



Uganda (E.A Studies Southall and Gutkind) Part 1

The corollary of increasing political centralisation in nineteenth century Buganda was the importance attaching to the capital of the Ganda king. The capital was moved from hilltop to hilltop every few years, and was invariably changed at the death of one Kabaka and the accession of another. But during the last half century of Ganda political independence the capital always remained somewhere within a small area of central Buganda not more than ten miles wide and less than that distance from the northern shores of Lake Victoria on Murchison Bay. From the death of Kabaka Suna in 1859 till the arrival of Lugard in 1890 the capital was changed at least ten times. When Burton was at Tabora in 1858 the Arabs told him about "Kibuga, the capital of Uganda." Kibuga is the Luganda word for capital and we shall have frequent occasion to use it. On whatever hill the capital happened to be, there was the centre of Buganda. Ahmed bin Ibrahim El Ameri was the first known Arab to reach the court of Buganda and claimed to have visited Kabaka Suna three times, first in about 1844. Speke found Kabaka Mutesa I at Banda-balogo in 1862, and Stanley found him at Rubaga in 1875. He was also there at Wilson's arrival in 1877 but had another palace on Nabulagala (Kasubi) hill as well. All visitors before Lugard were kept under very close supervision by the Kabaka, obliged to live near the capital more or less where he directed them and given little opportunity for travelling about the country. The interest of the outside world, aroused by the international incidents of the seventies and eighties in which Buganda was involved, was therefore also focused upon the Kibuga.

Uganda (E.A Studies Southall and Gutkind) Part 2, FOUNDING OF KAMPALA.

Lugard altered the whole position when, in December 1890, he crossed the Nile without waiting for the permission of Kabaka Mwanga, as previous visitors had done, made a forced march to the Kibuga, then at Mengo, insisted upon camping on a hill of his own choice irrespective of Mwanga's wishes and fortified it in defiance of Mwanga's sovereignty. The justification for this was that Mwanga had formally asked for British protection. Though the King's mind kept changing, he found himself in a position which made it impossible for him to avoid signing a treaty which marked the end of autonomous Ganda sovereignty. Lugard's choice of Kampala hill for his fort introduced the dual aspect to the capital which it has retained ever since. For more than a decade the whole embryonic urban agglomeration continued to be called Mengo after the hill on which the King's palace stood. For Colvile, writing in 1895 of his experiences two years before, "the capital of Uganda is built on four hills, Mengo, Rubaga, Namirembe and Kampala, the first three being occupied by the King and the Catholic and Protestant missions respectively, while the last was selected by the officers of the (Imperial British East Africa) Company as the site for their fort". By 1902 Johnston was already propounding the Roman analogy. The capital was sometimes called Mengo, he said, previously Rubaga, sometimes Kampala, but Mengo was the best name. "Mengo is like ancient Rome - only much more so - a city of seven hills..... Each suburb or portion of the straggling town of some 77,000 souls is a hill or a hillock in itself." Later writers perpetuated the analogy, though the actual hills selected as the basis for it constantly differ. Johnston illustrates the early settlement with the caption "Kampala (a suburb of Mengo)." Whereas in 1890 the little fort on Kampala hill and the houses of the missionaries on Namirembe and Rubaga were insignificant by comparison with the great concentration of the King's capital on Mengo, by 1906 the position was reversed by the rapid development of the British administrative post and the Asian bazaar which sprang up beside it, so that Commissioner George Wilson could write "so strong and wide-spreading has been the influence of Kampala that its name is superseding that of Mengo especially in outlying countries, and it will be simpler...to retain it ... as referring to the native Capital as a whole ... Its complete ascendancy in importance over all other centres, due to its being a long established Capital of the dominant tribe, is accepted by the natives of the Protectorate without dispute and its affairs are matters of "universal interest."



Uganda (E.A Studies Southall and Gutkind) Part 3

Political and Commercial Capital, Entebbe, Uganda

Despite this rapid growth Kampala was not made the political capital of the Uganda Protectorate. For this purpose Sir Gerald Portal had in 1893 selected Entebbe, a peninsula jutting into Lake Victoria some twenty miles from Mengo and Kampala, known for a few years by Portal's new name of Port Alice, which referred more particularly to the steamer landing than to the settlement on the hill above. Entebbe was chosen partly for its beauty, partly for its supposed superiority over Kampala in conditions of health, partly also for strategic reasons and because of its convenience on the lakeshore for communication by boat with Kisumu on Kavirondo Gulf, for many years the railhead from the East African coast port of Mombasa and the outside world. Another reason given in favour of Entebbe was its very aloofness from the vortex of Uganda affairs at Mengo and Kampala. Controversy over the desirability of transferring the political capital to Kampala continued for several decades, especially around the years 1905 and 1906 when the sleeping sickness epidemic of the lakeshore regions raged very near Entebbe. But Entebbe has remained the political capital of the Uganda Protectorate, and Kampala has remained its chief city. The Kingdom of Buganda has become one of the four provinces in the Protectorate, Mengo is still the capital of the Kingdom and the Protectorate government departments have their provincial offices for Buganda at Kampala.

