

THE CONSOLIDATION OF ABAISENGOBI RULE IN SOUTHERN KIGULU*

RENEE TANTALA

To describe the abaiseNgobi¹ in terms of charismatic leadership and a prestigious cultural tradition does not really explain how abaiseNgobi hegemony was achieved over most of northern Busoga. The aim of this article is a better understanding of the consolidation of abaiseNgobi rule by examining, within a particular polity, social and economic factors affecting political integration.²

The late seventeenth century Mukama migration through central Busoga initiated the development of a cultural frontier between northern and southern Busoga. In the pre-abaiseNgobi era the communities of Southern Kigulu County were culturally continuous with those of southern Busoga. Religious, economic, and social contacts with the south persisted even though abaiseNgobi hegemony introduced some new social and political ideas. The abaiseNgobi themselves took a keen interest in the southern neighbours. Migration into northern Busoga from the south accelerated in the nineteenth century due to increasing population pressure, the military expeditions of the Ganda, and better opportunities in the northern states. As a result cultural differences were gradually eroded. People moving north in search of land and opportunities often stopped over for some time in border villages such as those of southern Kigulu County where they might have clansmen or might still maintain ties with clansmen in villages directly to the south. That the residents of southern Kigulu County participated in two increasingly overlapping cultural zones needs to be taken into consideration in any study of their traditions.

By the mid-nineteenth century the abaiseNgobi expansion in Kigulu had resulted in at least eight polities. Present-day Kigulu County corresponds closely to the territory of these polities plus the territory of Busambira, whose ruling family intermarried with the abaiseNgobi. Ngobi Kikere, ruler of Buzimba in the 1890s, united them and called the new polity Kigulu after the name of a hill significant in clan history. Kigulu also serves as a convenient collective terms for the total area of these polities before their unification. Southern Kigulu refers to the abaiseNgobi polity in the south-western corner of the modern County, directly to the west of Busambira. During the second quarter of the nineteenth century Gonza Bato (c. 1936-1884),³ an able and ambitious prince, gained control of the abaiseNgobi

* Kigulu is in North Busoga, in the East of Uganda.

base in Ighawu from where he established effective rule over the rest of Southern Kigulu. Prior to this the abaiseNgobi had ruled only small portion of the territory. In the last half of the nineteenth century Southern Kigulu included the present villages of Ighawu, where Gonza Bato had his *mbuga* or headquarters, Namasoga, Busu, and Nawansinge. The pre-colonial name for this polity appears to have been 'Bugabula' but there are two reasons for this usage: to prevent confusion with the state of Bugabula in the northwest corner of Busoga; because in some instances 'Bugabula' refers to Ighawu rather than to the polity itself.

In Southern Kigulu the abaiseNgobi had to compete with strong royalties at the level of the village community, a relatively self-sufficient unit. The available evidence indicates that in the pre-abaiseNgobi era the inhabitants of southern Kigulu County lived in several *mitala* (villages) organized under the leadership of clans with religious prestige. Whether or not these villages were previously part of any larger polity, for example, Busambira, is an open question. Gonza Bato's polity, however, was certainly a new arrangement. He needed to foster among his people a sense of identity, a feeling that as his subjects they belonged to the larger community based on his polity. Although he did establish a viable political system, he was not completely successful in overcoming localized loyalties. In some aspects of the everyday life of the ordinary people the village community remained more significant than the polity. The consolidation of abaiseNgobi rule resulted from the ways in which new and old residents were brought into the system, yet a fuller understanding of that system emerges from an analysis of the relative importance of the village community and of the polity in the lives of the people.

The communities in what became Southern Kigulu may have had some contact with the abaiseNgobi entourage when Ibanda Ngobi (1737 $\pm$ 37), the founder of the ruling house of Buzimba, was growing up at Nhenda Hill or even later when he had his own enclosure at Kigulu Hill. During the time of Lugwiri (the son of IbandaNgobi, 1764 $\pm$ 34) the abaiseNgobi center shifted to the northern part of Kigulu County. Presumably Busambira remained the established polity in the south until the abaiseNgobi turned their ambitions southward again in the early years of the nineteenth century.

According to tradition Kiregeya was the first mwiseNgobi prince to establish a *mbuga* in Ighawu, probably in the 1820's since he assumed the Ngobishop of Buzimba C.1830. While in Ighawu Kiregeya cast his eyes covetously in the direction of Nawansinge. He informed Bagoole, the mwiseNkwalu chief of that *mutala*, that he wished to marry his daughter. Unfortunately for Kiregeya, Bagoole foresaw the consequences and refused this insidious offer. Greatly annoyed, Kiregeya promptly sent a party of men to kill him. Although the abaiseNkwalu fled at this point, the people of Nawansinge still managed to put up a strong resistance. Perhaps the abaiseIgaga who became the guardians of the abaiseNkwalu *musambwa*

shrine provided some leadership. In any case feuding continued across the Walutente stream until Kiregeya and his followers admitted that the determination of the people of Nawansinge was too much for them.

When Kiregeya became Ngobi, his younger brother Nkobe replaced him in Ighawu. Nkobe ruled there only a few years until he himself succeeded to the throne of Buzimba C.1836. Ngobi Nkobe is best remembered for the successful defensive wars which he fought against Luuka. Such a warrior needed many *abazira* (brave men). In the first quarter of the nineteenth century a large and prominent abaiseMuhaya family from Bugweri sought refuge in Southern Kigulu. Some of the men became the *abazira* of the abaiseNgobi and, as customary for an immigrant group, gave some women to the abaiseNgobi to be their wives. Nkobe married Mukise a mwiseMuhaya girl from Nawansinge. Their son Obo, later known as Gonza Bato, eventually brought that proud *mutala* into the abaiseNgobi orbit.

No mwiseNgobi prince was allowed to rule before reaching adulthood, that is, his early twenties. As Gonza Bato was growing up, political authority remained in the hand of Nkobe, his clients, and his elder sons. While it is difficult to determine exactly how Gonza Bato came to replace his father Ighawu (either when his father became the Ngobi or sometime in the next ten years or so), the baiseMuhaya undoubtedly did as much as possible to promote the fortunes of the young prince. Famous *abazira* and by now one of the numerically dominant clans in Nawansinge they were certainly capable of doing so. However, Nawansinge could not have served as Gonza Bato's base of operations—since Kiregeya's murder of Bagoole no prince had been allowed to sleep even one night in Nawansinge. Presumably he grew up in one of a *bisoko* (sub-villages) of Ighawu from where, with the support of the abaiseMuhaya *abazira* and probably some abaiseMagumba, he managed to succeed his father.⁴ He then rewarded his mwiseMagumba friend Kagolo with the position of 'Katikiro' and his mwiseMuhaya relative Lundhaya with the position of Kalabalaba.

In 1840s Gonza Bato participated in the same series of battles against Luuka which were being fought by Ngobi Ngobe. Having dealt successfully with this external threat, Gonza Bato must have been in a strong position: he had gained some practical experience for himself, he had a string of proven *abazira*, and he probably had added some *bisoko* to Ighawu. Then events at the abaiseNgobi centre interrupted his local career.

For more than a decade (C.1850 to 1862) after the reign of Ngobi Nkobe, Kigulu experienced considerable political instability. Several sons of Nkobe ruled, but none of them for more than a few years. Kibikibi (C.1850-C.1855), his immediate and most successful successor, enjoyed the nominal loyalty of the local princes at the beginning of his reign, but there were too many ambitious men among them for their support to last. Gonza Bato is said to have been Kibikibi's successor.⁴ This is corroborated

by another source which includes Gabula, another of Gonza Bato's nicknames, among the sons of Nkobe who succeeded him. Although Gonza Bato took an active role in the succession disputes, even claiming the throne for a short time, he is not included in the 'official' list of the rulers of Buzimba.⁵ Presumably he had not gone through the customary accession ceremonies. The other princes considered him as an usurper, threw him out, and sent him back to Southern Kigulu. From this incident comes the saying, 'Kalenzi genda abaghala bakuloby'e' which means 'Go away small boy, the girls have refused you.'

Ngobi Kiwe (also called Kiwayo), Kibikibi's formal successor, refused to give back to Gonza Bato what he and his abaiseMuhaya relatives considered his rightful territory. Evidently, he either tried to prevent Gonza Bato's return to Southern Kigulu or attempted to replace him with another prince. The abaiseMuhaya claim to have collected their clansmen from as far as Budiopo and marched to the Kabaka. They returned to depose Kiwe, sharing the plunder with the Kabaka's men. This provided an example for any other Ngobi who might want to depose Gonza Bato, but in fact Kiwe's successors were too weak to even attempt it. During the remaining years of confusion before the reign of Walusansa (C.1862), Gonza Bato re-established his position in Southern Kigulu.

Apparently he realized that Walusansa was capable of bringing stability to Kigulu and that it would be advantageous to support such a strong prince. Ngobi Walusansa did depose several other princes, but it is even claimed that he entrusted their villages to the care of Gonza Bato until he could appoint his own men. From time to time Gonza Bato sent some men to work on Kalusansa's enclosure. In his own domain he remained autonomous until his death sometime between 1879 and 1884. He was succeeded by his son Katekalusi who inherited a political tradition as well as a seat of power.

Now the discussion can turn to the strengths and weaknesses of that administrative system and to the factors complicating the consolidation of abaiseNgobi rule.

In *Bantu Bureaucracy* Lloyd Fallers remarks on the spatial stability of the Soga village.⁶ The available evidence confirms this in the case of Nawansinge, but suggests that Ighawu is an exception. Evidently, Gonza Bato created Ighawu (as it is known today) by adding to it other *mitala*. In pre-colonial times the villages of Southern Kigulu were divided into administrative units called *bisoko* (sing. *kisoko*) just as they are today, but the divisions were not the same as the present ones. Nawansinge had only two *bisoko* in the pre-colonial era, but the late nineteenth century Ighawu had at least ten *bisoko*. That Ighawu may represent an agglomeration of earlier *mitala* is subtly suggested by the way in which its residents are identified. When a resident of Ighawu is mentioned in an interview

or in conversation, he is usually referred to as a resident of a particular *kisoko*. Such references are rarely made for residents of the other *mitala*.

In addition to the pattern of hill-top communities there is a close correlation between the drainage pattern of northern Busoga and the boundaries between the polities. The villages ruled by Gonza formed a natural unit bound by the Lumbuye River in the west, the Kasanga tributary in the south, the Nabutundwe tributary in the north and the Walugogo River in the east. Some local informants claim that he once held the village of Budwege. This is plausible since no swamp or deep valley separates Budwege from Ighawu. The same geography applies to the *mutala* of Buwayo which Gonza Bato and the mwaseNgobi ruler of Bukoyo did divide between themselves in the 1870s. On the other hand, the stream Walutente to the west of the Walugogo helped to separate Nawasinge from Ighawu, contributing to the independent attitude of the resident of Nawasinge.

Geographical features also support the claim that Ighawu's *bisoko* of Ntinda and Masaba were once *mitala*. Masaba forms the distinct section between the streams Masaba and Nkabale. That Ntinda is almost cut off from Ighawu by Namasoga and Busu invites speculation. Since the abaiseNgobi headquarters were traditionally in Ntinda and since Ighawu is also the name of *kisoko*, Ighawu may have been a *mutala* which was taken over and which then gave its name to the larger unit. In view of the reliability of the informants who have made these specific claims, the more general descriptions of Gonza Bato's expansionist activities given by other informants, and the evidence relating to the takeover of Buwoya, it is highly unlikely that Ighawu was a stable unit in the nineteenth century. There is no reason why political changes could not lead to changing territorial designations when this was geographically feasible.

The problem of whether or not some of the *bisoko* of pre-colonial Ighawu were formerly *mitala* is significant in terms of the pre-abaiseNgobi heritage. The incoming abaiseNgobi, if confronted with even loosely organized communities, not only upset the existing political order, but compounded the loyalties of the people. Why did a village such as Nawasinge preserve its distinctiveness while the identity of others, even though they became *bisoko*, was not totally submerged? Whatever the advantages of accepting or submitting to abaiseNgobi rule, at least in some aspects of everyday life, the *mutala* remained more important than any larger unit of community such as a group of villages under the common rule of a prince. Thus, certain continuities from the earlier period are important factors contributing to working against any attempted political integration. These factors emerge from the history of each *mutala*, but information on the pre-abaiseNgobi era is difficult to obtain.

The earlier settlements in Busoga, according to tradition, were along the shore of Lake Victoria. Throughout the pre-colonial period the communities of southern Busoga were oriented towards the Lake, but clan

histories reveal a continuous trickle of migrants northwards. Southern Kigulu County may have been affected by the Kintu migration (1250 A.D. $\pm$ 150), but no specific evidence has been retrieved relating that migration to this area. What is certain, however, is that there were communities in southern Kigulu County prior to the migration of Mukama and his entourage through central Busoga, that is, before the end of the seventeenth century. These communities also looked towards the south, for trade and wives. The interior of Busoga remained sparsely populated until the eighteenth century.

Important for the political development of the area were the abaise-Igaga communities clustered around Nhenda Hill in southeasteast Kigulu County. Apparently the abaiseIgaga had established themselves here a short time before the Mukama migration. It is possible that their territory once extended westwards from the present Busambira. The descendants of the abaiseIgaga rulers assert that their polity lost territory not only to Kigulu, but also to Bugweri and to Bunya. Buima and other states to the south may have had some political influence as well.

Originally the communities of southern Kigulu County were self-sufficient in the religious sphere. The available evidence strongly suggests that they were organized under the leadership of clans with religious prestige. The *misambwa* cults, then, constitute the most significant aspect of the pre-abaiseNgobi heritage.

Sometime before the eighteenth century the abaiseNkwalu, a clan with origins near Lake Victoria, migrated and established centre at Magada a few miles southwest of Nhenda Hills. From there they dispersed and came to Nawansinge where they were the original owners, as far as can be determined, of the *musambwa* shrine called Nawansinge. At some point they took up the chieftainship. When the abaiseNgobi murdered the mwise-Nkwalu *mutala* chief of Nawansinge, the abaiseNkwalu fled, but the abaiseNgobi did not become the owners of the *musambwa*. Nawansinge's resistance undoubtedly stemmed from a sense of identity as the people of Nawansinge, that is, as the people of the *musambwa*. The abaiseIgaga assumed responsibility for the shrine and the religious tradition continued.

Nawansinge *musambwa* was available to all the people and the requests—successful journeys, fertility, rain in time of drought—included their most vitally felt concerns. Sometimes the entire village would come together to petition the *musambwa*:

Then the one who was going to pray would kneel down and say, 'Nawansinge, stop punishing your people, give them food so they won't suffer.' Then he gets coffee berries and throws them in the tree, slaughters the chickens, and the people eat that chicken. Then he would say, "Nawansinge, we have given you things, give us freedom and children so that we can live in peace without fighting." After that the owner of the *musambwa* would kill a cow for the people

to celebrate and to thank Nawansinge for giving in the name of Nawansinge. Everyone in the village could come and cut as much of that meat as he wanted—no one could stop him.⁷

This suggests how their identity developed and why it persisted. Newcomers during the nineteenth century brought their *misambwa* with them but these cults closely linked to their particular families, never acquired so much prestige. Nawansinge continued to be the village *musambwa*.

As for the other villages the traditions indicate that the incoming abaiseNgobi appropriated for themselves some of the shrines which they found. If the clans associated with the shrines had political as well as religious prestige, this represents one aspect of their political ascendancy. In Ntinda, Masaba, Ighawu *kisoko*, Busu, and Namasoga, there were *misambwa*, resembling Nawansinge, which were very likely the foci of pre-abaiseNgobi communities. After the abaiseNgobi took them over, they were thought to be acting for their new owners. Nevertheless, some influence remained with the original owners since the abaiseNgobi could approach them only through their respective *bataka*, the holders of ancient clan land.

Some shrines remained in the hands of the indigenous clans while others arrived with immigrant families. That *misambwa* usually travelled with their clans illustrates their importance in the religious system. The *musambwa* Meru, brought to Ighawu in the early nineteenth century by the abaiseMugwana, remained powerful. Towards the end of the century there was no mwiseMugwana to care for it and several deaths in the village were attributed to this neglect. Nampala, a son of Gonza Bato and a *kisoko* chief, was obliged to recruit a mwiseMugwana from Bunya (in southern Busoga) and give him a large plot. Wanambogo *musambwa* in Busu was retained by the abaiseKaluuba, a clan which did rule a small polity in south central Busoga.

In some states of Busoga the ancestors of the royal clan approached the status of national ancestors, but this was not the case in Kigulu. When the abaiseNgobi came to Ighawu, their *nkuni* settled at Nkazigheru. At this place the abaiseKiyemba had a *musambwa* called Nkazigheru, but apparently they kept their shrine by becoming the clients of the abaiseNgobi. The abaiseNgobi *nkuni* was a distinct shrine whose *muzimu* (ancestral spirit) possessed only abaiseNgobi women. The abaiseNgobi took chickens and goats there when they wanted to ask for rain, but they also took the same offerings to Waitambogwe. That the abaiseNgobi religious institutions were influenced by the religious systems of southern Busoga, of which the *misambwa* cults were a fundamental part, can be explained in terms of their relationship to some of these cults. AbaiseNgobi success in fostering the loyalty of the people toward their own rule was partly due to their hegemony over many of these shrines. Under abaiseNgobi ownership these *misambwa* operated for the benefit of the people, but their ability to focus local loyalties was inhibited. As for the abaiseNgobi

nkuni it could hardly become a 'national' cult since it was only one of many religious resources and had to compete with a venerable tradition. Instead it became almost a part of that tradition.

Each homestead within a *mutala* practised subsistence agriculture, pattern, the system of informal local exchange, and the trading contacts with the Lake Victoria littoral—also affected the degree to which the abaiseNgobi were successful in overcoming localized loyalties.

Each homestead within a *mutala* practiced subsistence agriculture. Plantains were the staple food crop and nearly every part of the plantain plant was put to some practical use. Chickens, goats, and cattle were kept. Although southern Kigulu County is in a climatic zone less suitable for cattle-keeping than the northern part of the county, in the nineteenth century there were some sizeable herds in both Nawansinge and Ighawu. Building materials and usually barkcloth trees were found on each plot. Salt was obtained from papyrus ashes. Thus, in many ways the homesteads themselves were self-sufficient.

Blacksmithing was the most important specialist craft practised in Southern Kigulu. In the late nineteenth century there were two blacksmiths here—one in Nawansinge and one in Ighawu. Like blacksmiths in other parts of Busoga, which lacks iron deposits, they made agricultural implements and spearheads from old hoes. New hoes came from Bunyoro and Bugwe, but for part of the nineteenth century, there was an exceptional hoe-making blacksmith in the valley between Nawansinge and Ighawu. This man had been born in Nawansinge and was still smithing in the 1870s. It is said that his father had also been a blacksmith. People brought slaves from distant places and exchanged them for hoes. He was very rich and kept some of the slaves to look after his herd of cattle. The other slaves were sent to Bugabula for iron.

Although barkcloth-making was a rather common activity, each village had some specialist clothmakers. Barkcloth was an important trade commodity, exchangeable for any other commodity, including cattle. Nevertheless, a specialist barkcloth-maker did not acquire the property that a blacksmith might; at best he was a little better off than the ordinary cultivator. Apparently only the very best cloth could fetch a profit in the long distance trade, for example, to Bunyoro via Bugabula in the north-western corner of Busoga. However, as a commodity of informal exchange it promoted the redistribution of local products.

Informal exchange operated within a village, among the villages of Southern Kigulu, and between them and neighbouring villages. For example, chickens and barkcloth were bartered for the products of a blacksmith, chickens for goats, and barkcloth for food in time of famine. This informal trade, facilitated by relatives and friends in other villages, extended southwards to link Southern Kigulu with the famous markets of southern Busoga. Since Southern Kigulu lacks clay suitable for pottery, the people got their

pots from Bugulu, where the potting tradition stretches back several centuries. Trading contacts between southern Kigulu and southern Busoga were probably as ancient as this need for pottery. The steady migration from southern Busoga helped to maintain these contacts.

Economic self-sufficiency as a factor in the instability of the Soga states was pointed out by Fallers.⁸ Gonza Bato might have strengthened his position by taking an active part in the exchange system. That he did not is particularly interesting since in northern Kigulu the chiefs appear to have been the middlemen, through their agents, in the trade with Bugabula. Chiefs often regulated markets by the appointment of a *muwooza* to collect market fees in kind. The few centres of exchange in Kigulu are remembered as insignificant compared to the markets of Bunya. Gonza Bato's domain did not include any markets although Igamba, later called Iganga, was a neighbouring *mutala*. During the 1870s Iganga remained a small market in the hands of a client of Ngobi Walusansa. The economic activities of Gonza Bato's administration were confined to the collection of tribute, mostly redistributed in feasts, and to the appropriation of property from a commoner who was considered too rich, a practice usually exaggerated.

Despite a *mutaia's* religious and economic self-sufficiency its residents might not be able to defend themselves from attacks by another village or group of villages. Throughout Busoga every able-bodied man was expected to defend his village. Those who distinguished themselves in fighting were known as *abazira*. Their informal leadership was often the decisive factor—a village without them was considered defenceless. Here is a very understandable motive for the acceptance of abaiseNgobi hegemony. Prestige and resources, especially the power to allot land, enabled a mwiseNgobi ruler to recruit *abazira* from elsewhere. This gave a military advantage and, hypothetically, he could extend his territory by attacking a village, leaving it defenceless by killing its *abazira*, and then offering it protection if it would submit to his rule. Returning to the case of Southern Kigulu, Nawansinge's resistance is understandable in terms of an unusual number of *abazira* and the weak position of the abaiseNgobi who had just made their initial thrust into this area. Otherwise, it is not surprising that Gonza Bato's political ascendance coincided with an external threat from Luuka. His rule meant an end to intervillage raiding among a certain group of *mitaia* and provided *abazira* to deal with any attack from their neighbours. From the perspective of the ordinary cultivator, the security offered by a prince must have gone a long way toward compensating for the produce and services which he had to render him.

The feasts given by Gonza Bato also helped to bring the people of the various *mitala* together. While some chiefs are remembered as infrequent feast-givers, giving only the expected feasts for *abazira*, Gonza Bato's enduring fame rests on the feasts which he gave for all his people. His nickname "Gabula" probably originated from the feasts which he gave

for his *abazira* during the wars against Luuka. At least the traditions of his collaboration with Ngobi Nkobe in these wars refer to him as "Gabula". After the mid-century succession disputes, when he was re-establishing himself locally, he continued to give many feasts even though he was fighting no wars. He did, of course, have *abazira* as protection against raids from other villages, but descriptions of these feasts emphasize that they were not given for any special group and that they were a form of economic redistribution. Feasts helped to counteract localized loyalties by providing an opportunity for people from all the villages of congregate at the *mbuga* in circumstances which encouraged them to think of themselves primarily as Gonza Bato's subjects.

Do these feasts represent a conscious effort on the part of Gonza Bato to direct the loyalties of the people towards his polity as a centre of unity and authority? He must have realised that they enhanced his popularity. At one time he had been a cruel ruler with the nickname "Musongola", which means, "the Sharpener". Some informants have linked his failure in the succession disputes to his cruel practices; the *bakungu* would not support him because he was unpopular with the people. However, he mended his ways and became "Gonza Bato", which means, "the Lover of Small Children". Literally, this name implies a paternalistic ruler. However, it is not necessary to interpret his feast-giving as a deliberate policy—it can be viewed simply as part of his response to the situation.

However, the integrative role of feasting should not be over-emphasized. Although they were given for the residents of all the *mitala*, it has been claimed that the people of Ighawu were better represented since it was difficult to cross the valley between Nawansinge and Ighawu. In addition it should be noted that people also participated in other feasts and that some of these re-inforced local loyalties, for example, the feasts held after sacrifices to a local *musambwa*, while others fostered ties outside the polity, for example, those given for a kinship or affinal group.

Ultimately, it was the nature of Gonza Bato's administrative system which held the polity together. The traditions of Southern Kigulu indicate, as already discussed, that gradual incorporation was part of the process of abaiseNgobi expansion. According to one informant, commoners, as overseers of the *bisoko* which had been taken over, played an important part in the initial phases of abaiseNgobi rule. Unfortunately very little is known of Gonza Bato's administration in the period prior to the succession disputes, but this assertion is consistent with his incorporation of commoners and newcomers into the political community in the period after the disputes.

By the 1870s Gonza Bato had regained control over *bisoko* which he had previously held as well as over new *bisoko*. From his base in Ighawu he finally took Busu from his collateral relatives. He and the *mwiseNgobi* ruler of Bukoyo divided Buwoya between them. Through the intermediary of Mudhumbusi, his mother's brother, he brought Nawansinge at last into

the abaiseNgobi orbit. Thus, he was able to reorganize *bisoko* divisions so that some authority might be delegated to his sons, but there were opportunities for commoners as well. In Ighawu most *bisoko* were held by princes, but one was held by a *muzira* and one by a family of religious importance. In Nawansinge one *kisoko* was held by a mwiseKyema *muzira* and one by a mwiseMuhaya. Busu like Ighawu was dominated by princes, but he may have appointed a *muzira* to overlook the *mutala* as a whole on his behalf. He divided Namasoga into two *bisoko*, both given to commoners.

Commoners who became administrators were called *bakungu*. In the local context a *mukungu* was anyone who frequented the *mbuga*, showing an interest in its affairs. He was expected to supervise beer-making, entertain the chief's guests, and help settle disputes. His only sure reward was what he ate and drank at the *mbuga*, but potentially he might become a *kisoko* chief. In choosing his *bakungu* Gonza Bato made no attempt to represent the different clans although, given the clan heterogeneity of his subjects, they were in fact from several clans.

The *mutala* chief of Nawansinge was Gonza Bato's most important *mukungu*. In the 1860s he astutely rewarded the abaiseMuhaya by appointing Mudhumbusi his "Katikikiro". Like Kagolo before him, Mudhumbusi was the *mutala* chief of Nawansinge. As the traditions are related today, this chief is thought to stand in relation to the prince as his chief adviser, but there is some doubt as to whether he was really called "Katikikiro".⁹ Mudhumbusi's title may have been "Walukulira". In any case his duties, except for occasional visits to the *mbuga*, were relatively few. His real power lay in Nawansinge where he had his own *mbuga*, *bakungu*, and *abazira*. Gonzo Bato probably regarded him more as an "ally" than as a "subordinate".

Lundhaya continued as Kalabalaba, a position more important than mere assistant to the Katikikiro. He was responsible for disputes being appealed beyond the level of the *mutala* chief and for formally granting land tenure on behalf of his prince.

The judicial aspect of Gonza Bato's administration was as decentralized as possible. A dispute was first taken to the *kisoko* chief, who usually settled it. If the disputants did not accept his judgement, which usually involved the payment of compensation, they could appeal to the *mutala* chief, and then to the Kalabalaba. The *bakungu* at each level formed a council to hear the arguments of the disputants and help the chief come to a decision. Mudhumbusi had his own *bakungu* to help him decide disputes in Nawansinge, but at the intervillage level Lundhaya was evidently more active. When a dispute was to pass on to Gonza Bato, however, it was taken by Mudhumbusi. Disputes rarely reached this level since the disputants were warned that a much harsher decision would be the result.

Other duties of the subordinate chiefs included mobilizing the able-bodied men when the chief was planning a raid, gathering beer and food

from the commoners and taking these to the *mbuga*, and choosing the best barkcloths for the chief. Often it is claimed that the expropriatory power of the chiefs on behalf of the prince was so great that "...no *mukopi* could own any good things". His goats, cows, even beautiful wives and children would be brought to the *mbuga*. This is contradicted by the "accumulation process" which is used to account for the wealth of certain men. To take the case of a blacksmith: for every spear he got two chickens—when these multiplied he might trade them for a goat—when the goats multiplied he might trade them for a herd of cattle. At least some commoners were allowed to acquire substantial wealth in cattle. Perhaps the most striking example was the hoe-making blacksmith between Nawansinge and Ighawu. Another in Balidha, a *mwiseMugwana* of Ighawu, who was neither a craftsman nor a *mukungu*. Sometimes, of course, the commoners were anxious to offer their best to the chief in the hope that they might ingratiate themselves into the system.

A prince strengthened his position by marrying many women from his own polity. If he wished to encourage friendly relations with another polity, he could send a sister or daughter to marry there. Gonza Bato sent his sister to the ruler of Buima. Locally, he might give his daughters to his *abazira* and *bakungu*. His chiefs often collected pretty girls and brought them more closely into the system and usually promoted the fortunes of their families. A *mukungu* might give his daughter to a more influential *mukungu*. Commoners often married women from the villages to the south. Some of these women had been brought up from Bunya to become wives and others were the sisters and daughters of the newcomers. Gonza Bato's own mother was from an immigrant family. In general marriage in Southern Kigulu had an alliance function which bound royal and commoner families together and which facilitated the absorption of immigrants.

The political aspect of marriage is more explicit in terms of the potential rewards. According to the commonly accepted institutional model, Gonza Bato's appointment of a *mwiseMuhaya* Katikikiro was in line with accepted procedure. Depending on the context, service to the prince as well as kinship is used to explain the delegation of authority to in-laws. Gonza Bato gave the *bisoko* of Namasoga to the *abaiseNkwalu* and *abaiseIgulu*, both immigrant families from Bunya, for their services and because they were the mothers of princes. Recalling the part which the *abaiseMuhaya* played in rescuing Gonza Bato after his failure in the succession disputes, it can be said that power accrued only to those relatives already strong enough to support their prince.

Even those *abazira* who were not *bisoko* chiefs were generously rewarded by the prince. They were given the best plots on the border areas where they could be ready for any attack. In fact, a *muzira* needed a large plot since he had many wives, often given to him by the prince, and was expected to keep his grown sons with him to assist in the defence of the

territory. If he had plenty of land, his clansmen from other parts of Busoga would join him and he could give them a plot. Some of Gonza Bato's *abazira* were local men who had distinguished themselves in battle. Others had been rescruited, for example, the abaiseWaguma from Buima. Considering relations between Nawansinge and the abaiseNgobi, it is not surprising that the *abazira* in Nawansinge were *bataka*. Perhaps the most influential *abazira* of Gonza Bato were the abaiseKiyemba. A mwiseKiyemba *muzira* guarded him at his *mbuga*. Later this man did become a *kisoko* chief in Busu.

Many other commoners, mostly immigrants, were allotted tracts of land as rewards for their services. The abaiseMukuve came from Bukooli seeking land and served Gonza Bato by hunting for him. The abaiseNdhego, also from Mukooli, sought refuge here because they were the in-laws of Gonza Bato. Kiiso, the head of this family was given land and became a hunter. When Isolonko, a wiseKiyimba, migrated from Buvuma, he gave his daughter Tukuwa to Gonza Bato. After her son Katekalusi succeeded his father, other groups of abaiseKiyimba came from the south to seek their fortune here. The same thing had happened when Gonza Bato appointed Mudhumbusi Katikikiro and *mutala* chief of Nawansinge: his clansmen from other parts of Kigulu joined him there. This was possible because these clients were allowed to transfer some of their land to their immigrant clansmen. Structurally, these immigrant enclaves were a vital part of the system. Since they were more closely tied to the ruler than the indigenous inhabitants, who tended to remember former loyalties, they offset these localized loyalties and so pulled the several communities of the polity towards the prince as a focus of unity.

How did Fallers' institutional principles—patrilineal kinship, ascribed rank, and the patron-client relationship¹⁰—operate in the political system of Southern Kigulu? By the 1870s abaiseNgobi rule had been consolidated and the principle of ascribed rank, as Fallers described it, was accepted. However, as in all Soga states this principle was modified by the patron-client relationship. Clientship to a prince was a particular form of the political service which every adult rendered to the community. Summarizing the main points of this article in terms of service illustrates more clearly the extent to which clientship contributed to the viability of Gonza Bato's political system. The advantage of this approach is that all the services by the prince for the people, and by the people for the prince, are taken into account in trying to understand the system.

In at least one significant way all Gonza Bato's subjects served him and were served by him. The humblest cultivator could serve his prince by providing the food for a feast. In turn the prince offered an entertaining community gathering. The subordinate chiefs rendered service to him, but also promoted order within and among the village communities through their judicial functions. Although the *abazira* were his direct clients, they served him by protecting not only his authority, but the people as well.

Thus, the most important services performed for Gonza Bato by his clients benefited the people in just those instances where the village community was least self-sufficient.

Those clients whose service to Gonza Bato was of a more personal kind also contributed to the success of the system. The critical fact here is that slightly more than half of the *bisoko* chiefs were not clients, but princes, the sons of Gonza Bato. All those commoners with special links to Gonza Bato were complementary to the client-chiefs and *abazira* in forming a commoner political 'in-groups' which acted as a necessary structural balance to the princes.

For another perspective the benefits of Gonza Bato's rule derive from the increase in scale which his polity represents.¹¹ The discussion can now return to the structural position of the local community *vis-à-vis* the polity. The real issue here is to what extent the new territorial arrangement of the polity became the basis for a new level of community.

Within each *mutala* communications were good, but swamps and streams tended to discourage purely social contacts between *mitala*. In other words, the ordinary person usually had some special reason for visiting another *mutala* and the community of everyday life was one's own *mutala*. Defining community as the areas of common life and the boundaries of community as the boundaries of many-sided relations, it is apparent that in Southern Kigulu in the last half of the nineteenth century a community was developing at the level of the polity. Using intensity of relations as a criterion, this community bound the people together politically more than socially, and socially more than economically.

Gonza Bato's *mbuga* in Ighawu was the focal point of the political community. Here he gave the feasts for which he became so famous. If a dispute could not be settled by the Kalabalaba and the Katikikiro, the disputants could go there for a decision. Men gathered at the *mbuga* every day to drink beer, entertain his guests, and sometimes help decide cases. However, since the *mitala* and *bisoko* chiefs had *mbuga* and *bakungu* of their own, whether they were princes or commoners, it was personal loyalty to Gonza Bato which held the political community together. While feasts were important socially, undoubtedly fostering a feeling of community among his subjects, they were not the real cohesive political factor. The immigrant enclaves were structurally significant in that they owed their place in the community to the prince's good graces. The consolidation of abaiseNgobi rule in Southern Kigulu resulted from the ways in which old and new residents were brought into the system of administration and into the service of the prince.

FOOTNOTES

1. Literally the prefix "abaise" means "those of the father..." Soga clans are

eponymous, patrilineal, exogamous, and dispersed with the effective corporate unit being a shallow patrilineage of three to four generations. Other abaiseNgobi branches ruled in Bugabula, Bulamogi, Bokono, and Luuka. For a detailed discussion of clan history, origins, and migrations, see David Cohen's *Mukama and Kintu*, Ph.D. Dissertation, London, 1970 or his book *Historical Tradition of Busoga: Mukama and Kintu*, Clarendon Press, 1972.

2. The main sources for this article are Kigulu Historical Texts 34-72, the original fieldwork of the author. The other primary sources are from "Collected Texts: Busoga Traditional History", collected, translated, edited and annotated by David Cohen, specifically, CTBTH numbers 64, 419, 421, 494, 741, and 759.
3. These are the dates for the active life of Gonza Bato, the dating for which has been discussed in detail in the author's seminar paper: "Gonza Bato and the Consolidation of AbaiseNgobi Rule in Southern Kigulu", Makerere University, Department of History (MSP/3/1972/73), August 21, 1972. The dating for the Kintu and Mukama migrations is from Cohen, *Mukama and Kintu*, pp. 129-130 and 185-188. The dates for the rulers of Buzimba are from Cohen's "Survey of Interlacustrine Chronology", *Journal of African History*, xi, 2(1970), pp. 177-201.
4. It is possible, but unlikely, that Gonza Bato was his father's appointee. See the author's seminar paper MSP/3/1972/73. Gonza Bato certainly faced competition from his elder brothers—his collateral relatives retained control over Busu until c. 1870.
5. This is the list of Mboli, CTBTH 742 which was accepted by David Cohen and by Kazungu in his "Political Centralization in Precolonial Kigulu", Graduating Essay, Makerere University, Department of History, 1970.
6. Chicago, 1965 (originally published 1956), pp. 51 and 63.
7. Kigulu Historical Text 39.
8. *Bantu Bureaucracy*, p. 143.
9. The Soga equivalent is "Kitukiro". For implication that the original title in Southern Kigulu was "Walukulira" see Kigulu Historical Text 39.
10. *Bantu Bureaucracy*, pp. 126-128. The variable operations of these principles was reviewed by David Cohen, in terms of his own material, in "Emergence and Crisis: The States of Busoga in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries", Makerere University, Kampala, History Department (MSP/17/71/72).
11. The concept of scale used here is adapted from that of Godfrey and Monica Wilson as presented in *The Analysis of Social Change*, Cambridge, 1968, first published 1945.

