

The Creation of Acholi Military Ethnocracy in Uganda, 1862 to 1962

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Abstract.

Although the Acholi constitute only four percent of Uganda's total population, they were the most dominant ethnic community in the country's military during the colonial and most of post-colonial period. British Colonial Administrators identified the Acholi as the best soldierly material in Uganda and transformed them into a martial race. By 1962, the Acholi themselves seemed to have endorsed this as their true identity. So strong was this martial spirit that when in 1986, the Acholi dominated Government of General Tito Okello was toppled, several armed rebellions emerged in the northern half of the country to try and restore the status quo. This paper analyses the creation of the Acholi military ethnocracy in Uganda.

Key words: Ethnocracy, martial race, colonialism, Acholi, military

Introduction and Background

The military has been the most dominant institution in the colonial and post-colonial history of Uganda. During the colonial period, the military was used to extend spheres of administration, silence dissenting views and safeguard British interests. In the post-colonial era, the military has remained the major deterministic factor on who governs Uganda. In this exceptional military history, the Acholi ethnic group became the most dominant from the colonial period up to 1986 when the current government captured power. Yet, the Acholi are one of the smallest ethnic groups in the country taking only four percent of the population. According to Ruddy and Koen (1999), the Acholi, far from being born warriors, were transformed into a military ethnocracy. Up to 1986, the Acholi were seen as the martial race of Uganda.

Martial race was a designation created by army officials of British India after the mutiny of 1857, where they classified each ethnic group into one of two categories, 'martial' and 'non-martial'. The ostensible reason was that a 'martial race' was typically brave and well-built for fighting while the 'non-martial races' were those whom the British believed to be unfit for battle because of their sedentary lifestyle (Rand, 2006). However, the real reason was to justify the fact that, after British-trained Indian soldiers rebelled in 1857, the British increased recruitment from the races which had remained loyal to them and diminished or abandoned recruitment from the catchment area of the Bengal Army where the mutiny originated. The concept of martial race already had a precedent in Indian culture since one of the four orders (Varnas) in the Vedic-Hindu social system is known as the "Kshatriya", literally "warriors." (Heather, 2004).

The British came to East Africa using the same colonial tactics they had perfected throughout their empire: consolidating power through divide- and- rule policies that irrevocably changed identity, politics and belonging in the territory now known as Uganda (Finnstrom, 2003). Like elsewhere in Africa, the British colonial regime's practices engendered winner-takes-all politics, and with arguably more disastrous results, the normalization of militarized governments. These institutional legacies were deeply influential in the shaping of Acholi ethnicity and remain significant sources of long-term political grievances in Uganda (Victor, 2011).

During Uganda's colonial period, the British encouraged political and economic development in the south of the country, in particular among the Baganda. In contrast, the Acholi and other northern ethnic communities supplied much of the national manual labour and came to comprise a majority of the military, creating a military ethnocracy. This military ethnocracy reached its height with the coup d'état of 1985 led by Acholi Generals, Tito Okello Lutwa and Bazilio Olara Okello, and came to a crashing end with the defeat of their Military Junta by the National Resistance Army led by now-president Yoweri Museveni.

The Acholi are a Lwo people, who migrated to northern Uganda from *Rumbek* in South Sudan. Lwo history traverses several ethnicities, states and polities without being confined to any single one of them. The Lwo are found in northern and eastern Uganda, the South Sudan, western Kenya, eastern Congo, western Ethiopia and northern Tanzania (Personal communication with Ret. Rev. Canon Opwonya in Gulu) Today, the Acholi of Uganda are found in the northern districts of Gulu, Amuru, Nwoya, Kitgum, Lamwo, Pader and Agago.

The colonial Labour policy

"What I know the Colonial Government does think about West Nile" fumed the area MP, "is to keep it a human zoo, and get cheap labourers from it to work in places like Kakira, Kawolo (central Uganda) and where new industries will be started". He went on, "I do believe that government does think that if industries are started in west Nile, the flow of labour from that district to other districts will be stopped" (Hansard 35, 3135-3136). Up to 1962, no industries, large plantations nor bituminized roads existed in northern Uganda.

By the time the colonization of Uganda was completed, the communities that inhabited the country were at different stages of political and economic development. Hence, the British Protectorate consisted of many distinct regions, inhabited by people who were not only ethnically different but who were also at different stages of development. The people of the south were able to steal a march upon their counterparts in the north (Mutiibwa, 1992).

The country also included two major linguistic groups namely Nilotics in the north and Bantu in the south. In the southern part of the country there lived peoples who for centuries had been welded into centralized and highly sophisticated political systems. These states not only had kings but also nkikos (parliaments), a hierarchy of chiefs, and laws that governed the relationship between rulers and the ruled.

From the onset, British colonial administrators assumed that Africans were naturally "tribal" people. An attempt was made, therefore, to govern the societies of Uganda as "tribal" people. They recognized though that the tribes were at different stages of development. This was the justification for the adoption of the systems of organization and administration of Buganda kingdom in other parts of Uganda. Baganda agents were posted to different corners of Uganda in what historians have termed Buganda sub- imperialism. That is, the Baganda who were victims of British imperialism were also perpetrators of their own form of imperialism in the rest of Uganda. This factor alone alienated Buganda and the Baganda from the rest of Uganda to the extent that up to today they are still viewed with a lot of suspicion in the other parts of Uganda. The use of Buganda model of administration and, above all, hired Baganda administrators elsewhere in Uganda was thus, the first means by which the British generated ethnic conflict in Uganda.

Generally speaking, the British divided the Uganda protectorate into two, namely labour and production zones. Governor Geoffrey Archer divided the Protectorate into productive and non productive areas where by the latter would provide labour for the former. The division was based on presumed natural qualities of the people of northern Uganda and those of the south. The people of the north were regarded to be strong, muscular and hard working while the southern peoples were perceived as weak, lazy but intellectually superior. The accuracy of those accolades is debatable. However, it is known that the British colonialists put up infrastructures like roads, telephones, banks, schools, health centres etc. mainly in the southern part of Uganda especially in Buganda. Lack of infrastructures could be the factor that discouraged both private and public investments in the northern half of the Protectorate. Again this is subject to debate.

The British did not wish to encourage any degree of unity among the different communities of Uganda. Keeping them at variance meant that there would be no nationalist movement for independence. Hence the British invested only in what they regarded as production zone. The labour zone was only to supply the production zone with man power. Until independence, the British established no single investment among the Acholi. The effect was that within a short time the demand for labour in Buganda caused wage inflation and stimulated a flow of migrant labour from Kitgum, Gulu and parts of West Nile, Northern Province.

The emigration of labour from Acholi-land to other parts of Uganda was not a surprise. The British had introduced taxes and monetized the economy: money was now the only medium of exchange. One was forced to work for a salary if they were to keep afloat the new economic system. Those like the Acholi who lacked investments in their regions were forced to migrate out of their regions. Their efforts developed the regions in which they worked more than where they hailed. As has been stated:

The uneven spread of colonial economic and infrastructure development between cash-crop and labour reserve regions ... introduced significant regional differentiation in access to cash crop production, trade, education, wage labour and state employment amongst different ethnic communities to produce sharper edges in the confrontation and competition of political tribalism (Kasfir, 1972).

Meanwhile the migrant labourers had to be closely monitored so that their tribal origins are never lost. Application forms for government employment included a question on the tribe of the prospective job seeker. Census forms requested similar information. The government intention was not only to encourage migrant labour but also to ensure continuity of tribal systems. Thus,

The protectorate Government laid the foundation for the controlled system of migrant labour by retribalising the unemployed ... It began to make the tribe rather than the individual the basic unit of social organization. Individual rights were subsumed under tribal obligations. In a very real sense, the tribe, in official parlance, at least, now owned the people (Kasfir, 1972).

In line with the above the colonial administration legalised a Vagrancy Ordinance in 1925, which restricted the migrant option to two: he could either work or he could return home to the "tribe". The migrant labour from Acholi-land was of low quality, mainly casual workers. They could only occupy low profile jobs because of the minimal education received or outright illiteracy. The first schools to open in Uganda were all in the southern half of the country especially Buganda. The Baganda became the most educated in Uganda and the most affluent since they occupied most of the senior non-military posts in both government and non-governmental enterprises. Considering that university degrees were the gateway to the most powerful positions and greatest economic opportunities, the fact that 40 percent of the 1698 persons who entered Makerere University before 1954 from all parts of east Africa were Baganda explains much of their predominance today.

Education continued to be dominated by the Baganda throughout the colonial period and up to today. Writing about the situation in the highest institution of learning in Uganda – Makerere University in the 1950s, Nelson Kasfir stated that while Baganda over representation has fallen, and continues to fall, they still provide over 50 percent of the Ugandan entrants as late as 1953. And that, of Uganda students abroad in the last quarter of 1960, 143 were sponsored by the then Kabaka's government, as compared to only 106 sponsored by all the rest of the districts and kingdoms of Uganda (Hansard 20, 284-285). This imbalance in education meant that the Acholi, and other communities of the north, were to continue working in the central regions but occupying low key posts for a very long time.

Even when cash crops were introduced among the Acholi like elsewhere in Uganda, the situation did not alter much. The natural conditions in Acholi-land especially East Acholi could only favour annual crops like cotton and tobacco. These two crops are labour intensive yet harvested only once a year. The north was left to grow an annual cash crop – cotton whose returns were over a long period of time and at low prices. This marked the beginning of disparity between the north and the south as far as economic development is concerned, and prompted many Acholi men to enroll in the army.

The Acholi were still at a disadvantage compared to the southern communities who grew coffee, pyrethrum and tea among others. But the Acholi had no choice because unlike before they were now confronted with a capitalist system in which the economy was highly monetized. Therefore, the young Acholi had only two alternatives: to get a job elsewhere or to grow cotton. When cotton prices began to drop after world war two, the situation was even more precarious. The Acholi were left with one choice: to look for salaried employment which meant traveling to the south where they were despised and insulted. An area member of parliament noted that:

Acholi District is poor, it has remained poor for a long time for various reasons; it is far away from the cattle trade and money circulation. There is lack of employment in the district. This has been illustrated in many ways. In the past, we did get a lot of people coming down here (Buganda) in search of work. Most of them go back worse than when they came....Acholi District is one of those areas in Uganda which has lagged behind economically (Mamdani, 1984).

As noted above Acholi District lacked employment opportunities in industries, plantations and state enterprises. What was readily available was the army, to which young Acholi men went in large numbers. With time it became the job of the Acholi.

The British colonial military policy

“Every institution touched by the hand of the colonial state”, wrote Mahmoud Mamdani, “was given a pronounced regional or nationality character. It became a truism that a soldier must be a northerner, a civil servant a southerner and a merchant an Asian” (Mamdani, 1984).

A British Protectorate over Uganda was formally proclaimed on 19th June 1894. In a dispatch to the colonial office in London dated 4th December 1894 Colonel Colville made recommendations for the formation of Uganda Rifles. In September 1895 the Uganda Rifles Ordinance was approved by Parliament. The man chosen for the task of building the Uganda Rifles was Major Ternan who had distinguished himself in service in Egypt. He arrived in Uganda late in 1895 and the following year was appointed commandant of Uganda Rifles.

The British were alarmed to discover by 1910 when they completed the colonization of Acholi-land that there were very many guns in the hands of the people. In 1912, it appears, the whole place blistered with firearms which had been purchased in exchange for ivory and stock mainly from Abyssinians and Karamoja ivory poachers (Girling, 1960). These guns posed a big threat to the British. There was an urgent need to

demilitarize the occupied people. Hence the British responded to the threats of resistance by building the colonial police and army.

It is also known that the British did not want their colonial armies to be dominated by societies that lived near the centre of administration. This was the reason they discouraged the Kikuyu in Kenya, the Ndebele in southern Rhodesia, and the Ashante in Ghana from joining the army. Instead, these societies were dominant in the civil service.

The second reason was that the British feared an organized and large scale military resistance by members of the dominant communities in the respective colonies. Since the Bantu communities especially the Baganda and the Banyoro were well organized under highly centralized societies, the British did not want to arm them. This was why the Acholi were preferred – they were not only too small in population to wage a strong military resistance, but also disunited under several chiefdoms as discussed earlier. Hence all efforts were made to disarm the populous societies and dissuade them from joining the army. It has been said that,

The British helped to demilitarize the Baganda and the Banyoro by introducing licencing laws for guns and through new forms of socialization, acculturation and western education. Modern schools and cash crops diverted the new elite of Buganda and Bunyoro away from the warrior tradition and towards the new money economy (Nabudere, 1980).

And that,

In contrast, some of the societies which in pre-colonial times had been basically stateless now became recruiting grounds for the new colonial army ... the stage was already set for a Nilotic supremacy in at least the first few decades of post colonial Uganda (Nabudere, 1980).

Uganda is, by no means, the only case in Africa where members of pre-colonial stateless societies have inherited the postcolonial state. Others were Kenya, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Ghana and Nigeria.

Having zeroed on the Acholi and other northern communities as the most suitable for the military, the British then began to build an army that could serve their interest. This army called as the East African Corps serving alongside the British army later changed its name to the King's African Rifle (KAR). The KAR was heavily dominated by the Acholi. According to Ali Mazrui (1975), "The Acholi constituted the largest single group within the armed forces of Uganda, although they were clearly one of the smaller groups in the total population of Uganda. Between a third and a half of the Ugandan army consisted of the Acholi".

The creation of a martial race was not unique to the Acholi. In Kenya after confidently describing the Kamba serving in the KAR as "loyal soldiers of the Queen" during the Mau-Mau Emergency, a press release by the East African Command went on to characterize the Kamba as a "fighting race". These sentiments were echoed by other colonial observers in the early 1950s who described the Kamba as hardy, virile, courageous and mechanically minded tribe. Considered by many officers to be the "best soldierly material in Africa", the Kamba supplied the KAR with soldiers at a rate that was three to four times their percentage of the overall Kenyan population. Interestingly enough, many Kamba appeared to embrace the British assertion that they were a martial race (Parson, 1999).

In Nyasaland (Now Malawi) the British created the Yao as the Martial race as opposed to the Ngoni and the Tonga who were larger in population and clearly better organized politically. The Yao depended on long distance trade of ivory and slaves, their land was dry, they were forced by natural circumstances into the KAR (Marjooma, 2003). When slave trade was abolished, the Yao were compelled to enlist in the KAR because that was the only available option to earn a living in the changed economic systems.

Similarly in India, another British colonial territory, there was ethnicisation of the KAR. The period from 1890 to 1914 is often referred to as 'the Punjabization of the Indian Army.' The British divided Indian ethnic groups into two categories: Martial and Non Martial. The following were identified as martial

(military) races: Jats, Awans, Gujjars, Balochs, Gurkhas, Sikhs, Pashtuns/ Pathans and Rajputs. This period saw extensive recruitment into the Indian army from the martial races and led to accusations about 'divide and rule.' During the First World War, Punjabi martial races formed 54 per cent of the entire British Indian Army. The Sikhs were a minority community in India but they featured prominently within the army and were overrepresented when compared with numbers of Muslim and Hindu soldiers from the Punjab. Many Punjabi's enrolled in the British army; they were the right hand of the British (Bonarjee, 1899).

Thus, since the colonial epoch, civil-military relations in Uganda have been in the context of Africa's cultural history. The warrior tradition places a premium on bravery in war as proof of manhood. This has not only been a constant but also an explanation and a determinant of intra- and civil military relations. One has to be man enough to be enrolled in the army and gain promotion thereafter. The British saw the Acholi as people who were "men enough" to serve in the KAR. The period 1897, when Nubian forces mutinied to 1962, witnessed the Acholisation of the KAR in Uganda.

Acholi men in the King's African Rifles (KAR)

"When recruitment to the Kings African Rifles began", wrote Postlethwaite (1947), "The Acholi took to soldiering like ducks to water". The formation of a standing army during colonial Uganda dates back to the period of the Imperial British East African Company (IBEACo), and specifically the arrival of Captain F. D. Lugard in December 1890. The role of IBEACo was the colonization of Uganda on behalf of British imperialism. Lugard was accompanied by Swahili Guards throughout his journey from the Indian Ocean coast to Uganda. In 1891, the Swahili guards were merged with Sudanese troops left behind by Emin Pasha to form a standing army.

Emin Pasha, the successor of Gordon, as Governor of Equatorial Province, was confronted by the Mahdist uprising in the Sudan. The Mahdist uprising went on for more than a decade. In the course of it, Emin Pasha together with about 4000 loyal Sudanese, were effectively isolated from the outside world at Wadelai, in present day West Nile. When Khartoum fell to the Mahdists on 26th January 1885, General Gordon was murdered and shortly afterwards the Egyptians evacuated the Equatorial Province, leaving Emin Pasha stranded.

In 1889, Emin Pasha left for the East African Coast, the Mahdist revolt having ended. On 13th September 1891, he signed an agreement with Captain F. D. Lugard. By this agreement, almost a thousand Sudanese troops, formally under Emin Pasha were transferred to the service of IBEACo in Uganda. It was from these trained Sudanese soldiers, together with his own armed followers and some of the *Askari* (Guards) of the IBEACo's private army, that in 1891, Captain Lugard put together the military force which became the Uganda Rifles. Lugard considered the Sudanese soldiers to be "the best material for soldiery in Africa" (Lugard, 1893). The IBEACo left Uganda on 31st March, 1893, the term of their charter having expired; and on 1st April, the British Government provisionally assumed responsibility for the country. The task of the colonial government was to establish a coercive force to rely on not only to keep the country united but also to fulfill Britain's imperial interests.

In September 1895, the British Parliament approved the Uganda Rifles Ordinance. The first commander of the Uganda Rifles was Major (later Brigadier General) Ternan who had distinguished himself in service in Egypt. He arrived in Uganda late in 1895 and in the following year was appointed Commandant of the Uganda Rifles. In November 1897 Major Ternan proposed to the War Office that the military in Uganda should be diversified. The substance of Ternan's proposal became law in the following year when the 1895 Uganda Rifles Ordinance was repealed and replaced by the Uganda Military Force Ordinance of 1898.

By the end of 1903 the military authorities had begun recruiting Africans into the King's African Rifles in large numbers. They were to be deployed either in a different region of their country or in a neighbouring country. Troops recruited in Kenya were posted to Uganda and vice versa. By 1914, Acholi-land had become the main recruiting ground for the KAR, a pattern which was continued in the post-colonial period.

The colonial administrators preferred Acholi because they were loosely organized with small political and military units. Their form of military and political organisation rendered large scale military mobilization very difficult: they could not easily raise a sufficient force under a single political leadership to confront the administration, if conflict were to arise between the two. But the reluctance of the colonial administration to recruit people from centralized states also meant by extension, the exclusion of Bantu speakers from the army.

Among the early recruits in the KAR were Tito Okello from Acholi. He was enlisted on 16th May, 1940 and first commissioned 22nd February, 1962. Of the 77131 soldiers who had been enlisted for world war two, 55595 had been demobilized to different parts in Uganda by March 1948. Acholi officers proved to be the best in the KAR. Following the end of world war 11, about 40 percent of all awards and honours, in the KAR, went to Acholi soldiers. At the time of the 1971 coup, the force of Uganda Army stood at 8500 officers and men. Of this 4300 were Acholi, 1300 Langi and most of the balance was made up of people from west Nile who were Amin's people (Otunnu, 1987).

The KAR fed its officers mainly on posho and beans - stuff which many Bantu communities are not familiar with. "The contingent from Uganda in 1917 suffered a death rate which illustrated the dangers of service far from home... Uganda porters were notoriously prone to gastric ailments caused by changes of diet, especially the Ganda and Soga who were green food eaters from the shores of Lake Victoria, whose staple food was fresh plantains" (Hodges, 1978). Following this, a dispatch was sent from Kenya restricting mass recruitment to grain eaters whose men might not be so prone to gastric disease as the Ganda and Soga. By this, the Bantu communities were literally knocked out of any consideration for their recruitment in the KAR. This paved way for the northern supremacy in the colonial and even post-colonial armies of Uganda.

As Greene (1980) has said, The British had a strong tendency to categorize people in racial terms. They believed that ethnic background went a long way in defining the character of an individual. The Acholi, like the Yao in Nyasaland and the Kamba in Kenya, had had a history of raids, hostile climate and loose political organization. All the three were considered in their respective countries as the martial race.

Amii Otunnu (1987) has argued that the Acholi and Africans generally joined the KAR in large numbers because they knew what German conquest of the world meant. "This type of African", he writes, "had heard or read what Hitler wrote in his book, 'Mein Kampf'." He states that these men bore Hitler a grudge for writing the following words: "From time to time our illustrated papers publish news that in some quarters of the globe a negro has become a lawyer, a teacher, a pastor, or even a grand opera singer...this is sin against reason itself: It is an act of criminal insanity". According to Otunnu, the Africans who knew those words joined the KAR not only to fight for the preservation of the empire but to frustrate the accursed man's ideals and save themselves and their children from cruelty and permanent bondage. How many Africans, least of all the Acholi who joined the KAR, had read or even seen Hitler's book?

It appears to me that Captain (1922). Lugard was more accurate on the reasons that prompted Africans, including the Acholi, to join the KAR. As stated by Lugard:

It would, I think, be untrue to say that they gave their lives to uphold the British Empire, for that was a conception beyond their understanding. No doubt they hated what they knew of German rule, but their chief motives were, I think, personal love for their officers, the terms of pay offered, the

decorations they hoped to win, ignorance of the conditions of warfare to which they would be exposed, and their natural courage and love of adventure.⁵⁸

The Acholi joined KAR in large numbers largely due to hostile economic, climatic and edaphic factors obtaining in their land at the time. Most of the Acholi KAR recruits were from East Acholi which receives low rainfall due to the rain shadow effect of Ethiopian Highlands. Both Generals Tito Okello and Bazilio Olara were from East Acholi. Of the cash crops introduced by the British, this region only supports cotton which is a low income earner in spite of being labour intensive. The only quick and easy way to earn income was to join the KAR. A popular song for youths in Acholi up to this day is:

Lim Onyo Ka Lameru pe, Dony I Keya

Lim Onyo Ka Dyangi pe, Dony I Keya

Lim Onyo Ka Gini pe, dony I Keya

Which is translated as:

The Bride wealth of these days! If you don't have a sister, join the KAR

The Bride wealth of these days! If you don't have cattle, join the KAR

The Bride wealth of these days! If you don't have anything, join the KAR

In the Luo dialect used by the Acholi, "Lim" can be translated, depending on circumstances, as "bride wealth", "wealth" or simply "money".

The Acholi men who got enlisted in the KAR were seeking wealth. Indeed all the people who retired from the KAR returned home with bicycles, radios, forks, spoons, shoes and clothes which the ordinary men lacked. These items mean nothing today but one hundred years ago they were prestigious at least in northern Uganda. Above all, the ex-KAR were able to marry a second, third or even fourth wife. During market days, they were the smartest. They used Kiswahili- a foreign language- and spoke of having been to Bombay, Abyssinia, Somalia etc. If an ex-KAR fell for your wife or girl friend, forget her! You can't manage the competition (Personal communication with a world War two veteran in Kitgum).

Army Mutiny and the British Fallout with Sudanese troops

The Sudanese troops, with whom Swahili soldiers were merged to form the core of KAR, were a people who had for over 100 years found themselves shifting between regular and irregular military employment, legitimate and illegitimate trade, slave trading, raiding cattle and playing off one Acholi chief against another. They were, from the onset, a people whose strength of character and discipline was wanting; a people whom, as early as 1872, Baker had to make the rather unpleasant task of deciding their fate after defeating them at Patiko, of either recruiting them or sending them home without guns, only to be killed by their adversaries. Indeed the Acholi, among whom they had operated for sometime, were surprised that such a band could be recruited by anyone at all (Baker, 1874).

The Sudanese troops had been a problem to Baker, a puzzle to Gordon and when Emin Pasha took them over, there were no indications that their conduct had improved. For instance, the Nubian horde while traveling through populated arrears caused considerable headache by their continual capturing of women. It was such a band which Lugard used to conquer Tooro and Bunyoro, for instance, in spite of their indiscipline which had become common knowledge.⁶² Little wonder that in less than ten years these Sudanese troops were up in arms against their employers – the British colonial government. I am referring to the 1897 mutiny.

This incident posed the most serious threat to the establishment of the British Protectorate in Uganda. The main cause of the mutiny was that some of the Sudanese troops who had been engaged in numerous expeditions all over East Africa with hardly any rest, felt, not without reason, that the administration did not

sufficiently appreciate nor reward their services. The mutiny began in mid-September 1897 when, after a long march to and from Eldama Ravine in Kenya, a company of the Sudanese troops refused to join an expedition to central Sudan, under Major Macdonald who was then serving in Uganda. It took a dramatic turn when, later that year, a company at Lubwa murdered their commander, Major Truston, and five other European officers. The mutiny was quelled after seven months with the help of troops enlisted from India, Kenya (Swahili) and Somaliland (Otunnu, 1987).

To prevent another revolt, the colonial government diversified the composition of the military. It reduced the number of Sudanese recruits, increased recruiting among the Indians and Ugandan Africans, and increased the overall ratio of European officers to soldiers. In 1903 the Uganda Armed Constabulary Ordinance and the Uganda Prisons Ordinance separated the police and prisons from the KAR. Subsequently, Nubians and Muslims were sidelined paving way for the Acholi and other northern Uganda ethnic communities, who were Christians and animists, to dominate the military. By this time the Acholi had become the martial race of Uganda. Recruitment into the KAR was heavily concentrated in the martial race territories not only in Uganda but also in Kenya, Malawi and the rest of the British Empire. A marching song of the KAR glorified the martial race as follows:

It's the Sudi, my boy, it's the Sudi
With his ugly face:
But he walks like a man
And he fights like a man
For he comes from the martial race.

The word "Sudi" means "black man." In Uganda, dark skinned people are known to come from the north such as the Acholi and Kakwa.

In India, where the martial race theory originated, the British also recruited heavily from the 'martial races' for service in the colonial army. Sensing the inequalities and fierce loyalty to one's tribe or group of the diverse native peoples of the subcontinent, the British found opportunities to use it to their own great advantage. These already wide divides were a fertile breeding ground to inculcate pride in one's identity based on 'race'. This served the British in two ways. On the one hand it made sure that there was no repetition of the 1857 mutiny by ensuring there was no unity among the different subjects of India. On the other hand it encouraged a sense of competition among the different 'races'. In Uganda, the concept of martial race was useful to the British because it ensured the people from southern and central regions where the KAR operated mainly were kept out of the army while the Acholi who were less educated and a minority in the country predominated the hence minimising the chance for violent opposition against European rule.

Conclusion

The British Protectorate of Uganda identified northerners, in particular the Acholi, as suitable reserve of military power. As such Acholi men comprised the largest proportion of the King's African Rifles. A military ethnocracy was formed and by 1914, the Acholi began to see the military as their natural vocation. This explains why the Acholi as a distinct and collective ethnic identity have occupied the center stage of Uganda national politics since 1962.

The British regarded the 'martial races' as valiant and strong but also intellectually inferior, lacking the initiative or leadership qualities to command large military formations. They were also regarded as politically subservient or docile to authority. For the case of Uganda, Nubians were the first preference owing to their loyalty in the pre-mutiny period. After the mutiny, the Acholi, loosely knit politically, fairly less educated and showing overwhelming interest to enroll in the military, became the designated martial

race of colonial Uganda. Other than these, there was nothing extraordinary about the Acholi relative to other Ugandan ethnic communities.

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