering them about my husband’.⁷² Initially held overnight in a ‘prison’ in Lira – the details are not specified – she was released the next day.⁷³ Several months later, Miriam claims she was arrested again, held in Lira Police Station, and tortured by a SRB agent who allegedly cut her ear off.⁷⁴ From there, she tells of her transfer and month spent in Nakasero, where she was ‘beaten daily’ and forced to drink urine.⁷⁵ Following three more weeks of detention in Lira military barracks, Miriam was released and advised by an army officer to ‘go deep into the village’ in order to avoid further harassment.⁷⁶

For many others, detention ended with death. This is evident in the various terms used to refer to Nakasero. In his memoir, Wycliffe Kato characterized it as a ‘slaughterhouse’, while George called it ‘a prison of no return’.⁷⁷ Two of my interviewees claimed to have lost family members in these sites. Kyemba recalled how his ‘relatives were picked up and taken to informal places’ despite his status as a government official.⁷⁸ One of his brothers was eventually killed at Naguru. Robeson Engur, a former soldier who had served under the Obote II government and had been imprisoned in Luzira following Obote’s overthrow in 1985, recounted watching his father being taken away by SRB agents from their home in Lira in the late 1970s.⁷⁹ His father – Yokosofati Engur – had first been to prison during the 1950s for his involvement in nationalist politics, and then was imprisoned again in 1975 in Luzira following his career as a government minister. Although Robeson said that his father did not discuss these experiences frequently, he indicated that Yokosofati was ‘treated very well’ at Luzira.⁸⁰ By 1977, however, SRB agents arrived at the family property and took him away. This was not unexpected, Robeson explained, as Lira town was a ‘human abattoir’, by that

⁷² Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 276.

⁷³ Ibid., 276.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 276.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 276.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 277.

⁷⁷ See: Kato, *Escape from Idi Amin’s Slaughterhouse*; Interview with George Kasozi.

⁷⁸ Interview with Henry Kyemba.

⁷⁹ Interview with Robeson Engur.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

point.⁸¹ Years later, with the publication of Lawoko's memoir, Robeson confirmed his father's fate. Etched onto the cell walls in Nakasero, detainees' 'diaries' recorded that his father was held there for four days before being killed.⁸²

Accounts from former detainees, government officials, and legal professionals suggest that the safe houses were completely separate from the Prisons Service. Discussing Nakasero, Geroje commented, 'It was a detention facility. It wasn't a prison. Because it was not gazetted. It was an informal, sort of detention, where the state had their killing machine. Because, they were just killing people in there, executing people'.⁸³ In contrast, he argued, 'Luzira is a system whereby the state acknowledges that these offenders have been tried, they have gone through the due process of law, they've been sentenced and they've been kept at this facility'. Henry Kyemba characterized the safe houses as the sites where 'most of the tortures, the greatest deprivation took place, where people were held'.⁸⁴ Discussing UPS, he remarked, 'as far as I'm aware, the prisons were not part of that kind of torture. They are professional'. Former detainee James Namajako described the conditions at Luzira as 'fabulous' in comparison to Makindye Military Prison.⁸⁵ John, a former soldier who served in the 1970s and was detained in Luzira after Amin's overthrow, remarked, 'during Amin's time, political detainees were never taken to Luzira I don't think. They would take them to Makindye or to Naguru, State Research, those were the detention places'.⁸⁶ Thus, for many Ugandans, from former detainees to government officials, the boundary between informal detention and incarceration in a government prison mattered a great deal.

Unsurprisingly, prison officers also drew clear boundaries between UPS and the safe houses. Nearly all seemed to be aware of the existence of these sites at the time and used them as a foil when reflecting on the merits of the Service. Discussing safe houses, Isaac remarked, 'Those were separate, and those did not reach us in prisons'.⁸⁷ Robert

⁸¹ Robeson Benazoo Engur, *Survival: A Soldier's Story* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2013), Kindle edition, location 651.

⁸² Ibid., location 735.

⁸³ Interview with George Kasozi.

⁸⁴ Interview with Henry Kyemba.

⁸⁵ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 126.

⁸⁶ John Pancras Orau, Personal Interview, 12 August 2016.

⁸⁷ Interview with Isaac.

contrasted the approach of the Prisons Service to the dire conditions at Nakasero. ‘Most people wanted to go to Luzira, because at least there, there was a humane approach’, he remarked.⁸⁸ ‘But if you went to the State Research, the conditions were terrible’.⁸⁹ Luke insisted that the ‘standard for the Prisons Service was different’ to the informal detention sites, remarking that ‘those who were dropped in prisons were the lucky ones’.⁹⁰ Officers also drew distinctions between themselves and the paramilitary organizations that ran the safe houses. Recounting the visit of SRB agents to the meat-packing factory in Soroti, Luke suggested that his professional status helped him to stand up to these men. ‘Some were of course aggressive, but then, I think it was not difficult for me as an individual to handle because I was also a uniformed man’.⁹¹ He emphasized the uniform as a key marker of distinction, commenting, ‘they would come in civilian clothes. So, I handled them well’, suggesting that the uniform gave him a degree of authority or perhaps confidence. Thus, officers who worked in the Amin years defined their work partially in contrast to this informal detention network and the paramilitary agents.

Ultimately, the Amin regime relied on safe houses as the primary places in which to torture and eliminate perceived enemies. The reasons for this are somewhat unclear. One former officer suggested that it was out of ‘respect’ for the Service, but it is unlikely that the reasons were so benevolent.⁹² This is particularly intriguing when one compares the fate of the Prisons Service and the Police Force in this period – while the police were overrun by the PSU and police facilities became sites of torture, the Prisons Service maintained a much greater degree of distance from Amin’s ‘coercive network’.⁹³ There are several possible reasons for this. The first is strategic: as discussed in Chapter 3, Amin used the Service as a convenient advertisement for the modernity of his state, and he perhaps thought it would be more beneficial to maintain the Service’s credibility rather than turning it into a space for murder on a major scale. Secondly, it may have

⁸⁸ Interview with Robert.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Interview with Luke, No.1.

⁹¹ Interview with Luke, No.2.

⁹² Interview with Isaac.

⁹³ Sherman, ‘Tensions of Colonial Punishment’, 660.

been a matter of efficiency. Torturing and killing political prisoners in government prisons that were overcrowded and housed ordinary criminals posed many logistical issues, as well as according too much visibility to the agents who carried out these activities. Thirdly, Amin may have wanted to maintain the Service's economic capacity, which may have been hindered by using the prisons as killing sites. Finally, it suggests the weakness of the Amin state. Although incredibly violent and repressive, Amin was not able to fundamentally control all of the state institutions and completely undermine bureaucratic norms. This serves as an important reminder of the resiliency and resistance that Ugandans exhibited during the 1970s, complicating portrayals of them as helpless victims.

Representations of Safe Houses

While the distinction between safe houses and government prisons is made clear in interviews, this line is not apparent in the vast majority of material written on the Amin years. Throughout the 1970s, international newspapers ran stories entitled 'Amin "joined in" prison killings', 'I was in Idi Amin's Death Camp', and 'Inside Amin's Prisons', relaying the horror of Uganda's 'prisons' to an international audience.⁹⁴ Writing on Nakasero, journalists Tony Avirgan and Martha Honey offered a particularly lurid description: 'As we entered the dungeons today, we saw scenes of incredible horror - bodies in varying states of decay and mutilation, almost all showing signs of torture. There were pools of blood on the steps, and blood was smeared on the walls'.⁹⁵ Some of the detainees, they said, had 'survived by eating human flesh'.⁹⁶ Such articles – although ostensibly about 'prisons' – focused on safe houses, but did not offer any delineation between these and UPS.

The blurring of these boundaries is also apparent in the most recent wave of scholarship on the Amin state. Although such works have complicated the more

⁹⁴ Martha Honey, 'Amin "joined in" prison killings', *Guardian*, 12 May 1979, 7; BAHA, 'I was in Amin's Death Camp', *Drum*, September 1977; David Martin, 'Inside Amin's Prisons', *Observer*, 15 August 1976, 15.

⁹⁵ Avirgan and Honey, 'Dungeon Visit'.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

sensationalist renderings of the 1970s, they partially reproduce the tropes and tone of this earlier literature when discussing incarceration. In her 2014 publication *In Idi Amin's Shadow: Women, Gender, and Militarism in Uganda*, Decker provides detailed descriptions of informal detention sites including Nakasero, Makindye, and Naguru, but fails to make explicitly clear that these were not part of UPS. Discussing the extra-judicial killings of the Amin years, she writes: 'Others died a more slow and tortuous death, languishing for days, even months, in prisons within the putrid bowels of the earth', and then goes on to describe the conditions at Makindye Military Prison.⁹⁷ This slippage between different types of carceral sites is illuminating, as Decker's book is meticulously researched and reflects much of the newly available source material on this period. Similarly, in *A History of Modern Uganda*, Reid offers a passing reference to 'Uganda's prisons' in his discussion of the Amin regime's brutality, remarking how they 'swelled with political leaders, civil servants, playwrights, "spies."' ⁹⁸ He then goes on to discuss the SRB and the PSU, and while he refers to the 'dungeons' of Nile Mansions, he never makes it explicitly clear that these were not government prisons.⁹⁹ In his account of Lubiri Barracks, Reid notes the 'bloody handprints' on the walls and characterized the site as a place that 'reeks of death and desperation'.¹⁰⁰ Thus, although these works adopt a very nuanced approach to the Amin period overall, they fall back on familiar and generic framings in their discussion of prisons, drawing on olfactory descriptors and graphic imagery.

Africanist scholars writing broader histories of the continent have used these simplified renderings of incarceration in Uganda to support wider arguments about post-colonial brutality. For example, Bernault draws on the Amin regime in her brief discussion of post-colonial prisons: 'Spectacular and mediatized descriptions of Sékou Touré's Camp Borio in Conakry (Guinea), Jean-Bedel Bokassa's prison at Ngaraba (CAR), and Idi Amin Dada's gaols in Kampala (Uganda) evoked the sinister images of

⁹⁷ Decker, *In Idi Amin's Shadow*, location 1059-1072.

⁹⁸ Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 61.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 61.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 63.

Nazi camps or Soviet gulags'.¹⁰¹ While she acknowledges that this comparison 'obscures, rather than illuminates, the logic of these prisons', she then adopts a sweeping approach to her treatment of prisons in Africa, arguing that these sites stand in stark contrast to the 'model of the Weberian or the Foucauldian state' and 'speak to both the colonial prison's prevalent use of coercion over protection and to newer, extravagant forms of personalised power'.¹⁰² There are several key issues with this description. Firstly, while Bernault rightfully draws distinctions between carceral sites in Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia, and post-colonial Africa, she discusses African spaces of incarceration in general terms, failing to distinguish between government prisons and informal detention sites. Secondly, she draws a clear line from the colonial to the post-colonial period without offering any insight into how colonial punitive forms or approaches were adopted or adapted following independence. Finally, her description reinforces tropes of post-colonial African states as spaces in which institutions and bureaucratic logic are meaningless.

There are many possible reasons for the conflation of safe houses and government prisons in both scholarly and popular accounts. Many of the initial publications on the Amin years were written by authors who were either foreigners or who were in exile, making it more difficult to disentangle Amin's security agencies from the more longstanding state institutions. Indeed, it is very likely that many detainees did not fully recognize the differences between formal and informal detention sites at the time. Reid and Decker's monographs provide sophisticated insight into the Amin years overall, with their discussions on imprisonment representing only a fraction of their work. Based on the lack of existing research on UPS, it is not surprising that they fail to make this distinction.

Tellingly, distinctions between safe houses and UPS are occasionally made, but fade into the background. For example, David Martin's monograph, *General Amin*, is laden with grisly details of torture, but he briefly acknowledges a degree of difference

¹⁰¹ Florence Bernault, 'The Shadow of Rule: Colonial Power and Modern Punishment in Africa', in *Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia, and Latin America*, eds. Frank Dikötter and Ian Brown (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 87.

¹⁰² Ibid., 88.

between safe houses and UPS. After relaying the testimonies of Makindye Military Prison survivors, Martin writes, 'Prisons at Upper and Lower Luzira were run by civilian prison staff and there were fewer atrocities'.¹⁰³ He provides no further elaboration, but nevertheless indicates that government prisons were different from the safe houses. Yet, in the article 'Inside Amin's Prisons', Martin discusses 'Makindye prison', Luzira Prison, and Naguru without making any differentiation amongst them.¹⁰⁴ For a popular audience, such distinctions were deemed less important than the overall narrative of horror about the Amin state.

A similar phenomenon is evident in the ICJ report on the Amin regime. The report includes a letter from a Ugandan citizen stating the following: 'many people who are taken to court these days prefer being sent to prison, even if they are found innocent. Otherwise they cannot survive. The magistrates are also cautious about acquitting men accused of serious crimes, even if the men are innocent'.¹⁰⁵ Yet, in an overarching statement about detention, the report fails to discuss this distinction:

One result of the increased power and authority of these security forces and the absence of any judicial control over arrested persons was a drastic deterioration in the conditions and treatment of prisoners. Especially horrifying are the accounts of Makindye Military Prison in Kampala, where repeated allegations have been made of torture and inhuman cruelty by army personnel.¹⁰⁶

Thus, to a general readership, stories of abuse crowd out any brief mention of the difference between government prisons and safe houses.

The CIVHR, which delivered its findings in 1994, drew a much more definitive line between the two. Following a discussion about the 'safe' houses, it commented: 'In contrast, hardly any evidence indicated that Government Civil Prisons were centers of torture. On the contrary, many detainees considered that transfer from military barracks to for instance, Luzira, was to be saved from death'.¹⁰⁷ Distinguishing between different

¹⁰³ Martin, *General Amin*, 135.

¹⁰⁴ Martin, 'Inside Amin's Prisons', 15.

¹⁰⁵ International Commission of Jurists, *Uganda and Human Rights*, 23.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁰⁷ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 365.

regimes, it continued, ‘detainees in Luzira were treated well during the sixties. During the seventies, there were no detainees, as the military regime then did not detain its opponents. They were made to disappear and/or were killed instead’.¹⁰⁸ Although an oversimplification, this statement does reflect the widespread use of safe houses during the 1970s as the primary site of political detention.

Conclusion

Images and stories of informal detention sites have occupied a prominent place in renderings of the Amin years. The CIVHR received more testimonies for the category of ‘Arbitrary Arrests, Detentions, and Imprisonment’, than any other aspect of post-colonial violence that it reported on.¹⁰⁹ Detention was also a major focus of media reporting on the Amin years, from the pages of South Africa’s *DRUM Magazine* to the *Washington Post*.¹¹⁰ Safe houses – and the grisly torture that went on inside them – are thus some of the most potent and enduring symbols of Amin’s atrocities.

As this chapter argues, this infamous aspect of Amin’s terror existed primarily beyond official prison walls. Rather than relying on UPS, Amin created an alternative detention network. On the one hand, the fact that hundreds of thousands of people were killed seems to render the ‘boundary’ of the Prisons Service meaningless. Why does it matter if people were killed in basements rather than prisons, if both ended with the same tragic outcome? Yet, this boundary did mean something. For an individual prisoner, being incarcerated within UPS rather than in a safe house was often the difference between life and death. For prison officers, it allowed them to maintain a degree of professional integrity. While it would be naïve to assume that all officers were able to completely extricate themselves from the violence of the 1970s – as it would be for any professional class working for an authoritarian regime – it is crucial to emphasize that UPS was largely responding to the widespread detention and killings of this period, rather than being on the front lines of such abuses. Through examining

¹⁰⁸ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 365.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 110.

¹¹⁰ See Seftel, *Uganda: The Rise and Fall of Idi Amin from the pages of DRUM*; John Fairhall, ‘Four days in Makindye’, *Guardian*, 22 September 1972, 11; Martha Honey and David B. Ottoway, ‘Amin’s Dungeon’.

these 'safe houses', we can better contextualize the sensational accounts of Amin's regime and its uses of detention, separating these from the Prisons Service. The neglect of this distinction in popular portrayals of the 1970s as well as in recent scholarship on this period reminds us of the ways in which 'prisons' are often uncritically used as a shorthand for disorder and abuse in African states.

CHAPTER 9

PROFESSIONALISM DURING MILITARY RULE

P.M.O. Onen, an engineer for the Kampala City Council, was one of the numerous public servants detained during the 1970s. In his memoir, *Diary of an Obedient Servant During Misrule*, Onen not only offers a personalized account of his detention, but also reflects on the state of the public service in the 1970s. 'Being a civil servant during the Amin regime was traumatic', he wrote.¹ 'We had to work either in violation of existing rules or according to none'.² Writing in the early 1980s, the Uganda Public Service Salaries Commission echoed Onen's assessment. It asserted that state institutions had been 'thoroughly interfered with' during Amin's presidency, and the public service as a whole had been 'shabbily decimated over the last ten years or so with incalculable consequences'.³ Reflecting on this period years later, Ugandan historian Phares Mutibwa offered a far more pointed criticism: 'Professional ethics, whether in teaching, law or medicine, utterly collapsed'.⁴

These assessments paint a grim portrait of Uganda's public service institutions in the 1970s. In contrast, it is worth reminding ourselves of the conclusion offered by the CIVHR on the Prisons Service. In evaluating the Service's response to military rule, it stated:

the staff of the Prisons Service were not as involved in human rights abuses as were the military, intelligence organizations, and some Police sections. Many reasons explain this, some of which were that Prisons personnel carry out their functions inside closed fences, outside public view, they only deal with prisoners and have little contact with the general public; they appear to be more disciplined than the personnel of the other services.⁵

This statement hinges on the idea of a professional boundary, one embodied in 'closed fences' and abstractly represented by notions of an institution that was 'disciplined' compared to other security organizations. As the 'fences' reference suggests, boundaries

¹ Onen, *Diary of an Obedient Servant*, 76.

² Ibid., 76.

³ UPL, *Report of the Public Service Salaries Commission, 1980-1982*, 31.

⁴ Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence*, 122.

⁵ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 603-604.

have always been fundamental to the concept and practice of a prison, which is premised on the need to create a physical distance between free and unfree members of society. Yet in the Commission's report, boundaries acquired a much greater significance, allegedly transcending their fundamental custodial function to act as a buffer against the incursions of a military state.

Drawing in particular on oral histories, this chapter explores professional boundaries in the Prisons Service during the period of Amin's rule: how they endured, how they broke down, and what was at stake in their articulation. As discussed, there were very clear divisions between the 'safe houses' in which Ugandans were tortured and killed and the prisons run by UPS. However, in contrast to the conclusion offered by the CIVHR, the Service was not sheltered from the Amin regime. Prisons assumed new functions, becoming places where detainees were 'dumped' following their release by state security agencies, either dead or alive.⁶ Amin's regime significantly undermined the ethos of the Service by creating the 'Prisons Council', introducing military training, appointing military personnel to UPS, conscripting prison officers during the Uganda-Tanzania War, and murdering prisons personnel. In many ways, then, boundaries collapsed with devastating consequences as the military regime encroached on the Prisons Service.

Yet, boundaries still mattered at a conceptual level. Many UPS personnel clung to a particular imaginary of their professional identity, using this to help them navigate the unprecedented challenges of the 1970s. They engaged in boundary work, creating bureaucratic and moral orders to distinguish themselves from paramilitary organizations and the military.⁷ As explored in Chapter 6, the Service was shaped by a set of well-articulated institutional values, including rehabilitation, bureaucratic order,⁸ expertise, discipline, and separation from politics. While these were deeply undermined by the rise of military rule, officers still turned to them when navigating the unprecedented challenges of the 1970s.

⁶ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 124.

⁷ Jan Beek, *Producing Stateness*, 3-5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

Professionals in the 1970s

Scholars studying authoritarian regimes have often focused on the complicity of public servants and other professionals in state abuses. Much has been written about the ‘desk bureaucrats’ and rank-and-file security agents who aided or carried out systematic massacres in Nazi Germany.⁹ Studies of military dictatorships in Latin America have drawn similar conclusions. Examining Brazilian police officers who tortured political opponents between 1964-1986, sociologist Martha Huggins argued, ‘the secularized, tautological morality of professionalism provides a legitimate justification for police violence’.¹⁰ Similarly, political scientist Lisa Hilbink has demonstrated the extent to which many Chilean judges ‘cooperated fully’ with the Pinochet regime – a state that had many parallels with Amin’s Uganda – going beyond ‘passive capitulation to outright collaboration’.¹¹ More recently, attention has been drawn to the role of medical personnel in creating interrogation techniques used at Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo Bay.¹² Reflecting on these issues, psychologist Stanley Milgram wrote, ‘ordinary people, simply doing their jobs...can become agents in a terrible destructive process’.¹³ This literature offers fascinating yet troubling inquiries into the human condition, asking us to consider how we would act in similar circumstances. As historian Christopher Browning reflected in his disturbing account of a police battalion in Nazi Germany – one composed of ‘ordinary men’ such as truck drivers and teachers – ‘If the men of

⁹ See Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), Kindle edition; Rebecca Wittmann, *Beyond Justice: The Auschwitz Trial* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), Kindle edition; Eric A. Johnson, *Nazi Terror: The Gestapo, Jews, and Ordinary Germans* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

¹⁰ Martha K. Huggins, ‘Legacies of Authoritarianism: Brazilian Torturers’ and Murderers’ Reformulation of Memory’, *Latin American Perspectives* 27:2 (2000): 76.

¹¹ Lisa Hilbink, *Judges beyond Politics in Democracy and Dictatorship: Lessons from Chile* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1-2.

¹² Steven Hoffman, ‘Ending medical complicity in state-sponsored torture’, *The Lancet* 378:9802 (2011): 1535-1537.

¹³ Quoted in Thomas Blass, ‘Perpetrator Behavior as Destructive Obedience: An Evaluation of Stanley Milgram’s Perspective, the Most Influential Social-Psychological Approach to the Holocaust’, in *Understanding Genocide: The Social Psychology of the Holocaust* eds. Leonard S. Newman and Ralph Erber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 96.

Reserve Police Battalion 101 could become killers under such circumstances, what group of men cannot?’¹⁴

Certainly, professional cultures have been harnessed in horrific ways to support authoritarian governments. However, this focus on professional complicity – while urgent and important – has led to the neglect of the study of the spectrum of responses by public servants to authoritarianism. While the recent scholarship on African bureaucracies has perhaps come closest, it tends to focus on governments that have a relative or at least superficial respect for democracy and human rights, and are not engaging in extra-judicial killings on the scale of the Amin regime.¹⁵ While illuminating the complicity of public servants in the abuses of authoritarian regimes is vital, we must also pay closer attention to their negotiations, struggles, and resiliency – not only as a backdrop to broader narratives of capitulation or resistance, but rather as a subject in its own right. By foregrounding these boundaries – and how they persist, collapse, or shift – we can better understand the complexity of human experience in times of extreme political repression.

As Onen’s memoir and the other accounts suggest, public servants were profoundly affected by Amin’s regime. Discussing the impact of the military, Jacob, a retired magistrate, remarked: ‘they took over everything. They were the chiefs, they were the police, in fact they were even the courts, because they would say do or write this, and sign it’.¹⁶ Similarly, Michael, the former police officer, recalled how soldiers ‘were the government...Whatever they could ask from us we surrender’.¹⁷ Henry Kyemba experienced significant internal conflict about how to respond to the growing atrocities. ‘It was the most difficult thing’, he reflected:

I can only give myself as an example. I was in sensitive positions...you know that your president is telling a lie. What do you do? You immediately say, I run away and you would – what I grew up knowing, and what I got from the British training, was that as a civil servant, you had all the right to advise what was proper...But you must also be aware that the head of government...because of

¹⁴ Browning, *Ordinary Men*, location 3082.

¹⁵ See: Bierschenk and de Sardan, *States at Work*.

¹⁶ Interview with Jacob.

¹⁷ Interview with Michael.

the enormous power they wield, can do what he wants, if necessary go to parliament and amend the law.¹⁸

By 1977, Kyemba had reached a breaking point. Having lost his brother at the hands of the PSU, and facing increasing personal insecurity, he felt like a ‘sitting duck’, and decided that he could be more ‘valuable to his country’ by ‘conveying the message of what was happening here’ from outside of Uganda, leading him to write his memoir, *State of Blood: The Inside Story of Idi Amin*.¹⁹

Many other professionals faced similar challenges. Yash Tandon – a scholar of international relations and the one-time director of the Makerere Institute of Social Research – was forced to flee Uganda after becoming a target of the regime.²⁰ Discussing the period, he remarked: ‘Right from the start...Amin began to brutalise people’. Many of his colleagues at Makerere were affected. ‘My own Vice-Chancellor, Kalimuzo, was picked up’, he commented, referring to Frank Kalimuzo, the Vice-Chancellor of Makerere who was ultimately ‘tortured and killed’ by Amin’s agents.²¹

At times, public servants found ways to mitigate Amin’s abuses. Jacob recalled how security agents would come to the court with someone they had recently arrested and demand their incarceration without offering evidence of any crime. In most cases, the magistrate would initially comply. ‘If we don’t convict him and put him to jail’, Jacob explained, ‘it is you who will be taken there’.²² However, Jacob claimed that he and his colleagues sought to undo this unjust imprisonment in a discreet manner: ‘what we did, we’d just make the warrant, send him to jail, then make a note...that I’ve been ordered, I was under duress by the complainant, so I ask the high court to revise this case’. Within a few months, the prisoner would be released, and security agencies would be none the wiser.

Others expressed a feeling of powerlessness. Michael, who had first joined the police in the mid-1960s, had enjoyed his work initially, remarking, ‘the best thing was

¹⁸ Interview with Henry Kyemba.

¹⁹ See: Kyemba, *State of Blood*.

²⁰ Yash Tandon, Personal Interview, 9 May 2017.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Interview with Jacob.

knowing law'.²³ While Michael felt that Amin's presidency had 'started well', he indicated that by the mid-1970s, things had become much worse. During this time, it was common for security agencies to pick up police officers and 'take them away to unknown places, and till this day, [we] don't know where they are'. Ultimately, he felt that the police 'were controlled by the soldiers', and that they were 'fearing them all the time'. The experiences of Michael, Henry, Yash, and Jacob remind us of the unprecedented challenges that professionals faced in the 1970s. They were constantly weighing their loyalty to the government, their own vulnerability, and their sense of professional duty. While they dealt with these conflicts differently, all four drew on their professional identity as an anchor for their reflections on this period.

The Impact of Military Rule on UPS

The Prisons Service was also deeply affected by Amin's regime. One of the key administrative changes was the creation of the 'Prisons Council' in June 1971.²⁴ Broadly similar to the Defence Council, it consisted of Amin, who served as the chairman, the Minister of Internal Affairs, and the Commissioner of Prisons.²⁵ The Council's purpose was to 'appoint prison officers, to exercise disciplinary control' over prison officers, and to 'remove' officers who committed disciplinary offences.²⁶ This effectively undercut the power of the Public Service Commission in favour of Amin. There is no mention of the Council in any of the official documents from UPS. In a speech to prison officers, Amin explained that it had been created 'in order to streamline good behavior, conduct and discipline' among the members of the Prisons Service and other security forces.²⁷ One of the only assessments of the Council's impact is offered by the Public Service Salaries Review Commission, which declared that its 'never met and decisions, it purportedly made, were by the then President himself, and as was normally the case, ill-conceived. As a result, the service was virtually emasculated, through a catalogue of ill-conceived

²³ Interview with Michael.

²⁴ UPL, Decree No. 22 of 1971, 'The Prisons (Special Provisions) Decree', 2 February 1971.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ 'The Public Must Feel Safe', *Uganda Argus*.

pronouncements'.²⁸ While there is very little to measure this assessment against, it is likely the Council did have a very negative impact on the Prisons Service at the highest levels of the administration. However, as this chapter will argue, this did not necessarily mean that the entire Service was 'emasculated' as a result.

Along with undermining the overall administration of the Service, Amin also brought military personnel and other agents working for the regime into the senior and junior ranks. The CIVHR noted that after the coup, soldiers were introduced into the 'security arrangements of prisons, particularly Luzira Prison'.²⁹ 'Amin ordered that soldiers should come and help train', Luke recalled.³⁰ 'So we were just looking on, and the instructors did come, and from the army they were there'. This, he argued, made him and his colleagues feel helpless. 'Things were out of our control', he remarked.³¹ Matthew recounted how Amin would bring in new officers who were 'not trained up to our levels', many of whom he believed were acting as 'spies' for the government.³²

In the view of many officers – especially those based in Kampala – the introduction of these soldiers and new officers eroded the Service's collegiality. Whereas officers remarked that they were very close to each other in the 1960s, Luke argued that they were mistrustful of each other during Amin's time. 'Many of us, the officers, we had no voices. And we could not discipline them [the new recruits] because you don't know whom you are talking to, whom you are ordering'.³³ He insisted that most of his relationships with prison officers were 'generally fine', but argued that if he encountered an officer who was 'a Muslim...or he comes from Amin's tribe', he would 'handle him the way my common sense would tell me' – a rather ambiguous assertion that he did not elaborate upon, instead stating that this behavior was about 'survival'. Robert recalled how officers were 'living under fear', and said that it became hard to trust his colleagues, because some were 'in fact the ones making the list...a list of people who

²⁸ UPL, *Report of the Public Service Salaries Commission, 1980-1982*, 259.

²⁹ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 124.

³⁰ Interview with Luke, No.1.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Interview with Matthew.

³³ Interview with Luke, No.1.

should be picked and killed'.³⁴ William echoed this sense of mistrust and uncertainty:

During Amin's time, I remember...you know every morning we must have a parade. If you could have maybe a member of staff [who] is against you, and he puts you to any army man, to your surprise, you will find yourself being taken without knowing. What of just pulling you out of the rest...you enter the boot [of a car]... you enter on gunpoint, putting the boot shut.³⁵

The incursion of the military into UPS was most explicit through the introduction of military training for all prison recruits.³⁶ Through this, they learned about 'security', 'safeguarding the country', and how to 'assist the army'.³⁷ According to Margaret, this training was only required for male recruits.³⁸ This blurring of prison and military training harkened back to the formative years of the Service. Over the course of the colonial period and the 1960s, UPS had tried to explicitly distance itself from the military and the police. Thus, the blending of military and prison work significantly undermined the Service's independence and institutional identity.

The incursion of the military into the Prisons Service was most acutely felt during the Uganda-Tanzania War. In the latter stages, Amin turned to UPS to 'beef up' his army.³⁹ 'Staff were drafted', Luke recalled. 'You were trained militarily, therefore you go to the front line. And they went. By that time things were of course out of hand'.⁴⁰ He said it was very difficult for himself and his fellow senior colleagues: 'there was nothing you could do. Those staff who were ordered to go, they had to go'.⁴¹

Prison officers not only had to contend with the rising presence of the military, but they also had to deal with the consequences of informal detention. 'Lodgers', or former safe house detainees, were frequently brought to government prisons if their lives were to be spared.⁴² Officers based at Luzira recalled numerous instances where detainees had been brought to the prison without warning or proper documentation. 'It

³⁴ Interview with Robert.

³⁵ Interview with William.

³⁶ Interview with Patrick.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Interview with Margaret.

³⁹ Interview with Luke, No.1.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 123.

was very difficult for prison officers’, Luke explained, ‘because although professionally we would advise that they should not be received by us, but because of the political environment...there was nothing we could do’.⁴³ In the ICJ report, a former detainee at Makindye Military Prison gave a similar account. Discussing his experience at Makindye, he reported:

The first night I was there they killed forty soldiers in “Singapore” cell...The soldiers went into “Singapore” and bayoneted the prisoners. Then they calmly drove away. Those who were not dead were taken to Luzira for treatment and the bodies were loaded into three-ton trucks and taken away.⁴⁴

George Kasozi’s experience at Luzira is particularly illuminating. When he first arrived, the guards were allegedly ‘very rude’.⁴⁵ George recalled how the officers ‘would cane us, literally slash our bottoms, slash our backs, they would beat us so hard’.⁴⁶ He said that most of the guards whom he initially encountered were ‘people close to Amin’, referring to those who had been born in West Nile District. After the first night, however, his impressions of the staff improved. ‘They became more friendly, they realized we were not hostile’, he explained. ‘Some had been misinformed that we were criminals, but after interviewing us they realized no, we were just church people...and so they in fact felt for us...So they started to treat us well’. This included some of the officers from West Nile, who would update George and other detainees about the government’s latest plan for them. When it appeared that they were going to be executed, George recalled one of these officers coming to them and saying ‘People, please *pray* —pray that God intervenes’. Overall, George said ‘we had good interactions with some of them, and they would give us encouragement’. This experience changed his view of prison officers: ‘I realised that all people are not bad. Everybody who worked for the system was not evil. Some of them were there because they were looking for a living. Not that they were prepared to work for the perpetuation of the regime’.

John Sekabira, a university student who was initially detained by the SRB, also

⁴³ Interview with Luke, No.1.

⁴⁴ International Commission of Jurists, *Uganda and human rights*, 31.

⁴⁵ Interview with George Kasozi.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

ended up at Luzira. Unsure of why he had been transferred, a SRB agent apparently told him, 'You were lucky. The order was to finish you. Go and serve that, maybe you come back alive'.⁴⁷ Like George, John claimed to have initially been beaten upon entering the prison, but does not indicate any further physical abuse during his sentence.

Along with receiving 'lodgers', Luzira served as a primary burial site for victims of extra-judicial killings. This had begun before the Amin years. In his testimony to the CIVHR, former Commissioner of Prisons George W. Ssentamu reported that 413 bodies had been brought to Luzira following the attack on Mengo Palace in 1966.⁴⁸ This practice increased significantly during Amin's presidency. For example, following the purge of Acholi and Langi soldiers shortly after the coup, 'Most of the bodies were buried in mass graves in prisons'.⁴⁹ In an interview with the *Daily Monitor*, former Superintendent of Police Daniel Mulemezi claimed that Benedicto Kiwanuka's body was buried at Luzira after having been dipped into an acid solution to avoid identification marks.⁵⁰ Thus, while Luzira was not a 'slaughterhouse', it appears to have been a final resting place for many killed during the Amin years.

Prison officers were also victims of the regime's extra-judicial killings. When asked about the impact of the Amin years, the majority of retired prison officers immediately commented on the deaths of their colleagues. 'There was no question of law', Robert commented, 'and we lost our colleagues...many of them. Because of high-handedness, of those who are working for Amin'.⁵¹ He suggested that 'quite a number' of officers were killed, including 'at least fifty' senior officers. Numerous officers recounted how SRB agents would simply come into prisons and remove or execute particular officers. Stephen provided one of the earliest examples, recalling a day in 1972 in which 'more than 300 prison staff who were junior staff, were killed in one day, in fact in one hour'.⁵² Referring to the senior staff, he continued, 'they killed...sixty-seven

⁴⁷ BAHA, 'I was in Amin's Death Camp', 6.

⁴⁸ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 238-239.

⁴⁹ International Commission of Jurists, *Uganda and human rights*, 117.

⁵⁰ Faustin Mugabe, 'How Amin killed Kiwanuka', *Daily Monitor*, 21 September 2014, accessed 26 April 2017, <http://www.monitor.co.ug/Magazines/PeoplePower/How-Idi-Amin-shot-Kiwanuka-to-death/-/689844/2459590/-/item/2/-/dmbethz/-/index.html>.

⁵¹ Interview with Robert.

⁵² Interview with Stephen.

officers'.⁵³ As he remembers it, the staff had been gathered to see the Vice-President of Uganda, 'when they were suddenly executed' by SRB agents.⁵⁴ Isaac shared a similar experience:

There were some prison staff that were targeted...some were arrested and released. Some were arrested and we never saw them again. An example is two of my officers-in-charge, names withheld, one was from Eastern Uganda, one was from Mbarara, they were my immediate officers-in-charge, and they were arrested in our presence, and we never saw them again.⁵⁵

John Sekabira recalled a series of similar incidents while imprisoned at Luzira in the late 1970s. According to him, prisoners and prison staff gathered one afternoon in 1977 to meet a 'big man' from the government.⁵⁶ SRB agents appeared, armed with 'heavy machine guns and a list of those they wanted'.⁵⁷ The first person to be called was V.I. Okrut, the officer-in-charge of Murchison Bay Prison at the time.⁵⁸ Martin also recalled this moment, commenting that Okrut was 'dragged' out to the SRB vehicles.⁵⁹ Overall, Sekabira estimated that a total of fifty officers were taken away that day, and that one was shot while trying to escape.⁶⁰ Several days later, Sekabira claims that twenty of the missing officers' bodies were found in a mutilated state. 'Today if you visit Luzira barracks you will see about 600 empty houses, because their occupants have been killed or have sought refuge in neighbouring countries', he claimed.⁶¹

In his testimony to the CIVHR, Ssentamu offered further details of such incursions into the Service. He recalled a day when 'many soldiers came to our office, armed, and called out the names they wanted to take'.⁶² 'They called Mr. Oketa, Assistant Commissioner, Mr. Ocitti, a Superintendent of Prisons, Mr. Odongo who was Assistant in charge of the prison farm of Kitanya'.⁶³ Ssentamu was the only

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Interview with Isaac.

⁵⁶ BAHA, 'I was in Amin's death camp', 7.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Interview with Martin.

⁶⁰ BAHA, 'I was in Amin's death camp', 7.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 84.

⁶³ Ibid., 84.

commissioner who survived the Amin years. As mentioned, Okwaare was killed during in the 1970s, although the details of his death remain unknown.⁶⁴ His successor, Kigonya, was also killed. Referring to Kigonya's death, Ssentamu commented: 'his car was found along the road full of blood and his body has never been recovered anywhere'.⁶⁵ Amin had appointed Kigonya in April 1971, shortly after the coup.⁶⁶ Initially, Amin had praised him for his 'years of experience', and remarked that 'the Prisons Department would be capably run' under his leadership.⁶⁷ Prior to his death, Kigonya was stripped of his post and detained following an ill-fated invasion attempt by Ugandan exiles living in Tanzania, which he was alleged to be involved in.⁶⁸ Amin had ordered that Kigonya be arrested 'so that other officers didn't follow his example and bring a lot of confusion into the country'.⁶⁹

Memoirs and testimonies by former detainees also suggest that prison officers were regularly taken to safe houses. Former detainee John Ejura encountered numerous prison officers during his eighteen-month stay in Nakasero.⁷⁰ Similarly, James Kahigiriza recalled how Archbishop Janani Luwum was escorted out of his cell with a group of 'policemen and prison officers', and the 'entire group' was 'murdered' soon thereafter.⁷¹ In *Dungeons of Nakasero*, Lawoko also writes about encounters with prison officers, who taught the other detainees 'how to loosen, or completely remove the handcuffs'.⁷²

Prison officers were also targeted in more public displays of repression. This was most evident in the 1977 'Clock Tower' execution.⁷³ During the 1970s, public executions became a regular part of Amin's punitive repertoire. Most of the condemned were accused of either *kondoism* or treason. The Clock Tower execution, the most famous of these publicly staged performances of terror, was, in the view of the CIVHR,

⁶⁴ Ibid., 44-45.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 85.

⁶⁶ 'Kigonya new Prisons Chief', *Uganda Argus*, 23 April 1971, 1.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 1.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 1.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 1.

⁷⁰ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 160.

⁷¹ Kahigiriza, *Bridging the Gap*, 49.

⁷² Lawoko, *The Dungeons of Nakasero*, location 2903.

⁷³ 'Death in the Afternoon', in *Uganda: The Rise and Fall of Idi Amin*, 191.

‘intended to cow the people into docile acceptance of a brutal military regime’.⁷⁴ The execution took place on the afternoon of 9 September 1977, following a military tribunal in which twelve condemned men were charged with treason.⁷⁵ They came from a range of professional backgrounds, including teaching, policing, and business.⁷⁶ Three of them were senior prison officers: John Kabandize, a Senior Superintendent of Prisons; E.N. Mutabazi, the Superintendent of Prisons in Kampala; and Peter Atua, a Principal Officer at Murchison Bay.⁷⁷

In his memoir, Robeson Engur reflected on the spectacle of the execution. It was a major public event, attended by a crowd of several thousand.⁷⁸ ‘By about four o’clock’, he writes, ‘it had become a mammoth crowd and soldiers were everywhere at the ground’.⁷⁹ The condemned men were then ‘frogmarched into the ground where the firing squad was waiting. They were led out under armed escort and they all had hoods covering their heads and faces’.⁸⁰ He remembers the crowd being in a ‘state of disbelief’ after it was over: ‘It was hard to comprehend that, twelve men, who were some people’s fathers had just been murdered in a matter of seconds’.⁸¹ Isaac, who travelled with the condemned men to the execution site to provide spiritual comfort in their final moments, has similarly disturbing memories. ‘People you have worked with...are being executed, and some of them you are fully aware that they are innocent’, he reflected.⁸² Overall, he characterized the experience as ‘the most challenging time’ in his career.⁸³

Retired officers gave varied reasons for why their colleagues were killed. Stephen recalled how soldiers used to refer their targets as ‘*watu wa luzungu*’ a Swahili phrase that translates to people who can speak English.⁸⁴ ‘They didn’t want the educated class’, he

⁷⁴ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 157.

⁷⁵ ‘Death in the Afternoon’, 191.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁷⁷ ‘Death in the Afternoon’, 191.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁷⁹ Engur, *Survival: A Soldier’s Story*, location 789.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, location 802.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, location 802.

⁸² Interview with Isaac.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Interview with Stephen.

explained.⁸⁵ Other officers were more ambiguous. 'It is very difficult to tell whether they were resisting the government', Isaac commented.⁸⁶ Robert also indicated that some of his colleagues were 'associated with what they call the elements', those individuals who the regime perceived to be 'trying to run down their government'.⁸⁷ These officers did not seem to be criticizing their colleagues for this possible resistance; rather, each was simply identifying that it was a major reason why their colleagues were targeted.

Especially in the latter years of the 1970s, a number of officers temporarily left the Service. Isaac recalled how some of his colleagues 'had to run away from prisons, to go into exile, go in hiding for some time, because we were not sure what would come next'.⁸⁸ By the time of the Uganda-Tanzania War, Robert had 'run away' to his village, while Stephen had headed for home even earlier.⁸⁹ 'They wanted to kill me', Stephen explained, referring to Amin's security agents, 'so I had to leave the Prisons Service for the time being...I went home for three years'.⁹⁰ He recalled how many officers had to follow a similar path: 'To survive, they had to escape'.⁹¹

Along with threats to their physical safety, officers also faced economic challenges. For much of the 1970s, Ugandans struggled to buy basic commodities such as sugar or cooking oil. Although less immediately threatening than the violence of the Amin regime, this economic instability impacted officers' lives, especially as most had wider familial networks relying on their income. 'When he [Amin] took over, things were still okay, but as we're going ahead on with the years to come, things started changing', Matthew commented.⁹² 'And most especially when he expelled the Asians. Things started becoming worse...the roads started getting spoiled, no maintenance. Commodities started getting lost. Goods, essentials started getting expensive'.⁹³ This, he said, had a negative effect on prison officers 'because we also live like any human

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Interview with Isaac.

⁸⁷ Interview with Robert.

⁸⁸ Interview with Isaac.

⁸⁹ Interview with Robert.

⁹⁰ Interview with Stephen.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Interview with Matthew.

⁹³ Ibid.

being'.⁹⁴ As prices increased, he said, 'you find you cannot manage, you cannot afford. The budgeting became a problem'.⁹⁵ It also affected prison operations. 'The budget for the prisons was reduced, and therefore taking care of the prisoners was very difficult, even buying uniform[s] was not easy, so some prisoners would put on tattered uniforms in rural prisons', Isaac recalled.⁹⁶

The Uganda-Tanzania War introduced new challenges and constraints. In addition to the loss of personnel who had to serve in the military, there were also major disruptions in the running of prisons towards the war's end. The TPDF opened up many prisons and let the inmates go, perhaps assuming that they were all victims of Amin's tyranny.⁹⁷ Patrick, who worked at a prison farm in Western Uganda at the time, recalled how the soldiers 'released all the prisoners in Ruimi prison, and we just stayed in our quarters until when the war ended'.⁹⁸ Luzira was also opened, enabling all of those inmates who were serving long-term criminal offences to walk free.⁹⁹ As Samuel recalled, the end of the war was a time of major instability: 'the government was not functioning, it was as if it was not there. Amin's regime was almost not there, the prisoners had to be released from prisons and all prison officers had to go except those with good records', the latter referring to a screening process of officers that took place following Amin's overthrow.¹⁰⁰ The war also resulted in family disruptions and tragedies. For example, in September 1979, an officer by the name of Joseph requested a transfer to his home area of Kabale.¹⁰¹ While he had been 'enjoying his work' in Soroti, he desperately needed to return home, as 'he has to look after his aging parents, [and] the five children left by his two brothers who wer[e] killed by Amin's soldiers'.¹⁰²

Many prison sites were looted following the war, and the Service lost a great deal of equipment and materials as a result. As Luke recalled, 'That looting was

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Interview with Isaac.

⁹⁷ Interview with Benjamin.

⁹⁸ Interview with Patrick.

⁹⁹ Interview with Robert.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Samuel.

¹⁰¹ KDA JLOS 5, 'Kabale/Kigezi District – Prisons & Police', DC Kabale to Commissioner of Prisons, 6 September, 1979.

¹⁰² Ibid.

fantastic...for example, Upper Prison, which had very large tailors' workshop, with thousands of sewing machines and what have you, all those were looted'.¹⁰³ He was particularly frustrated with the looting of the Prisons Service Library: 'a lot of those books were looted...if I went in [now] I would shed tears because so many of those books I participated in buying and stocking, they're not there'. For Luke, this was particularly tragic, as the books represented 'my contact, and my colleagues' contact in the world, where we would go...throughout our connections we would get books donated'.

Thus, UPS was affected on many levels by Amin's military regime. Officers faced unprecedented attacks on their professional integrity and often had to deal with the suffering wrought by Amin's security agencies firsthand. They were also targets of Amin's culling of certain professionals, epitomized by the Clock Tower execution. Those who escaped such punishments dealt with new challenges in their workplace, from budgetary constraints to growing doubts about the trustworthiness of their new colleagues. Rather than being protected by the 'closed fences' that surrounded it, the Service was impacted by Amin's military dictatorship in numerous and often devastating ways.¹⁰⁴

Professional Boundaries

The period of military rule directly challenged many of the Service's anchoring institutional values. As the military became increasingly embedded within UPS, officers struggled to position themselves professionally. Although the Service's core institutional values – such as rehabilitation, neutrality, and expertise-driven work – were severely undermined by Amin's regime, prison officers turned to these norms in order to navigate their work during this period. These processes of boundary work are ongoing, as retired officers continue to draw such lines in their retrospective representations of the Amin years.

This section draws on the oral accounts of former prison officers, emphasizing

¹⁰³ Interview with Luke, No.1.

¹⁰⁴ Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 604.

the ways in which the militarization of the state impacted their sense of professional identity. While there was by no means a uniform response to the military rule, officers did draw on a shared set of discourses and norms when discussing the challenges of this period. Senior officers were the sharpest critics of Amin and spoke the most frankly about the many problems that military rule had created. In some cases, junior officers suggested that the wider turmoil of the 1970s did not really affect their work, especially those who were based outside of Kampala. One officer was particularly defensive, resisting the view that anything ‘bad’ had happened in the Service during the 1970s, while another praised Amin’s contributions to Uganda.¹⁰⁵ This range of responses reflects both the ambiguity of the 1970s in Uganda’s historical memory and also the varied experiences of officers working in a large government service.

When asked about the Amin years, the majority of former senior officers were unequivocal in their assertion that it had been a decade of extreme difficulty. Robert referred to the 1970s as the ‘dark days’, likening the culture to ‘Animal Farm’.¹⁰⁶ Matthew provided a similarly negative portrayal: ‘I still say 1960s or before during the British [times], things were okay...between 70-80, that’s where things went wrong’.¹⁰⁷ Stephen echoed this narrative: ‘Up to the time Amin took over, things had not changed very much. The system was still very good...The system was still working properly, until he took over’.¹⁰⁸

One aspect of the ‘system’ that was particularly undermined was the Service’s meritocratic structure and emphasis on expertise. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, UPS had advertised itself as a place where anyone could advance through hard work and good job performance. Officers were particularly upset, therefore, when Amin began promoting people along ethnic lines. Those who were not from West Nile, ‘had it rough’, William argued, because ‘you were a little bit discriminated [against] if you do

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Benjamin.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Robert.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Matthew.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Stephen.

not belong to his region'.¹⁰⁹ Government officials 'were not minding about the education', he insisted, instead promoting people based on 'tribes' during the 1970s.¹¹⁰

Many officers were appalled at the incursion of the military, which they felt represented an affront to the Service's identity and integrity. Reflecting on the 1970s, Martin exclaimed, 'We were almost returned to military people!'¹¹¹ Matthew also resented the military's encroachment. In his view, Amin 'wished that all the forces – prisons, police – would become like [the] army'.¹¹² Matthew insisted that the functions of these institutions were different, turning to the Service's role of rehabilitating offenders: 'this is Uganda Prisons Service. We serve to teach the wrongdoers, to counsel them to become better citizens...but in this case....Amin even wanted prison officers to go to war'.¹¹³ Patrick, who had gone through the military training, was adamant that this did not change the approach at UPS: 'Ours was a service, not the force', he explained.¹¹⁴

For Robert, the Service's emphasis on rehabilitation became an important anchor during the 1970s. In addition to his administrative duties running the Training School, Robert said that he tried to help the 'lodgers'.¹¹⁵ He recalled how security agents would bring people to Luzira who were 'almost skeletal [*sic*]'. These former detainees, he said were, 'so bad off', but the officers would 'accept them and treat them'. 'We'd look after them and heal them', he said. Robert characterized this as one of the few rewarding aspects of prison work in the 1970s.

Along with emphasizing rehabilitation, officers also turned to bureaucratic principles. When asked whether or not the work of the Service had changed after the coup, many of them insisted that it had remained largely the same on a day-to-day basis. While officers acknowledged the wider ways in which the integrity of the Service was compromised, they suggested that their professional approach remained steadfast. 'After Amin things changed because of conditions, but we still continued doing our work',

¹⁰⁹ Interview with William.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Interview with Martin.

¹¹² Interview with Matthew.

¹¹³ Interview with Matthew.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Patrick.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Robert.

Matthew commented.¹¹⁶ 'We cannot change as I told you, we have standing orders'. This refrain of consistency and order was a key theme in officers' recollections, and was usually phrased in such a way as to suggest that this continuity was inevitable given the disciplined ethos of UPS. Martin, who spoke very frankly about the abuses of the Amin years, insisted that his work 'didn't change much', explaining, 'I was already trained. I knew what to be done and what not to be done'.¹¹⁷ Luke, who was also highly critical of Amin, echoed this view. Throughout the 1970s, he focused on 'running a prison as it should be. Just as a prison should be run, that is all'.¹¹⁸ Similarly, Isaac insisted that the 'the style was still the same' in prisons despite the changes wrought by military rule,¹¹⁹ while Robert remarked, 'we kept to our job'.¹²⁰

Officers also reaffirmed the importance of political neutrality. As was the case in their discussions about rules and regulations, the separation from politics was presented as fundamental and automatic. Luke insisted that officers' approach did not change in the 1970s, because 'we as prison, we were the technical people, the policy within the prison was the same. There was no change'.¹²¹ Patrick was adamant that the Service was always politically neutral, commenting 'we don't indulge ourselves in politics'.¹²² Similarly, Matthew insisted, 'prisons has never gone into politics, except the few individuals who wish for their own ends'.¹²³ This response was consistent throughout the interviews, with officers emphasizing the continuity of purpose and the ongoing importance placed on ensuring the Service's autonomy from the military regime. Whereas Lisa Hilbink argues that the principle of 'apoliticism' made Chilean judges more likely to go along with the abuses of the Pinochet regime – as challenging the 'validity' of the government's 'laws and policies in the name of liberal-democratic values

¹¹⁶ Interview with Matthew.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Martin.

¹¹⁸ Interview with Luke, No.1.

¹¹⁹ Interview with Isaac.

¹²⁰ Interview with Robert.

¹²¹ Interview with Luke, No.1.

¹²² Interview with Patrick.

¹²³ Interview with Matthew.

and principles was viewed as unprofessional “political” behaviour’ – prison officers in Uganda suggested the reverse effect.¹²⁴

This sense of professionalism was not only held internally, but also pervaded wider perceptions of the Service. In interviews with other Ugandan professionals, the discipline and integrity of prison officers were consistently praised. Jacob, the retired magistrate, characterized the officers whom he encountered as ‘really real professionals’, and ‘very kind’.¹²⁵ When asked whether or not prison officers tried to maintain due process during the Amin years, Kyemba commented: ‘I think they did. Normally, I think they enjoyed the respect of their profession, and I don’t know, quite a number of prisoners...were praying that they be taken to the prison cells, so that they’re managed in the way they are supposed to be managed’.¹²⁶ Engur claimed said that prison officers treated him ‘very well’ when he went to visit his father at Luzira during the 1970s, commenting that they were always ‘very helpful’.¹²⁷

Although these other professionals and the prison officers to whom I spoke strongly emphasized the Service’s discipline, there was greater dissonance when it came to framing the impact of the Amin years. Not all of the officers felt that the 1970s were a particularly challenging time, and some did not view Amin in a negative light. Generally, these were officers who worked outside Kampala during this period. ‘The government changed, but it wasn’t very bad...the prison was not affected’, Benjamin remarked.¹²⁸ ‘It’s the only institution I think, which remained intact. We didn’t see anything which was bad’. Margaret also felt that the Service was minimally affected, commenting ‘We didn’t have much change’.¹²⁹ Both of these officers were posted outside of the central region in the 1970s, and thus likely faced with fewer direct encounters with paramilitary organizations or ‘lodgers’. Samuel had a decidedly positive view of the Amin years. He praised Amin for having ‘united all the security personnel’

¹²⁴ Hilbink, *Judges beyond Politics in Democracy and Dictatorship*, 5-7.

¹²⁵ Interview with Jacob.

¹²⁶ Interview with Henry Kyemba.

¹²⁷ Interview with Robeson Engur.

¹²⁸ Interview with Benjamin.

¹²⁹ Interview with Margaret.

and teaching prison officers to become more ‘self-reliant’.¹³⁰ As a proud Muganda, Samuel’s praise was more likely due to his fervent hatred of Obote rather than his admiration of Amin.

Benjamin – while he did not praise Amin directly – insisted that the problems of the 1970s had been overstated. He claimed that there were no economic issues and also repeatedly emphasized that he had never seen anything ‘bad’ occur in the prisons.¹³¹ This exaggerated and even defensive approach to the interview was perhaps due to his concern about my agenda and the possibility that I was searching for horror stories. Throughout the interview process, several retired officers raised the point that I might have alternative motivations, including one who explained his desire to remain anonymous: ‘I wanted to be open to you, but to me you are like, who’s working for what?’ Matthew exclaimed.¹³² ‘You’re on research. And in [re]search you are almost like, you know a journalist?’ For Samuel, the possibility that I could be a journalist had the opposite effect. ‘I speak this with confidence, without fear, even if you put it on [the] internet’, he told me.¹³³

Ultimately, these varied views about the Amin years reflect the vexed position of this period within Uganda’s history, as well as the spectrum of experiences within UPS. In an institution that encompassed nearly forty prisons – employing officers from a range of ages, ethnic backgrounds, and ranks – experiences of the 1970s were bound to differ.¹³⁴ Yet what is common in these reflections is the way in which officers engage in ‘boundary work’, framing their experiences in relation to their profession and its attendant set of moral orders. Discourses of rehabilitation, rules, expertise, and political neutrality were widely shared throughout the Service, but were used in different ways by officers to support their views of how a prison officer should act. We cannot always determine the extent to which these discourses reflected officers’ actions, but we can consider how they shaped officers’ self-perceptions and representations of their careers.

¹³⁰ Interview with Samuel.

¹³¹ Interview with Benjamin.

¹³² Interview with Matthew.

¹³³ Interview with Samuel.

¹³⁴ MUAC, *Uganda Prisons Service Annual Report 1975*.

However, when taken together with the views of other professionals and the testimonies in the CIVHR, it seems that this perception of the Service's professionalism was widely held.

While the officers' narratives could simply be dismissed as efforts at self-preservation, they speak to the wider human need to identify with collective values and shared norms, ones that can provide comfort and clarity in times of distress. This chapter does not aim to provide a definitive assessment of officers' culpability in the abuses of the military regime, but rather to examine the ways in which they imagined, debated, and engaged with the boundaries of their profession in response to a period of unprecedented violence and vulnerability. Determining the Service's boundaries became particularly urgent in the 1970s, and continues to unfold as officers reflect upon and try to make sense of their careers.

'Turning Points' and 'Dark Days': History-Making at UPS

The narrative of professionalism evident in the oral histories of retired officers also emanates from current officers and institutional histories. UPS officers, both past and present, regularly engage with the Service's history, drawing on particular discourses and stories to affirm their own sense of professionalism. This history-making falls into two categories, one in which the past represents something to be overcome, and the other in which it is a source of strength and resiliency. The first strand, which in many ways parallels the rhetoric of the NRM government, is often used by officers who joined the Service after 1986 to affirm their distance from the violence and brutality of the early post-colonial period. Within this narrative, there are several elements of the past deemed to be problematic. As already discussed, many officers have a very negative view of the Service's military origins, insisting that this was incompatible with penal modernity. For others, it was the period between Amin's coup and Museveni's takeover of power that was deemed to be a source of shame. When presenting my research, many current officers were often pleased to hear that I would be shedding light on this period in the Service's past, in the hopes that it would provide a foil to their contemporary human rights framework, thereby showing just how far the Service had come. After

introducing my research to one senior prison officer, he reflected on the long road to the emphasis on rehabilitation, one that had been profoundly undercut by the Amin years, which he felt were marked by torture, violence, and a dismissive attitude towards the mistreatment of prisoners.¹³⁵

In one of the few written histories of the Service, former Commissioner of Prisons Joseph Etima offers a particularly concise and condemnatory portrayal of the 1970s and early 1980s.¹³⁶ In the section entitled ‘The Fall of the Prisons Service’, Etima provides the following assessment of this period: ‘Due to misrule the Prisons failed in following established programmes. This was the dark period so to speak’.¹³⁷ In contrast, Etima presents the 1960s as a golden age of professionalism and reform, extolling Okwaare’s influence. His appointment, Etima avers, was the ‘turning point for the development of the Uganda Prisons Service’.¹³⁸ Another written history provided by an officer at the Prisons Training School declared 1995 – the year in which the NRM government passed a new constitution – to be the defining line in the Service’s history, as it began to embrace a human rights framework.¹³⁹

Other officers felt that there was considerable continuity in terms of the standards of professionalism throughout the post-colonial period. In a recent account of the Service’s history – written by a current officer – the 1970s are barely discussed, mainly mentioned in the context of the achievement of total Africanization during this decade. Discussing the challenges of the 1970s, a current officer proclaimed with pride that his colleagues in Service and also the Police Force tried to keep doing their jobs despite the extreme circumstances, with some of them resisting the Amin state.¹⁴⁰ As Tomas Martin, who engaged with numerous current officers over the course of his ethnographic research at UPS, commented, ‘the first batches of Uganda’s post-colonial

¹³⁵ Field Notes, Meeting in Port Bell, 15 June 2015.

¹³⁶ Personal Collection of J. Etima (PJE) Joseph Etima, ‘Historical Perspective of the Uganda Prisons Service and background to the Prisons Act 2006’, (2008).

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ PJE, ‘Historical Perspective of the Uganda Prisons Service and background to the Prisons Act 2006’.

¹³⁹ PTSL, ‘History of UPS’.

¹⁴⁰ Field Notes, Meeting at Uganda Prisons Service Headquarters, 7 April 2016.

prison officers have, in UPS' own eyes, offered a protective and enabling continuity across the troubled waters of Uganda's post-colonial history'.¹⁴¹

For the majority of the retired officers whom I interviewed, the early post-colonial period was a time of profound challenges, but also evoked a sense of pride. In some cases, these officers sounded almost wistful when speaking about this period in their careers, a time when staff were increasingly seeking out opportunities for professional development within Uganda and overseas, and the Prisons Service was seeking to make its mark within the new nation. While they acknowledged the setbacks of the 1970s and early 1980s, some spoke nostalgically for this golden age of professionalism.

Conclusion

Like all public service institutions, UPS was profoundly affected by military rule. Soldiers and other agents of the regime were given a place in the Service's hierarchy, undermining the ethos of expertise and the collegiality amongst the staff. Rules and regulations governing the processing and incarceration of inmates were regularly breached, as 'lodgers' were dumped at Luzira without proper documentation. The most devastating and unquestionable impact was the murder of prison officers at the hands of paramilitary organizations. Some were killed in a spectacular fashion in front of a crowd of thousands, while others were called out during parades and never seen again.

While it is clear that UPS was deeply impacted by the violence of the Amin years, the extent to which officers' were able to temper or resist these incursions is murkier territory. In the estimation of the CIVHR, the Service was unique in this regard when compared to other security organizations, an assessment that is supported by interviews with other Amin-era professionals, former detainees' memoirs and testimonies, and the reflections of prison officers themselves. It is also, perhaps, indicated by the high-profile killings of prison officers, suggesting that many were

¹⁴¹ Martin, *Embracing Human Rights*, 71.

unwilling to capitulate to the regime. This was certainly not unique to the Prisons Service, but its personnel did form a very visible group of Amin's victims.

If we accept this evidence, the question remains: why was the Service relatively autonomous during the Amin years? Was it a matter of physical boundaries – the 'closed fences' – or more imagined ones, namely the professional culture?¹⁴² This is a question that will be much more effectively answered with further research on other professional groups, such as the Police Force or the judiciary. What can be said with a much higher degree of certainty, however, is that prison officers represented themselves as professionals, and used this identity to explain their responses to military rule. In their reflections on the Amin years, officers engage in boundary work, arguing that bureaucratic principles guided their actions and helped them to maintain their distance from the regime's abuses. If we believe this, then the case of UPS give us pause to think about how such boundaries and professional imaginaries can be created in order to provide a counterweight to the mercurial nature of politics. Either way, it opens up crucial questions about how public servants view themselves and create meaningful identities in the wake of political extremes.

¹⁴² Republic of Uganda, *The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights*, 604.

CONCLUSION

Delivering his inaugural speech on 29 January 1986, President Museveni urged Ugandans to put the violent early post-colonial period behind them. Referring to his political predecessors, he remarked: 'What you need is to develop enough strength to enable you to sweep that kind of garbage to where it belongs: on the dung heap of history'.¹ Throughout its initial years in power, the NRM's rhetoric was saturated with these messages of rupture and renewal. As Peterson writes, 'The NRM government of the late 1980s and early 1990s regarded Uganda's conflicted history as a hindrance to progress, and they sought to direct citizens' attention toward a bright and promising future, not toward the benighted past'.² In the eyes of many international observers, the NRM made impressive efforts towards this achieving this goal, and was heralded as an exemplar of 'good governance' and a 'beacon of hope' in the region.³ By the 1990s, Uganda appeared to have transformed itself from a 'conflict-wracked basket-case to poster-boy for the success of structural adjustment, liberalization and development agendas'.⁴

On the surface, this sense of rupture was evident in the rhetoric and policies surrounding UPS. Even before the NRM's takeover of political power, its members had expressed the need to rebuild the Service anew. In a pamphlet published in 1982, the NRM provided a narrative of the Service's decline over the post-colonial period, asserting: 'Our prisons which once boasted high standards of management and administration have now sunk so low that they definitely rank among the worst. They have now become no more than places of torture, starvation and death'.⁵ The Service's personnel were also characterized in disparaging terms: 'The attitude of prison warders and officials towards

¹ 'Museveni 24 Years Late: Ours is not a mere change of guard; it is a fundamental change', *Daily Monitor*, 29 January 2010, accessed 14 March 2017, <http://www.monitor.co.ug/SpecialReports/688342-851112-osrbrwz/index.html>.

² Derek R. Peterson, 'A history of the heritage economy in Yoweri Museveni's Uganda', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 10:4 (2016): 793.

³ Adam Branch, *Displacing Human Rights: War and Intervention in Northern Uganda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 81.

⁴ Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 276-277.

⁵ ICS, National Resistance Movement (NRM), PG.UG.NRM, *Towards a Free and Democratic Uganda: the Basic Principles and Policies of the National Resistance Movement (NRM)* (Kampala: Authority of the National Resistance Council, National Resistance Movement, 1982), 1.

prisoners is itself criminal. Prisoners are regarded as beasts to be abused, flogged and tortured at will'.⁶ As a result, the NRM leaders pledged that both the Police Force and the Prisons Service would be 'built afresh' upon their successful takeover of power.⁷

In the 1995 constitution, the Service was introduced as follows: 'The Uganda Prisons Service shall be nationalistic, patriotic, professional, disciplined, competent and productive; and its members shall be citizens of Uganda of good character recruited from every district of Uganda' – a description in keeping with the NRM leadership's wider emphasis on good governance.⁸ In 2000, the Service inaugurated an 'Open Door' policy, which invited external observers to observe, critique, and suggest improvements regarding its operations – resulting in millions of dollars of funding from external donors.⁹ The most significant change came in 2006 with the passage of the Prisons Act. Its primary goal was to bring the prison legislation 'in line with effective and humane modern penal policy and universally accepted international standards'.¹⁰ With this shift, the Service's operations were fundamentally reoriented around a human rights framework. In language reflecting the zeitgeist of international penal reform, the Service declared its vision of being 'a centre of excellence in providing human rights based correctional services in Africa'.¹¹ Overall, UPS has received some praise for this shift in approach,¹² as well as critiques that concrete changes have only been implemented in the larger prison sites.¹³ The NRM government has focused mainly on the praise, evident in the 2014 headline 'Uganda Prisons best in Africa' in the government's newspaper, *New Vision*.¹⁴

⁶ ICS, *Towards a Free and Democratic Uganda*, 15.

⁷ Ibid., 15.

⁸ Article 215, 'Uganda Prisons Service', Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995, accessed 9 March 2017, http://www.statehouse.go.ug/sites/default/files/attachments/Constitution_1995.pdf.

⁹ Tomas Max Martin, 'Accessing and Witnessing Prison Practice in Uganda', *The Palgrave Handbook of Prison Ethnography*, eds. Deborah H. Drake, Rod Earle, Jennifer Sloan (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 425.

¹⁰ 'The Prisons Act, 2006', 5.

¹¹ 'Vision and Mission', Uganda Prisons Service, Republic of Uganda, accessed 8 June 2017, <http://www.prisons.go.ug/aboutups/vision-and-mission>.

¹² Andrew Coyle, *A Human Rights Approach to Prison Management: Handbook for prison staff* (London: International Centre for Prison Studies, 2002), 16-17, accessed 9 March 2017, http://www.prisonstudies.org/sites/default/files/resources/downloads/human_rights_prison_management.pdf.

¹³ Human Rights Watch, *Even Dead Bodies Must Work: Health, Hard Labor, and Abuse in Ugandan Prisons*, 14 July 2011, accessed 9 March 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/07/14/even-dead-bodies-must-work/health-hard-labor-and-abuse-ugandan-prisons>.

¹⁴ Steven Candia and David Lumu, 'Uganda Prisons best in Africa', *New Vision*, 30 October 2014, accessed 9 March 2017, http://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1313629/uganda-prisons-africa.

These changes could easily be read as a product of the NRM's good governance agenda. Yet, as this dissertation has argued, the Service has a much longer history of engagement with transnational models of penal reform. As early as the 1930s, UPS sought to reimagine itself as professional institution, one that aligned with universalizing principles of 'penal welfarism' and bureaucracy. This was not simply a state-directed agenda, but was adopted and shaped by prison officers. These actors harnessed the imaginative capital of the Service, using it to anchor their professional identities, make claims on the government, and navigate the violence of military rule.

A History of Boundaries

Bringing together a diverse collection of archival materials, oral histories, media sources, memoirs, visual sources, and disciplinary perspectives, this dissertation makes a substantial empirical contribution to our understanding of the Service's historical development. In particular, it offers evidence to suggest that UPS remained relatively distant from the atrocities of Amin's military regime, becoming less entangled in its abuses than other state security institutions. This was in no small part due to the separate existence of safe houses, the primary detention sites in which Ugandans were tortured and killed in the 1970s. In contrast to the portrayals offered by both popular and scholarly accounts, these were entirely outside the formal remit of UPS – a finding that complicates our understanding of the Ugandan state in the 1970s.

However, the main contribution of this dissertation rests not in drawing a boundary between formal and informal sites of incarceration, but rather in exploring what made this boundary meaningful. From its inception in the early colonial period, the Service lacked a distinct identity. Instead, it was subsumed under the aegis of the military, with prison guards drawn from the ranks of the KAR. This militarism was not shaken off with the Service's transfer to the newly created Uganda Police Force in 1908, which was a highly militarized organization in terms of its training, structure, and policies. Thus, in the initial decades of its existence, the Service's role was mainly to support the consolidation of colonial control, often by coercive means.

In the 1930s, however, the colonial administration began to question its punitive approach. Whipping offenders and locking them up with no rehabilitative intent was increasingly unpalatable to the metropolitan public, the Colonial Office, and the growing

ranks of globally minded penal experts. As a result, the course of colonial penal policy was fundamentally altered. It was tethered to a universalizing vision of penal welfarism, one in which offenders were rehabilitated through scientific means. In Uganda, this shift was solidified by the 1936 Prisons Committee, which decried the deplorable state of the prisons and insisted that the Service be given the autonomy, resources, and personnel that it needed to develop as a modern institution. The Committee sparked the first crucial boundary-making process, severing UPS from the Police Force and making it an independent organization for the first time in its history.

With this newfound autonomy, the Service embarked on a robust effort to professionalize its staff. The tipping point was again in the late 1930s, as the colonial administration decided to recruit officers with elite educational standards into the Service's senior ranks. Uganda was at the vanguard of this process of 'Africanisation', with its local officers receiving promotions that were unparalleled in East African prison services at the time. This process accelerated in the late colonial period, acquiring a more international dimension as officers were increasingly provided with opportunities to engage in penal reform networks abroad. It gained further traction after independence, as Okwaare set out to empower a new generation of officers with cutting-edge penal expertise and transnational approaches to prison management. Distancing themselves from their military past, prison officers sought to reposition themselves as technical practitioners, steeped in criminological theories and focused on the rehabilitation of offenders. Although this newfound professional persona was not always reflected in officers' daily practices and generated tremendous tensions when it came to balancing professional and personal responsibilities, it nevertheless provided them with an important boundary with which to assert the worthiness of their work and their professional identity.

Throughout this period, boundaries were also being intensely negotiated between UPS and local government prisons. From the early colonial years, these institutions occupied a vexed position in Uganda's penal landscape, viewed as either a flexible form of punishment that was more suitable for the African population, or a poor cousin of UPS that was far removed from the remit of modern penal practice. Perhaps surprisingly, it was Amin who made the first ill-fated attempt at integrating these disparate systems. Although the merger was not successfully completed until 2006, *askaris* had long been

trying to blur the lines demarcating them from UPS, asserting their legitimacy as professional public servants. While some of the UPS officers looked down on their local government counterparts, the boundary between them was constantly shifting, reflecting wider negotiations over the distribution of power within the Ugandan state.

Turning outwards, prison officers at UPS were involved in their own processes of boundary negotiation, seeking to limit the distance between themselves and prison professionals in Western nations, while also asserting their own modified vision of the prison. Okwaare and the generation of senior officers who served under him embraced opportunities outside of Uganda, from training courses in Britain to UN forums. Okwaare and his officers were constantly asserting their inclusion within these transnational communities, evident in the pages of the photo album documenting his trip to North America, or in the numerous publications on criminology lining the shelves of the Training School Library. Yet, like many of their counterparts elsewhere in the Global South, they did not simply adopt Western approaches wholesale, instead insisting on the importance of the prison's contribution to economic development.

With the ascendance of Amin's military regime, boundaries were thrown into question with a new intensity. Government agents wore bell-bottom trousers instead of uniforms, ministers were detained by paramilitary organizations, and public service institutions faced unprecedented interference from the army. Boundaries were also obscured within UPS: military personnel were introduced into the Service's ranks while prison officers were being called to the front lines, and many prison officers became targets of state brutality rather than agents of law and order. This was, by all measures, a nightmarish situation for UPS, as it seemed that its military history was reemerging, albeit in a new and horrifying manner. However, the boundary distinguishing UPS from Amin's military regime did not entirely collapse. Although the Service undoubtedly became a more violent and corrupt place in the 1970s, many officers held on to their principles of professionalism. Officers drew on professional imaginaries to evaluate the military state and its repressive techniques, distancing themselves where possible and articulating sharp critiques of Amin's paramilitary organizations and the safe houses that they ran. In UPS

and other public service institutions, the ‘stubborn historicity’ of bureaucratic and professional ideals – although severely tested – remained meaningful in the 1970s.¹⁵

The history of the UPS is thus a history of boundaries, which were continuously being created, shifted, and dismantled in response to changing political dynamics. The Service was constantly negotiating its relationship to the military, the police, local government prisons, and wider international professional and intergovernmental networks. At stake throughout this was the fundamental question of what it meant to be a *modern* prisons service. From the late colonial period onwards, the answer had been firmly tied to transnational tenets of penal welfarism, giving the Service a particular imaginative capital. Within Uganda, this was deployed in creative ways by a range of actors, from heads of state to junior prison officers. It was used to pursue a wide variety of aspirations, as officers imagined a better future for themselves, their families, and their nation. Most importantly, these boundaries were given meaning by the men and women who served UPS. While officers certainly ignored or undermined professional ideals on a regular basis, they consistently articulated a shared set of values and principles that underpinned their understanding of what it meant to be a professional. Drawing on Weberian bureaucratic notions, they asserted the importance of doing things ‘by the book’ and remaining politically neutral.¹⁶ They also made meanings about their profession in moral and interpersonal dimensions, measuring the worth of prison work in terms of its ability to build better people. Thus, while the actual practices of prison officers are indeed significant, what matters most in this dissertation is how they envisioned and represented themselves. As Julie MacArthur writes in her examination of Luyia ethnic identity in Kenya, ‘This study has been less concerned with saying what the Luyia are, or were, than with exploring what they imagined they could be: less concerned with some essential essence than with their multiple ways of being’.¹⁷ This dissertation adopts a similar approach, drawing out the aspirations and identities of prison officers, their narrations of personal and institutional histories, and various visions of UPS to explore broader questions about modernity, professionalism, and authority in Uganda’s history.

¹⁵ Alexander, ‘Militarisation and State Institutions’, 812.

¹⁶ Interview with Luke, No.1.

¹⁷ Julie MacArthur, *Cartography and the Political Imagination: Mapping Community in Colonial Kenya* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2016), Kindle edition, location 5002.

Beyond UPS: Wider Implications

This study makes several broader contributions. The first, and perhaps most obvious, is in regards to Uganda's historiography. Foregrounding the resiliency and professional imaginaries of the Prisons Service personnel complicates our understanding of the post-colonial state in Uganda, especially in the 1970s. Although profoundly destructive, the Amin regime was not a 'homogenous Leviathan' that turned all citizens into hapless victims or brutal perpetrators.¹⁸ Rather, the Amin state was a 'field for action', in which public servants and the wider citizenry navigated, challenged, and resisted many aspects of the regime's repression.¹⁹ However, this dissertation stands out for its unique degree of emphasis on the Obote I government, tracing the continuities in professional histories and official discourses across the 1960s and 1970s. Much more research needs to be done to complicate the portrayal of the Amin state as an aberration, exploring not only the coercive similarities between the two decades, but also social, professional, and political histories. There is a wide scope for research that treats the post-colonial period more holistically, including the years between Amin's overthrow and the NRM's victory in 1986.

Secondly, this dissertation helps us to recast our notions of the post-colonial state in Africa. In seeking to historicize the postcolony, we must strip away the layers of sensationalism and generalization that have dominated scholarly and popular accounts, instead examining how institutions were imagined and given meaning after independence. This is not intended to sanitize the very real abuses of power within Uganda and elsewhere, but rather to open new avenues for understanding post-colonial states. As this and other recent studies have shown, the state in Africa was not simply a 'hollowed-out, decayed shell', but rather a place where people worked – and in some cases lived – tried to forge careers, and pursued respectability.²⁰ While informality and corruption were apparent and even rampant in certain contexts, bureaucratic ideals nonetheless provided a point of departure and generated certain understandings about how a public servant should act. This reminds us of the need to take bureaucratic ideals seriously when looking

¹⁸ Peterson and Taylor, 'Rethinking the State', 59.

¹⁹ Ibid., 59.

²⁰ Ibid., 59.

at African states, tracking their ‘stubborn historicity’ and seeing how public servants understand them.²¹

Such emic perspectives not only complicate our image of the state in Africa, but they also open up a rich vein of social history. While historians of Africa have done much to explore the experiences of public servants in the colonial period through the concept of the ‘intermediary’, we still have much to learn about how various professional roles were imagined and enacted after independence. Throughout the continent, doctors, psychiatrists, teachers, prison officers, and other professionals engaged in a process of negotiating their place within the post-colonial state, taking inherited colonial categories and reworking them in the context of independence. They also asserted their place on an international stage, becoming engaged in critical questions about the universality of education, medicine, and punishment, and other institutions.²² With a few exceptions, we know very little about their professional identities, and how their personal lives, engagement in local political arenas, and involvement in wider global networks shaped these identities. This study represents a step in that direction, but there is a great deal of work to be done in this field.

Finally, this dissertation opens up important questions about the global history of the prison, as well as its position in our contemporary political landscape. While scholars have tracked the prison’s movement across empires, its history after decolonization has been almost entirely ignored, beyond simply adding weight to wider diagnoses of dysfunction. Yet, the case of the UPS suggests that a range of imaginaries, ambitions, and personalities shaped post-colonial prisons, rather than simply coercive agendas. Ultimately, the development of the Service was intimately intertwined with deep deliberations on the meaning of modernity in the post-colonial context.

At their core, prisons are sites of deprivation, places in which free movement and choice are denied. Yet, the prison also has a powerful constitutive capacity, as the stories and images surrounding prisons can serve much broader narratives of modernity, nationalism, resistance, and political legitimacy. It is perhaps this quality that explains why the prison endures as a hallmark of modern statehood, beyond its punitive and custodial uses. The prison offers political leaders a pastiche of possibilities: it can confirm a state’s

²¹ Alexander, ‘Militarisation and State Institutions’, 812.

²² Heaton, *Black Skin, White Coats*, location 285.

commitment to humanity or security, serve as a source of unity or division, and fortify calls for nationalism or claims to membership in a global community. It also offered post-colonial citizens a site of respectable employment, in which they felt they could contribute to law and order while obtaining a degree of security and status.

The power of the prison is thus derived not only from the structures built to contain criminals, but also from the stories told and images conjured. From Uganda in the early post-colonial period to contemporary debates on mass incarceration and the privatization of prisons in the United States, politicians and their opponents pluck images and discourses of the prison to serve particular agendas. Representations of the prison can bolster a state's claim to modernity, underscore its control over deviant elements, or demonstrate its commitment to security. This malleability of the prison helps us to better comprehend its durability. As Frank Dikötter argues, it is 'precisely the singular resilience of this contested institution that makes a history of the prison so urgent'.²³ Through analyzing the imaginative capital of prisons, rather than simply decrying their abuses, we can perhaps come closer to understanding their continued prominence as a pillar of the modern state, while also seeking to build criminal justice systems that better support human dignity.

²³ Dikötter, 'Introduction: The Prison in the World', 3.

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Interviews

Formal interviews were conducted with the list of names below. In many cases, pseudonyms have been used in order to protect the privacy and safety of participants, and are indicated with an asterisk. Pseudonyms were not used for interviewees who are published authors. Along with these formal interviews, many informal interviews were conducted with other members of the Prisons Service and a range of Ugandans who lived in the 1960s and 1970s. In the dissertation, these are referred to as 'Field Notes', with reference to the specific date on which the conversation took place.

Interview with George Kasozi, 11 April 2016
Interview with Luke, 28 April 2016 and 3 May 2016*
Interview with Matthew, 19 May 2016*
Interview with Henry Kyemba, 24 May 2016
Interview with Isaac, 30 May 2016*
Interview with Simon, 30 May 2016*
Interview with Robert, 13 July 2016*
Interview with Michael, 19 July 2016*
Interview with Jacob, 22 July 2016*
Interview with Robeson Engur 24 July 2016
Interview with Patrick, 28 July 2016*
Interview with Benjamin, 29 July 2016*
Interview with Margaret, 4 August 2016*
Interview with Samuel, 6 August 2016*
Interview with Charles, 12 August 2016*
Interview with John Pancras Orau, 12 August 2016
Interview with Martin, 12 August 2016*
Interview with William, 22 August 2016*
Interview with Stephen, 24 August 2016*
Interview with Yash Tandon, 9 May 2017

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