



Africanisation of the Feudal Notion: Colonialism and Restructuralisation of State in Pre- and Colonial Buganda

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How to cite this paper: Sekiswa, P. (2023) Africanisation of the Feudal Notion: Colonialism and Restructuralisation of State in Pre- and Colonial Buganda. *Open Access Library Journal*, 10: e10822.
<https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1110822>

Received: September 27, 2023

Accepted: November 27, 2023

Published: November 30, 2023

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Abstract

The Africanization of the feudal notion through the lens of colonialism and state restructuring in pre- and colonial Buganda. This study delves into the intricate interplay between indigenous socio-political systems and the impact of European colonial powers on the Buganda Kingdom. Through a comprehensive analysis of historical records, ethnographic accounts, and scholarly research, the journal paper examines how the pre-colonial Buganda society developed and adapted feudalistic principles unique to its cultural context. Furthermore, it delves into the transformative effects of colonial intrusion, focusing on the restructuring of the Buganda state apparatus under colonial rule. By tracing the socio-political evolution from indigenous feudalism to colonial-era state restructuring.

Subject Areas

History

Keywords

Africanisation, Feudal, Colonialism, Restructuralisation

1. Introduction

The intricate interplay between traditional African social structures and the transformative forces of colonialism has long been a subject of academic inquiry. Among the numerous regions profoundly impacted by colonial encounters, the Kingdom of Buganda stands as a fascinating case study. This study delves into the Africanisation of the feudal notion within the context of Buganda, exploring how colonialism and subsequent state restructuring shaped the dynamics

of power, governance, and socio-cultural norms. By examining the pre-colonial and colonial eras, this investigation sheds light on the complex process through which indigenous feudal systems were adapted, contested, and reconstructed in the wake of colonial interventions.

Buganda, situated in East Africa, offers a captivating lens through which to analyze the interplay of tradition and colonial influence. Its pre-colonial history is characterized by a well-defined feudal hierarchy, where the monarchy, nobility, and commoners were intricately woven into a social fabric governed by customary norms. This feudal structure was deeply rooted in local beliefs, values, and practices, embodying a unique socio-political order that influenced governance, land tenure, and social mobility.

However, the late 19th century marked a significant turning point for Buganda as European colonial powers, notably the British, established their presence in the region [1]. The imposition of colonial rule disrupted existing power dynamics, prompting a reevaluation and reconfiguration of indigenous institutions [2]. As colonial forces began to exert control over economic resources, political authority, and legal systems, Buganda's traditional feudal framework found itself entwined with external influences, leading to a process of Africanisation that combined local agency with colonial pressures.

This study aims to unravel the intricate layers of this Africanisation process by investigating how the feudal notion was redefined, contested, or preserved during the colonial era. The impact of colonial policies, such as indirect rule and Christian missionary activities, further catalyzed shifts in power structures, societal values, and cultural expressions. The dynamic interaction between indigenous actors and colonial authorities gave rise to new forms of socio-political organization, which both reflected the adaptation of feudal norms and the assimilation of foreign paradigms.

In light of the above, this paper contributes to our broader understanding of how indigenous societies responded to the challenges posed by colonialism and the subsequent reconfiguration of the state. By examining the Africanisation of the feudal notion in Buganda, we gain valuable insights into the complex negotiation between tradition and modernity, local agency and external influence, and continuity and change. Moreover, this study holds implications for contemporary discussions on the legacy of colonialism and its enduring effects on the socio-political landscape of modern African nations. In the following sections, we will delve into the historical context of pre-colonial Buganda, the impact of colonial rule, and the resulting restructuring of the state, all of which collectively illuminate the Africanisation of the feudal notion in this distinctive East African kingdom.

2. Conceptualization of the Feudal Nation for African Social Formations

This Paper has attempted to universalize the concept of feudalism to apply even

to African social formations of the 19th century. This worldview puts it that feudalism is not a Western European preserve for the medieval era. That Feudalism as a mode of production can exist across time and space in different places or countries at different times. On the other hand, feudal social forms like those that existed in medieval Europe cannot be expected to be the same throughout the world or even have the same features as those that existed in Africa because each one of them was a product of specific historical and prevailing material conditions. And for this reason, they are bound to differ from country to country ([3], pp. 23-24; [4]).

However, in this particular case, feudalism will be used to describe the social, economic and political changes that occurred in the African social formation of the Buganda kingdom. This paper put forth the evolution of an African feudalism concept. That feudalism evolved beyond European societies; it became a universal concept of government. This study gave an explanation of the evolution of an African feudal state. It portrays a social and political relationship between free peasants and a ruling oligarchy—a relationship between superiors and a subservient class of free peasants and an evolution of a monarchical government based on an agrarian economy and trade. There was centralisation of land control by the monarchy and a collection of tribute in kind from peasants' who were ordinary people seated (occupying) on land. A government of notables, chiefs responsible to the king, was created. The class of notables consisted of traditional clan chiefs and warlords/territorial chiefs. The territorial chiefs took over new land which they conquered to extend the kingdom's size and power influence. They represented the king's government in the areas they occupied, thus expanding the Buganda state.

African history in its own right certainly has gone through a period of evolution that had characterised features whose organisation of government and social relations portrayed centralisation of power and at the same time devolution of power. This was believed to have amounted to the creation of an African feudal state. The concern of this paper was to portray an African perspective of feudalism in east African states, notably Buganda.

Feudalism initially applied to a political system in mediaeval Europe where authority or power was divided between the overlord and the vassalage [5]. However, the concern of this study is to put into perspective the evolution of feudal relations in the African kingdom of Buganda in an African context. It should be noted that feudalism was not an exclusively medieval Western European phenomenon. This does not mean that there were no challenges involved in applying the concept of feudal relations in an African context.

The history of the concept of feudal relations generally begins with the collapse of the Carolingian empire. Europe began to see the emergence of congeries of territories ruled by individual feudal lords' princes, the legacy of centralised rulership as established by Charles the Great. The Carolingians instituted a number of medieval ideas and institutional structures and their purpose was to

rule, to subject, and to legitimate public power. Thus the Carolingian period was one in which there was a feudal society requiring feudal government ([6], p. 12). Feudalism was a term describing a particular system of economic production on the one hand, and a legal system of governing the military organisation of an earlier society on the other ([6], p. 13). This was a system that actually prevented absolutism and tyrannical rule by passing on the notion of government as a kind of contract and where there was a legitimate right of resistance to unjust or inefficient rule ([6], p. 13). According to Marc Bloch in his work *La Société Féodale*, feudalism initially characterised the personal bond between one man and another, often known as a vassalage. A property bond was created by the granting of what later were called fiefs or land in return for military services, and there was a distribution of governmental powers among numerous petty lords. By the 11th century in Europe, with the loss of its original military characteristics, feudalism became a contractual relationship between lords and vassals ([6], p. 13).

3. The Contestations for and against the Application of the Feudal Concept of Governance and Economic Organisation to Interlacustrine East African Social Formations

3.1. Arguments against the Application of Feudal Governance for African Social Formations

This part of the paper gave the arguments against the application of the concept of the feudal type of governance for the Interlacustrine social formations. Therefore, the study will begin by putting forth the arguments against the use and application of the term feudal system of governance for African social formations; these arguments were mainly based on the views of the following scholars: Jack Goody, Mafeje Archie, and Amin Samir.

Goody uses the economic approach to criticise those scholars that have put it that feudal forms of governments existed in the interlacustrine social formations in the East African region. He explained that there are plenty of similarities in the structure of monarchical systems of African social formations with those of the Eurasian continent. He puts it that those were merely superficial similarities. These were in terms of super-structural features in those societies. The bureaucracy in these interlacustrine societies or even political hierarchical structures was not enough to qualify them to be classified as feudal social formations, despite the fact that he acknowledged that these interlacustrine societies in eastern Africa were bureaucratic with monarchical structures like those that were in medieval societies. The problem he notes is that scholars failed to realise that what was being compared was the social systems and political organisation in African social formations, and they do not use the economic approach, say the structural organisation and production processes of the medieval societies; which totally differed from those of Africa. The two regions compared were at different levels of economic and technological development. The African economy was based

on a non-monetary subsistence economy and at the least, the social and production relations greatly differed [7].

Contestation also came from property relations and property management. They put it that chiefs in the East African social formations have been wrongly compared to knights and Barons in medieval Europe, in that they did not own property, they were simply custodians on the lands on which the client peasant settled—usufructuary rights in land. Even the chiefs' estates or administrative domains were not heritable and reverted to the Kabaka on the death or on the dismissal of the chief. In fact, the Bakungu in the case of Buganda social formation were territorial as well as clan chiefs elected by the kabaka and stood in a relationship of administrative subordination; thus their estates bore only a slight resemblance to fiefs in mediaeval Europe ([5], p. 607). In Mafeje's opinion it makes it difficult to put it that Buganda actually had a ruling aristocracy or class ([8], pp. 56-57). In other words the scholars of this line of argument suggest the absence of property-relations. Even the seigniorial mode of estate management which was an important source of private wealth in medieval Europe was not applicable to social formations in Africa. According to Mafeje, there is nowhere in Africa where property was privately owned.

The next point of contestation in this conversation is the issue of production relations. Mafaje denies ordinarily that relationships that existed between the chiefs (*omwami*) and their tenants in the Buganda social formation did not amount to relationships between a lord and his serfs. In the first instance, the ordinary people of Buganda were not serfs; they were independent of free peasants and as may be termed they could freely move from the jurisdiction of one chief to another, from a chief or *omwami* who was autocratic to one who was not. The services tenants, in this case, peasants, who were obliged to render to the chiefs, were public ones and not private. That's why only persons appointed by the kabaka were the ones obliged to allocate land. Authority over peasants went with the above right and all such authority was exercised on behalf of the Kabaka ([9], pp. 315-325). In fact the public services that were offered by the peasants included military services, public works such as building roads and bridges and repairing the chiefs' houses and enclosures. In interlacustrine kingdoms, the idea of a lord's demesne was cultivated but the corvee labour of bonded tenants did not exist. Instead, office estate holders relied on the labour of their wives and domestic slaves for subsistence production ([8], p. 84). Mafajee put it that labour relations in the interlacustrine kingdoms took three distinct forms: first family subsistence production applied to all families, including that of the king for which his wives and domestic servants or slaves took responsibility. The second kind of labour was clientage. Patron-client relations were common in the interlacustrine kingdoms. This was a personal and free contract between the patron and the client. Office-holders treated their subordinates and inhabitants in their domains as vassals who owed them tribute which in turn was shared with their superiors in ascending proportions ([8], p. 84).

The other point of contestation was as regards to as to whether Buganda and other East African social formation exhibit features of feudal social formation is in terms of power relations within these state formations. The writings of scholars such as Jack Goody, explain that the nature of state organisation in the mainly interlacustrine (Great Lakes) region of Africa cannot be characterised as having exhibited feudalistic relations. Those African social formations were at different levels of development and the influence of institutions such as the church had not yet permeated African societies. Mafeje states that initially in the Kingdom of Buganda, the *Kabaka* was the first among equal heads of patrilineages or clans (*Bataka*). However, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the king had usurped clan heads and had declared himself *Saabataka* (head of all clan heads). This meant that the king had dispensed with the *Bataka* as custodians of clan lands and usurped the sole right to distribute land himself. Mafeje argues that having taken control of all land in Buganda, the king was in a position to administer it the way he chose. He did this by appointing his own chiefs who were known as *bakungu*. These in turn appointed their own assistant chiefs or bailiffs (*batongole*) with the approval of the *kabaka*. They acted as sub-district chiefs and were responsible for collecting tributes and dues (*busulu* and *nvujjo*) from the people who resided in their administrative domains. The evolving political structure had far-reaching implications ([8], p. 51).

However, despite this devolution of power, Mafeje insists that none of the state formations in the interlacustrine region qualified to be categorised as feudal because the office of the chief was not permanent: chiefs would revert to ordinary persons (*bakopi* or peasants) in the event of dismissal by the king. The peasants were also not obliged to render personal services to their chiefs. Even all tributes were in the form of perishable goods such as green bananas, beer, fish, and bark cloth; there was no money or cash economy in this region. Also, enterprising ordinary citizens could be appointed to high positions; thus there was no permanent stratification of society in the Buganda Kingdom ([8], pp. 51-52).

Additionally Mafeje bases his analysis on Samir Amin's work, *Class and Nation, Historically and in the Current Crisis* ([8], p. 74). Whereby Amin proposes, much like Mafeje, that there should be an outright elimination of the concepts of feudalism and Asiatic modes of production for societies in the African region. He suggests that the above modes of production should be replaced by the tributary mode of production. That in his perspective the tributary mode is theoretically correct and universally applicable to the different social formations in Africa. That black Africa is largely under-researched, and therefore it is the tributary mode, is theoretically and politically relevant for Africa. Amin's key point here is that there was social control of productive resources and subsistence was non-monetary. The surplus was extracted by non-economic means by an exploiting class and used in the communal production ([8], pp. 78-79). He literally means that unlike in medieval Europe where property rights formed the basis of

the relationship between the lord and the vassals, this was not the case in Africa. The disposition of property rights gave permanence to the relationship between the European lord and his vassals or serfs which was not the case in the interlacustrine region where these estates were not heritable. Therefore, he believes there was an absence of property relations in the interlacustrine region. Dispersal of political authority through autonomous landlords, which was a characteristic of feudal Europe, was non-existent in the interlacustrine region. He adds that in feudal Europe the seigniorial mode of estate management was an important source of private wealth. Even in the interlacustrine kingdoms the idea of a lord's demesne, cultivated by the corvée labour of bonded tenants, did not exist. Instead, office estate holders relied on the labour of their wives and domestic subsistence production ([8], p. 74).

3.2. The Construction of the Concept of African Feudalism

On the other hand, this section of the journal paper defends its construction of an African feudal mode of production and political system of government. Especially for the case of Buganda society where there was an evolution and transformation of an administrative structure and traditional institution in Buganda society. This study's focus undertakes to present the view that African feudal applies in terms of aiding and enabling land, economic and social changes that took place in the kingdom first during the pre-colonial times in the nineteenth century and then in the colonial times. In other words, the African perspective focuses on the view that actually there occurred a transformation of labour relations both in pre-colonial and colonial times leading to social economic changes in Buganda society: there was the centralisation of power on the one hand and on the other there was the devolution of power relations within the ruling class, thereby creating a type of feudal relations ([3], pp. 9-10).

First, unlike Samir Amin's view, the concept of feudalism is universal and not peculiar to a particular region of the world. In the application of the concept another word would have been used, but because it is a universal concept which is why it even applies to African social formations. This concept in its application does not refer to social formations that existed in medieval Europe but it refers to a mode of production or even a stage in human development or a particular epoch in the stages of development in Africa. In that, a mode of production can exist across time and space. In other words, it can exist in different places or countries at different times. On the other hand, feudal formations that existed in Europe cannot be expected to be the same or uniform as those that existed in Africa. Those social formations in Europe were products of specific historical and prevailing material conditions, which is why Africa should be gauged in its own right as it had its own feudal social formations which were not the same as those in other parts of the world. The study tries to illustrate those peculiar characteristics only to African feudal states that in the view of this study is the concept of African feudalism.

Therefore, the study's intention is not to do a historical comparison of the two economic and political systems of medieval Europe and those of Africa but to build an explanation of an African feudal system in both pre-colonial and colonial Buganda.

In the case of the East African social formation of Buganda, there was the evolution of a monarchical institution in Buganda which was believed to be the centre of power of all traditional institutions in the kingdom. It is this institution of the monarchy that devolved authority to territorial chiefs (Bakungu), who managed estates both private and official. According to Mamdani feudal relations existed in centralised social formations in Uganda. In the Buganda kingdom in particular this was seen in the appropriation of resources which led to class formation. Let alone the allocation of land and management of produce from land and trade with Arabs, by the 19th century Buganda state had successfully created an infrastructural the basis for a national economy and mercantile economy. A network of roads constructed and maintained by corvee labour linked the countryside with the royal capital ([3], pp. 9-10+39).

Production relations in Buganda were based on a political relationship between the king and the chief on the one hand and the other between the chief and his client/person, the free peasant. This peasant would at will choose residence in any chief's jurisdiction he wanted. This takes into account Mair's Africanisation of the concept of feudalism by replacing it with the concept of clientship that both parties enter a relationship of mutual advantage. This kind of relationship is the basis of the development of power by virtue of holding the political office of the chief. It is this centralisation of authority which empowers the chief with wealth, power and status which correspond to the distribution of power and authority. In this case, clientship is a specific relationship between the patron, the chief, and his client, the peasant ([9], pp. 315-325). In his discussion Mair deliberately avoids the use of the word feudal but she was able to deal with the gaps and the necessary shortcomings that European scholars have expressed with the classifying of African centralised monarchical systems as feudal. This type of government was basically in predominantly agricultural societies, notably, to mention one, the Ganda (Baganda). In this case, clientship was a specific personal relationship embracing only a minority who chose to seek advancement by attaching themselves to persons in authority. This was specifically in the centralised Interlacustrine kingdom. This seems to answer the line of thinking that in the African case, the lords were chosen by the king; they did not choose to offer their services to the patron or king or offer themselves to serve.

Society was divided into the upper and lower classes. That's why the ruling oligarchy was allocated different roles and departments in the case of the Buganda Kingdom. As the king, the monarchy had usurped the powers of clan chiefs by taking charge, controlling and distributing of land. The king in turn devolved his power by allowing the territorial authorities traditionally the right to also allocate land. All persons living within such a chief's jurisdiction had the

same obligations towards him as he had to the king. These persons rendered a number of services to the chiefs. However, there are a number of interpretations as to whether these services were political services as opposed to being personal to particular individuals. These were free persons and not slaves in addition to the non-free persons, wives and followers the chiefs had in their compounds ([9], pp. 315-325).

Essentially Mair in her discussion upgrades the concept of clientship in Buganda, by basing on the fact that the basic traditional divisions in Buganda society were the divisions of the chiefs on the one hand and the peasants on the other. The essence of this division was the right of those who had the right to allocate land and those who had to apply for it. That the chiefs were given authority over large areas in turn had their subordinates chosen by themselves who would at times follow their patron if he was transferred to a different chieftainship. That's why there is a belief that there was only public and no private clientship. Only persons appointed by the kabaka had the right to allocate land and the authority over large areas; in addition, they had to choose their own subordinates by themselves, who might even follow their patron if he was transferred to a different chieftainship.

The other angle of the cliental-patron relationship, in the case of Buganda, was the institution of monarchism or what could have been referred to as imperial power, according to traditionalists in Buganda. This was molded by the selection or the grooming of youth from the various circles of society to be prepared in the royal court not necessarily from the royal line. Accordingly, leading chiefs could claim as their servants' boys and girls from the children of their subjects. Literally, the term servant is used to refer to the enlisting to serve in the imperial service of the state in any capacity. It was possible for a father to send a son to join the chief's retinue, thus securing favour for himself and a prospect of future advancement for the boy, from whom his relatives might profit ([9], p. 323).

In this way promising youth were recognised by their patent merits; were promoted to more responsible service and were eventually perhaps commended to the kabaka. Nevertheless, in the view of this study, this was the beginning of class differentiation in the pre-colonial era in Buganda state, whereby the individuals who entered the service of the state were set apart from the rest of the people in the state. Therefore, both peasants and chiefs frequently passed slaves off as their own children (*abasige*) to a superior, and for this reason, the children from another tribe who attracted attention and served their lord faithfully were likely to reach a court office. This was another form of the creation of the patron-client relation, lord and servant status. It is this state of affairs that affirms that actually African feudalism stands out in its own right despite its analysis is based on its functional utility in the different social formations such as the clientship function. This reminds us that the feudal system of government cannot have similar characteristics in the different parts of the world but is a uni-

versal concept describing social economic and political relations between a superior and a person of a junior status.

The other perspective in which African feudalism can be viewed in Buganda is in Edward Steinhart's comparative study of the two social institutions in medieval Europe with those of social formations in Africa, mainly with those of the Buganda social formation of the vassal and fief ([5], pp. 606-623). In the first instance he defines the vassalage as being the legal contract by which two legally free men voluntarily enter a personal relationship and assume obligations and rights of unequal quality relating to their social positions. He maintains that despite differences in social and economic conditions of the two regions these two institutions existed in the two regions. The obligations on the part of the social inferior, the vassal, are assumed by the performance of the act of homage. And in return in agrarian societies was the grant of usufructuary rights in land. Fief for the vassal for the duration of his life-time was the contract of vassalage; this was the case of medieval Europe. This of course differed from that in Buganda where the fief in some cases was the official estate of office but this does not take into account the official grant/estates to the official/territorial chiefs of personal fief which the king allocated personally to these individuals as personal property which differed from official estates ([5], pp. 606-623).

Nevertheless, this kind of relationship, whether in medieval Europe or in Buganda, provided a stable property basis to the personal dependency upon which the whole structure of feudal relations could be or was erected. Steinhart compares Buganda's territorial chiefs to the Baronial regime in medieval Europe. The aim of this study is not only to compare both the regimes but also to make a point that traditional institutions in Buganda can be a base on which to defend an African hierarchal regime that functioned socially, economically and politically in a seemingly feudalistic organisation as per its functional approach. The territorial chiefs *Abakungu*, who were also clan heads functionaries elected by the kabaka, stood in a relationship of administrative subordination to the monarchy ([5], p. 611).

3.3. Evolution of Power Relations and State Construction in Buganda Kingdom

More than anything else the evolution and development of an elaborate power structure in the Buganda Kingdom, is the best explanation for a powerful centralised administration in Buganda. It is this centralised political administration that with it comes a hierarchal structure of administration with both clan (Bataka) and territorial chiefs which underwent regularisation of the state machinery putting all authority over land and political appointments in the hands of the monarchy, the King; thus both centralisation and devolution of power at the same time is what this study describes as a unique case of African feudalism.

This line of argument takes from the views of Richard Reid that actually there was an evolution of power relations in the pre-colonial Buganda kingdom. The

resultant power structure was responsible for the subsequent social and economic organisation in the kingdom ([10], pp. 3-4). This was in reference to the changes in power relations that began in the 18th century and by the 19th century the head of the clan heads King (kabaka), had gradually shifted power relations from clan heads, and taken over the charge of free estates (Butaka) from the hereditary clans. The King took control of land more directly to be well positioned to make political appointments ([10], p. 3). This is to say that in pre-colonial Buganda the king restructured power relations to favour direct control of power and economic organisation of the state, a move that was regarded as regularisation of state power and thereby the institution of feudal relations in the Buganda state.

In the same light, Samwiri Karugire acknowledges that in the kingdom of Buganda in the 19th century, there was actually a restructuring of power relations. The Baganda Kings had developed the most efficient bureaucracy in pre-colonial Uganda [11]. The Kabaka assumed the title of *Ssaabataka* or literally 'the father of clan leaders or leader of all clan leaders' Karugire narrates that at the height of Buganda's expansion, the rulers felt confident enough to begin encroaching upon the powers of clan leaders; in other words, reducing the influence of clan heads, even though they still maintained the support of some clan heads by means of patronage. The resultant administration system evolved around the royal household. There was a hierarchy of chiefs of varying degrees of importance [11]. This state of affairs could only mean that Buganda kings did not merely take effective control of power, but also of decentralised power, giving some of the administrative functions to the appointed chiefs and military leaders as the state expanded. Nevertheless, even with such an elaborate explanation of a seemingly evolving African feudal political system, Karugire falls short of acknowledging that the social formation of Buganda had evolved into a feudal state.

As for Semakula Kiwanuka's work, much attention is paid to the growth and evolution of political institutions in Buganda during the pre-colonial period ([12], chapters 5 and 6). In Africa the growth and development of centralised institutions was the evolution of a chieftainship structure or kingship which was the development and beginning of a hereditary succession system, custom of designating a successor. In the case of Buganda, the beginning of the 14th century saw struggles between clans in Buganda and from the outcomes of the clan struggles emerged a system of tribal organisation. This is believed to have led to the rise of the institution of Kingship in order to deal with rival power bases and establish effective control of the entity Buganda ([12], pp. 95-96). Kiwanuka went ahead to explain the importance and growth of royal power, then the succession of ceremonies leading to enthronement. After the acquisition of royal power and after succession ceremonies leading to enthronement, a prince was no longer an ordinary man. This was the putting in place of an elaborate system of monarchism or imperial power. Buganda kings based their rights to rule on

the time-honoured principle of royal blood and personal ability. Moreover, without the claim of royal blood in him no man had any claim to the throne, even when he acquired it through force of arms ([12], pp. 98-99). This in the view of the study is the evolution of a feudalistic type of administration that arose from the institution of chieftainship which sprang from the traditional social structure enshrined in the clan system ([12], p. 99). The implication here is that there was a structural realignment that resulted in the King Kabaka assuming the role of the supreme leader and controller of all resources in the kingdom but on the other hand devolving his power to territorial and some clan chiefs who ruled on his behalf. This in essence explains the process of construction of an African feudal state and system in the Buganda kingdom.

Samwiri Lwanga-Lunyiigo's work on the struggle for land in Buganda, is a classic example, describing the evolution of the Buganda monarchical government and the subsequent creation of a ruling oligarchy based on land allocations of the 1900 Buganda agreement. This is feudalism evolving first in the pre-colonial period and what is purportedly referred to as a colonial construction of a feudal state during the colonial era. He first acknowledges that Buganda emerged as a clan-based state. The formative period in Buganda was characterised by migrations in the area that was later to become Buganda, most of which were associated with Kintu, the first Buganda King ([13], p. 1). Like other Buganda scholars he points out that until the 18th century, the kings of Buganda were *primus inter pares vis-à-vis* the clan heads. The clan heads or the *bataka* had their own estates and their jurisdictions. They were powerful and politically regarded the Kabaka simply as a senior colleague until King Mawanda broke their political power ([13], p. 3) and made administrative reforms which largely removed clan heads from the hereditary tenure of administrative positions and centralised power under the monarchy. During that period the Kabaka became the *Ssaabataka*, the grand trustees of land in Buganda ([13], p. 3). In this new dispensation created by Mawanda, the king held land at his will and from then on land and politics were truly joined. It should be noted the chiefs had political usufructuary rights and they were only custodians of the land under their control, and their relationships with the peasants on the land were basically political; chiefs held land at the pleasure of the king or Kabaka. The prestige and prosperity of a chief depended on the number of peasants he could attract to settle on his land and the number of men he could therefore mobilise for war ordered by the king or Kabaka. Thus, it is the above organisation structure that actually makes Buganda a good case study of an African feudal state. In that African feudal states differed in some aspects in terms of power relations from European social formations. However, the basic institutional power structures remained the same so social formations in a different era would certainly not be the same. Nevertheless, this paper is presenting the case of an African feudal state. Buganda certainly has peculiar features characteristic of an African feudal state.

Lunyiigo, like Mafeje, looks at the Buganda social formation even in the co-

lonial era. Initially, Buganda's social formation in the pre-colonial period had developed into an African aristocracy based on the changes in the land tenancy that had taken place. The chiefs' relationship with their people had evolved into patronage-clientele. The coming of colonialism saw more changes in land and politics in the Buganda kingdom; mainly structural and institutional. For instance, the system of land tenancy where the *Kabaka* (King) and the clan heads were joint trustees of the land in Buganda on behalf of the people and where land was basically an instrument of politics was radically upset during the colonial era ([13], p. 3). The colonial land system removed the Kabaka from his position of *Ssaabataka* or chief trustee of land in Buganda; it removed the clan heads as trustees of the land on behalf of their clans; the relationship between the Kabaka and the chiefs and the chiefs with the peasants was changed with the coming of colonialism. The colonial system divorced the ownership of land from political responsibilities, and most radical of all, land could now be bought and sold like any other commodity. The Kabaka and chiefs now became the managers of land in Buganda for perpetuity. The giver of land, who was the Kabaka, was now given land under the clauses of the Buganda Agreement of 1900. Therefore, in the view of this study, colonialism and administration put in place structural and institutional reforms of the instituted feudalism in Buganda, also during the colonial era, through the transformation of mainly the land tenure system in Buganda.

3.4. Conceptualisation of the Notion of Feudalism; Evolution of Social Relations and Governmental Organisation in Pre-Colonial Buganda

Buganda had evolved a dual system of social organisation beginning from kinship divisions each with a *Kika* that can be translated as "clan" ([14], p. 134) and a system of local administrative organs from county to parish level. In fact, each of these two systems complemented each other. The clan leaders were also in some cases territorial chiefs. In Buganda, the *Kika* or clan traced the origin of a family to one ancestor. All men of the same generation in the clan were sisters and brothers. Each clan had two totems: the principal one (*Muizi*) and a minor one (*Kabiro*). Most importantly, each clan had its own family estate which was as a rule situated on some hill, with the gardens running down into the valley. On such an estate there was a chief who was responsible for the conduct of the affairs of the clan. The people who settled on these family estates were called Bataka owners of the soil and the head chief, the caretaker of the clan's responsibilities, was called the *Omutaka* ([14], p. 134). Clan divisions or segments which comprised major lineages (*Masiga*) and minor lineages (*mituba*) lines) and minimal lineages (*nyiriri*) each also had their heads. In practice the supreme head was the kabaka, which is why he was called Ssaabataka. He moved from the position of *primus inter pares* among heads of clans or patrilineal decent groups [15]. The point to make here is that it is this elaborate social system which was modified to the requirements of centralisation of power, which in turn evolved

into a powerful monarchical institution. The clan chief controlled the clan estate, Butakka, which was lineage land. His role on the one hand was that of an overlord of the clan estate and its inhabitants; on the other hand, he was the leader of a scattered community of patrilineal kinsmen. Clan lands were freehold estates of the clans for burial purposes. The process of centralisation of the clans' chiefs began to serve two roles both as cultural leaders and political representatives of their clans ([15], p. 89), for example, the contribution of labour and taxes to the state. The dualism is in the joining of the political system with the social system described above.

On the other hand, the political system was eventually co-joined with the social system. It could be thought that this is where the government system in Buganda evolved from, hence the phrase for the king's chiefs or officials *Basajjaba Kabaka*. The belief in this case was in practice, that the king usurped the powers of clan chiefs to appoint territorial chiefs who were also in some cases war generals and put in place political offices without completely doing away with clan authority. The appointed officials of the Kabaka were the Abakungu and the *bami ab'ebitongole* or *batongole*. These traditionally leading officials were the ssaza/county chiefs or departmental leaders and their leading subordinates who formed something like a hierarchy of territorial governors ([15], p. 93). Both *Batongole* and *Bakungu* carried out responsibility on behalf of a superior, the Kabaka. They ruled on his behalf. They appeared to extend the role prerogative of the King Kabaka; in the case of the *Batongole*, they were in some way independent of the *Bakungu* national military heroes whose estates represented rewards. They were on the other hand responsible for providing specialised services to the royal household. Political authority was more visible in that the offices of territorial chiefs/the district chiefs (*Abamassaza*) were directly appointed by the King through the Prime Minister/Katikiro, though in these offices of chieftaincy, one would be retired or expelled for one reason or another. This particular chief was housed on an official estate. This study is, however, interested in the role or functions of this particular chief, like maintenance of law and order and good order of roads. His enclosure was inhabited by a number of helpers' women and unfree people. He was also the principal magistrate, assisted by sub-chiefs and the division of roles between the chiefs, *i.e.* the district and the sub-district chief and their autonomy of power and areas of jurisdiction and functions. There were all in turn responsible to the King Kabaka. This was the essence of governmental functions in pre-colonial Buganda and the nature of feudal government.

3.5. Offering Service to the State the "Abasiige" Culture: Feudal Clientism in Buganda State

Individuals voluntarily offered their services to the state or a patron, a relationship involving very specific obligations on the part of the client. The client entered a mutual relationship with his patron. This was often linking members of the upper class with those of the lower class ([9], pp. 315-325). Feudal rule in Buganda was viewed in the form of a cliental relationship between the state chief

and his king on the one hand, and on the other hand, he was the patron while his subjects were the clients. In the preceding paragraphs, the institution of chieftaincy is explained. Both the clan and territorial chief sat on either public or privately awarded estates on which they were the custodians, a form of relationship that causes controversy with Western scholars who argue that the chiefs in Buganda cannot be compared to feudal lords in medieval Europe in that as there was no devolution of power, in this case, they were not autonomous lords. This may be true if this was a comparison between Buganda and European medieval societies. However, this study hopes to bring out an evolution of an African agrarian social formation, with a mixture of political and labour relations that conform to an African feudal state.

The peasants in Buganda were free people who could choose to settle in the jurisdiction of a chief of their choice, but this would also depend on those who chose to leave their clan's land and break away from their kindred lands, to go and settle elsewhere. In this case, the peasants became the clients of the chief while the chief became their patron. They paid tribute in kind to the chief for staying on his land. They were liable for military service in the name of the state in case able-bodied men were called upon. Leading chiefs in Buganda had the right to claim as their helpers boys and girls from children of their subjects. It was also possible for a father to send a son to join the chief's retinue, thus gaining favour for himself and a prospect of future advancement for the boy from which relatives might profit. This is whereby promising youth were recognised for their patent merits, promoted to more responsible service, and eventually perhaps commended to the kabaka ([9], pp. 315-325).

However, the understanding of this study is that the culture of the *abasiige* referred to in the last part of the preceding paragraph was the training of individuals who would be the future elite in the service of the state. In other words, these were individuals or youth groomed in court etiquette to be future rulers. It was prestigious to serve in a palace or to be enlisted to state service. So these youths, mainly the boys, were recruited right from the lowest level *Muluka, Saza* up to the level of the district chief who would sort out those who qualified for the service of the King or state. This is one way where clan chiefs and district chiefs who wanted to win favour with the court often provided their sons or relatives in order to win favour in state affairs or increase the power of their clan to influence state affairs. This was one way in which the culture of *Abasiige* promoted client-patron relations in the Buganda state. However, Mulira points out that both peasants and chiefs instead passed off slaves as their own children when presenting *abasige* to a superior. For one reason or another, a child from another tribe served his lord faithfully and was more likely to reach the court office, say, than a Ganda boy who had a strong allegiance to his own family [16]. Nevertheless, promotion depended on the personal favour of the chief and king which is why clientism played a big part in building the monarchical institution in the Buganda state which led to the growth of a feudal mode of governance and pro-

duction. That is why traditional sources say that some of the great personalities who served in the court had been formally recruited from a background of un-free people; in this case, it is alleged that Apollo Kagwa, formally Katikiro of Buganda, was one from such a background.

The Buganda society was not a caste or permanently stratified as anyone could become a person of substance. Therefore, clientism in this case was the principal avenue to social mobility. Attaining high status was the road to attaining a high political office or position in Buganda state. The ruler who took office in this case had the right to appoint his subordinates of his own choice; thus the term: client chiefs. This befits the Buganda case where the king appointed territorial chiefs who in turn chose their own subordinate chiefs, muluka chiefs (sub-District chiefs). It meant that the chiefs were the clients of the king while the peasants on the other hand were the clients of the chiefs. What pegs Buganda to this particular social relation is the kind of farming and land tenancy that was practised in the Buganda state. The custodians of the land in Buganda depended on the overwhelming indebtedness and support of their clientele in their areas of jurisdiction; the more the clientele the more favour they attained from the king and this prolonged their tenure of office. This is to say the chiefs performed such responsibilities as the mobilisation of men for war and collecting tribute to be sent to the court.

3.6. Buganda's Perpetuation of Traditionalism and the 1900 Buganda Agreement; the Modification of Traditional Institutions

Traditionalism in this context will refer to the efforts by the rulers or Buganda institutions to maintain the norms, and values of the Kabakaship/Kabaka institution or monarchy in Buganda. The ruling class, as they may be referred to, preferred to display that the Kabakaship institution was still in control of the Buganda state. This was the impression that the ordinary people got, based on the application of the British indirect rule, where the traditional leaders were left to rule over their people. From the views of Hobsbawm, the invention of tradition and Mamdani's creation of decentralised despotism as amplified in the preceding discussion, in this light it portrayed that the colonial administration and Buganda ruling oligarchy were one. Based on the discourses of the retired traditional chiefs, for them, they believed that Buganda was an autonomous entity from the British administration and that the Kabaka still ruled his country as he had done in the pre-colonial times. First and foremost, the institution of county and sub-county chiefs remained in place but was modified to take on chiefs who were now schooled in the same knowhow of the English and their language. It was from this group that most of the representatives of the Buganda legislature/Lukiiko came from. Therefore, in the construction of an agrarian economy, they became the footsoldiers foot soldiers in collecting taxes and maintained labour routines as if they had a clientele that paid allegiance to them as it had been in the pre-colonial times, despite the fact that they had now become independent

civil servants of the colonial administration.

The interview of one former Buganda government official his views on the Buganda Agreement held in September 2019 in Ssesse County.

The Buganda agreement in essence divided the Buganda society between the landed/abaami and those who did not own land, the Abasenze in other interpretations could mean tenants or squatters, the ordinary people. The ordinary people were supposed to pay homage to the King/Kabaka through paying land rent to the county chiefs. The traditional view is that the Buganda agreement divided land into the crown land 9000 square miles and 8000 square miles of which were given to the kabaka and Buganda notables. This was the beginning of inequality in Buganda society—the very rich landed class and the landless Basenzense/squatters. However, more importantly, this began the process of streamlining of property ownership /land ownership in Buganda society. Letters of ownership were written out to landowners, in other words, partial title certificates were given to landholders, the notables of Buganda. In fact, Mr Sseruwu complained why the people of Abasenze on Kakaba's miles did not want to pay rent these days, for he believed that land was still in the control of the Kabaka. Because for him since time immemorial this was the process of becoming a sitting tenant on any land in Buganda Kingdom [17].

Generally, the 1900 agreement streamlined the roles and duties of the various county chiefs just as they had been in pre-colonial but more especially defined the roles of the particular chiefs like the Kaggo of Kyadondo, Mukwenda of Singo, Sekibobo of Kyagwe, Kagawo, Mugema, Kaima of Mawokota, Kitunzi of Gomba district and Pokino of Budu and Katambala of Butambala District. These were incorporated into administration and became government officials and they played a more functional role. However, this line of information is explicitly well explained by Mr Nsimbi who tries to show that the 1900 agreement also changed the roles of some traditional chiefs and joined departments roles to county chiefs; that the 1900 agreement was instrumental in streaming the roles of these chiefs but also assigning them new roles and new titles, and at this point Nsimbe shows that clan chiefs were also given administrative roles. To illustrate this, the *Kaggo*, the county chief of Kyadondo district, was joined to the office of the *Ssaabaddu* in the olden times, which simply meant the department which was in charge of all King's men for it was perceived all the Kings' men were his slaves so these offices were joined in the new dispensation. While the *Mukwenda*, the county chief of Singo, was also joined to the *Ssaabagabo* department/ offices by the 1900 agreement traditionally *Ssaabagabo* was formally the department or chief who was in charge of holding/keeping the King's shield, while *Ssekiboobo* which was the office of the county chief of Kyaggwe was joined to the department of the *Ssaabawaali*, the chief who was in charge of all Bachelors in the kingdom. While *Kyiima* who was the county chief of the district/county of Mawokota also held the title *Musaale*, or the two offices were joined, which in the old dispensation was the department concerned with the King's arrows or

marksmen ([18], pp. 70-71). Nsimbe further explains the fact that the 1900 agreement was instrumental in the creation of new office structures of government, not that these were not there, but fitted them in a new formal setting of the modern state. Like that one of the Katikiro that had been less important to that of *Kimbugwe*, *Kimbugwe* initially had been the official in charge of the King's Umbilical cord ([14], pp. 232-233). The Katikiro became the second important office to that of the Kabaka, the most important non-royal official in the Kingdom; the office of the finance minister in the new dispensation *Muwanika* and that of the *Mulamuzi* the chief justice were also put in place ([18], pp. 71-73).

In the new roles the chiefs, for example, supervised the beginning of the process of cash crop production in Buganda. Below is the interview of a Buganda female official, Namirembe Jane, and Mwanjje Luben, held in September 2020 in Sseese Islands a Buganda county and District.

In an interview with Namirembe Jane an elder, in her view, Buganda was a very powerful state in the pre-colonial period. It was in the Buganda State that private ownership of land was inaugurated and not in other parts of Uganda. By this Buganda region took a stride ahead of other regions of Uganda in terms of economic development. She even adds that the structure of Buganda's administration was formalised into that of the modern state, that traditional power structures were incorporated into those of the British indirect rule. She gives an example of the resultant structures of Gombolola County, Milulukal sub-county, Batongole, Parish chiefs and village chiefs. It is also during this period that in the Buganda region infrastructure greatly improved, say, in terms of schools, hospitals, and offices. But the point to note in this case is that the land that was given to the chiefs was official estates and the other was for personal use, estates to be rented out for production purposes/economic activities, say, the engagement in agriculture and in partnership with the colonial administration; educational facilities, hospitals were built and collecting taxes for colonial administration was enforced. That's why the process of land allotment had been streamlined with the increment of Land titles [19].

Namirembe, however, also points out to the reason why some officials got more land than they deserved. The officials/chiefs working in the records office awarded themselves more Mailos than necessary. Namirembe says they had privy information of those mailos whose owners did not take on; failed to be occupied; "okulimiria" literally the allotted owners failed to occupy. These/such records were returned to the records office so the chiefs who had an upper hand of such information, added on to themselves more miles, getting more than was allocated to them. This is why some critics of the 1900 agreement have a view that this was a spree of a few fellows to enrich themselves [19].

The view of those groups of people who were not serving government official royalty, suggests that the 1900 agreement did nothing towards improvement of the conditions of the ordinary people. Its role was only exploitative, sucking out

even the little the ordinary person had made. This was in terms of land rent imposed on the peasants by the landlords, and that's why the colonial administration was forced to pass the *Busulo Nvujjo* law of 1927 to protect the landless/renters, and everyone who lost land ownership, including the Kabaka, who was initially the owner of all land in the Buganda state in the pre-colonial period. He was also allocated land just like any ordinary chief. The Kabaka/King lost his status as King and paramount/supreme giver of land to others by the clauses of the 1900 agreement.

Mr Sserwaniko particularly points out that's why while in exile the Kabaka ran broke, so he instructed his sister (name not mentioned) to sell a portion of land given to him by the colonial authority while he was still King; this is today the land near the maximum prison in Luzira, Kampala; the Kabaka King had now become like any other citizen of the land [20].

In the views of Lunyiigo the land allotment process was unfairly done. This view differs from the official Buganda government version. The Lukiiko had its own aims in preparing the lists of those to be allotted Mailo land. The leading chiefs had a field day in carrying out this exercise giving their relatives and friends land to which they were clearly not entitled; that children and even the unborn got a share of the land. One may say this was the unofficial view of those who were merely Bakopi ordinary people, who in any case were not part of the allotment lists. But whatever the case, these views represented the unfairness of the whole allotment exercise but more importantly they represented the process of class creation in the Buganda society. This marked the beginning of the process of economic differentiation in the Buganda society, let alone the creation of a ruling oligarchy based on an agrarian economy. In Busujju, the mighty leader of the victorious protestant faction and later regent and prime minister, Katikiro Apollo Kaggwa, purportedly attempted to grab his own clan Butakaka—the clan burial grounds of his own grasshopper/*Nsenene* clan; he conflicted with his clan chief when he took over clan land as personal land and even levelled graves of his ancestors in the name of new malio land under a new dispensation ([13], p. 30). The same person using the influence of his office purportedly acquired fraudulently the islands of Magara and Bussi on Lake Victoria from the custodian clan chief Magera. Hanson also averred that regents who negotiated the 1900 Agreement were land grabbers; for example, huge estates were amassed by Apollo Kaggwa, the Prime Minister and Stanislaus Mugwanya; the Chief Justice ([21], pp. 126-127).

Notably, Kaggwa rebuffed the traditional norms of Buganda by utterly refusing to listen to the complaints of the clan elders' fathers of the nation. These had lost all their clan lands and were unable to bury their relatives. As highlighted above, there was proof enough that Kaggwa had allotted miles to all of his sons, including one who was unborn at the time. In general, the chiefs inscribed a new order of power in Buganda; cultural translation expressed the relationship of power and class construction. The new ruling class of chiefs gave themselves

more land than clan chiefs in the past, which also meant, as mentioned in the preceding chapters, the creation of new chiefly officers such as Zakaria Kisingiri, who moved from *Kangaawo*/county chief of Bulemeezi to become *Omuwani-ka*/Finance minister ([21], pp. 127-128). The result was that the whole population of Buganda was on the move; streams of men, women and children were going east with all their household goods, and cattle, sheep, goats and fowls met similar streams going west ([21], p. 137). Nevertheless, the consolation was that the ordinary people from their earnings as civil servants began to buy land by the acre from the profligate landowners and once they had purchased their tiny portions of Mailoland, they were free from the deadly yoke of land owners and were left only with their obligations to the crown colonial administration.

Therefore, the interaction between the Buganda traditional chiefs and the colonial administrators resulted in the opening of the process of restructuring Buganda society and the creation of institutions to run state affairs; what has been termed by this study as institutionalisation. The would-be state leaders are the ones that embraced the coming of Christianity; which was used to overthrow the old order and occasioned the creation of a new state structure—the institution of an oligarchy that led the Christian wars and assumed state duties led by Apollo Kagwa. The Christian leaders handed over Buganda to the British administrators and it is then that the 1900 agreement was signed which marked the construction of the landed class emphasising the victory of the religious leaders but more important restructuring traditional institutions or power centres in Buganda. This also led to the construction of an agrarian economy; therefore, the feudalisation of Buganda country, notably putting in place a farming peasant class on the land of the independent chiefs who had now become landlords. The state of Buganda was realigned from the traditional institutions to fit the modern times like appointing of functioning offices of county and sub-county, parish and sub-parish; but separating the roles of clan officers and those of state duties; state roles were no longer mixed with traditional or cultural roles. The officers of the chiefs were streamlined by the 1900 agreement to become civil officers with paid salaries, serving the colonial administration and not mainly the King/Kabaka. However, land as a factor of production became the basis of the Buganda economy to feed the British economy with crop commodities. The structuring of the labouring masses, the rent paid to land owners, turning land into a commodity, and the presence of a non-labouring class were all changes emanating from the clauses of the Buganda agreement with the process of feudalisation of Buganda even though this may be perceived as the introduction of the capitalistic mode of production in the Buganda state.

4. Conclusion

The Africanization of the feudal notion through the lens of colonialism and state restructuring in pre- and colonial Buganda sheds light on the intricate interplay between indigenous socio-political systems and external influences. The

transformation of Buganda's feudal framework under colonial rule underscores the multifaceted impacts of imperialism on traditional African societies. The colonial encounter brought about significant changes to Buganda's political landscape, as European powers sought to assert control and exploit resources. This resulted in a reconfiguration of the pre-existing feudal structures, often leading to a complex hybridization of indigenous norms and foreign paradigms through the 1900 Uganda Agreement. The colonial administration's manipulation of Buganda's socio-political hierarchy for administrative convenience further underscored the malleability of traditional institutions in the face of external pressures. The Kiganda traditional government was modified by the colonial authority to be able to entrench its grip on Buganda and Uganda in general. Furthermore, the restructuring of the Buganda state highlighted the resilience and adaptability of the local population. As Buganda navigated the challenges posed by colonialism, it displayed a remarkable ability to negotiate and manipulate the evolving power dynamics, often leveraging aspects of the feudal system to navigate the changing socio-political landscape.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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