

KINGS, CHIEFS AND OFFICIALS:

The Political Organization of Dahomey and Buganda compared

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1. Introduction

A clear distinction between the concepts of 'chiefdom' and 'state' is necessary for the adequate description and analysis of political organizations. Despite the fact that many scholars, marxists and non-marxists alike, treat the emergence of the state as a kind of 'watershed in history', a satisfactory definition of the two concepts is still lacking.

In view of the many differences between a fully developed state organization and the more 'primitive' chiefdom, the idea of a watershed seems justified. Nevertheless, as the evolution of the state was a gradual process, during which new forms developed slowly and often hardly noticeably from older, slightly less sophisticated political forms, the problem of drawing the demarcation line between the two is a difficult one (for more detailed discussion: Claessen and Van de Velde 1985; Claessen and Skaln k 1978, 1981).

To complicate matters further, recent research shows that although the emergence of the (early) state has far-reaching consequences in the socio-political field, other social institutions, e.g. kinship organization or the economy, follow different evolutionary trajectories, a process characterized by Carneiro some years ago (1973) as 'differential evolution'. Muller (1981), for instance, demonstrated that, at least for a number of African societies, the ideological frame of reference for chiefs and kings was basically identical. The occurrence of such similarities led Smith (1985) to the suggestion of a completely different typology of political systems, in which chiefdoms and early states are placed in one category, 'dominion'. On the other hand,

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Carneiro (1981:45) attempted to formulate the differences between the two in structural terms. In his words,

A chiefdom is an autonomous political unit comprising a number of villages or communities under the permanent control of a paramount chief.

The chiefdom in his view is a two-level structure. To reach the State structure a third level is needed, the regional level between the central ruler and the local communities. Such a three-tier administrative structure is indeed characteristic of early states (Claessen 1978:579). Hagesteijn (1985) made the development of such a structure the cornerstone of her analysis of the evolution of Southeast Asian political systems. Her analysis demonstrated also that when supra-regional structures emerged, they were only viable when accompanied by an increase of power and legitimation in the center. Where that did not occur, the three-tier structure was only short-lived, and the chiefdom replaced the early state again (cf. also Bargatzky 1987).

These results support the views expressed in *The Early State* (Claessen and Skalník 1978:630) that there are structural differences between chiefdoms and early states. The structural traits separating the early state from earlier forms of socio-political organization are the legitimized power of the center to enforce decisions, and the power to prevent (or rather the efforts to prevent) fission (cf. Cohen 1981).

These two kinds of power, of course, are no more than the top of an iceberg. They are indicative of the development of a complex form of socio-political organization, of central government, of social inequality, of balances of power, of sufficient legitimation, of adequate state resources, and so on. (Claessen and Skalník 1978:630; cf. Carneiro 1981:69)

The two political systems to be described and compared in this article - 19th century Dahomey and 19th century Buganda - certainly qualify as early states. The differences and the similarities between these early states and African chiefdoms become clear when Dahomey and Buganda are compared with chiefdoms such as the We (Geary 1976) or the Rukuba (Muller 1980, 1985) in West Africa, the Hutu chiefdoms (Nahimana 1981) or the Unyamwezi (Abrahams 1967) in the east. The chiefdoms are smaller, their political organization is less elaborate and so on. Nevertheless the *Akhosu* of Dahomey and the *Kabaka* of Buganda are specific representations of a more general pattern of African leadership (cf. Claessen 1981, 1984a; Muller 1981,

1982; De Heusch 1984). Notwithstanding the fact that their power is more extensive, the organization they head more complex and their legitimation more elaborate, they are traditional African political leaders, and they will be treated here as such.

2. Dahomey

2.1 Introduction

In 1772 the British slave trader Robert Norris made a journey from the coastal town of Whydah to Abomey, the inland capital of Dahomey. The governor of Whydah (the *Yevogan*) arranged for carriers and a small escort. Before leaving, Norris tried to buy a woman who had been convicted of arson. This appeared to be impossible, for the king in far-away Abomey had ordered her death, and the *Yevogan* did not have the power to change the order. Norris traveled relatively comfortably along well-kept roads to the capital. The captain of the escort took great care that Norris received good service, being responsible 'with his head' for the well-being of the white traveler. Norris adds to this account that he was favourably struck by the order and safety of the country he crossed (Norris 1800:184-208).

There are several interesting points in Norris' account. There was a ruler in Abomey who issued commands that were carried out to the letter by the Governor of Whydah, one of the highest dignitaries of the State. There was an escort that, even far away from king or *Yevogan*, continued to execute the orders received. Clearly Dahomey was an early state with a central ruler who not only issued orders, but also succeeded in having them carried out. What is more, there was marked continuity in this power of the center. Norris' experiences are similar to those of Duncan, who made such a journey in 1845, and of Skertchly, who traveled in Dahomey in 1874 (Duncan 1847, I:205-218; for another journey with similar experiences: Duncan 1847, I:272-291, and 1847, II:5-76; Skertchly 1874:71-117; cf. also Forbes 1851, I:53-66; cf. Claessen 1984b).

2.2 The Ruler

The ruler of Dahomey, the *Akhosu*, was the pivot of the whole socio-political system. He was a member of the Alladahonu clan, which according to tradition originated in Ketu (Argyle 1966:4). In the 16th century the clan settled in Allada, where, again according to tradi-

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tion, a separation occurred in about 1600. One branch of the clan went to Porto Novo, one remained in Allada, and a third went to Abomey. This third branch became in time the dominant one (Cornevin 1962:92 ff.; Dunglas 1957a:80-88; Le Herissé 1911:274-284).

The *Akhosu* was associated with the panther (Dalzel 1800:10; Forbes 1851, I:32; Skertchly 1874:79) and there is sufficient ethnographic evidence to consider him as sacral. In former times the *Akhosu* was tattooed with the 'marks' of the panther, but as this tattoo imposed numerous taboos on him, later rulers had a substitute marked with these incisions. According to Palau-Marti (1964:133 ff.; Le Herissé 1911:10 ff.) the substitute was the priest of Adjahuto in Allada. After receiving the marks he had to avoid meeting the *Akhosu*.

The ruler was not allowed to touch the earth with bare hands or feet, as this would influence the earth's fertility in a negative way. The *Akhosu* was thus the only man in the country who wore shoes or slippers (Abson 1800:276; Dalzel 1800:28, 59; Norris 1800:220; Burton 1864, I:238; Skertchly 1874:142, 345, 444; Dunglas 1957b:46). Forbes (1851, II:34) states:

The king never walks, nor rides on horseback, but is either carried in a hammock, or drawn in a carriage or wheeled chair.

Skertchly (1874:24) says that if through the negligence of his carriers the *Akhosu* should touch the earth, they would be immediately executed.¹

The royal blood could not be shed, and princes who fell in disgrace were executed by drowning them (Dunglas 1957a:91, 167; Norris 1800:119).

The *Akhosu* had to be well-built and in good health. Cases are known in which royal sons were excluded from succession because of physical deformation (M'Leod 1922:28; Dunglas 1957b:34; cf. Skertchly 1874:443, who mentions drunkenness as an impediment; also Burton 1864, I:207 n.). The many invitations extended to the *Akhosu* to dance in public may be interpreted as a way to make him demonstrate his perfect physical condition (Norris 1800:233; Duncan 1847, I:246;

¹ On less formal occasions, however, the ruler walked around, as witnessed by Duncan (1847, II: 278), Forbes (1851, I: 80), Skertchly (1874: 145, 306), and Burton (1864, I: 274).

Forbes 1851, II:120 ff.; Burton 1864, I:362, 364; Skertchly 1874:169, 295).

Each year the *Akhosu* took a ritual bath (Bertho 1946:62 ff.). During this occasion a boy clad in the clothes of the ruler was buried alive (no bloodshed), together with the royal hair and nail clippings. This ritual was held at the beginning of the harvest season. It was a kind of rebirth ceremonial, and should be seen in connection with the requirement of perfect health. The ritual also indicates the connection between the ruler's health and fertility. The ritual killing of the king, a phenomenon widely dispersed in Africa (Claessen 1981:65), is enacted here quite dramatically.

The sacral character of the ruler also comes to the fore in the assertion that he needs neither food nor sleep (Dalzel 1800:26; Norris 1800:233).² With regard to drinking the Dahomean customs were less stringent. The *Akhosu* often drank publicly; those present were obliged to turn away their eyes, however, and the ruler hid behind a screen.

The *Akhosu* had to be approached in a most humble manner. Duncan (1847, I:218) describes an audience in the palace in the following way:

During all this palaver the whole of the attendants were on their knees, Mayho himself not excepted, this being their mode of procedure when delivering or receiving a message from the King, besides kissing the ground and covering their heads with dust.

The obligation of wallowing in the dust is mentioned by all visitors, from Snelgrave (1735:45) to Skertchly (1874:143, 169). Every subject paying a visit to the king - men as well as women - had to perform this act of humility.

The death of an *Akhosu* had far-reaching consequences, for it was he who guaranteed fertility and law and order. His death ritually marked the end of a period of prosperity. The announcement of his

2 It is only natural that the "roi-homme toujours imparfait" defeats the "roi-dieu parfait" in these respects (Palau-Marti 1964: 218): several European visitors saw the royal bed chamber or witnessed him eating (Dalzel 1800: 24; M'Leod 1822: 46; Burton 1864, I: 218; Le Herissé 1911: 28).

demise led to the outburst of wild anarchy, during which many people were killed or killed themselves, thieving took place, and a great confusion was found everywhere (Bosman 1709, II:154; Norris 1800:116 ff.; Abson 1800:261 ff., 350 ff.; Burton 1864, II:19 ff.). Le Herissé (1911:165, 179) gives a much more moderate picture of the anarchy. He reports a general mourning. People were forbidden to wash themselves or to visit the market. The wilder scenes were limited to the royal palace. The inauguration of the successor immediately terminated whatever disorder there may have been.

Not much is known with certainty about the inauguration ceremonies (Argyle 1966:119). As the successor of an *Akhosu* was more or less known during the latter's lifetime, the dangerous succession strife that usually accompanied the dynastic election elsewhere in Africa (Claessen 1981:68 ff.) was not a factor of importance. The *Vidaho*, the designated successor, was presented to the people by the *Migan* and the *Meu* (for these functionaries, see below). The royal slippers were put on his feet and the *Vidaho* recited a text considered to be an indication for the way in which he would rule his country (Le Herissé 1911:11, 112; Dunglas 1957a, 1957b, and 1958).

After a year the new *Akhosu* presided over the large mourning rituals for his predecessor, which were accompanied by numerous human sacrifices. These rituals were at the same time a part of the prolonged inauguration ceremonies of the new ruler. During the rituals it was customary that the *Akhosu* in return for the gifts he had received distributed cowries and trinkets among the people. These return gifts were however in no way equivalent to the valuables given to him (Forbes 1851, II:30 ff., 43, 54; cf. Claessen 1970:72). Finally, he would pay a visit to the Adjahuto priest in Allada, the one who was tattooed in his place, and only after that visit was the inauguration complete (Abson 1800:387; Burton 1864, I:159, II:255; Skertchly 1874:88, 95; Le Herissé 1911:112 ff.). Politically, however, the *Akhosu* assumed his position immediately after the presentation to his people.

The *Vidaho*, the heir apparent, was formally selected by the ruler from among his sons, based on his judgment as to which one would make the best ruler. This son was then proclaimed as *Vidaho* (Herskovits 1938, II:31). According to Coissy (1949:5) only the eldest son of the official royal wife qualified as successor. This statement finds some corroboration in Le Herissé's report (1911:6 ff.) that several categories of royal spouses were excluded from the right to bring forth the successor to the throne. This privilege was reserved to women of non-royal blood. A survey of the history of Dahomey

shows that in the majority of cases an *Akhosu* was succeeded by a son, but several of them certainly were not first-born (Claessen 1970:75).

There are no indications that the *Vidaho* possessed political power. In this respect his position was similar to that of the other members of the royal family. They all had a high status and enjoyed certain privileges, but "tradition holds strongly that no King ever appointed a prince to any position of power" (Herskovits 1938, II:39; Le Herissé 1911:32, 200). It is not clear in what ways the rulers of Dahomey achieved this remarkable feat, but it is often considered to be one of the most important factors in the stability of Dahomean political organization (e.g., Newbury 1966:29 ff.; Claessen 1970:76). It must be stated, however, that there was never total exclusion from political power; some members of the royal family could always be found who exercised political influence (Dunglas 1957a:97, 166). Since the mid-19th century an increasing number of royals were even found in formal political functions. From Forbes' journal it appears that during the reign of Gezo (1818-1858) their activities were not yet very specific (1851, II:28, 102, 123, 130, 178), but Burton (1864, I:123, 130, 178, 207, 209, II:34, 37, 92) and Skertchly (1874:129, 131, 291), who were in Dahomey during the reign of Glele (1858-1889), note that sons and cousins of the *Akhosu* occupied important positions. Le Herissé (1911:33) points out that under the last *Akhosu* Behanzin (1889-1894), the highest positions were open to them. The background of this development will be discussed below.

The ruler of Dahomey was surrounded by a great number of women, and in many respects their role in ritual, as well as in politics, was important. Only a few of them, the *Kposi*, can be considered as royal spouses in the strict sense of the word (Burton 1864, II:90 ff.; Skertchly 1874:203; Le Herissé 1911:27). It is not clear if one of them fulfilled the function of 'queen' or 'principal wife'. Norris (1800:237) mentions a queen, and Coissy (1949:5) says that the *Akhosu* had one head-wife:

Cette épouse a la préséance sur toutes les autres. Aux cérémonies officielles, sa place est à droite du Roi.

However, these statements find no confirmation in the other sources on Dahomey.

A second category of royal wives were the so-called 'amazons', the armed women. No European visitor failed to describe and comment on these regiments of female soldiers. They functioned prominently in

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the countless processions in Abomey, also taking an active part in wars (e.g., against Abeokuta, Dunglas 1948). In the lively political arena of Dahomey the leaders of the 'amazons' formed a counterweight to the leaders of the male soldiers (Forbes 1851, II:95-101, 107-120; cf. Claessen 1979:186; Van der Sande 1986).

A very important role in the governmental apparatus was played by the so-called 'mothers'. They were recruited from the brighter members of the royal harem and controlled the political and administrative activities of their 'sons'. Every male official, and every foreign visitor, was placed under the care of such a 'mother' (Duncan 1847, I:227; Forbes 1851, I:22, 77; Burton 1864, I:332 n.; cf. Herskovits 1938, II:44 ff.). A shadow administration was thus formed inside the palace, and each time an official reported to the *Akhosu*, his 'mother' was present and checked his words. The most important of these 'mothers' were the *Gundeme*, who controlled the *Migan*, and the *Yewe*, who controlled the *Meu*. These women were also the commanding officers of the amazon regiments (Forbes 1851, I:22 ff.; Le Herissé 1911:30 ff.; cf. Herskovits 1938, I:111 ff.).

The 'mothers' of the *Akhosu* the *Kpodjito* (Le Herissé 1911:27), were a very special category of older women. Little is known about them. Abson (1800:305), the first visitor who mentions them, says a bit cryptically that such a mother never dies, even though she is sometimes killed. This may refer to the official character of these mothers: when one died she was replaced by another woman, who received the title of 'mother of the king' (see: Duncan 1847, I:253 ff.; Forbes 1851, II:152; Burton 1864, II:59n.; Skertchly 1874:208 speaks of "ghost mothers"). Some ritual tasks seem to have been entrusted to these *Kpodjito* (Herskovits 1938, II:47; Palau-Marti 1964:215; Claessen 1981:72).

2.3 The Governmental Apparatus

The Dahomean governmental apparatus was large and complex. Several categories of officials and functionaries can be distinguished. Usually the whole group was designated with the Portuguese word *Caboceers*. All visitors of Dahomey described, or rather try to describe, the organization, but many of them lost their way in the jungle of titles, functions and statuses. Only by dividing the *Caboceers* in various subgroups can some form of order be created, but even then many questions remain unanswered. Detailed surveys are given by Burton (1864), Skertchly (1874) and Le Herissé (1911), all of whom spent a long period in the capital (cf. the surveys given by Herskovits 1938,

Argyle 1966, and Claessen 1970). In this article only an outline of the governmental apparatus will be attempted.

The most important category of *Caboceers* was formed by the *Bonugan*, comprising the officials outside the palace. The most prominent functionaries of the *Bonugan* were

- The *Migan*, the "Premier of the empire amongst men" (Burton 1864, I:221). He commanded the right wing of the army, was head of the police, was supposed to be the spokesman from the people to the *Akhosu*, was the highest judicial functionary, administered the village heads and, finally, was the supreme executioner of the realm. After the death of an *Akhosu*, the *Migan* and the *Meu* administered the country and proclaimed the new ruler.
- The *Meu* was the "second subject in the empire" (Burton 1864, I:222). He was the spokesman from the *Akhosu* to the people. He was in charge of all foreigners visiting the country and supervised the taxation system. While the *Migan* controlled the people of Dahomey, the *Meu* was entrusted with the supervision of the royal family (Le Herissé 1911:41). He was the commander of the left wing of the army.
- The *Yevogan* was the governor of Whydah, and in that function he maintained the contacts with foreign merchants. Usually the *Yevogan* spoke several languages, but his competence in juridical matters was limited. Economically he fell under the control of the *Meu*. Several *Yevogans* are reported to have been executed after complaints about their stewardship (Akinjogbin 1967:119 ff.).
- The *Tokpo* was a kind of overseer of agriculture. In the course of a relatively short time the position of the *Tokpo* rose from minor *Caboceer* to one of the leading dignitaries of the realm. This may be connected with the shift from slave trade to the production of palm oil in the 19th century.

As was customary in Dahomey, each of the functionaries mentioned had an assistant (who, in his turn had an assistant, etc.). The assistants for the *Migan*, the *Meu* and the *Yevogan* were the *Adanejan*, the *Biwanton* and the *Chuydaton* respectively. There were many more *Bonugan* in Dahomey working in lower functions in the governmental apparatus. All of them had titled assistants. This may explain the bewilderment of European visitors in view of the many titles with which they were confronted.

After the *Bonugan* followed the *Owutunun*, the male functionaries inside the palace. They were eunuchs, the most important being:

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- The *Totonun*, the head-eunuch. He was a kind of maiordomo, but also the head groom of the royal chambers. He tasted everything the *Akhosu* ate or drank; usually he was killed after the death of the ruler.
- The *Kangbode*, in command of the royal body-guards.
- The *Binazon*, the royal treasurer.
- The *Adjaho*, who can also be considered to be one of the palace dignitaries, though Burton (1864, I:225) states that he was not a eunuch. His tasks lay mainly in the field of security: he commanded the secret police and the spies. It was the *Adjaho* who controlled the eunuchs, and it was he who executed their death sentences. The control of the royal harem was an additional responsibility of his.

Among the assistants of the major *Owotunun* were the *Gbwewedo*, the *Kakapwe*, the *Sokun* and the *Sogan*.

The third category of *Caboceers* consisted of the male military leaders, the *Ahwangan*. Though formally the *Migan* and the *Meu* were *Ahwangan*, too, they were usually counted among the *Bonugan*. The most important military commanders were:

- The *Gau*, the actual commander in chief of the army. He was associated with the right wing divisions. During a campaign the *Akhosu* placed himself ritually under the responsibility of the *Gau*. The idea was that he escaped in this way the eventual negative supernatural consequences of war (Herskovits 1938, II:91). The *Gau* thus became his ritual substitute (Claessen 1981:73 ff.).
- The *Posu*, the commander of the left wing of the army was the counterpart of the *Gau*. The *Matro* and the *Akwegbamen* were mentioned as assistants.

At this point it seems appropriate to describe in some detail the distinction made in Dahomey between the palace and the outside world. This distinction formed one of the central concepts in the political ideology of this early state. People outside the palace were supposed to have nothing to do with those inside the palace. Moreover, the palace contained mainly female functionaries and the outside had mainly male functionaries. In this respect the position of the eunuchs versus the amazons was important (Van der Sande 1986:139 ff.). The eunuchs were men inside the palace; however, they were castrated, they were neuters. Because of that they were classified as 'wives' of the *Akhosu*. Their tasks were mainly connected with bodily and sacral functions of the king: his eating, his sleeping and his dressing, tasks that for ritual reasons could not be accomplished by women (Argyle 1966:67). Amazons were royal women

outside the palace. Upon pain of death they were forbidden to have relations with men; they were condemned to a life of celibacy. Their tasks were connected with war, with killing, with the military and with the national honor and glory. Conceptually they were classified as male.

A third anomaly in the system was that of the 'halfheads', the corps of royal messengers. Their heads were shaved on one side, thus explaining their name. Practically all visitors to Dahomey mentioned these messengers (Claessen 1970, note 42). The latter travelled through the country to inform the population of royal commands or demands and to report to the *Akhosu* on the situation in the provinces and villages. In this way they were the eyes and the ears of the king and thus belonged at the same time both to the world of the palace and to the world outside (Argyle 1966:68 ff.).

An interesting problem connected with the existence of so many officials is that of succession. Analytically speaking there are only two possibilities: functionaries can be appointed or the function can be hereditary. The situation in Dahomey, however, was more complicated. Herskovits (1938, II:5, 33) and Le Herissé (1911:37), both well-informed about the traditional state, are of the opinion that the *Akhosu* appointed whoever he chose to an open post. They give several examples of such appointments. There is, however, much evidence that in the majority of cases the appointed successor in fact was a brother or a son of the deceased. For instance, Forbes (1851, I:27, 34, II:72) not only says that offices were hereditary, but he gives a number of examples in which this was the case. Norris (1800:124) as well as Abson (1800:301) describe instances in which the *Akhosu* even against the wishes of the father and against the advice of his councillors, appointed a son as successor.

The evidence seems clear that heredity played an important and decisive role for succession. But which one of the (many) sons, brothers, cousins, etc. of the deceased was to get the appointment? The *Akhosu* was free to choose the best-qualified contender or the one who had succeeded in building up the most support. Moreover, the *Akhosu* always retained the right to appoint a complete outsider. There are instances recorded of totally unexpected people being chosen by the ruler to fulfill important positions (Burton 1864, I:366; Skertchly 1874:347).

To obtain a high position is one thing; to keep it is another. Many state officials lost not only their position but their life and material wealth after having made serious mistakes (cf. Dalzel 1800:106;

Norris 1800:123, 174; Akinjogbin 1967:119 ff.). Lesser punishments are mentioned, among others by Burton (1864, I:224, 226, II:111, 262) and M'Leod (1822:35). The threat of punishment obliged the functionaries continually to demonstrate their competence and loyalty. There was great rivalry among the various groups of functionaries described above and among the individual dignitaries. The loss of life and position for the one brought honor and promotion for the other. The *Akhosu* deliberately made use of this situation. He carefully played groups and individuals off against each other, thus maintaining a balance of power between the forces in his state (Claessen 1979). His efforts to create and to maintain such a balance of power permeated the whole political organization of Dahomey. The *Migan* and the *Meu* each headed an important division of the governmental apparatus. Forbes correctly states that 'they have, if united, actually more power than their royal master' (1851, I:83; cf. Burton 1864, I:263; Skertchly 1874:443). The power of the one, however, was kept in balance by the power of the other. The opposition between the palace and the world outside had a similar balancing function. Within the palace the whole governmental apparatus was duplicated in a way by the royal spouses. These women controlled the *Caboceers*, and reported on their doings. The influential military leaders, the *Ahwangan*, were counterbalanced by the leaders of the amazons. The bitter rivalry of these groups is reported in detail by Forbes (1851, II:92-102, 107-121, and many other places), for example. Against the many *Caboceers* of the outside, the *Tononun* or eunuchs formed a counterweight. Their interests were on the whole congruent with those of the *Akhosu*. For a long time the members of the royal family were kept outside of the government of the country. In the 19th century, however, the *Akhosu* started to appoint uncles and cousins to formal positions, first in subordinate ones, later in more important functions. This policy can also be interpreted in terms of the counterweight policy, namely as an effort to counter the influence of the *Caboceers* in general. Argyle (1966:76) thinks the reason was to create an outlet for ambitious members of the royal family; but this explanation is not in conflict with the policy of maintaining a balance of power.

Though generally speaking the political system worked in favor of the centrally-placed *Akhosu*, not every ruler was adroit in playing the game, nor were every ruler's counselors always trustworthy, nor his perseverance sufficient. This meant that certain kings exercised more power than others. Gezo was a very influential ruler. Not only did he reorganize the amazons, he also abolished the tradition that members of the royal family were to be excluded from governmental functions. During the reign of his successor, Glele, however, several

of Gezo's decisions were reversed under the influence of *Caboceers* and religious leaders.

The last aspect of governmental organization to be described here in some detail is the way in which the regions and villages were administered. According to Herskovits (1938, II:23) there were six provinces in the early state of Dahomey: Whydah, Allada, Zagnanado, Mahi, Atakpame and Adje. Le Herissé (1911:44) states that the chiefs of the provinces were called *Togan*. There is, however, not much known about the regional organization with certainty. The majority of European visitors never went beyond Abomey. Duncan is an exception. However, his report on the organization of the provinces is rather vague.

We learn from him that important *Bonugan* had estates in the provinces, and also that various officials had governmental tasks there. His information specially concerns Mahi (1847, I:272-292, II:76, 80, 190, 260). Other data concern mainly the situation in Whydah and Allada, the provinces that had to be crossed when traveling to Abomey. The chief of Whydah - the governor, as he is usually called - was the *Yevogan*. His rights and duties have been mentioned already.

The chief of Allada was the *Akplogan* (Burton 1864, II:287; Le Herissé 1911:44). His function had an important religious component, for the members of the royal family were buried in Allada, and the *Akhosu* had to undergo certain ceremonies there before his inauguration was completed. According to Parrinder (1949:86) it was the *Akplogan* who represented the ruler in the various religious groups in Dahomey. Whether this implies that he also fulfilled ritual obligations for the *Akhosu* (and thus acted as a ritual substitute) is not known.

As general tasks of the heads of the provinces are mentioned "the collection of taxes, the provision of a quota of men for the army, and the supervision of agriculture" (Argyle 1966:75; cf. Le Herissé 1911:45; Herskovits 1938, II:29). Following the views of Ellis (1890) on the early state of Dahomey, Argyle is rather sceptical about the royal power and the degree of control by the central government over the chiefs of the provinces; he even states that,

In fact, there may never have existed in Dahomey a political hierarchy closely controlled from the centre. (1966:75, id. p. 80)

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The reports of Norris, Duncan and Skertchly that were mentioned in section 2.1, however, give reason to think that the amount of power and control in the center was considerable. When compared with other early states, Dahomey certainly is one of the better-organized (cf. Claessen and Skalník 1978). This, of course, leaves undisputed the fact that regional leaders also disposed over considerable power.

The village chief was the *Tokosu*, a title that can be translated as 'king of the land' (Le Herissé 1911:44). This may be an indication of the mythical connections between the village chief and the land that are often found in African societies (cf. Claessen 1984a; Muller 1980; Duval 1986:22 ff.; Van Binsbergen 1981:115 ff.). The position of the *Tokosu* was hereditary, but the succession was subject to confirmation by the *Akhosu*. This was done by sending the belongings of the deceased to the palace, 'where the king if it pleased him, gave them back to the son' (Argyle 1966:123). How the transport of the belongings was accomplished between far-away villages and the capital is not mentioned. Perhaps it was only done in a symbolic way.

The position of the *Tokosu* was ambiguous, to say the least. On the one hand he represented the ruler. In that capacity he had to place the national interest before everything else. He had to see to it that everybody worked hard and that no one migrated to another part of the country. He additionally had to maintain law and order in the village. In that capacity he adjudicated in disputes, settled cases and punished criminals. In the execution of these tasks his powers were severely limited, for all decisions and punishments were subjected to the right of appeal to the king. On the other hand, the village chief represented the interests of the village towards the authorities. In his activities he was assisted by the *Tonukwe*, 'the spokesman of the tokosu' (Herskovits 1938, II:6). This functionary spoke on all occasions on behalf of the village chief and supervised the administration of the village. Another functionary was the *Dokpwegan*, who was the chief of the *Dokpwe*, the organized work force of the young men (Herskovits 1938, I:63-75 on the *Dokpwe*). Together with the old men (the lineage heads), the *Tokosu*, the *Tonukwe*, and the *Dokpwegan* formed the village council. 'It would be a rash chieftain who would defy the wishes of the old men of his village' observes Herskovits (1938, II:9).

The many, often contradictory obligations notwithstanding, Herskovits is of the opinion that,

In the body of village chiefs the King of Dahomey had a group of officials who were in a strategic position to keep

the monarch in close touch with whatever occurred among the people of his kingdom. At the same time, since the tenure of office was at his pleasure, these men were under his control to an extent that assured him a loyalty that was based solidly on the economic advantages they enjoyed, or if fealty was not wholeheartedly accorded the monarch, on fear of the loss of their position, or even of their lives. (Herskovits 1938, II:10)

Argyle, his sceptical attitude towards the power of the center notwithstanding, does not contradict these words (1966:125 ff.).

3. Buganda

3.1 Introduction

The foregoing discussion of the early state of Dahomey begins with a description of how European visitors experienced the situation in that kingdom. At about the same time several Europeans paid visits to Buganda. It is instructive to compare the experiences of the two groups. As in Dahomey, in Buganda an escort that was supposed to take care of the visitor and to conduct him safely to the royal court is always mentioned. The behavior of the escort was, however, very different. Speke, the first European to visit Buganda, tells in his journal that the villagers ran away when the safari approached, "knowing well that they would be seized and punished if found glaring at the King's visitors" (1863:272). The escort stole food everywhere, and this appeared to be normal behavior for royal messengers (Speke 1863:272, 275, 280). Grant, Speke's companion who arrived in Buganda some weeks later, also notes in his journal the ruthless behavior of the escort:

On getting near camp, regardless of cultivated fields, they would plunge into them with malicious delight, trample them down, slash away branches of plantain-trees which came in their way. (Grant 1864:191, also p. 208)

This show of royal power by proxy did not mean that the Europeans were well cared for. Grant complains (1864:202) that,

Mariboo, although in charge of me, would be absent for days drinking, allowing me to get on as best as I could.

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And the American Chaillé-Long, who visited Buganda some ten years later, mentions in his diary after a march of only one day from the court (1876:146):

It was here that I was made aware of the enmity of the mtongoli charged with my safe conduct to the river. His malevolence and the hostility of his men were no longer under control of M'tsé, and they seemed determined to revenge upon me the friendship the king had persistently extended to me.

The French soldier Linant de Bellefonds was honored by an impressive escort, yet he had to cope with refusals to carry his baggage and with problems in the distribution of food (1876:22, 27, 38 ff.). Visitors met with such problems not only when entering Buganda, but also on leaving the country (see for example Speke 1863:453-473; Wilson and Felkin 1882, II:36; cf. Stanley 1891, I:186 ff.).

Stanley (1891, I:166) maintains that the authority of the king, even far away from the court, was undisputed. The reports cited above likewise stress the awe in which the ruler was held everywhere. The problem, thus, is to explain the seeming contradiction. A possible explanation can be the lack of rational organization in 19th century Buganda. The power of the *Kabaka* in the centre was tremendous. Orders were given "without knowing how they are to be carried out", and he treated "all practical arrangements as trifling details not worth attending to" (Speke 1863:351, 448; cf. Emin Pascha 1917, I:403). Without a moment's thought or hesitation, people set out to obey his wishes. Speke gives many examples of this thoughtless and inconsiderate royal demeanor, a behavior faithfully copied by lower functionaries once outside the royal presence (Speke 1863, 208, 323 ff., 380, 385, 389, 394, 448-450; Grant 1864:224, 227, 241; Linant de Bellefonds 1876:64, 66; Emin Pascha 1917, I:413; Stanley 1891, I:300 ff., 328 ff., 342). It is possible, of course, that Speke and Grant met Mutesa, the king, when he was young and capricious, and that Stanley and visitors as Wilson, Felkin or Emin Pascha met with an older and somewhat more balanced ruler (as stated by Stanley 1891, I:173; Linant de Bellefonds 1876:72). But the stories told about Ssuna, Mutesa's predecessor (Stanley 1891, I:328 ff.), and the experiences of visitors with Mutesa's successor Mwanga (Ashe 1889; Mackay 1890) give reason to think that harshness and lack of consideration were characteristic for the way in which Buganda was governed.

3.2 The Ruler

Early visitors to Buganda relate in greater or lesser detail the history of the kingdom (Speke 1863:246 ff.; Stanley 1891, I:312 ff.; Stuhlmann 1984:192 ff.). They state that long ago the royal family came 'from the north' and settled among the people living along the shores of Lake Victoria. The same story is also told by the missionary Roscoe (1911:136 ff., 214 ff.; 1921:83). He considers the legendary ruler Kintu, the first *Kabaka*, as a conqueror who subjected the clans living there. In his opinion "The royal family differ in appearance from most of the clans; they have straight noses and less protruding lips" (1911:186). He therefore connects the royal clan with the Galla (id. p. 187). This view is shared by later scholars (Gray 1935:264; M. Fallers 1960:14; Baumann and Westermann 1962:215; Richards 1960:345 ff.; Rusch 1975:153 ff.). Though the influence of immigrants on the development of early states in East Africa can be demonstrated in some cases, the role of internal developments should not be underestimated (Kottak 1972; Mworoha 1977:20 ff.; Claessen 1984a: 110-114). Without an already existing hierarchical organization and a rather developed form of subsistence agriculture, a 'sudden' introduction of new forms of political stratification can hardly be expected to be successful (Claessen 1986a). A gradual development of the political organization in Buganda therefore seems more probable (cf. Kottak 1972; Claessen and Skalník 1978:620 ff.).

The *Kabaka* was the supreme ruler of Buganda. He was supposed to be a descendant in direct line from Kintu, though in reality fraternal succession several times took preference over filial succession (Southwold 1968:137 ff.). Moreover, only from the third *Kabaka* in the royal genealogy line can we rely somewhat on historical sources (cf. Rusch 1975:155).

The *Kabaka* was a sacral ruler. He was not allowed to touch the earth. Because of that he was carried by sturdy bearers from the Mgogo-clan. During audiences he stood on a leopard skin or on rugs (Burton 1860, II:194; Speke 1863:290; Linant de Bellefonds 1876:67; Ashe 1889:292; Mackay 1890:375, 470; Stanley 1891, I:275, 358; Emin Pascha 1917, I:358; Roscoe 1911:154, 191, 197, 258; Kagwa 1934:65). The mother of the ruler, the *Nnamasole*, and the royal sister, the *Lubuga*, were also carried on formal occasions (Linant de Bellefonds 1876:58; Roscoe 1902:67; 1911:84, 197, 237).³

3 The ample evidence for carrying notwithstanding, there are also several instances reported during which the *Kabaka* was seen walking

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Nobody was allowed to touch the sacral person of the *Kabaka*, nor his clothes or stool (Speke 1863:256). Special precautions were needed for his bearers (Roscoe 1911:154). As a sacral person the *Kabaka* was never supposed to eat (Gale 1956:76). Therefore, nobody was allowed to see him while taking food (Felkin 1886:719, Emin Pascha 1917, I:435; Roscoe 1911:207).⁴ The ruler was never ill; in case of illness this was kept a secret (Nicq 1932:183). The royal blood was not to be spilled; execution of members of the royal family was therefore by burning or starvation (Ashe 1894:107; Nicq 1932:437, 469, 473; Roscoe 1902:50, 1911:99, 189, 221, 336, 347; Kagwa 1934:32 ff.).

The ruler was only nominally the commander of the army. He stayed at home, or at least at a safe distance, when actual combat started (Stanley 1891, I:284, 293; Claessen 1981:73 ff.). An experienced warrior was usually appointed as actual commander (Lugard 1893, II:112 ff.; Roscoe 1911:350 ff.). Several visitors met with such commanders (Speke 1863:365, 387, 405, 415, 419; Chaillé-Long 1876:102; Stanley 1891, I:277 ff.). The commander of the army ritually substituted for the king; he received the ashes of the royal fire on his face and wore royal paraphernalia (Stuhlmann 1894:176; Felkin 1886:736; Lugard 1893, II:112; Roscoe 1911:348 ff.; cf. Stanley 1891, I:184; Lugard 1893, II:303; Mukasa 1946:138).

Moreover, the commander

is supposed to be a viceroy, armed for the time with all the powers of the king; and as it is not fitting that two kings should sleep in the same place, he clears out. (Lugard 1893, II:112; cf. Roscoe 1911:350; Nicq 1932:135)

To protect the *Kabaka* against sorcery his hair and nail clippings were preserved carefully during his lifetime, and after his death they were placed in his tomb (Roscoe 1911:107, 1921:165). One of the royal wives, the *Nasaza*, was charged with the care of the royal hair and nail clippings (Roscoe 1911:85). The umbilical cord of the *Kabaka* was also surrounded by strict precautions. It was kept in a special building, and the *Kimbugwe*, one of the highest dignitaries of the realm, was its guardian (Speke 1863:372, 441; Grant 1864:232; Roscoe 1911:235, 1921:81; Gorju 1920:138, Kagwa 1934:76).

on foot (Speke 1863: 335, 380; Stanley 1891, I: 279, 302).

4 There are cases known, however, that visitors shared meals with him (e.g., Speke 1863: 392; cf. Kagwa 1934: 88).

The subjects of the *Kabaka*, when allowed in his presence, demonstrated a most humble behavior,

grovelling on the ground, floundering about and whining after the manner of happy dogs, and after which they rise up suddenly, take up sticks - spears are not allowed to be carried in court - make as if charging the king, jabbering as fast as tongues can rattle, and so they swear fidelity for all their lives. (Speke 1863:256)

This was the great salute, or *Nyanzig*. It was always required after receiving gifts from the *Kabaka*, however paltry these usually were. A less elaborate form was

performed kneeling in an attitude of prayer, continually throwing open hands, and repeating sundry words. (Speke 1863:256).

Practically all visitors describe these salutes and give more or less ironic comments (Grant 1864:1891, 221; Linant de Bellefonds 1876:55; Chaillé-Long 1876:106; Stanley 1891, I:351; Wilson and Felkin 1882, I:182 ff.; Nicq 1932:401). For the Baganda, however, the correct accomplishment of the *Nyanzig* was a matter of life and death. Even a slight negligence could occasion a sentence of death, as occurred during an audience attended by Speke (1863:340).

While male visitors of the *Kabaka* were obliged to be dressed (Speke 1863:258; Emin Pascha 1917, I:397; Wilson and Felkin 1882, I:105), the majority of females around the *Kabaka* went around completely undressed, a custom that did not fail to attract the attention of Victorian visitors (Speke 1863:258, 259, 314, 357, 374; Chaillé-Long 1876:150; Felkin 1886:709; Stuhlmann 1894:174).

Severe precautions were taken to protect the royal health. To guard against magical dangers a group of "wich-wèzi, or lady sorcerers" stood behind the *Kabaka* (Speke 1863:291, 256; cf. Roscoe 1921:166, 183). To protect his physical health it was forbidden, upon pain of death, to sneeze or to cough in the royal presence (Ashe 1889:69; Roscoe 1902:77, 1911:207, 259). Before the entrance of the royal enclosure a perpetual fire burned, guarded by the *Musoloza*. When the *Kabaka* died the fire was extinguished and the guardian was killed (Ashe 1894:66; Roscoe 1911:103, 159, 202).

The death of a *Kabaka* was a terrible event. As soon as it is known,

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A wild state of disorder ensued, anarchy reigned, people tried to rob each other, and only chiefs with a strong force were safe, even the smaller chiefs being in danger from stronger chiefs, who did as they liked during the short interregnum. (Roscoe 1911:103)

In spite of its wild appearance, this period of anarchy should be considered as a ritual. The *Kabaka* embodied law and order. His demise, therefore, produced (ritual) disorder and anarchy; only the appointment of his successor could restore law and order.

In other respects as well the *Kabaka* was the ideological pivot of Buganda. Only he was able to maintain contact with his divine forebears. They advised him how to promote the well-being of the country (Fallers 1964:102; Mair 1934:230). In much earlier times the *Kabaka* himself acted as the medium of the god Mukasa. At the time of the visitors cited here, however, someone else acted as medium on his behalf (Roscoe 1911:220; Low 1957:4). The rituals for the royal forefathers were accompanied by numerous human sacrifices (Chaillé-Long 1876:117; Mackay 1890:173, 184, 189, 197; Stuhlmann 1894:191; Roscoe 1911:112, 114, 116, 331, 442, 1921:151 ff.; Nicq 1932:139). To restore the life force of the *Kabaka* magically during the *Nankere* ritual (see below) a substitute for the ruler was killed.

Though there are grounds - summarized by Mair (1934:178 ff.) and Richards (1964:278 ff.) - to think that the *Kabaka* was not a 'divine king' in the sense of Frazer (cf. Claessen 1970:103, 223), there is no doubt that he must be considered as a sacral ruler (Claessen 1986b:116 ff.). The only author who almost completely neglects this aspect of the *Kabaka* is Rusch (1975:153 ff., esp. 232 ff.). This is probably connected with his Marxist background.

The appointment of a new *Kabaka* from among the sons (or brothers) of the deceased was done by the *Kattikiro*, the *Kimbugwe* and the *Kasujju* (see 3.3 for these dignitaries; cf. Goody 1966). After the proclamation of the new ruler by the *Kattikiro*, the complex inauguration ceremonies needed to make the humble prince a sacral king could begin. The main sources on the inauguration are Roscoe (1911:103-112, 189-207) and Kagwa (1934:108-114). Snoxall (1937:277) points out, however, that neither of these authors ever witnessed a traditional inauguration; they base themselves mainly on tradition.

Shortly after the proclamation of the new *Kabaka*, a new *Lubuga* was also appointed,

electd from the new King's half-sisters by the same father, and (she) was the daughter of a woman who had no sons. When they had chosen the Queen (*Lubuga*) and her kago [see para. 3.3], he was carried off to join the King, and she shared with him the coronation and official mourning ceremonies. (Roscoe 1911:84; id. p. 191)

Carried on the shoulders of the royal bearers, the new *Kabaka* and his *Lubuga* departed immediately to Budo, where, after a sham fight with the assistants of the Budo priest, the young couple entered a house named Buganda (Roscoe 1911:193 ff.; Kagwa 1934:11, Snoxall 1937:280). Here the *Kabaka* proclaimed himself king of Buganda. After the Budo ritual the *Kabaka* was the legitimate successor. Only then could the great mourning rituals begin. In the course of these rituals several human sacrifices were made (Roscoe 1911:197, 200, 209 ff.). This period ended with a kind of enthronement, during which the *Kabaka* and the *Lubuga* were clothed with new barkcloths (Roscoe 1911:197). The ruler then took an oath that he would rule his people well. After that he indicated where he wanted his new capital built. Each district chief then had the duty to provide his royal master with a special house inside the enclosure and had to build some portions of the high fence which enclosed the royal residence (Roscoe 1911:208).

Like the commander of the army (see above), the *Lubuga* had her own residence on an adjacent hill, separated from the *Kabaka's* by a stream of running water,

because it was said that she was also a King, with her own independent establishment, and that two Kings could not live on the same hill. (Roscoe 1911:203, id. p. 84. Also Emin Pascha 1917, I:402; Gorju 1920:139.)

The question whether the relation between the *Kabaka* and his *Lubuga* qualifies as incest is not easy to answer. The ruler spent a short time with her when undergoing the complex inauguration ritual. It was customary for all men who had to undergo some ritual to do this together with a sister (Roscoe 1911:122; Nsimbi 1956:33). The *Lubuga* left her brother after the rituals ended and from then on she lived separately. She was obliged, however, to visit her brother daily (Roscoe 1911:84, 206). There are no indications that the relationship included sexual intercourse, but also no reports that it

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did not. Ritually seen this may be sufficient to count as incest (cf. Claessen 1981:66). Interestingly, Kagwa does not include the *Lubuga* in his list of royal spouses (Kagwa 1934:67-69, 1971:187 ff.). For De Heusch (1958:81) the Baganda case is a clear example of royal incest, which is, according to him, characteristic for Africa. The empirical data, however, are not easy to square with his theory (cf. Claessen 1981:66 ff., 1984a:108 ff.; Claessen and Skalnik 1981:476 ff.; De Heusch 1984:303 ff.).

The royal inauguration took several years. Speke notes twice (1863:432, 443) that the inauguration of Mutesa was not yet completed, though he had reigned already for some years. He also mentions the fact that the *Kabaka* repeatedly met with his mother, the *Nnamasole* (1863:330 ff., 376), though the two were no longer allowed to meet after the completion of the ritual. As late as 1875 Mutesa still had to undergo the final ceremony. Stanley (1891, I:165), as well as Linant de Bellefonds (1876:58), report that he met with his mother. Mackay, who was in Buganda in 1878, states that the contacts between the two had ceased (1890:163; cf. Nicq 1932:207 ff.).

The ritual in question was the so-called *Nankere* ritual. The *Kabaka* then visited the *Nankere* priest, a prominent member of the Mamba clan, who lived in Busiro (Roscoe 1911:210 ff.). This was the only occasion that the two met. During the ritual,

Nankere's son was (now) brought in; *Nankere* took him by the hand and presented him to the King, who passed him on to the body-guard; they took him outside, and killed him by beating him with their closed fists. (Roscoe 1911:210)

The purpose of the killing was to prolong the life of the ruler. The unfortunate young man was a ritual substitute for the *Kabaka*. Before the ritual he was fed and clothed and treated in every way as a prince, and his blood was not shed in the killing (cf. Claessen 1981:65 ff.).

In the foregoing some attention has been paid to the *Lubuga*, the queen-sister of the ruler. She was considered to be a powerful person in the politics of the country. She bore the same titles as the great chiefs and her estates were found all over Buganda. She had her own court and tried her own people (Emin Pascha 1917, I:402; Roscoe 1911:237). She was, according to Roscoe (1911:84), absolutely forbidden to have children, a rule that also held for the other princesses (Roscoe 1911:232; Emin Pascha 1917, I:169, 375, 383; Ashe 1894:105).

If she died before the *Kabaka*, another woman took her place (Wilson and Felkin 1882, II:13 ff.; Roscoe 1911:113 ff.).

The most important of the royal spouses in the strict sense bore the title of *Kadulubare* (Kagwa 1934:67). She was the wife whom the *Kabaka's* father had given him. She was in charge of "the fetiches and amulets" (Roscoe 1911:84). As second and third wives are mentioned the *Kabeja* and the *Nasaza* (Kagwa 1934:68). *Nasaza* was chosen by the father's mother of the *Kabaka*. She acted as hairdresser, cut the ruler's nails, and gathered the hair and nail clippings (Roscoe 1911:85). Several of the royal spouses were connected with ritual tasks and represented specific clans; they were replaced when they died. Besides these formal spouses there were numerous other wives in the royal harem. On the one hand the *Kabaka* could simply request any woman who somehow attracted his interest; on the other hand, fathers willingly supplied a stream of girls and young women to the king, either when asking for favors or to appease his wrath (Speke 1863:357, 361, 368, 434; Emin Pascha 1917, I:383; Stuhlmann 1894:189; Roscoe 1911:86; Kagwa 1934:67). The life of Mutesa's women was full of risks. Speke, but also other visitors, repeatedly mention the execution or maltreatment of these women (Speke 1863:358, 388, 389, 394, 412, 450; Grant 1864:223, 227; Emin Pascha 1917, I:444; Stanley 1981, I:362 ff.; cf. Sagan 1985:xi-xiii).

The 'mother' of the *Kabaka* bore the title of *Nnamasole*. According to Stuhlmann (1894:189)

sollte seine wirkliche Mutter nicht mehr lebend sein, so wird eine Tante oder dergleichen für diese Stellung auserzehen.

This view has been confirmed by several authors (Stock 1892:29; Nicq 1932:129, 208). Roscoe (1911:114) suggests that the succeeding *Nnamasole* is a member of the clan of the deceased. The prestige of the *Nnamasole* was great: she was the mother of a *Kabaka* and was married to a *Kabaka*, at least ideally. The respect paid to her was equal to that of the *Kabaka* himself (Mukasa 1946:139). She had her own court and freedom from taxation. Her estates were found all over the country and were safe from plunder by messengers of the king. Foreigners were obliged to visit her and to offer her valuable presents. Speke, who met with the *Nnamasole* of that time, characterized her as "fat, fair and forty-five" (1863:304).

In matters of state the *Nnamasole* had great influence. Together with the *Lubuga* she was a member of the *Lukiiko*, the Great Council (Cunningham 1905:182 ff.; Rusch 1975:216; on *Lukiiko*, see below 3.3).

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Speke states that it was she who guided the newly elected *Kabaka* in the governing of the country and remained the virtual ruler of Buganda till the end of the *Kabaka's* minority (1863:254). This view is also expressed by Felkin (1886:739, 741), Stuhlmann (1894:189), and Emin Pascha (1917, I:444). Roscoe, however, thinks that the regent for the young *Kabaka* was the *Katikkiro* (1911:232; cf. Kagwa 1934:7). Like the *Lubuga* the *Nnamasole* also moved to a hill away from her son. Both ladies lost their position when the *Kabaka* died, "to take charge of the deceased King's temple" (Roscoe 1911:196 ff.; 1921:150 ff.). In Roscoe's opinion 1911:99, 226; 1921:87) it was the *Nnamasole* who saw to it that the brothers of the new *Kabaka* were put to death though elsewhere he states that it was the *Ssenkole* who fulfilled this task (1911:189, 348), without, however, excluding the possibility that the *Nnamasole* shared this responsibility.

The introduction of the custom of eliminating the princes of Buganda is ascribed to *Kabaka* Ssemakookiro, who ruled shortly before 1800 (Kagwa 1934:39, 1971:195). Speke, however, met the brothers of Mutesa several times,

some thirty odd young men and boys, one half of them manacled, the other half free, with an officer watching over them to see that they committed no intrigues.. (1863:355; also p. 389, 425; cf. Grant 1864:224.)

Speke even met some brothers of the former *Kabaka* Ssuna who apparently had survived the executions (1863:266, 281). However, when Ashe arrived in Buganda in 1883, all of Mutesa's brothers, except one, were dead (1889:48; cf. Emin Pascha 1917, I:444; Burton 1860, II:192; Mackay 1890:194 ff.; Lugard 1893, II:391). The background of this custom seems to be that the brothers of a *Kabaka* were considered potential political rebels. In the past the succession of a *Kabaka* had often been accompanied by fierce wars of succession between the sons of the deceased (Roscoe 1911:223 ff.; Rusch 1975: 233 ff.). The succession of Mutesa in 1885 gave rise to "the year of the three kings of Buganda" (Gray 1950; Southwold 1968). As soon as a *Kabaka* had sons, his surviving brothers had to surrender their estates to them. By way of compensation they received less important areas (e.g. Mutesa's two uncles, who lived far away from the court). Though deprived of their estates the uncles remained eligible for the throne; their sons, however, were definitely barred from this possibility. They were called 'peasant princes' in contradistinction to their fathers, who were called 'princes of the drum' (Roscoe 1911: 187 ff.).

The *Kasujju* was the guardian of the sons of the *Kabaka*. The eldest bore the title of *Kiweewa* and was never eligible for the throne. He was responsible to the *Kasujju* for the conduct of his brothers (Roscoe 1911:73, 188; Kagwa 1934:70 ff.; Emin Pascha 1917, I:444). The daughters of the *Kabaka* were placed under their eldest sister. Roscoe (1911:74) notes that both princes and princesses learned to work; they were not expected to be idle.

Interestingly, in patrilineal Buganda the royal children were reckoned to belong to the clan of their mother. This explains the interest the clans took in 'their' princes, for the clan which supplied the new ruler gained considerably in privileges and power (Stuhlmann 1894:190; Ashe 1889:85 ff.; Roscoe 1911:128). Some clans seem to have been excluded from the right to present a prince as candidate for the throne (Roscoe 1911:137).

Princes were allowed to marry and have children. Princesses, however, were neither allowed to marry nor to have children, though they lived free lives with men who pleased them (Roscoe 1911:85, 232; Emin Pascha 1917, I:169, 375, 382; Stuhlmann 1894:189; Ashe 1894:105). Sometimes the *Kabaka* gave one of his daughters in marriage to a favorite functionary; in such cases she was allowed to have children (Emin Pascha 1917, I:399, 424; Linant de Bellefonds 1876:96; Wilson and Felkin 1882, I:201).

It is not surprising that, as a consequence of the drastic measures to limit the number of adult males in the royal family, only a few of them ever lived long enough to occupy a political function of some importance. In practice, the only functionaries with family ties to the *Kabaka* came from the clan of his mother. They were the *Kauzumu* and the *Ssabaganzi*. The *Kauzumu* was a relative who fulfilled certain ceremonies and taboos for the *Kabaka* in order to save him such inconveniences (Roscoe 1911:205 ff.; Kagwa 1934:22). When one of the royal spouses died, the *Kauzumu* was the chief mourner on behalf of the king (cf. Claessen 1981:74 ff.). The *Ssabaganzi* was a brother of the *Nnamasole* and was appointed by the *Katikkiro*, the *Mugema* and the *Kimbugwe* as soon as the new *Nnamasole* was known. Being a mother's brother to the *Kabaka*, the position of the *Ssabaganzi* was rather strong and he acted with some independence, as witnessed by Father Lourdel (Nicq 1932:146, 149, 167) and Speke (1863:387, 416). It is evident that the *Nnamasole* and the *Ssabaganzi* represented the clan of the *Kabaka's* mother, one of the major forces behind the throne (cf. Rusch 1975:241-246).

3.3 The Governmental Apparatus

The governmental apparatus of Buganda comprised numerous functionaries in various ranks and categories. The most important categories were the *Bakungu* or territorial chiefs, the *Batongole*, or functionaries with more general tasks, and the *Bataka*, the functionaries basing themselves on their position in clans or lineages (Gorju 1920:136 ff.; Fallers 1964:69 ff.). The functionaries in the first two categories were appointed by the *Kabaka*, while those in the third category were hereditary, although not only sons, but also brothers, cousins, uncles and so on qualified for succession (Emin Pascha 1917, I:398, 408; Stanley 1891, I:350 ff.; Gorju 1920:133 ff.; Roscoe 1911:117, 135, 238, also 1902:47, 51). These same rules held for the female functionaries who fulfilled the ritual tasks mentioned above (Roscoe 1902:66).

The most important functionary of the *Batongole* was the *Katikkiro*, the "prime minister" (Emin Pascha 1917, I:447; Stanley 1891, I:356 ff.; Wilson and Felkin 1882, I:194; Ashe 1889:54 ff.; Nicq 1932:130; Gorju 1920:136 ff.; Roscoe 1911:233 ff.; Kagwa 1934:171 ff.). All matters of state were presented to him first, and it was he who informed the ruler.

The position of *Katikkiro* was usually reached at the end of a long and successful career. During the audiences of the *Kabaka* the royal rug rested on the knees of the *Katikkiro*, the *Kimbugwe* and some of the royal wives (Roscoe 1911:259). The genealogical lists provided by Kagwa (1934:18-67) mention 56 *Katikkiro*. All rulers of Buganda made use of this functionary. There was no clan associated specially with this function (see table I). In all districts of the country large estates were assigned to the *Katikkiro*. He was the supreme judge, and bribes seem to have played a decisive role in his court. He governed the capital (Gutkind 1963:67) and was responsible for the collection of taxes (Roscoe 1911:244; Mukasa 1946:137). Together with the *Kimbugwe* and the *Kasujju* he appointed the new *Kabaka*.

The *Kimbugwe* was in ritual matters the equivalent of the *Katikkiro*. He was entrusted with the care of the royal umbilical cord and was responsible for the maintenance of the royal fetishes (Roscoe 1911:105, 233; Emin Pascha 1917, I:383; Stuhlmann 1893:190). The umbilical cord - the 'twin' of the ruler was kept in a special part of his house. Once a month he presented the fetishes to the ruler (Speke 1863:372, 441; Grant 1864:232; Kagwa 1934:76). After the appointment of a new *Kabaka* he retired to continue his care for the 'twin' and the fetishes of the deceased (Roscoe 1902:53, 1911:105, 236). The *Kimbugwe* was like the *Katikkiro* a member of the *Lukiiko*,

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and "in virtue of his office was a favourite with the King, and was admitted to his presence at all times" (Roscoe 1911:236; Mackay 1890:153). According to the lists of Kagwa there have been 23 *Kimbugwes* throughout the years. Apparently not every *Kabaka* appointed such a functionary. There was no clan associated specially with this function.

TABLE I: THE NUMBER OF TOPFUNCTIONARIES PER CLAN (till Mwanga II)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	T.
Ng (royal clan) -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Ngeye	1	4	12	2	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	2	1	25
Ngonge	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	3	6
Nsenene	3	1	3	2	2	3	5	7	2	1	-	2	3	34
Fumbe	10	3	2	2	2	-	2	-	-	4	-	2	1	28
Njovu	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	-	1	3	11
Mamba	9	5	3	3	13	-	2	-	6	2	5	4	5	57
Butiko	4	1	2	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	14
Lugave	4	4	4	1	3	1	2	30	-	2	-	1	2	54
Ndiga	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	5	22	-	2	33
Mbogo	3	-	-	10	-	-	-	1	4	-	-	3	-	21
Nkima	1	-	-	2	3	34	-	1	-	1	-	2	-	44
Mpewo	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	4
Nvuma	8	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	12
Nyonyi	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	6
Musu	1	-	2	-	1	-	1	-	-	2	1	6	-	14
Kobe	1	2	-	2	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	8
Ngabi	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Ntalaganya	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	3	14	-	-	-	-	18
Mutima	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Nteriko	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Totals	51	23	31	26	35	38	17	42	35	19	28	26	25	396

(1) Katikikiro	(8) Kasujju
(2) Kimbugwe	(9) Kitunzi
(3) Kago	(10) Ppookino
(4) Mukwenda	(11) Katambala
(5) Kangawo	(12) Ssekibolo
(6) Mugema	(13) Nnamasole
(7) Kaima	

From: Claessen 1970: 337.

These two were by far the most important appointed functionaries. There were several more *Batongole* who should be mentioned here, however:

- The *Kauta*, the royal cook. Some visitors were surprised that his position was so prominent (Chaillé-Long 1876:92 ff., 128; Stanley 1891, I:274; Wilson and Felkin 1882, I:195; Nicq 1932:131, 328;

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Gorju 1920:139; Roscoe 1911:106). He was a member of the *Lukiiko*. During the mourning ceremonies for a deceased *Kabaka*, the *Kauta*, the *Sseruti* (the chief brewer) and other functionaries, male as well as female, were put to death to serve their master in his new life (Roscoe 1901:129; 1911:106).

- The *Ssaabakaaki* was the head of the royal palace, including the division of the ruler's pages (Gorju 1920:138; Kagwa 1934:171). According to Roscoe (1911:249) he was responsible for their conduct to the *Kago*, who seemed to be his immediate chief.
- The *Ssenkole* was also connected with the *Kago*. He was the guardian of the perpetual fire. He executed members of the royal family (Nicq 1932:366; Roscoe 1911:189, 336). The actual keeper of the fire, the *Musoloza*, a function hereditary in the Nyonyi clan, was killed when the *Kabaka* died (see above).
- The *Ssabata* was the state's executioner (Stuhlmann 1894:191; Roscoe 1911:202, 332).
- Also should be mentioned the *Kawuka* (chief drummer; Roscoe 1911:25) and the *Mujasi*, a military title. One of the *Mujasi* was commander of the royal bodyguards (Stuhlmann 1894:161; Ashe 1894:80).

Numerous unnamed *Batongoles* were found in functions varying from bodyguard to assistant of more prominent dignitaries. Their common characteristic was that they got their position by appointment. For the more important of such posts the *Katikkiro* and some *Ssaza* chiefs made suggestions to the ruler, who then selected one of the men suggested (Stanley 1891, I:359). Some of the functions in the hands of the *Batongole* at that time seem to have been hereditary in earlier periods.

Among the territorial chiefs or *Bakungu*, the *Ssaza* governors were by far the most important. They were the heads of the major provinces of the realm. In that function they maintained law and order, levied soldiers for the national armies, oversaw the royal estates in their regions and regularly sent great quantities of food to the court (Linant de Bellefonds 1876:72; Stanley 1891, I:276 ff.; Stuhlmann 1894:191; Ansorge 1899:90; Roscoe 1911:238-247; Kagwa 1934:90 ff.). The *Ssaza* chiefs were:

- The *Kago*, chief of Kyadondo. He performed on behalf of the *Kabaka* all kinds of ritual obligations (as was also done by the *Kauzumu*, mentioned above). After the death of a *Kabaka* the *Kago* retired to guard the lower jaw of the deceased (Roscoe 1901:129; 1911:105, 110; Kagwa 1934:13). Because of his ritual responsibilities the *Kago* could not be executed - a privilege he shared with the *Katikkiro*, the *Kimbugwe*, the *Mugema* and the

Kasujju - though the tradition was not always sufficient to save the life of such a dignitary (Kagwa 1934:83 ff.). The *Kago* also administered the priests and temples of Buganda. According to Kagwa's lists there were 31 *Kagos*. No fewer than 11 *Kabakas* seem to have reigned without a *Kago*. There was no special connection with one of the clans.

- The *Mukwenda* was the chief of Ssinga. There are 26 *Mukwendas* known in history, who served under 11 *Kabakas*. This function came to prominence only relatively late. In the period between appointment and inauguration the *Mukwenda* protected the new ruler. Speke states (1863:254) that the *Mukwenda* was the guardian of the harem. He (1989:53, 91) mentions that the *Mukwenda* was appointed, but Emin Pascha (1917, I:408) and Wilson and Felkin (1882, I:273) met with a *Mukwenda* who succeeded his father.
- The *Kangawo* was the chief of Bulemeezi. There are 35 *Kangawos* known of whom 13 came from the Mamba clan.
- The *Mugema* was the chief of Busiro. He was called 'the King's father' and 'Katikiro of the Death' (Roscoe 1911:233). The position was hereditary in the Sheep clan. Of the 38 *Mugema* known, 34 came from that clan. His tasks lay mainly in the field of ritual around the *Kabaka*.
- The *Kaima* was chief of Mawokota. There is not much known about him.
- The *Kasujju* was the chief of Busujju. He was the guardian of the children of the *Kabaka*. Together with the *Katikkiro* and the *Kimbugwe* he appointed the new ruler. Of the 42 *Kasujju* mentioned, 30 came from the Lugave clan, and before that time 7 *Kasujju* came from the Nsenene clan.
- The *Kitunzi* was the chief of Ggamba. This function is said to have been created by *Kabaka* Kateregga. For some time it was hereditary in the Ntalaganya clan (Kagwa 1934:27).
- The *Katambala* was the chief of Bulambala. This position was usually held by the chief of the Ndiga clan (Roscoe 1902:27; 1911:256). In Kagwa's lists 28 *Katambala* are mentioned, 6 of whom did not come from the Ndiga clan.
- The *Ssekibobo* was the chief of Kyaggwe. This function was created not long before the time of the visits, after the conquest of the region. Yet no less than 26 *Ssekibobo* were known, some of whom were executed by orders of the king (Speke 1863:463). Stanley (1891, I:284) mentions the *Ssekibobo* as an important military leader.
- The *Ppookino* was the chief of Buddu, and like the *Ssekibobo*, this title was a relatively recent one. The information found by Stanley (1891, I:284) and Lugard (1893, II:426, 433, 470) suggests

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that the *Kabaka* very easily replaced the one *Ppookino* with another.

Though the *Ssaza* chiefs are usually discussed in connection with the provinces they administered, it must be noted that they lived at the court of the *Kabaka* for the greater part of the year. They could be better kept under control in this way. Their tasks in the provinces were executed by deputies bearing the same titles as the chiefs in the capital, a fact that contributes greatly to the confused information on the political system of Buganda. Though they were absent, the functionaries at the court remained fully responsible for the state of their provinces (Speke 1863:255, 323, 438; Linant de Bellefonds 1876:72; Nicq 1932:113, 125; Roscoe 1911:237 ff.; 1921:185).

Apart from the *Ssaza* chiefs, there were several more *Bakungu* holding posts in the provinces. They administered smaller districts. Interestingly, they were not responsible to the province chief, but directly to the *Kabaka*. At the bottom of the scale were the village heads. Rusch (1975:228) points to the fact that villages in the sense of closely-grouped clusters of dwellings did not exist in traditional Buganda. A village must be understood in the sense of a group of households scattered over a relatively limited region and forming a political unit.

As in Dahomey, the appointed village head was in a difficult position between the villagers and the government; he had to maintain good relations with both groups. From the point of view of the center, his main obligation was to see to it that taxes were paid and services rendered (Emin Pascha 1917, I:447 ff.; Roscoe 1911:14, 133, 238, 268; Nsimbi 1956:28 ff). Though *Bakungu* were found in all provinces, there were considerable differences in the power and influence of these functionaries. This obtained especially for the provinces that formed the heartland of Buganda and those that had recently been conquered. Such issues are handled in the detailed analyses by Fallers, Kamoga and Musoka (1964:99 ff.). They compare the situation in Busiro, an old province, and in the recently conquered Buddu. In Buddu, the district of the *Ppookino*, the majority of positions were in the hands of powerful *Bakungu*. In Busiro, headed by the *Mugema*, the hereditary *Bataka* functionaries were dominant. Fallers c.s. note,

that neither the Senkezi, nor the Makamba (in Busiro) exercised within his 'jurisdiction' the kind of over-all authority enjoyed by the Katambalwa in Buddu (Fallers, Kamoga, Musoka 1964:96).

In the newly conquered provinces the power of the *Kabaka* - and thus of his officials - was apparently greater than in the older regions, where the hereditary clan heads had their strongholds.

One of the problems in the analysis of the struggle for power between the *Kabaka* and the clans is that the traditional history is not very clear. It seems probable that several clans already lived in Buganda before the arrival of what would become in time the royal family (Roscoe 1911:136 ff.). It is also probable that these newcomers only gradually rose to power (Rusch 1975:180 ff.; cf. Kottak 1972; Claessen 1984a). The influence of the clan leaders diminished and newly appointed functionaries took over some of their tasks and responsibilities (Rusch 1975:193 ff.). Some functions, however, were never hereditary (Claessen 1970:118-126). In the middle of the 19th century the battle for power seems to have been lost by the *Bataka*. Only a minority of functions was then still in their hands. In ritual respects, however, the traditional situation had not changed very much. Through ritual ties the sacral kingship and the clans remained closely connected; these ties in fact legitimized the kingship, (cf. Claessen 1984a:110).

The main functions occupied by the *Bataka* were: the *Mugema*, the *Kasujju*, the *Katambala* and the *Musoloza*, all discussed above. The most important functions that were lost by the *Bataka* were the *Kangawo* and the *Kitunzi* also already discussed. Among the functions still held by the *Bataka* were furthermore:

- The *Gabunga*, the head of the Lungfish clan and commander of the royal fleet on Lake Victoria. His estates and those of his lineage heads covered a great part of southern Busiro (Fallers, Kamoga and Musoke 1964:96; on the *Gabunga* also: Speke 1863:449; Stanley 1891, I:284; Lugard 1983, II:150).
- The *Kibaale*, the deputy of the *Kabaka*, whenever the ruler was absent from the capital. Rusch (1975:220) considers him one of the most important functionaries of Buganda. He was a member of the Mpewo clan (Ashe 1889:85, 126; Roscoe 1911:157, 349; Mukasa 1946:138).

Other functions held by *Bataka* were largely ritual functions such as:

- The *Semanobe*, the priest of Budo Hill, who took an active part in the coronation of the *Kabaka*. He was a member of the Mamba clan.
- The *Nankere*, the priest who performed the final ceremonies of the royal inauguration; his son was killed in that ritual. He was also a member of the Mamba clan.

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- The *Walusimbi*, a member of the Fumbe clan. He assisted in the ritual on Nankere Hill (Roscoe 1911:146, 211; Kagwa 1934:18, 86, 116). The same held for the *Nakantanzi* of the Lugava clan.

Also several of the royal wives performed specific ritual tasks in connection with the ruler. Their position was hereditary in specific clans.

Though in many respects governance in Buganda creates the impression of ad hoc decisions and personal activities, in reality there was, of course, much order and organization. All functionaries had specific tasks and responsibilities, and there was a rather strict control on their activities. One of the places where ruler and functionaries met on a regular base was in the *Lukiiko*, the Great Council of Buganda (Roscoe 1911:258 ff.). The council met almost daily. Serious business as well as trifling details were discussed. High functionaries but also humble peasants had the right to be present here and to be heard (Stuhlmann 1894:191; Roscoe 1921:181). According to Felkin (1886:742), "whatever the privy council decides must be carried out, for no king dares oppose their decisions." Though this may be worded too strongly, the fact that all important functionaries of the realm attended the meetings of the *Lukiiko* certainly gave its decisions much weight.

4. Comparisons

A comparison between the socio-political organizations of Dahomey and Buganda reveals many surface differences. The titles are different, the ranks differ, the systems of taxation are different, the behavior of the escort differs, and so on. To compare merely by enumerating traits and aspects would not be very fruitful.

It seems more rewarding to look for similarities and differences in structures and patterns, and thus establish to what extent these two early states, which developed without ever being in touch with each other, show more basic common elements. Such an approach does not imply that common elements are identical. The idea is rather to look for general forms behind the variation in detail. Thus, the generalization that "members of the royal family play a minor role in the government" applies to both early states, while the specific form in which it occurs is variable (cf. Claessen 1970:178-180; 1978:533-536).

The ruler is not a 'divine king' in the sense of Frazer; there is no direct connection between his state of health and fertility (though in

Dahomey the *Akhosu* is required to demonstrate his good health). On the other hand, in both cases the ruler is sacral. He embodies law and order. His death occasions ritual and actual disorder. The ruler is not allowed to touch the earth, but the way in which this is prevented varies. His blood should not be spilled. The ruler is approached in a most deferential way. He is protected against the ritual risks of war: a substitute king commands the army. The ruler acts as a mediator between his people and his divine ancestors. Both success in war and the fertility of people and land are connected with his mediating activities.

The ruler does not need food, he is obliged to be generous, but his gifts are often of a paltry nature. Rituals to prolong the life of the ruler are found: substitutes are killed in his place.

The ruler holds numerous audiences, meets his counselors repeatedly. All decisions are taken at least ideologically by the ruler. But in practice the top dignitaries have great influence on the course of matters. Occasionally the ruler acts as supreme judge. In these matters things seem to be arranged more formally in Dahomey than in Buganda.

In both early states the members of the royal family are kept practically outside the government. This is accomplished in Dahomey in a less drastic way than in Buganda. Moreover, in Dahomey in the 19th century some members of the family received formal political positions. Both polities show deliberate efforts to create counterweights against powerful groups. This system appears to be more elaborate in Dahomey, however. The ruler appoints numerous functionaries, but it is not always clear to what extent such appointments are deliberate, or follow hereditary lines.

The succession of the ruler is arranged by way of dynastic election. Some of the great dignitaries of the realm play a decisive role in the selection. As the successor is not yet sacral, complex rituals including human sacrifices are necessary to achieve this special status. The rituals extend over a number of years. In Dahomey the successor is usually known during the lifetime of the ruler; in Buganda this is not the case.

The position of women in the courts of Dahomey and Buganda differs considerably. It is not clear whether a first wife played an important role in Dahomey. In Buganda the *Lubuga*, a half-sister of the king, figures as the queen of the realm. Apart from the *Luguba* there are several wives of the *Kabaka* who fulfill specific ritual

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tasks. In Dahomey and in Buganda the 'mother' of the ruler is a functionary once the biological mother has died. In Buganda this 'mother', the *Nnamasole*, is politically powerful. The position of the many other women in the harem varies again considerably. In Dahomey many of them function as controlling officials of the *Caboceers*. In Buganda they have no political influence at all and suffer as a result of royal arbitrariness.

In both early states the numerous functionaries and officials can be grouped into categories. Such categories play a significant role in the establishment of counterweights. In terms of state organization it is possible to distinguish national or central dignitaries (prime ministers and the like), regional functionaries (such as the *Ssaza* chiefs), and local functionaries (as village heads). In broad outline the main tasks of the regional and local functionaries are alike: the maintenance of law and order and the organization of taxation and public works.

It might be possible to reduce this (incomplete) list of similarities and differences into more general patterns. In order to do so, however, several more African cases should be included in the comparison, while also a number of cases outside of Africa have to be introduced to check whether the phenomena selected are typical for Africa or are general traits of all early states. The construction of such patterns will not be attempted here. The interested reader is referred to publications specially directed towards that goal (Claessen 1970, especially chapters 7-10; Claessen 1978; 1981; 1984a).

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