

Living with Ethnic Difference in Uganda
Reflections on Realities and Knowledge Gaps with Specific Reference to Kibaale District

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Introduction

Contemporary Uganda is embroiled in a number of inter-ethnic challenges at varying degrees of intensity and complexity. Kibaale presents a curious case that is grounded in a complex history of pre-colonial inter-ethnic rivalry; colonial ethnic manipulation; a colonial legacy of strained ethnic relations; and contemporary trends of massive immigration into the area with attendant immigrant-phobia catalysed by memories of foreign domination and humiliation. In 2002, the ethnic tension in the area peaked with the outright rejection by the Banyoro of an 'outsider' (immigrant) who had been elected to the post of District chairman. While the Banyoro feel threatened by the rising number and influence (political and economic) of immigrants in their area, the immigrants are also insecure about their future in the area without a political power base. Moreover, it is their constitutional right to stand for political office as legitimate residents of the district.

The above situation raises nagging questions about the possibility of pluralism in the area. Within the painful memories (history) of the Banyoro in relation to domination by the ethnic other (Baganda), do possibilities remain for living in ethnic difference even when the 'new other' becomes politically or/and economically influential? It raises a query on how the different ethnic groups in the area feel and what they make out of the situation. This query is further raised by the observation that the people of Kibaale have harmoniously co-existed at some points of their history (1960s – 2000) when they went to the same schools, churches, markets and even intermarried (Schelnberger 2005). This paper particularly focuses on explaining the realities of living with ethnic differences that the Kibaale case presents and the questions raised by those realities. The questions specifically concern the possibilities of pluralism in Kibaale and the conclusive suggestion is that these are best answered through a study that focuses on the perceptions of the people themselves. This suggestion is grounded on the researcher's constructivist theoretical outlook by which social reality is viewed as constructed by the people through whose agency meaning and relations are formed.

The Context of Ethnic Difference and its Challenges

Humanity is grappling with many social issues that seem to have eluded solutions up to today. One of these key problems facing contemporary society is that of co-existing with the various forms of difference that characterise it. "Difference animates key conflicts of our time. Claims about difference breathe life into cultural, ethnic, religious, and values conflict" (Brigg 2008, p.6). As Sen (2006) observes, among the key developments on account of which such tensions and conflicts are becoming more pronounced today are the increased global and national contacts and interactions, and in particular extensive migrations, which have placed diverse practices of different cultures next to each other.

The diversity from which tension emerges in different societies could certainly be acknowledged as a permanent feature of all human societies, manifested in different forms and dynamics over time. According to An-na'im (2008), this is what makes diversity a very

important aspect for consideration in human relations, especially in view of how people negotiate their differences for sustainable pluralism. As An-na'im notes, pluralism is "... an ideology and system that accepts diversity as a positive value and facilitates constant negotiations and adjustments among varieties of difference without seeking or expecting to terminate any or all of them permanently" (2008, p.225). The way and extent to which this ideal is practically possible within a context of ethnic diversity with strained relations is the main focus of this investigation.

Among the most notably sensitive differences in the African context is ethnicity which has led to social tension and exclusion of some groups from their full rights as citizens (Ratcliffe 2004). The 1994 genocide in Rwanda, where about a tenth of the population was exterminated, was largely a result of ethnic strife and suspicion between the Hutu and Tutsi (Mamdani 2001; Rukooko 2002; Guest 2004). According to Guest, "ethnic or religious differences have been the pretext for violence in Sudan, Nigeria, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Uganda, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, both Congos – the list goes on" (Guest 2004, p.110). One of the most recent large scale ethnic clashes in Africa happened in Kenya in December 2007 where, after disputed presidential elections, forty eight ethnic groups coalesced into pro-Kikuyu¹ and anti-Kikuyu alliances leading to the death of about one thousand five hundred people (Collier 2009). What we should read into the various cases of ethnic conflict is that when engagement with ethnic difference goes wrong, the implications can be severe and, therefore, that pluralism is of much significance. However, the many cases of ethnic conflict that feature in the African story should not be interpreted to indicate that ethnic diversity in itself is problematic and/or bound by necessity to result into conflict. The relations that ensue in multi-ethnic encounters should be viewed as a function of the nature of engagement between communities (Varshney 2005).

Living with Ethnic Difference in Uganda

To illustrate the significance of addressing questions of living with ethnic difference in the context of Uganda, let us now turn to the ethnic landscape in the country in general and then Kibaale, the focus of the paper, in particular.

In its *Vision 2025*², where it commits itself to the task of carefully managing ethnic diversity in the country, the Uganda Government acknowledges that though very beautiful in almost all ways, "Uganda has been, regrettably, really rotten from within in terms of ethnic conflicts" (Republic of Uganda 1998, p.303). To substantiate this strong statement, among others, it highlights the following violent ethnic confrontations in Uganda's history:

The uprising of the Bamba and Bakonzo against the Batooro and the Central Government in 1962; the 1966 confrontation between the Baganda ethnic group and the Central Government [in which the latter deposed the former's king by military force] which was deemed to be Northern [in inclination]; the wanton and brutal massacres of members of the Acholi and Langi ethnic groups during the Amin regime; the equally wanton and brutal retribution by these latter groups against ethnic groups from the West Nile region – Idi Amin's home region – after

¹ The Kikuyu are the biggest ethnic group in Kenya. Although the violent conflict was sparked by the disputed presidential elections, the tension between the Kikuyu and some other Kenyan ethnic groups (such as the Luo) had been building over time.

² With the theme 'Prosperous people, harmonious nation and beautiful country', Vision 2025 is the Government of Uganda's strategic document that reflects the country's history, core values and aspirations in terms of objectives and goals.

the fall of Idi Amin; the war in the Luwero Triangle; and ... the ... civil war in the north (Republic of Uganda 1998, p.303).

Though based on broader ideological reasons, the war that brought Museveni into power in 1986 was to an extent perceived as a war of the Southerners against the Northerners who were known by the derogatory term 'Anyanya'. The twenty-year Northern war that followed Museveni's ascent to power also bore an ethnic twist as a response of the Northerners to perceived deliberate marginalisation by the 'Southerner Government'.

With over sixty five ethnic groups (Kabanankye and Kwagala 2007), Uganda is one of the African countries that are ethnically very diverse. Most of the people are Bantu³-speaking and the majority of the population lives in the south of the country. Bantu-speaking people constitute about 70 per cent of Uganda's population while Nilotic groups make up about 25 per cent. The Nilotics are mainly composed of the Acholi, the Langi and the Alur ethnic groups (about 15 per cent) from the north; and the Iteso and Karamojong (about 10 per cent) from the north eastern part of the country (Mwakikagile 2009). Of these, the Baganda in the Buganda Kingdom are the largest, with 17 per cent of the country's population.

The 2002 Uganda National Population and Housing Census report (the most recent Census) places other ethnic groups as follows: Banyankore (9.8 per cent), Basoga (8.6 per cent), Bakiga (7.0 per cent), Iteso (6.6 per cent), Langi (6.2 per cent), Acholi (4.8 per cent), Bagisu (4.7 per cent), Lugbara (4.3 per cent), and other Ugandans from smaller ethnic groups are put at 30.7 per cent.

In Kibaale District, the Banyoro are the 'indigenous' ethnic community. The 2002 Census Report indicates that there are 24 main 'tribes'⁴ living in Kibaale. They are distributed as indicated in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Distribution of Ethnic Groups in Kibaale District - 2002

Tribe	Banyoro	Bakiga	Alur	Bagungu	Acholi	Lugbara	Bafumbira	Chope
Population	193,555	126,312	3,240	373	326	574	32,241	3,240
Tribe	Baruli	Bakhonzo	Batoro	Banyankore	Banyarwanda	Kebu	Bagisu	Langi
Population	78	11,742	8,352	9,256	3,331	62	422	119
Tribe	Iteso	Lendu	Baamba	Basoga	Bahororo	Banyore	Baganda	Bagwere
Population	192	85	2,261	637	634	223	4,475	252

Source: Republic of Uganda (2005)

The total population of immigrants (including what the Census categorises as 'small tribes') is at 212,327 while the Banyoro are 193,555. It therefore indicates the immigrants to be more than the natives, a phenomenon, as we shall see later, which also informs the tension in the district. However, as shall be discussed later, the numeric factor is but one among others.

³ The Bantu-speaking people are a group of people who speak related languages and have relatively similar social characteristics. They occupy a large part of Zaire and southern as well as eastern Africa and are said to have originated from the Congo region of central Africa and spread rapidly to the Southern and eastern Africa. Today, more than one half of the population of Uganda are Bantu-speaking (<http://www.ugandatragelguide.com/bantu-people.html>).

⁴ Although the word tribe is being abandoned today in anthropological and sociological circles, largely due to its demeaning colonial roots, in several parts of Africa, and in Uganda in particular, it has been sanitised and is still widely used to denote 'ethnic group' in a non-derogatory sense. However, for this paper to fit into the wider discourse on ethnicity, the word tribe is avoided except where cited from elsewhere.

According to an 'Inquiry into Bunyoro Issues Report' (Republic of Uganda 2006), the area also accommodates 3,900 people from other small tribes including: the Babukusu, Bagwe, Bahehe, Bakenyi, Banyara, Basamia, Jopadhola, Kumam, Sabiny, Dodoth, Ethur, Teuso, Jie, Jonam, Kakwa, Karimojong, Kuku, Madi, Mening, Mvumba, Napore, Nubi, Nyangia, Pokot, Tepeth, Vonoma, Babwisi, Banyabindi, Basongora, Batagwenda, Batuku, and Batwa. The report indicates that, as of 2002, Kibaale's total population was 405,882, with a high growth rate of 5.2 compared to the national rate of 3.3. In the next sub-section, the researcher explains the genesis of the above demographic phenomenon and its implications to pluralism in Kibaale District.

The Genesis of Ethnic Tension in Kibaale's Context

Kibaale District, which is part of Bunyoro Kingdom⁵, located in western Uganda, has been one of the vivid hotspots of ethnic tension at the start of the 21st century in Uganda. However, as with most forms of socio-political organisation and relations in Africa (Mamdani 2001, Mamdani 2004), the roots of this tension can be traced back to colonial times, and this helps us to both contextualise its complexity and meaningfully interrogate the possibilities of pluralism in the light of all dimensions of the case.

In the 1890s, the British colonialists faced much resistance in establishing their rule in Bunyoro Kingdom. Hence, the former resorted to collaborating with the Buganda Kingdom (who had pre-colonial rivalry with the Banyoro over territory and might) to fight the Banyoro. This move marked the defeat of Bunyoro towards the end of the 19th Century and, in appreciation for the support from Buganda and/or for strategic reasons, the British 'donated' a big and very culturally significant fraction of Bunyoro land (six counties⁶ – later to be known as the 'lost counties') to Buganda (Schelnberger 2005; Espeland 2006). Kiwanuka (1968) contends that it was more for strategic reasons than for appreciating Buganda that the counties were annexed to the latter. He argues that, the British having appreciated the administrative structure of Buganda, they wanted to take advantage of it in Bunyoro as well through indirect rule thereby helping to curb further resistance to their rule and reducing administrative costs.

It should be observed that the territory carved from Bunyoro was geographically larger than the original size of Buganda, too large to be ignored by Bunyoro. In humiliation of the Banyoro, through the authority of the British colonisers, Buganda effectively sent her chiefs to administrate and embark on 'Bugandanising' Bunyoro through entrenching Kiganda⁷ language and culture and thereby deculturating the Banyoro (Kihumuro 1994). By force of law, Runyoro (the language of the Banyoro) was effectively banned from official communication and all the Banyoro had to adopt Baganda names. Up to today many Banyoro elders bear Baganda names. This psychological trauma still plays into the dynamics of ethnic relations with the effect of triggering sporadic moments of xenophobia in fear of being

⁵ Bunyoro kingdom is one among many 'kingdoms' in Uganda. These kingdoms are constitutionally viewed as cultural institutions and are not allowed to participate in political affairs.

⁶ The number of counties actually given by the British to Buganda is still contested. Contrary to the popular account of six (or seven) counties, Kiwanuka (1968) and (Lwanga 2007) argue that only two counties (Buyaga and Bugangaizi) were extended to Buganda, the rest had already been conquered by Buganda. This study does not intend as part of its scope to verify what the true account is, but what is important to draw from this is that there was significant territorial lost by Bunyoro.

⁷ Adjective in reference to something 'of the Baganda culture'.

dominated again. In some cases, it is simply used as a mobilisation scapegoat by opportunistic politicians to win favour on grounds of ethnicity.

In 1964 (after independence from British rule in 1962), as had been recommended by the colonialists at their departure, a referendum was held in two of the six 'lost counties' – Buyaga and Bugangaizi - that had been given to Buganda and the vote was in favour of returning the territories to Bunyoro. Consequently, Schelnberger (2005) reports that the Baganda chiefs and their agents were chased from Bunyoro with spears and machetes. But they left without giving up their legal ownership of the land and kept their official land titles for over 2,995 square miles (Republic of Uganda 2006). These owners are locally known as 'absentee landlords'. This situation left the Banyoro effectively as squatters in their native land, who had to pay feudal dues to the absentee Baganda landlords. This caused bitterness fueling negative memories of domination.

Even though a Land Fund was established by force of the Land Act (1998) to, among other functions, buy out the absentee landlords from the area, much land still remains in the latter's hands. Its implementation is complicated by the requirement of the same Act that "... any compulsory acquisition of land for purposes of implementing ... shall be at a fair market valuation assessed on a willing seller willing buyer basis". Some absentee landlords are not willing to sell their land.

In addition to this historic presence of the Baganda and the Banyoro people in the area, a number of other ethnic groups have been settling in Kibaale over time. Most of these settlers are from western Uganda (mainly the Bakiga). Some have settled through official state resettlement schemes. Republic of Uganda (2006) indicates that about 300 Bakiga families were resettled in Ruteete – Kagadi in 1965 by the Government under an arrangement initiated by Kigezi leaders in consultation with the Omukama of Bunyoro (Sir Tito Winyi). Another official resettlement scheme was the Bugangaizi resettlement scheme of 3,600 families in Nalweyo – Kisiita in 1993. The resettled group was of Bakiga who were previously evicted from Mpokya Forest Reserve.

Due to the above resettlement schemes and other factors, the largest population of the Bakiga (126,312) in Bunyoro Kingdom is found in Kibaale District (Republic of Uganda 2006, p.38). The resettlements, together with other voluntary migrations into the area, effectively tipped the demographic figures with the migrants out-numbering the indigenous group. This in itself may not have sparked off tension between the Banyoro and the migrants but, as shall be later explained here, it fostered the 'ethnicisation' of local politics amidst a numerical disadvantage on the side of the Banyoro and set the scene for conflict.

In observation of these series of resettlements, the Mubende Banyoro Committee, an ethnic pressure group formed in 1918 to 'fight' for Banyoro rights, feels that, by resettling groups of people there, Government has turned their region into "a dumping ground of refugees and migrants" (Mubende Banyoro Committee Memorandum – MBC - 2005, in Republic of Uganda 2006, p.213). It can be read from MBC's Memorandum that this feeling is not helped by the claim that the Banyoro did not consent to the Government's resettlement schemes.

Some of these new settlers were invited by the native Banyoro and were given land along forests in order to shield the Banyoro's gardens against vermin and wild animals (Nsamba-Gayiiya 2003). Some were given land by local chiefs for token payments while others bought

it from the native Banyoro. Many more people have migrated to the area in search for land or/and following their relatives. Bunyoro has been a convenient place for resettling other Ugandans who were overpopulated in their areas (especially Kabale and Kisoro districts) because the war between the British government and the kingdom from 1893 to 1899 and the diseases that broke out thereafter left the area with virtually no population (Kihumuro 1994; Republic of Uganda 2006).

Initially, the settlers were quite well received in the then sparsely populated area and they mainly served as labourers for the indigenous Banyoro. But with the increase in numbers of settlers, financial strength, and the attendant cut-throat competition for resources and power, inter-ethnic conflicts started to emerge in the wake of the 21st century (Green 2006). It should be noted that the migrants are not mere temporary residents. They are permanent resident citizens and, as such, have clear stakes in the political process. This complicates the ensuing ethnic bargains through ethno-political competition.

Large-scale open violence took place between February and May 2002 when a Mukiga was elected as the District Chairman⁸. The sitting Munyoro refused to hand over power to someone they considered to be a 'foreigner' and clashes ensued between Banyoro and settlers in some places. The Banyoro started to claim back land from non-Banyoro. Violence again emerged in April 2003 when news spread that land that belonged to Bakiga was being allocated to the Banyoro by the District Land Board (Espeland 2007). The violence that followed left three people dead, several others injured, huts burnt, and livestock killed (Schelnberger 2005). In 2005, Schelnberger observed that the situation was calm but the conflict remained at a stage of high intensity where it could easily break out into open violence again.

With a tendency of peaking during elections, the tension remains up to today. In the analysis of the Inquiry into Bunyoro Issues Committee, "the Banyoro think that they are being re-colonised while the other tribes think that their survival in the region will be guaranteed only if they are in charge" (2006, p.45). Such feelings seem to put the two sides on oppositional directions. To further complicate the case, sometimes the Government's intervention has only served to aggravate the tension. This is partly because it is viewed in terms of the side it would be taking in the Banyoro – *Bafuruki* polar equation. After the *Mufuruki* (immigrant) LC5 Chairman had been forced to step down for a compromise replacement in 2002, Government felt that there was a need to come up with a policy to prevent such a scenario from re-occurring. In a letter titled *Guidance on the Banyoro/Bafuruki Question* (July 2009), the President⁹ - suggestively justifying the Banyoro's rejection of non-indigenous leaders - asks:

- i) If the Bafuruki dominate political space in the area to which they migrated, where do the indigenous people of the area find another political space?
- ii) If the Bafuruki were more nationalistic, why could they not find some persons among the indigenous people and vote for them?
- iii) Can some people from indigenous groups successfully compete, politically in the areas of origin of the Bafuruki? If not, is this not an unequal relationship?

⁸ This is the highest position at District level within Uganda's decentralised framework. It is also referred to as Local Council Five (LC 5) as the highest of the five local government councils. LC 4 is the County, LC 3 the Sub-county, LC 2 the Parish while LC 1 is the village.

⁹ Yoweri Kaguta Museveni

iv) Suppose we were to infuse 100,000 Bafuruki into Acholi or Karamoja [other Ugandan ethnic communities], what would be the reaction? If the Acholis and Karamajongs were to react violently, would it mean that they are not Ugandan enough or would it be that the policy was wrong?

In an apparent condemnation of the migration of the Bakiga [the dominant immigrant group] into Kibaale, 'an already enfeebled population [of the indigenous Banyoro] on account of history', he argued that "horizontal rural migration by peasants after they have exhausted land in one area is not a progressive way of creating national integration. The more correct way is vertical migration, from the farm to the factory". On account of the above contentions, as one of the possible solutions, the President proposed as 20-year affirmative action:

1. Ring-fencing the LC V positions in the whole of Bunyoro region for the indigenous people; and also ring-fencing the sub-county leadership except for the sub-counties around the Kisiita and Luteete areas [the resettlement schemes].
2. Ring-fencing the positions of Members of Parliament in the whole of Bunyoro region for the indigenous people, except for the special constituencies created around Lutete [sic] and Kisiita resettlement schemes.

The President's suggestion was considerably lauded by the Banyoro. In a response written by Ford Mirima (September 3, 2009) on behalf of the Banyoro elders, they said:

The Banyoro, understandably, fully support the president's position. They say that they have been victims of colonial suppression for generations, a marginalized minority, purposely kept backward to satisfy colonialists policies, which policies [sic, policies] were unfortunately inherited by independent Uganda successive Governments even after the country attained independence. ... Banyoro's prayer is that these proposals reach cabinet, then go to parliament and are given the force of law so that they can be implemented.

However, some Banyoro, represented by the LC 5 Chairman of Masindi District (also within Bunyoro), felt that the suggested affirmative action was an insufficient concession. Instead, they suggested that: "For anybody to contest for any leadership position from Parish level to Member of Parliament, that person's paternal grandparent should have lived in Bunyoro by 1926" (Gyezaho 2009)¹⁰. This requirement would certainly disqualify most of the *Bafuruki*.

On the other hand, the President's suggestion was met with resistance and contempt from a wide section of the non-Banyoro within and outside Bunyoro. At the center of the reactions was a fundamental concern that such a measure was inconsistent with the procedural rules that constitute democracy. Commenting on the President's proposal in the *Abu Mayanja Memorial Lecture – August 7, 2009*, Mamdani felt that in such a suggestion:

The real shift is in the definition of citizenship. Nationalists defined citizenship as Ugandan, regardless of origin; Amin defined it as black Ugandan. But, today, it is proposed that the core rights of citizenship - the right to political representation - be defined on a tribal basis. The NRM¹¹ is the first government in the history of independent Uganda to propose a dilution of national citizenship in favor of a tribal

¹⁰ <http://allafrica.com/stories/200909180968.html> Viewed on August 25, 2011

¹¹ National Resistance Movement, which is the ruling party.

citizenship. My argument is that if we adopt this proposal, we shall be returning to an arrangement resembling colonial rule¹².

In re-emphasis of his thesis of contemporary African politics as more of a colonial legacy, Mamdani interprets the President's proposal as the usual reference to the colonial book in 'times of crisis'. Mamdani's view should be appreciated from the implication of the President's suggestion that indigenous groups are entitled to a wider set of rights than legitimate migrant groups/ individuals. Such a view goes contrary to a fundamental tenet of the Ugandan constitutional provision that "... all persons are equal before and under the law in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life and in every other respect and shall enjoy equal protection of the law" (Section 21, Art. 1).

On the other hand, the President's suggestion ought to be assessed as well from the angle of a response to ethnic bargains based on historical marginalization despite 'indigeneness'. Viewed as an affirmative action, if it is indeed true that the Banyoro are marginalised, the President's suggestion passes as just/ fair in a remedial sense. But this needs to be handled delicately to avoid giving the impression that rights and privileges are extended to some sections of society by the state on the basis of ethnicity.

In another move to resolve the tension, in 2010 the President passed a directive to the Attorney General and Minister of Local Government to create two new counties/constituencies. He said, "we need to split Buyaga with a new constituency centred around the former Lutete [Ruteete] refugee camp to cater for the Bafuruki, and also to split Bugangaizi, to create a county/constituency around Kisiita [resettlement scheme] to cater for the Bafuruki there" (Lumu 2010). Though the move was rejected by Bunyoro Kingdom, it was ultimately implemented. The idea seems to have been to ensure that each group gets representation of their own at parliamentary and other local government levels¹³. Whether this can help in bringing about short and long term harmony remains a lingering question. The 2011 elections were generally peaceful, but the ethnic calculations were not completely out of the picture. There were strategic alliances on ethnic lines and, in some cases, deliberate moves to share out constituency representation in parliament by ethnicity. The sustainability of such an arrangement is debatable.

Still in a bid to sort out Bunyoro's issues and in display of their significance, in 2011 a fully fledged Ministry for Bunyoro Affairs was created. The minister appointed to head the above ministry (Saleh Kamba) was neither from the area nor a Munyoro. In response to this development, the Prime Minister of Bunyoro Kingdom (Yabeezi Kiiza) said: "We thank the President for creating a ministry for us but the appointment of a minister who is not a Munyoro is a big concern for us. We have several people from Bunyoro who qualify to head it [the ministry]¹⁴". Eventually a Munyoro was appointed Minister in November 2012.

Even in appreciation of the Banyoro's history of marginalisation, the above response to the appointment of a non-Munyoro minister for Bunyoro Affairs together with the rejection of a non-Munyoro LC5 Chairman in Kibaale in 2002 seem to point to a nativist feeling among the Banyoro that issues of Bunyoro ought to be, first and foremost, their business to determine.

¹² http://abumayanja.org/news.php?prog_id=13 Viewed on August 25, 2011.

¹³ The creation of a constituency goes with the creation of other sub-units thereunder such as LC III. Leadership of these is also through elections.

¹⁴ <http://mobile.monitor.co.ug/News/-/691252/1172156/-/format/xhtml/-/mg7veb/-/index.html> Viewd on August 11, 2011

But this is contested by some non-Banyoro and it raises questions on its implications to wider society if, after official endorsement, it spills into other areas in Uganda such as Karamoja and Luwero which have special ministries on the ground of affirmative action. Should they also ask for ministers from their areas? That could play against the spirit of national integration. It was also particularly curious that shortly after the President's letter proposing ring-fencing was published, the Buganda Kingdom announced that they were planning to count all their people and their origins¹⁵. More importantly, the contestations also raise questions over the possibilities of co-existence amidst the ethnic differences in Kibaale.

An earlier study in the Pluralism Knowledge Programme in Kibaale (ND) indicates that the Banyoro are not happy with what they call the arrogance of the Bakiga and their refusal to adopt Banyoro culture, respect their king (Omukama) and learn their language (Runyoro). MBC also claimed that "due to arrogance the settlers have failed to be assimilated or learn the ways of the people who hosted them" (Republic of Uganda 2006, p.192). It is not well-received among a wide section of the Banyoro that a number of Bakiga still practice their culture and speak their languages and that they have even renamed some of the places in Kibaale giving them Rukiga¹⁶ names.

On the other hand, in an open memo to the president from 36 'Leaders from the Non-Banyoro Community living in Kibaale District', they argued that "We believe that non-Banyoro living in Bunyoro do not have to deny their culture and identity in order to be considered respectful. We also believe that respect for one community's culture cannot be a one way street" (*The Observer*, 10 August 2009). In the same communiqué, the immigrants also felt that it is their constitutional right to stand for any electoral position in the area, practice their culture, and legally settle where they wish.

These sentiments and line of events highlighted above serve to demonstrate the complexity of the current ethnic sensitivity of Kibaale and call for inquiry into the possibility of pluralism in the area through people's own perceptions. As the above account indicates, Kibaale was specifically selected on account of the fact that it has been one of the predominant spots of ethnic tension/conflict in contemporary Uganda (Espeland 2007 and Nkurunziza 2011). Boulding's classical definition of conflict as "a struggle over values, claims to scarce status, power and resources" (cited in Jeong 2008) is clearly exemplified by the Kibaale case. It further becomes a case for academic interest due to its complexity and entanglement in ethnic, historic, economic, cultural and political factors.

One would say that what we see here is a failure to acknowledge and negotiate difference. However, as argued by An-na'im (2008), such failure does not have to be final or conclusive. "Since every failure holds a new possibility of success in the future, the question should always be what people can do to achieve the transformation of the permanent realities of difference into sustainable pluralism" (An-na'im 2008, p.225). This is also in consideration of a very important observation that the people of Kibaale have co-existed peacefully from the 1960s to 2000. "Together they built community structures such as health centres, they sent their children to the same schools, worshipped at the same churches and they also intermarried" (Schelnberger 2005, p.30). Schelnberger's observation points to the possibility that the people of Kibaale could be having imaginations - based on their past and present

¹⁵ See Gyezaho and Mwanje (05 August 2009). 'Bafuruki hit back at President Museveni, Mengo to issue IDs to all Baganda' From <http://www.mail-archive.com/ugandanet@kym.net/msg26575.html> Viewed on 13th march 2012.

¹⁶ Rukiga is the language for the Bakiga.

experiences – on how ethnic pluralism could be framed again in their community. The rationale for a focus on people's own perceptions in the Kibaale complexity is explained further in the theoretical perspectives on which this paper and its suggestions are grounded.

Primordialism and Constructivism as Theoretical Perspectives on Ethnic Conflict

The two most dominant theoretical frameworks which social scientists have used to understand and explain the existence and dynamics in and between ethnic groups are primordialism and constructivism (Hale 2008). This paper is largely inclined towards a constructivist approach but, there are aspects of primordial theory which will be brought into consideration. As such, the conceptual frames of both theories will be explored. A synthetic outlook is adopted where, through a critique of each of the two theoretical lenses, a synthesis is developed which deems to offer a stronger account of how and why some ethnic conflicts persist and the circumstances under which pluralism is made possible in a multi-ethnic context.

Primordialism

The key argument of the primordialists (Shils 1957; Geertz 1963; Huntington 1996) is that ethnic conflicts are renewals of age old antagonisms and hatreds.

Primordial conceptions of ethnicity focus on shared qualities such as a common language, a collective name, a common myth of descent, a shared history and allegedly inherited physical or/and behavioural characteristics common to members of the group (Narrol cited in Poluha 1998). These are considered to be 'givens'. In this line, Geertz specifically defines primordial attachment as:

One that stems from the 'givens' of existence or more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed givens of social existence; immediate contiguity and live connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. These continuities of blood, speech, custom and so on are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering coerciveness in and of themselves. One is bound to one's kinsman, one's neighbour, one's fellow believer *ipso facto* as the result not merely of personal attraction, tactical necessity, common interest or incurred moral obligation, but at least in great part by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself (cited in Rex 2002, p.90)

Accordingly, most primordialists think "ethnic communities are persistent, resilient, robust, and capable of eliciting deep loyalty, intense attachment and strong motivation, and, in consequence, are particularly resistant to change" (Harowitz cited in Coetzee 2009). Contemporary ethnic conflicts are thus viewed as the renewal of age old antagonisms (Roe 2005) – ones that antedate the formation of nation states.

This theory could partially serve to analyse ethnic conflict and exclusion in Uganda especially in relation to emotional ethnic ties and allegiance to perceived common ancestry, which exists among most ethnic groups in Uganda. Among the Baganda, for example, one way of expressing one's Baganda identity is by reciting ancestry (a list of ancestors). It is also

used as a means of identifying (and sometimes excluding) non-Baganda. And, in emphasis of common ancestry, the Baganda also identify themselves as *bazzukulu ba Kintu* (grand children of Kintu – the mythical first Muganda). It should however be noted that, just as many other ethnic groups in Uganda, the Baganda group has over time assimilated several other peoples into its fold yet they are also identified as Baganda. Therefore, at best, the primordial explanation of ethnicity by common ancestry is largely mythical. It is mainly for this reason that such ancestral accounts often contradict the known biological and social history of an ethnic community. We would rather argue that the boundary of ethnicity tends to shift, narrowing or broadening in accordance with the specific needs of political mobilisation at different times. It is for this reason that descent as an ethnic marker is often selectively cited or may matter on some occasions and sometimes not.

In his famous book, *The Clash of Civilisations* (1993), Huntington views different ethnic and religious groups as civilisations defined by their cultural differences. He identifies differences in language, ethnicity, family, nation, religion, common traditions and history, which he says are “not only real; they are basic” (p.22). Conflict between different civilisations is thus mainly based on cultural differences, which he considers less mutable and therefore less easily compromised and resolved than political and economic ones. In prediction of the ‘return of traditional rivalries’, he argues that new waves of conflict across the globe in the 21st century will be a direct result of competing ethnic identities.

Without considering the arguably influential factors of economic competition and political manipulation often entangled within ethnic tension, he argues that the differences of language, ethnicity, culture, and history do not merely exacerbate conflict, they are the cause. He predicts that with the world becoming a smaller place, increased interaction, will “intensify civilization consciousness” and enhance group “awareness of differences between civilizations and commonalities within civilizations.” The civilisation consciousness in turn invigorates differences and animosities stretching - or thought to stretch - back deep into history.

Casting doubt on Huntington’s primordial analysis, Roe remarks that “while Huntington’s thesis seeks to propound a systematic explanation for violence and war, his conclusions appear every bit as deterministic as those who proffer ancient hatred explanations” (2005, p.27). And its weakness precisely lies in its deterministic reductionism in explanation of conflicts, some of which may not be rooted in histories of hatred. Reinforcing Roe’s criticism, Sen adds that within Huntington’s determinism:

Modern conflicts, which cannot be adequately analysed without going into contemporary events and machinations, are then interpreted as ancient feuds which allegedly place today’s players in preordained roles in an allegedly ancestral play. As a result, the ‘civilisational’ approach to contemporary conflicts (in grander or lesser versions) serves as a major intellectual barrier to focusing more fully on prevailing politics and to investigating the processes and dynamics of contemporary incitements to violence (2006, p.43).

Moreover, to add to Roe and Sen’s critique, as shall be seen later, whereas the history of ethnic relations in Kibaale, for example, plays a role in contemporary tension in the area, that may not lead us to the reductionist conclusion that elevates it at the expense of contemporary political manoeuvres/manipulations and other relevant explanations.

In *The Clash within Civilisations*, Senghaas further criticises Huntington's thesis as being essentialistic. "... he [Huntington] regards civilizations as not adaptable and changeable over centuries. Deep down, they remain constant, and they tend to process external influences so as to guarantee continuity" (2002, p.73). Moreover, in his monistic identification of cultures as singular civilisations, Huntington ignores the plurality of identities 'within' (Sen 2006) and, by extension, the clashes within. He ignores the extent of the internal diversities¹⁷ within his civilisational categories and the interactional porosity of the civilisational borders that he presents as though they were rigid boxes frozen in time.

Senghaas argues that "holistic statements have never been analytically useful and cannot be justified today in the face of growing cultural conflicts within civilisations" (p.74). In the same line of critique, in her study entitled *The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence and India's Future*, Nussbaum argues that "thinking in terms of a 'clash of civilisations' ... leads us to ignore both the heterogeneity of all known civilisations and the inter-penetration and mutual influence among cultures that is a fact of human history" (2007, p.7). We should not ignore both 'internal diversity' and 'cultural borrowing'.

On the whole, primordialist theories would not adequately explain the non-historical aspects of Uganda's ethnic rivalries. For example, primordialism does not account for the ethnic conflicts in Uganda that originate from political manipulation of the 'ethnic card' (Kigongo 1995; Muhereza and Otim 1998; Storey 2002; Mamdani 2004; Nsamba et al. 2007). This is in reference to ethnic conflicts that are fuelled by politicians as they pit ethnic groups against each other for political scores. Guest observes that:

Most of Africa's ethnic strife has its roots in the manipulation of tribal loyalties by the colonial authorities [and some post-independence African leaders]. And most of today's conflicts owe their persistence to modern politics, not primordial passions (2004, p.111).

Citing the example of Rwanda's 1994 genocide, Guest argues that a primordial 'ancient hatreds' explanation of the violence cannot suffice. Just as Mamdani (2001), he admits that it is true that the Hutus always hated the Tutsis and vice versa but that:

Hutus and Tutsis have only thrown themselves at each other's throats since their political leaders started urging them to. The genocide was carefully planned by a small clique of criminals, to maintain their grip on power. They were not forced to carry it out by passions beyond their control, or by the irresistible tide of history (pp. 112-113).

The history of the Hutu-Tutsi relations, especially in the light of colonial favouritism for the Tutsi (Mamdani 2001), was of course connected to the genocide but not a sufficient reason for it. Besides, even history is constructed through socio-political dynamics, not a 'given'.

Primordialism also fails to explain the conflicts emerging from perceived and actual discrimination, especially in the distribution of power and other resources (Smith 1994).

¹⁷ Sen (2006) highlights divisions between the rich and the poor, between members of different classes and occupations, between people of different politics (political affiliation), and between language groups. Divisions of religion, gender, and age group could be added to Sen's list.

Moreover, as remarked by Okuku (2002), primordial conceptions look at ethnicity from a static and negative stance with a tacit suggestion that ethnic rivalries can never be addressed, as though ethnic pluralism is an impossibility. But ethnicity is never static since new forms or characteristics are perpetually created because what is considered to be significant changes over time (Bacova 1998, Paloha 1998, and Gunaratman 2003). "This flexibility makes it possible for members of ethnic groups to communicate their ethnicity in different ways" (Poluha 1998, p.33). In Gunaratman's view, ethnicity is not an objective, stable, homogenous category but is produced and animated by changing, complicated and uneven interactions between social processes and individual experience as shall be explained by the constructivist theory.

More importantly for this paper, an exclusive primordialist account also fails to explain why there are long periods of peaceful coexistence of different ethnic groups such as in Kibaale, or why these waves of ethnic consciousness and tension take place at particular times (Coetzee 2009). It also fails to explain why ethnic groups seemingly appear, disappear, and sometimes re-appear throughout history. A constructivist outlook critically addresses some of primordialism's presuppositions.

Constructivism

Constructivists emphasise that, just like ethnicity itself, ethnic conflicts are socially constructed through the agency of those competing for positions of advantage in the modern state (Mamdani 2004). The competition could be for jobs, political positions, and economic interests. As such, it is the competitive threats (real or imagined) that bring people together (Weber 1922, Barth 1969, Smith 1994 and Coetzee 2009). In the social constructivist thesis, it is the level of threat from the 'out-group/s' and nature of political mobilisation that will determine the emergence or non-emergence of inter-ethnic conflict.

One of the explanations central to the constructivist line of analysis is the *rational choice theory*¹⁸ according to which, people calculate the costs and benefits of any action (including ethnic attachment) before engaging in it (Scott 2000; Brittain 2006). It is these calculations that determine/ construct the shape and direction that ethnicity takes.

Scholars such as Epstein (1958) and Gluckman (1960) noted that in some situations, such as in labour relations, appeals to class solidarity dominate appeals to ethnic identity; in other settings, such as during elections, appeals to ethnic interests dominate those to class solidarity. These findings were later confirmed in studies by Wolpe (1970) and Melson (1971) and gave rise to the notion of 'situational selection'. This notion implies the idea that ethnicity is invoked according to circumstances; it is context-related (Forster et al. 2000). They provided a point of entry for rational choice theory to approach the study of cultural politics.

Rational choice theories hold that individuals must anticipate the outcomes of alternative courses of action and calculate that which will be best for them. Rational individuals choose the alternative that is likely to give them the greatest satisfaction (Coleman 1973; Heath 1976: 3; Carling 1992: 27). As such, "a particular set of preferences within a fixed array of possible choices shapes the expectations of actors about the outcome in a search for the greatest benefits" (Jeong 2008, pp.66-67). In Hempel's view, "individuals will consciously self-identify on the basis of ethnicity when ethnic membership to one or another group is

¹⁸ To be explored later.

perceived to be instrumental in accessing valued goods” (cited in Coetzee 2009). Choices of ethnic affiliation are based on rational awareness, not closeness, but the need for protection of common (and sometimes selfish) interests.

As such, it is the competitive threat that brings people together. Such threats could be real or imagined/perceived. In some cases, “it is not the reality of competition that counts; it is a perception that the out-group wishes to increase its share of valued resources and statuses at the expense of the in-group” (Bobo and Hatchings cited in Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007, p.80). The competition around which calculations are made could be about jobs, political positions, and economic interests. It is important to look out for and examine these dynamics in the context of Kibaale, especially because there is an indication that the tension rotates around political positions, socio-economic status, and land.

The individual understands the community as an instrument for achieving his goals. These bonds of an individual to a community are characterized as cool-headed, formal, intentional, purposeful, requiring conscious loyalty and formed on the basis of choice, but also as vague, temporary, intermittent and routine (Bacova 1998, p.33).

Thus, with regard to ethnicity, ethnic identification would be based on the perceived benefits and costs. This manifests ethnicity as a resource to be mobilised, or an instrument to be used, by particular groups and individuals in pursuit of their political and economic ends (Smith 1994; Coetzee 2009). As in the social contract theory (to be seen later in this section), members of an ethnic group tacitly consent to belong to the group in anticipation of some benefit. These benefits are weighed against life outside the group. In such an arrangement, allegiance to an ethnic group is on condition that the reasons for belonging to the group are respected. Short of that the membership loses meaning and some other sort of re-organisation would have to be sought.

Through ‘situational selection’, people organise their perceptions and choices depending on how an issue is framed. Ethnic identities are not eroded but rather retained; supplemented with new identities, such as that of a worker; and, in some settings, activated (Posner 2004). When class solidarity is valuable, ethnic differences are set aside; when competing for the spoils of office, they are re-affirmed. Viewed from this perspective, ethnicity can be seen as a choice or a strategy (Smith 1994), the instrumental value of which varies with the situation.

In this situational context of ethnicity, it is important to note the behaviour of leaders/elites who seek to mobilise collective action or support. As Posner (2004) demonstrates, such leaders tend to choose purposefully, assessing the relative advantages of ethnic mobilisation against other means of recruiting political support. Such Machiavellian¹⁹ elites sometimes manipulate otherwise peaceful, cooperative populations into ‘ethnic frenzies’ or less intense forms of ethnic conflict when they have the desire and the opportunity to do so (Hale 2008). In such cases, as observed by Mamdani (2001) and Guest (2004) in the case of the Rwanda genocide, ethnic tension cannot be said to be caused by ethnic passions per se. Rather, ethnicity is simply “a discourse that guilty elites invoke to obscure the real, venal causes of violence that they incite” (Brass cited in Hale 2008, p.25). In studying ethnic tension therefore, it is important to pay keen attention to the role of elites in shaping ethnic relations, especially in the political dynamics of the context being studied.

¹⁹ For Machiavellians, the end justifies the means used to achieve it.

Hale observes that the 'elite manipulation' argument begs some very important questions. The first is: "If ethnicity has no inherent meaning for individuals, why do followers follow the elites' calls to ethnic battle?" (p.25). To this he points out explanations that have been put forward by various scholars. Citing Snyder's *From Voting to Violence* (2000), one of the possible explanations he gives is that because elites tend to control/dominate mass media, they can very easily control how people think. It is also possible that, in the event of inter-ethnic violence, the masses expect to benefit somehow. This could be through opportunities to loot, revenge on a neighbour who happens to fall in the category of the enemy, exercise greater power personally or/ and to reap material or political benefits through massive ethnic patronage networks led by the elite.

The second question is: "Since the ways people can be categorized are nearly infinite, why is it that elites so often invoke ethnic themes as their way of rallying or coordinating the masses?" (*Ibid.* p.27). Why would ethnicity be the 'master narrative' amidst several possible others? This question suggests that there could be something emotive about ethnic identity or that there could be some sort of utility that people derive from merely belonging to an ethnic group. However, as argued by Mamdani (2001), the significance of ethnicity is historically constructed and, often, legally and institutionally reproduced as opposed to being instantly available for manipulation. Hale is also not right in insinuating that elites 'more often' invoke ethnic themes as their way of rallying the masses. We note that the identity along which to mobilise is often situationally selected. In India, for example, it is more along the lines of religion and caste (Nussbaum 2007), and in other contexts it could be on economic class lines – depending on the circumstances and what has been historically or at the moment shaped to be the important social identity.

However, social constructivism through the rational choice approach bears one important weakness that this study is keen to isolate from its constructivist foundation. It underrates the role of the affective element in ethnic ties. Some people identify with and pay strong allegiance to their ethnic groups even when there are no political or/and economic benefits in sight. "Choice cannot be reduced summarily to maximising utility, but may be influenced by habit, custom, a sense of duty, emotional attachment, etc" (Brittain 2006, p. 158). It can still be argued that such disinterested ethnic attachment is socially constructed but not necessarily around calculated interests.

In extension and reinforcement of the social constructivist theory, this study widely draws from Shoup's (2008) *theory of conflict and cooperation in counterbalanced states* which more specifically engages with the concepts and relations that we focus on. Although his explanation mainly attempts to explain inter-ethnic relations at state level, as we illustrate here, we also find it instrumental in understanding local levels such as in Kibaale. We tailor Shoup's theory with Mamdani's analysis of post-colonial ethnic dynamics in *Citizen and Subject* (2004) and in *When Victims Become Killers* (2001) where he explains ethnic conflict in the context of the Rwandan genocide of 1994.

Shoup defines a counterbalanced society as one where one ethnic community demands political priority on the basis of ethnic myths of indigenusness while another ethnic group that is 'not indigenus' controls the majority of the economic assets. Myths signify beliefs held in common and often regurgitated as truisms (Mamdani 2001) by a large group of people that can give action and events a particular meaning. These would therefore also include real historical events that have capacity to generate a particular effect on the practices

and worldview of individuals. In the context of Kibaale, the Banyoro would constitute the indigenous category while the immigrants (*Bafuruki*) represent the economic group that have strongly established themselves in business and trade. But this is not to claim that all immigrants are expected to be in an economically stronger position than all the Banyoro. Rather, it is only to generically indicate the comparative economic salience of the immigrants as a group in relation to the Banyoro. This categorisation forms the springboard for operationally positioning the two groups but without assuming that there is uniformity of perception, motivation and action within each of the groups. The possibility of intra-group diversity is acknowledged.

Shoup argues that the state of counterbalance harbours opportunities for political extremists and/or opportunists to exploit both the economic gap between the groups and, perhaps more importantly, possible fears of ethnic domination in order to achieve their political objectives. As argued by the rational choice theorists above, such political exploitation nests serious risks of ethnic conflict, even violence. But is political manipulation always bound to succeed in clashing ethnic groups for political scores?

It is here hypothesised that ethnic conflict is "... a function of both the latent social dissatisfaction necessary to influence individuals to ethnically mobilise and the institutional incentives that are sufficient to allow ethnic extremists to exploit such mobilisation" (Shoup 2008, p.15). Mobilisation along ethnic lines finds fertile grounds in the presence of a shared sense of anger or indignity brought about by differences in group status. In the tension that might ensue, individual people rally behind the identity of the group whose interests they identify with, hence increasing ethnic consciousness (Soeters 2005). This reactive cohesion within the group tends to be in direct relation to the growing sense of animosity between the groups in tension. However, as Mamdani (2001) argues, the connection between threats to group interests/ constraints and conflict is not a necessary one. The choice people make in response is rather mediated through how they understand and explain these constraints and the resources they can garner to change them. This therefore calls for a careful analysis in approaching explanations for conflict based on competition for resources. It is imperative to examine the intricate circumstances and dynamics in competition that determine the nature of outcome in inter-group relations.

The indigenous group will most likely seek political control as a way of maintaining both a sense of group dignity and ethnic survival. This is even much more likely in a post-colonial setting characterised by a colonial legacy of politicising indigeneity as a basis for rights and a mode of citizenship that denies full citizenship to residents it brands as ethnic strangers (Mamdani 2001). Conflict is bound to result when such political control sought by the indigenous group is either put or perceived by the indigenous community to be at risk of being usurped by the immigrant group ('ethnic strangers'). More importantly, whatever the threat, it does not have to be real or pressing, what is significant is how it is perceived. Thus we are reminded to pay special attention to perceptions.

The immigrants on the other hand are bound to seek to protect their property rights and other entitlements from being violated by the indigenous group. To this effect, in the event of a 'threat' (real or imagined), they will also seek to solve their problems through political mobilisation so as to acquire sufficient political strength to address the threat. But this will come with the effect of equipping the indigenous group (or factions of them) with 'evidence' that their fears of being dominated are justified and, probably, result into conflict. Soeters (2005) predicts that under such a situation, group binding becomes stronger on either side

implying an explicit antithesis between 'us' and 'them', often with attendant stereotypes being solidified and given more social significance. Auto-stereotypes (about a group as seen by themselves) tend to put the group in a self-serving positive light while hetero-stereotypes (about the other group) will contain negative connotations, even when the behaviour is the same.

The foregoing theoretical explanations suggest the need to make a keen interrogation of the history of the ethnic relations in the context of Kibaale. In this, there is a need: to understand the dynamics that have both led to co-existence and to conflict over the past; the claims and counter-claims in the narratives of both groups; and the different players and how their agency shapes the ethnic relations. Since apparently what mainly shapes the relations are the perceptions of the people in the context and their instrumentalisation, we suggest that any meaningful study into ethnic relations should start with accessing these as the building blocks for further analysis.

One important question remains unexplained by the above projections. That is, what then determines inter-ethnic co-existence and cooperation? The case of Kibaale indicates that there are periods when the different groups have peacefully co-existed (Schelnberger 2005). What circumstances enable this phenomenon?

In some ways, both the indigenous and the immigrant groups need each other. Shoup argues that this utilitarian consideration offers some minimal incentives for cooperation. The indigenous group will make claims to political dominance which necessitate the immigrant group to take a politically subordinate role but have a free rein in the economy. In such a setting, the immigrant group will count on protection of their property rights and a conducive environment for prosperity. On their side, the indigenous group will realise a development boost, increased tax revenues, and welfare benefits produced by a well-functioning economy. For such relations to hold, there should be no threats in the picture which would equip and send either side (especially their extremists) into mobilising along ethnic lines. However, the above circumstances for cooperation seem very delicate, especially within a democratic arrangement. The assumption that the immigrant group will accept to stay out of politics once they get assurance of their economic interests is apparently overstretched/ asking too much and requiring more investigation. There is also a possibility that the indigenous group could use its political position to marginalise the immigrants despite the economic gains from them. Nevertheless, in investigating the possibilities for pluralism in Kibaale, the viability of the arrangement suggested above needs to be inquired into. It is indicated above that immigrants are already active in the politics of Kibaale and that this has resulted into bouts of tension and violence. It thus seems relevant to study how immigrant groups motivate their pursuit of political positions. Is it simply out of an urge to participate in the administration of the area like others, or/and a move to counter perceived and/or real threats to their well-being as a group? And, whatever the motivation, it is also important to establish how the immigrants' entry into politics is perceived by the indigenous group, the influence of such perceptions on inter-ethnic relations, and, if in any way, how the two groups are engaging with such realities for co-existence.

Shoup idealises that, to reinforce and sustain cooperation, there should be both state and non-state mechanisms to prevent problems associated with opportunism. Among the non-state mechanisms, intergroup cooperation would be enhanced by the expectation/ correct assumption that guilty parties will be punished by members of their own ethnicity. Fearon and Laitin (1996) refer to this as 'in-group policing'. In such an arrangement, through their

social networks, groups are supposed to monitor and sanction their own members. This suggests that, to ascertain the spaces for pluralism, it would also be essential to investigate the presence or absence of in-group policing mechanisms, the circumstances under which they arise or not, and their effectiveness for co-existence.

However, in-group policing must go together with inter-group engagement for conflict to be avoided. Varshney argues that "... if communities are organised only along intraethnic lines and the interconnections with other communities are very weak or even non-existent, then ethnic violence is quite likely" (2001, p.363). There has to be inter-ethnic civic engagement both in *associational forms* and *everyday forms*. Associational forms include business associations, religious clubs, NGOs, sports clubs, trade unions, professional organisations, and cadre-based political parties while everyday forms consist of simple, routine interactions of life such as families of different ethnic groups visiting each other, eating together, and children being allowed to play together in the neighbourhood.

Varshney views associational forms to be of greater influence than everyday forms (although the latter are often crucial for the emergence of the former), especially in facing up to political manipulation of ethnicity. It makes it hard for politicians to polarise ethnicity. Such forms of organisation are vital in policing neighbourhoods, killing rumours, providing information to local administration, and facilitating communication between communities in times of tension. We therefore find it necessary as well to study the role of civic life (in both associational and everyday forms) in Kibaale in facilitating inter-ethnic engagement for co-existence. Civic life is investigated in the family, religious, political, business, and education spheres which are identified as the key aspects in the social life of the people of Kibaale.

At state level of conflict prevention, Shoup postulates that political institutions that insulate the political authority of the indigenous group without fully alienating the economically dominant group tend to produce more stable long term outcomes than institutions that allow the economically dominant group to 'encroach' on the political sphere. This would indeed be a difficult balance to strike, especially because it goes counter to republican democratic ideals on which Uganda's system is based. In Shoup's suggestion there is an implication that the rules of democracy are insufficient to enforce the norms underlying inter-ethnic bargains. Mamdani puts it even more categorically that "by itself, majority rule provides no guarantee for [numerical] minorities that fear majority domination ... Majority rule can be turned into a bedrock for the domination over fragile minorities ... – a democratic despotism" (2001, p.281). Shoup thus emphasises the need for affirmative action policies for the indigenous group to minimise the utility of ethnic manipulation by extremists. Such policies would include: Expansion of higher education opportunities, language policies that favour the language of the indigenous group, economic incentives that promote economic ventures by the indigenous group, openings for government jobs and state economic enterprises.

Even though Uganda operates under a decentralised structure, it would be very challenging to grant differential citizenship rights to different groups in different areas of the country. Whereas the above suggestions could be of significance to pluralism, at face value they raise questions as to whether they may not spark other imbalances/ injustices with the effect of narrowing spaces for pluralism. The assumption that the numerically dominant economic/ immigrant group will simply look on as the indigenous group is given unconstitutional favours seems to hope for too much. There is bound to be a feeling on the side of the immigrant group that they are being discriminated against, and this will most likely breed tension and limit negotiation possibilities.

The above explanations and assumptions provide an insightful starting point for interrogating the dynamics of cooperation/pluralism and conflict in an ethnic context, especially in view of the players, processes, and possibilities. More specifically, some of these claims need to be examined on the basis of empirical data from Kibaale District.

Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that Uganda is characterised by a complex ethnic landscape. Taking the case of Kibaale District I have demonstrated how the current ethnic relations between the native Banyoro and immigrants from other parts of Uganda are mediated through Kibaale's history of marginalisation by both the British and the Baganda and manipulation by opportunists (especially politicians) from both sides of the 'ethnic divide'. I have also argued that the tension in Kibaale is allowed to persist by Government's weak and sometimes ill-thought out interventions.

However, the complexity is not meant to indicate that co-existence is impossible in the area. It is manifest that there have been periods of harmonious living in Kibaale for over thirty years. This observation provides the hope that pluralism is possible despite the angularities that may come with ethnic difference. Since it is my contention that social realities are constructed through people's engagement with each other, I recommend that to understand the possibilities of pluralism in Kibaale research should be done starting from people's own perspectives as they are the meaning makers. It is important to know what allowed them to co-exist in the period of over thirty years so as to understand what triggers the tension and how it can be meaningfully addressed. We can go beyond their meaning and ideals but cannot ignore them as the fundamental starting point for engagement.

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