The Colonial Archives: Photographs of Uganda and European Imaginative Constructions of Africa

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Introduction

This archive note examines a selection of photographs that were made available to the public at the National Archives at Kew in 2005.[2] Although Kew's archives are typically associated with economic and scientific implications of botanical research,[3] they nonetheless contain a plethora of colonial photographs from the camera's inaugural years.[4] Incidentally, there is a level of temporal common ground between the portrayal of the empire and the development of the archive, as the latter, much like the former, was a fixation of the Victorian bourgeoisie.[5] Yet although the myriad constituents contained within the archive, including 'museum collections, public registers…and the records offices of public and private societies and companies,'[6] render it, as Ann Laura Stoler suggests, autonomously worthy of academic analysis,[7] this archive note will set the photographic material as subject and the archive as the source.

This prioritisation of the interrogation of photographic material rather than that of the archive itself is largely due to the fact that this material's designation as "colonial" has been described as 'a heterogenous documental world, spanning distinct languages, literary and artistic genres or conventions, historical moments, geographical settings [and] varied human purposes and agendas'.[8] As such, to set the material (rather than the archive) as subject enables us to interrogate a selection of 'the diverse constituents of colonial knowledge'[9] with a focussed analytical gaze. Since, moreover, the 'meanings of such images have shifted over time, acquiring layers of thought and critiques',[10] my analysis will first and foremost account for the contextual connotations of the photographs, interrogating the role of captioning in photography, the material itself, and the formation of the archive as an element of colonial expression.

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[2] 'Africa Through a Lens: The Colonial Office photo collection', Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 10 February 2011, accessed 14 March 2013, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/africa-through-a-lens-the-colonial-office-photo-collection.

[3] 'Archive Collections', *British Journal for the History of Science*, 25.4 (1992), pp. 453-456, at p. 455.

[4] M. Kennedy, 'Out of Africa: National Archives seeks public help to identify empire-era pics', *The Guardian*, 10 February 2011, accessed 14 March 2013, www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2011/feb/10/national-archives-empire-era-photos.

[5] A. Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home and History in Late Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003), p. 22.

[6] J. Bacon, 'Archive, Archive, Archive!', *Circa*, 119 (2007), pp. 50-59, at p. 51.

[7] A.L. Stoler, 'Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance', *Archival Science*, 2.1-2 (2002), pp. 87-109, at p. 88.

[8] R. Roque and K.A. Wagner, *Engaging Colonial Knowledge: Reading European Archives in World History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 1.

[9] Roque and Wagner, *Engaging Colonial Knowledge*, p. 4.

[10] L. Peers and A.K. Brown, '"Just by Bringing These Photographs": On Other Meanings of Anthropological Images', in C. Morton and E. Edwards (eds.), *Photography, Anthropology and History* (Farnham: Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Group, 2009), pp. 265-280, at p. 265.

Parenthetically, my interest in this region of Africa is personal, as my great-grandfather stowed away on a boat from Porbandar to Uganda in 1908 aged 14, setting up what was to become the current family business of sugar production aged 14. Indeed, my discovery in the National Archives of a photograph of a college established by my great-grandfather in Uganda was somewhat at odds with the intriguing fact that they are 'not intended for your eyes';[11] one does indeed feel an uncanny level of intrusion upon opening a tattered colonial photograph album (see Fig. 1), which is compounded by the prestige ascribed to colonial photographs in their exemption from the flows of economic interchange.[12] Although perhaps digitizing the archive is a possible solution for both increasing the accessibility of these photographs and aiding in their preservation, as it has been argued that this would 'enlarge the field of what can be said on the topic of the history [of]…Africa',[13] there is something strangely absorbing about being able to connect with a physical artefact of colonial rule.

The Camera and Colonial Africa

Despite the omnipresence and ease of accessibility attributable to the camera in contemporary existence, this device first appeared in 1839[14] and, interestingly, it manifested itself instantaneously, as a fully-fledged technology.[15] As a panoptic phenomenon embodying the Victorian inclination towards 'collection, display and discipline',[16] it is little wonder that photography's popularity in this era was widespread, as 'the exhibition, the museum, the zoo, the gallery and the circus – all of which involve the fetishistic principle of collection and display'[17] were prevailing preoccupations of the time. Although neither many Africans nor foreigners utilised this technology during the mid-nineteenth century,[18] the collection of colonial-era photographs held in both private and public archives across the world is testimony to its nevertheless relatively widespread use. Moreover, that both the manifestation of the camera as germane and conveniently transferable device and academic research into African civilisation were practically concurrent occurrences,[19] suggests that photography provided a means for the peripheries of the empire to transmit visual information back to its metropolitan centres. Indeed, since travel in this era was not nearly as simple or ubiquitous as it is today, photography matched well with 'the ethos of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century travellers who journeyed to the world's remaining *terrae incognitae*',[20] as a means to capture and relay detailed knowledge of previously unexplored territory.

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[11] C. Steedman, *Dust* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2001), p. 150.

[12] L. Buckley, 'Objects of Love and Decay: Colonial Photographs in a Postcolonial Archive', *Cultural Anthropology*, 20.2 (2005), pp. 249-270, at p. 251.

[13] A. Isaacman, P. Lalu and T. Nygren, 'Digitization, History and the Making of a Postcolonial Archive of Southern African Liberation Struggles: The Aluka Project', *Africa Today*, 52.2 (2005), pp. 55-77, at p. 72.

[14] A. McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (Oxford: Routledge, 1995), p. 121.

[15] J.R. Gold, Review of 'Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire', by James R. Ryan, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 89.2 (1999), pp. 366-368, at p. 367.

[16] McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p. 122.

[17] McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p. 122.

[18] P. Hayes, 'Power, Secrecy, Proximity: A Short History of South African Photography', *Kronos*, 33 (2007), pp. 139-162, at p. 139.

[19] H.M. Cole and D.H. Ross, 'Photography in Africa', *African Arts*, 18.4 (1985), pp. 28-29, at p. 28.

[20] J. Bale, 'Foreign Bodies: Representing the African and the European in an Early Twentieth Century "Contact

There is certainly 'something voyeuristic and scopophilic'[21] about photography as a technology of surveillance, and despite the instantaneous nature of the information relayed by a visual image, photographs are, much like manuscripts, 'far from simple objects'.[22] Although photographs have been traditionally perceived not as analogous with experiential occurrences, but rather as autonomous segments of actuality itself,[23] the overt linkages between the camera, the eye and the "I"[24] emphasise the implicit subjectivity involved in both the production and reception of photographs. A photograph thus lacks autonomy,[25] and its '[encapsulation] of the rational laws of perspective in its very function'[26] suggests that the way in which it reduces a moment from the three-dimensional reality of the time-space continuum into a two-dimensional image leaves it open to interrogation and interpretation; as one critic succinctly puts it, 'the apparent meaning of particular photographs is a slippery matter'.[27] Indeed, it has been argued that photography's capacity to impart a visibly discernible phenomenon, drastically converts such a phenomenon 'into an object of possession';[28] the gaze a photograph invites is thus never without an undercurrent of tenure or control. Additionally, the coincidental overlap in the terminologies of photography and hunting (including 'loading, stalking, aiming, cocking and clicking [which] are all appropriate examples of their shared linguistic terrain'[29]) emphasises, in my view, the violence implicit in photography.

Colonial rule came relatively late to Africa, with the continent being surmounted by European colonial forces in the late 1800s and early 1900s.[30] The coincidence, moreover, of photography's initiation with the "Scramble for Africa"[31] suggests an overlap between the role of photography and the African colonising process, as images of European-claimed land and its inhabitants were easily dispatched to the imperial centre. However, colonial photographs of Africa did not always contain the explorative trope of nature and terrain,[32] and since 'private [colonial]

Zone"', *Geography*, 84.1 (1999), pp. 25-33, at p. 25.

[21] V. Prakash, 'Between Objectivity and Illusion: Architectural Photography in the Colonial Frame', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 55.1 (2001), pp. 13-20, at p. 14.

[22] I. Walker, 'Phantom Africa: Photography between Surrealism and Ethnography', *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, 37.147 (1997), pp. 635-655, at p. 635.

[23] C. Lyman, *The Vanishing Race and Other Illusions: Photographs of Indians by Edward S. Curtis*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), p. 29.

[24] Prakash, 'Between Objectivity and Illusion', p. 14.

[25] J.O. Bass Jr, 'More Trees in the Tropics', *Area*, 36.1 (2004), pp. 19-32, at p. 22.

[26] Z.R. Chaudary, *Afterimage of Empire: Photography in Nineteenth-Century India* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2012), p. 107.

[27] P.S. Landau, 'Empires of the Visual: Photography and Colonial Administration in Africa', in *Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa*, ed. by P.S. Landau and D. Kaspin, (Ewing: New Jersey: U of California P, 2002), pp. 141-172, at p. 142.

[28] D. Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing and Imperial Administration* (Duke: Duke UP, 1993), p. 25.

[29] Landau, 'Empires of the Visual', p. 145.

[30] J. Parker and R. Rathbone, *African History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford UPr, 2007), p. 91.

[31] B. Harris, 'Photography in Colonial Discourse: The Making of "The Other" in Southern Africa, c. 1850-1950', in W. Hartmann, J. Silvester and P. Hayes (eds.), *The Colonising Camera: Photographs in the Making of Namibian History* (Cape Town: U of Cape Town P Ltd, 1998), pp. 20-25, at p. 20.

[32] C.G. Schillings, 'Photographing Wild Animals', *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society*, 37. 10 (1905), pp. 588-594, at p. 590.

photographs…[are] excellent and rich sources of information about both producer and subject',[33] they are perhaps more informative about contemporary European envisaging of Africa than those taken by explorers.

Although the intentions of religious and official institutions were not always concordant,[34] both missionaries and colonial officers produced detailed, varied photographic depictions of the continent.[35] Indeed, for the 'colonial ethnographers and historians, photography was a serious and useful science…imperative to the demonstration of proof',[36] suggesting that the images relayed by the colonisers were received in Europe as expressions of an absolute reality. Perhaps, much like the function of colonial and postcolonial texts, photographs of Africa at the time were seen as provisional of admittance to African "otherness" and culture itself,[37] as viewers were and are immediately drawn into the colonial world of Africa. Indeed, the Western convention whereby to envisage peoples or civilisations becomes interchangeable with their comprehension[38] perhaps explains the vast number of images of colonial Africa located in archives. This understanding of other cultures and societies through the use of photographic images emphasises the 'role of the eye in establishing knowledge of the world and authority over space…[which was] a fundamental characteristic of Western thinking',[39] suggesting that photography aided in colonial claims to both the land of Africa and knowledge of it. Yet although 'photography, Western knowledge and Western authority became synonymous with the real',[40] and although the colonial photograph guarantees an authentic historical snapshot,[41] it has been argued that the camera paradoxically propagates its subject matter,[42] insinuating that images of colonial Africa contain much more information than the apparent reality they attempt to portray.

A subsequent point for contemplation is how photography relayed quotidian affiliation between the metropolis and its colonial outposts,[43] or how photography contributed to imaginative constructions of the empire held in European urban headquarters.[44] Indeed, that photography from the colonial era has been a comparatively unexploited resource for analysis[45] certainly makes them worthy of attention. Considering, furthermore, that the British Empire was not merely a

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[33] C.M. Geary, 'Missionary Photography: Private and Public Readings', *African Arts*, 24.3 Special Issue: Historical Photographs of Africa (1991), pp. 48-59 + 98-100, at p. 48.

[34] M. Godby, 'Framing the Colonial Subject: The Photographs of W.F. P. Burton (1886-1971) in the Former Belgian Congo', *Social Dynamics: A Journal of African Studies*, 19.1 (2008), pp. 11-25, at p. 13.

[35] Geary, 'Missionary Photography', p. 51.

[36] Prakash, 'Between Objectivity and Illusion', p. 16.

[37] G. Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (Oxford: Routledge, 2001), p. 37.

[38] J. Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia UP, 1983), p. 106.

[39] Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire*, p. 25.

[40] McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p. 122.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 123.

[42] *Ibid.*, pp. 123-124.

[43] C. Kaplan, 'Imagining Empire: History, Fantasy and Literature', in C. Hall and S.O. Rose (eds.), *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), pp. 191-212, at p. 191.

[44] D.W. Chambers and R. Gillespie, 'Locality in the History of Science: Colonial Science, Technoscience and Indigenous Knowledge', *Osiris*, 15 (2000), pp. 221-241, at p. 232.

[45] Buckley, 'Objects of Love and Decay', p. 249.

geographical and political body but also an autonomously potent example of display,[46] a level of the performance and spectacle involved in imaginative constructions colonised spaces is insinuated. It has, moreover, been argued that 'the convergence of technology, capitalism and visual culture…unmistakably gave rise to imperial consciousness',[47] which suggests something of a cause-and-effect phenomenon between ways of documenting the empire and Europe's apprehension of it. As there was also a significant dearth of actual intelligence with regards to Africa, coupled with a longstanding academic dialogue on the subject,[48] photography perhaps functioned as a means to underscore such discourse. Thus, what is demonstrated and withheld by archival colonial album pages perhaps 'enables us today to measure not only the limits of [European] "knowledge" of Africa, but also the…perception…of African otherness'[49] that prevailed in the colonial era. Since there is, moreover, a 'propensity of Europeans to represent Africa according to mythological schemas that predate European explorations there',[50] the camera no doubt functioned as a means to reinforce imaginative European constructions of "the dark continent". As Edward Said puts it, 'imperial mastery [involving] white Europeans *over* black Africans…[and] civilization *over* the primitive dark continent'[51] was a blueprint of colonial rule, and the fact that imperialism 'itself created "ways of seeing" that helped shape the composition, reproduction, circulation, and consumption of photographic imagery',[52] suggests there was a reciprocal and interdependent relationship between imperial thought and photographic images generated at the time. However, just as 'photographs of empty lands did not necessarily produce hundreds of white settlers…photographs of Africans in "savage" garb did not necessarily produce military expeditions and conquest';[53] the relation between imperial activity and photography was thus not always mutually reinforcing.

Yet colonial photography from Africa 'is typically fraught by the problematic depiction of subject as specimen',[54] suggesting that the violent lens through which Africa and its peoples were photographed contained the sinister implications of anthropologically-imbued inferiority. Since 'from the initial periods of tentative trade to the Early Modern period…the more common depictions of Africa positioned it as a place of freakish practices, beasts and violence-prone peoples',[55] this archive note investigates whether the camera functioned as a device through which such

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[46] D. Ciarlo, *Advertising Empire: Race and Visual Culture in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2011), p. 305.

[47] V. Langbehn, 'Introduction: Picturing Race: Visuality and German Colonialism', in *Routledge Studies in Modern European History: German Colonialism, Visual Culture and Modern Memory*, (Florence, Kentucky: Routledge, 2010), pp. 1-33, at p. 9.

[48] S. Palma, 'The Seen, The Unseen, the Invented: Misrepresentations of African "Otherness" in the making of a Colony. Eritrea, 1885-1896', *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, 45.177 (2005), pp. 39-69, at p. 40.

[49] *Idib.*, p. 40.

[50] D.D. Kaspin, 'Conclusion: Signifying Power in Africa', in P.S. Landau and D. Kaspin (eds.), *Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa* (Ewing, New Jersey: U of California P 2002), pp. 320-337, at p. 324.

[51] E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 33.

[52] Gold, Review of 'Picturing Empire', p. 367.

[53] P. Hayes, J. Silvester and W. Hartmann, 'Photography, History and Memory', in W. Hartmann, J. Silvester and P. Hayes (eds.), *The Colonising Camera: Photographs in the Making of Namibian History* (Cape Town: U of Cape Town P, 1998), pp. 2-10, at p. 2.

[54] M. Libsekal, 'Mama Casset and the Studio Dream Factory', Another Africa, 12 April 2012, accessed 14 March 2013, http://www.anotherafrica.net/tag/colonial-photography.

[55] N. Jayawardane, 'The End of the "Colonial Gaze"?', Africa is a Country, 21 November 2012, accessed 14 March 2013, http://africasacountry.com/2012/11/21/the-end-of-the-colonial-gaze.

perceptions were reiterated and reproduced. It is also worthy of mention that whether European photographs of Africa were 'conceived as ethnological data, political propaganda, or tourist advertising…[the] undercurrents of racism and voyeurism could run deep',[56] which implies that such condemning perceptions of Africa and its peoples were not necessarily confined to a singular discipline.

Captioning in Colonial Photographs

Bearing in mind this intimate connection between colonialism and the camera, this archive note explores the use of captions in ten photographic album pages of colonial Uganda dating from 1899 to 1959, examining the manifestations of the aforementioned colonial perceptions of Africa and its peoples. This period coincidentally covers almost the entirety of Uganda's colonial history, as the nation was 'created out of diverse socio-political formations by British colonialism from 1890',[57] and gained independence in 1962.[58] It is crucial to explore the function of the photographs' captions. Captions have been described as '[adding] a further frame…which guides the interpretation'[59] of a photograph, and they '[specify] one of the limitless possibilities of the picture',[60] which implies that the act of attributing verbal description to a visual image narrows the viewer's focus considerably. Also called a rebus title,[61] the caption 'trades on the photograph's inability to establish, of itself, the identity of its subject',[62] which denotes its practical capacities. Yet, despite the functional nature of captions, they act 'as mediation, offer[ing] the promise of a contact between the viewer and the viewed',[63] and thereby destabilise the potential for impartial judgement of the image it speaks of. Indeed, the caption has the ability to 'assume supremacy over the image and can divert the audience's attention away from what might, at first sight, appear the central object of the photograph',[64] indicating the, at times, disruptive and misleading operation of textual descriptions affixed to images.

Figure 2, taken in 1899, contains two images, only the first of which is captioned. This caption does not contain much information, simply describing the large, European-style residence as 'Entebbe, Uganda'. On the lawn in front of the mansion, a Ugandan, presumably one of the household's domestic staff members, stands gesturing to two lion cubs. Here, I would argue that the caption does indeed disturb the viewer's focus, as it suggests that this image of an imposing house is representative of life in Entebbe in 1899. Furthermore, the lack of detailed description here perhaps assists the image in communicating this representation for itself: the colonial preoccupation with

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[56] H. Cotter, 'Photography Review: Scenes of Colonial Africa With Racist Overtones', The New York Times, 14 February 2003, accessed 14 March 2013, www.nytimes.com/2013/02/13/arts/photography-review-scenes-of-colonial-africa-with-racist-overtones.html.

[57] P.T. Zeleza and E. Dickinson, *Encyclopaedia of Twentieth-Century African History* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 574.

[58] *Idib*., p. 574.

[59] Palma, 'The Seen, The Unseen, the Invented', p. 49.

[60] V. Signorile, 'Capitulating to Captions: The Verbal Transformation of Visual Images', *Human Studies*, 10.3-4 (1987), pp. 281-310, p. 283.

[61] C. Scott, *Spoken Image: Photography and Language* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), p. 49.

[62] *Ibid*., p. 49.

[63] *Ibid*., p. 54.

[64] Bale, 'Foreign Bodies', p. 30.

Europe's conquering of the "dark continent" is conveyed by the situation of two domesticated wild animals, guided by a uniformed Ugandan, within a beautifully manicured, tropical garden.

Figure 3, taken in 1904, is a page of five images from another album. Much like Figure 2, the captioning conveys little information, simply stating that this is 'Jinja, 04'. Three of the images contain traditional African thatched huts, and one is of several evidently rural-dwelling Ugandans, who appear relatively unaware of the camera. These individuals are marginal to the page's prioritisation of the large centre picture, which contains several European-style edifices, suggesting an emphasis on not only the aforementioned trope of subject-as-specimen, but also impression of Africa's people as bucolic and marginal to the European physical constructions.

Figure 4, taken in 1910, contains two images. The first of these is of Sir Appolo Kagwa, who is named and described in the caption as 'Prime Minister of Uganda'. His female companion is described as 'one of his wives', and both are smartly attired (she in a European dress), seated and hold rather stern expressions, perhaps implying their prior knowledge of the official nature of the photograph. By contrast, the images below (Fig. 4) depict almost nude Ugandans, all of whom are unnamed by captions. There is perhaps an element of hierarchy entering into the images, their placement and captioning: the male official, a collaborator with the colonial forces, is named and titled, his wife appears merely as one of his accessories (indeed, on the right of her image, it is his name that appears again) while his subjects are unspecified, thereby allowing their semi-nudity and traditional decorations to reinforce whatever preconceptions the viewer holds about Africa and its people.

Figure 5, taken in 1924, is a page containing four images. The two larger images of scenery are given priority, and one is captioned 'Ripon Falls, Source of the Nile'. The two smaller images depict local villagers in traditional attire situated next to traditional African huts. The precedence given to the European-named site, coupled with the lack of captions affixed to the images of African people, perhaps insinuates that claiming ownership over the land through the act of naming in some way connotes European superiority over its people. Figure 6, taken in 1927, operates similarly. Only the last two photographs on the page contain captions, one naming the 'Nile' and the other the 'Assua River'. This latter caption, particularly, diverts the viewer's attention away from the Ugandans bathing in the river, focussing instead on the ownership the Europeans exerted over the land, its features, and its people. Figure 7 was taken in 1961. It is a rural image of the hilly approach to Npalo, and in the foreground is a Ugandan woman in traditional dress. Yet nowhere in the caption is she named or mentioned; again, the wording only describes the site of the Rukiga Headquarters, and emphasises that the reader should 'Note the contour lines of black wattle on the stony hill sides'. Here we find a colonial landscape narrative, wherein the African figure, despite her foregrounded positioning, is merely 'part of the scenery…yield[ing] no agency over [her] surroundings'.[65]

The final motif to be considered through interrogating the use of captions is the representation of colonial office in Uganda. Figure 8, taken in December 1959, is captioned 'His Excellency Governor Taking Salute. Prisons Training Depot'. Positioned on a stage, central to the image is the English governor standing surrounded by colonial officials beneath a large Union Jack. The photograph's foreground predominantly contains seated European women, who are smartly dressed with hats and dresses. In the background a number of Ugandans, presumably individuals of some importance, can just be glimpsed. Despite the many individuals in the image, only the

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[65] E. Brownell and T. Falola, *Routledge African Studies: Landscape and Environment in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa* (Florence, Kentucky: Taylor and Francis, 2011), p. 2.

governor is identified, and even then he is not named. The unambiguous emphasis not only on the English governor but on his role as a prominent member of colonial officialdom sets the other people in the image in a space of inferiority, with again a hierarchical trope of the identified white male official, female accessory, and unspecified Africans entering into it.

Figure 9, taken again in 1959, is a photograph whose focus is a smartly-dressed English woman being given a bouquet by a uniformed female Ugandan. Its caption, 'Mrs Melmoth Receiving Flowers at Opening of Industries', immediately lends priority to the smiling woman as she takes the bouquet. Her married status perhaps implies she is the wife of a colonial official. The woman handing her the flowers is not named and can only be seen from behind while the faces and expressions of a number of seated English women and men in the background are in clear sight. Again, the caption leads the viewer to prioritise the representative of colonial administration (in this case, a European woman) with a Ugandan merely supplementing the action.

Figure 10 depicts four colonial officials in military attire, one of whom is shaking hands with a liveried Ugandan holding a rifle. The caption reads 'His Excellency the Governor Presenting Prize to Recruit. Depot 1959', and again lends significance to the governor. Much like the wording of the caption, the angle of the photograph prioritises the colonial governor, as the rewarded recruit's face cannot be glimpsed and his name is not stated. Figure 11 is an aerial view of Kampala city. Taken a year before independence, the caption is typewritten and detailed in description and yet lends precedence to only the 'Legislative Council Buildings' (which are foregrounded by the photograph's composition) and the pylons 'erected at the time of the visit of Queen Elizabeth II in 1954'. Rather than describing the exact location in Kampala of these buildings, or perhaps giving some information about the city as a whole, the caption suggests that the viewer's focus should be located on these colonial architectural constructions, again chiefly communicating the manifestation of colonialism in Uganda.

The Subject Matter of Colonial Photographs

Many of the photographs in the colonial archives contain no captions, perhaps because 'those who originally compiled the albums presumed that the people [or features] in the images were already known'.[66] While 'images of the empire's racial Others travelled from…colonies…in the form of settler newspapers and letters, as well as in official dispatches and travellers' reports',[67] the albums I examined did not appear imbued with any official resonance, implying perhaps that their consumption was indeed intended for a private audience. As shall be seen, there exists within these pages some 'enduring metaphors, instructive imagery and compelling figures [of] colonial discourse',[68] a few of which can be identified as 'the white hunter, the noble savage, the detribalized native…[and] the harmonious little community'.[69] Indeed, the notion that 'colonial rule operated smoothly in Africa',[70] with the continent imagined as a 'quiet "backwater"'[71] is certainly conveyed by

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[66] Buckley, 'Objects of Love and Decay', p. 266.

[67] A. Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating identities in nineteenth-century South Africa and Britain*, (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 7.

[68] C.M. Shaw, *Colonial Inscriptions: Race, Sex and Class in Kenya* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 1.

[69] *Ibid*., p. 1.

[70] B. Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance: Africa and Britain, 1919-1945* (Florence, Kentucky: Routledge, 1999), p. 5.

some of the photographs. The question that remains is what other 'tropes characteristic of the colonial archive'[72] can be glimpsed within these pages.

Some of these photographs play with the trope of the white man asserting dominance over the natural world, and, by extension, its inhabitants. Figure 12, from an album dated 1889, contains a set of four images. The first is a scenic depiction of a large, fast-flowing waterfall, next to which a portrait of an official named Captain Burton is placed. Below these an image of a Dr Gray reclining on a deck chair outside a sophisticated-looking tent is placed next to an image of an African-style thatched construction. This juxtaposition of the untamed natural world with images of colonial presence perhaps suggests the visibility of the 'white man's prominent position in the African interior',[73] serving to highlight the notion of the European "taming" and conquering of the continent. Figure 13, dated 1915, is a set of six photographs of an orderly, tropical garden with neatly pruned foliage. In the top left photograph stands a Ugandan holding a garden tool, with a white man seated on a low wall to his right, clearly communicating the motif of the European ownership over the land, and perhaps its people, through the act of subduing the natural world. Figure 14, dated 1917, is another page of pastoral images, although this time involving the notion of the hunter. Two images of a killed elephant and one of several dead Uganda kob can be seen, suggesting again the now-familiar schema of victory over the African natural world. Figure 15 from 1923 functions similarly. A Ugandan, complete with rifle, sits on top of a dead elephant, with three images of the natural terrain (one complete with a live elephant) being placed alongside.

These photographs also give us a glimpse of the racial hierarchies at work in colonial Uganda. Figure 16, taken in 1901, depicts a number of smartly dressed people arranged in an orderly fashion on the stairs of an imposing building, suggesting that the photograph was deliberately planned. At first glance they all appear European, but looking more closely, several Asians are interspersed among them. In the background of the picture, are three Africans, peering out from the shutters of the edifice. Here perhaps the legacy of the 'eighteenth century [classification of]…different varieties of human beings…according to the hierarchical scale of the Great Chain of Being',[74] in which 'the African was placed at the bottom of the human family, next to the ape'[75] is present. Figure 17, from 1910, perhaps illustrates this theme more explicitly: a colonial official stands erect at the top of a flight of stairs above a vast party of Ugandans. The photograph's composition, with its emphasis on the sheer volume of the crowd, coupled with the distinct elevation of the white man does indeed appear to convey the impression of the racially-delineated rank and order associated with colonialism. As Fanon so succinctly puts it, '…not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man'.[76]

African "otherness" and the consequent, reactionary changes brought to Africa by Europe's ideological and technological influences, is a further presence in many of the photographs. Figure 18, dated 1912, is another page containing several photographs although this time they depict a

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[71] *Ibid*., p. 5.

[72] L. Firstenberg, 'Representing the Body Archivally in South African Photography', *Art Journal* 61.1 (2002), pp. 58-67, at p. 66.

[73] L. Koivunen, *Visualizing Africa in Nineteenth-Century British Travel Accounts* (Florence, Kentucky: Routledge, 2008), p. 208.

[74] R.J.C. Young, 'Hybridity and Diaspora,' in *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, (Oxford: Routledge, 1995), pp. 1-28, at pp. 6-7.

[75] *Ibid*., p. 7.

[76] F. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto P, 2008 [1952]), pp. 82-83.

rural Ugandan village in which thatched huts, dancers in traditional attire and scenic images of the surrounding countryside can be seen. Here the sheer unfamiliarity of the African continent is conveyed, with its alien landscape, tribal inhabitants, and their traditional dwellings highlighting the "otherness" attributed to Africa by Europe. Figure 19, from the same year, operates similarly: once again, the environment takes centre stage, with acacia trees, the savannah and its resident elephants featuring prominently. The top right photograph depicts a tribal warrior, standing almost nude and complete with spear. Although this latter photograph appears posed, its contrived nature does not detract from the exoticism it evidently intends to portray. Moreover, the undescribed differentiation between this individual's attire and that of those from Figure 18 perhaps denotes European tendencies to homogenise African people, the legacy of which is the 'superficial creation'[77] of the African nation-state, in which many different ethnic groups reside under a singular national umbrella.

Figure 20, from 1912, contains three images. The first is of a number of Ugandan villagers in traditional attire outside a thatched hut, below which are two images depicting a number of Ugandans, overseen by two colonial officials, working on a boat. Here, the juxtaposition of traditional village life with the trappings of Western modernity suggests the "civilising" nature of colonisation in Africa, as progress is brought to the continent in the form of naval technology. Figure 21, from 1917, depicts a group of Ugandan military members, standing proudly in their uniform. Clearly demonstrating the familiarity of British military attire alongside the strangeness of several cheerful-looking black faces, with the 'reformed, recognizable Other, as a *subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*',[78] here is a communication of the "civilising" facets of the African colonial agenda. Figure 22, from 1922 contrasts an image of a tranquil, well-maintained garden with three images of Ugandans. Two of the images containing people are of Ugandans in tribal adornment, while in the image at the bottom of the page stands a group of Ugandans in Western attire. The layering of contrast between the cultivated landscape, the tribal warriors and their Westernised counterparts conveys again the cultural impositions placed upon Africa by Europeans.

Concluding Remarks

It has been argued that 'the greatest historical tragedy of Africa has been not so much that it was late in making contact with the rest of the world, as the manner in which that contact was brought about',[79]. This comment laments the way in which the European arrived on the continent, complete with 'intellectual baggage and a visual arsenal that served to direct his attention and filter reality'.[80] Therefore, one deduction to be positively drawn from this analysis is that since 'Europe's engagement with Africa goes back many centuries',[81] unlike the colonisation of the continent, it is perhaps unsurprising that photography, a relatively recent phenomenon, acted as a medium through which to reinforce the long-standing, mythologically-imbued European approximations of the continent. The question that arises is what the implications of this are in present-day

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[77] W. Maathai, *The Challenge for Africa: A New Vision* (London: Heinemann, 2009), p. 184.

[78] H.K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Oxford: Routledge, 1994), p. 122. Original italics.

[79] A. Cesaire, 'Discourse on Colonialism', in P. Williams and L. Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (Essex: Pearson Education Ltd, 1994), pp. 172-181, at p. 179.

[80] Koivunen, *Visualizing Africa in Nineteenth-Century British Travel Accounts*, p. 21.

[81] T. Youngs, 'Africa/The Congo: The Politics of Darkness', in P. Hulme and T. Youngs (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), pp. 156-174, at pp. 156-157.

photographic practice. Contemporary 'media depictions of postcolonial Africa as a space of crisis and lack'[82] suggest that the inheritance of colonial or European imaginative superiority is still rife today. Moreover, despite the humanist endeavours of such photographic engagements, they are perhaps more 'likely to invoke pity, rather than compassion',[83] thereby insinuating that remnants of the colonial consciousness, albeit with an impression of condescension rather than sheer superiority being evoked. One critic asks, 'Why not focus instead on the re-emergence of parliamentary democracy? The flowering of the free press? The changing condition of women'[84] in photographic depictions of the African continent today?

Certainly, there is a 'particular role of photographs in inscribing, constituting and suggesting pasts',[85] as the themes discussed through interrogating the captioning (European superiority; the role of names and the act of naming; the portrayal of colonial authority) and subject matter of the photographs (the white man's victory over the African landscape; racial hierarchy; African 'otherness') speak volumes about colonial imaginative apparatuses. Moreover, these archival collections have certainly been able to 'offer insight into the importance of photography...[in] anthropological, administrative, governmental and "popular"'[86] notions of Africa as a continent, since the level of thematic continuity running through those discussed here, let alone the untold others resting untouched in archives, cannot be ignored. Furthermore, considering these visual examples of colonial life in Africa 'as a counterpoint to the theoretical speculations of metropolitan theorists',[87] would almost certainly have lent them considerable authority at the time, and thus perhaps allows them to communicate a more resonant "truth" about colonial ideology today than, say, colonial archival sources derived from the empire's centres. My conclusion is thus fourfold. First, the archive is an excellent source for the exploration of both private and public histories. Second, there is a level of continuity between the violent function of the camera and the violence implicit in colonial ideology. Third, photography evidently contributed significantly towards the way in which colonial life in Africa was relayed to the empire's centres, acting as a means to bolster long-established imaginative constructions of the continent, while maintaining a veneer of reality. Last, (and this is a topic for another discussion in itself), that despite the facts of decolonisation and the creation of independent African nation-states, residual traces of imperial preoccupations are evidently apparent in European photography of Africa today. This, in sum, suggests that the colonial consciousness will take some time to evaporate from Western thought.

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[82] W.C. Bissell, 'Engaging Colonial Nostalgia', *Cultural Anthropology*, 20.2 (2005), pp. 215-248, at p. 217.

[83] R. Bleiker and A. Kay, 'Representing HIV/AIDS in Africa: Pluralist Photography and Local Empowerment', *International Studies Quarterly*, 51.1 (2007), pp. 139-163, at p. 141.

[84] S. Ellis, 'Writing Histories of Contemporary Africa,' *The Journal of African History*, 43.1 (2002), pp. 1-26, at p. 11.

[85] E. Edwards, 'Photography and the Performance of History', *Kronos*, 27 (2001), pp. 15-29, at p. 15.

[86] D. Poole, 'An Excess of Description: Ethnography, Race and Visual Technologies', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 34 (2005), pp. 159-179, at p. 162.

[87] F. Driver, 'Distance and Disturbance: Travel, Exploration and Knowledge in the Nineteenth Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 14 (2004), pp. 73-92, at p. 81.

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Appendix

All photographs in this Appendix have been reproduced with the permission of the National Archives, UK.

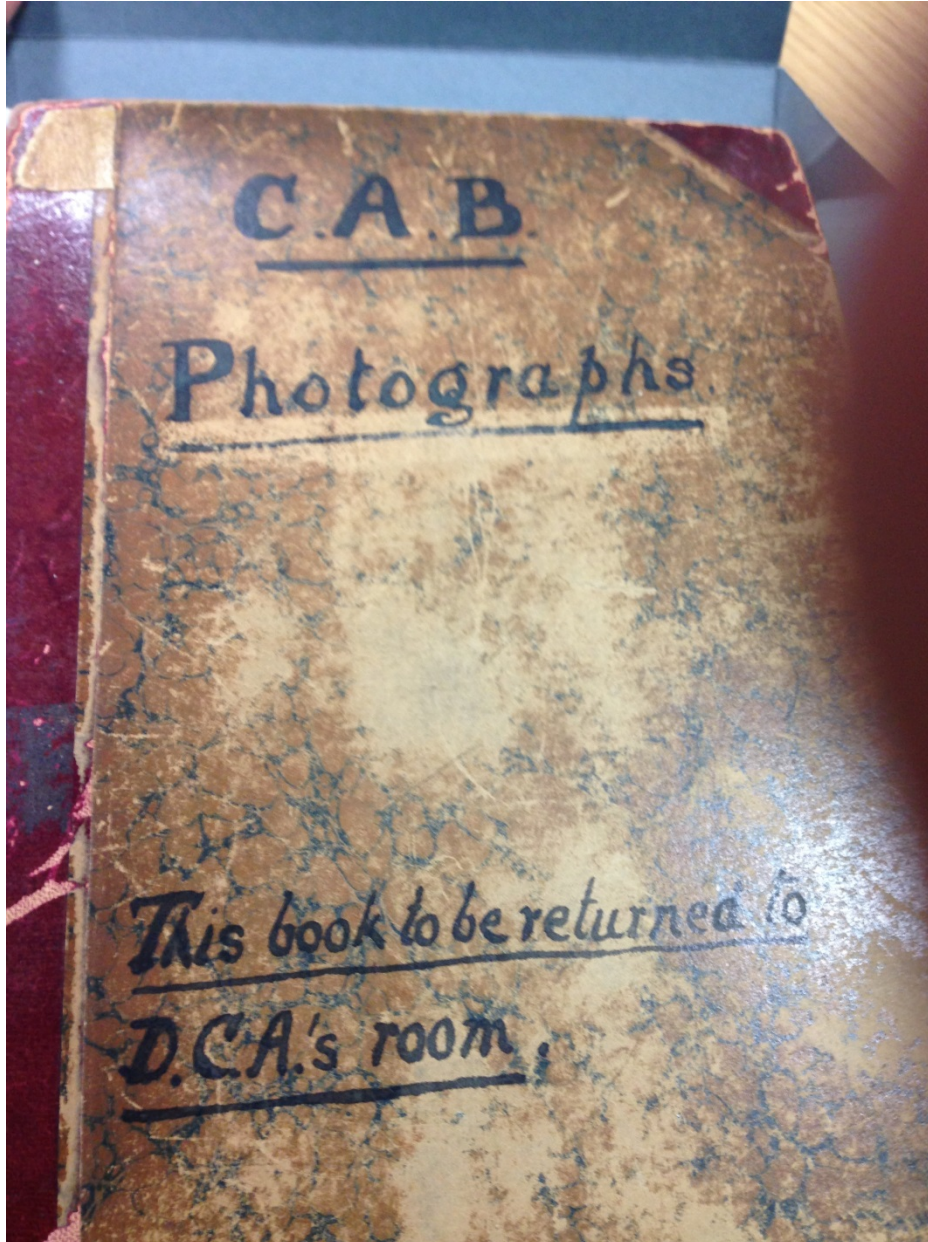Figure 1: The National Archives, CO 1069-817

Figure 2: The National Archives, CO 1069-189-9

Figure 3: The National Archives, CO 1069-189-16

Figure 4: The National Archives, CO 1069-189-8

Figure 5: The National Archives, CO 1069-189-24
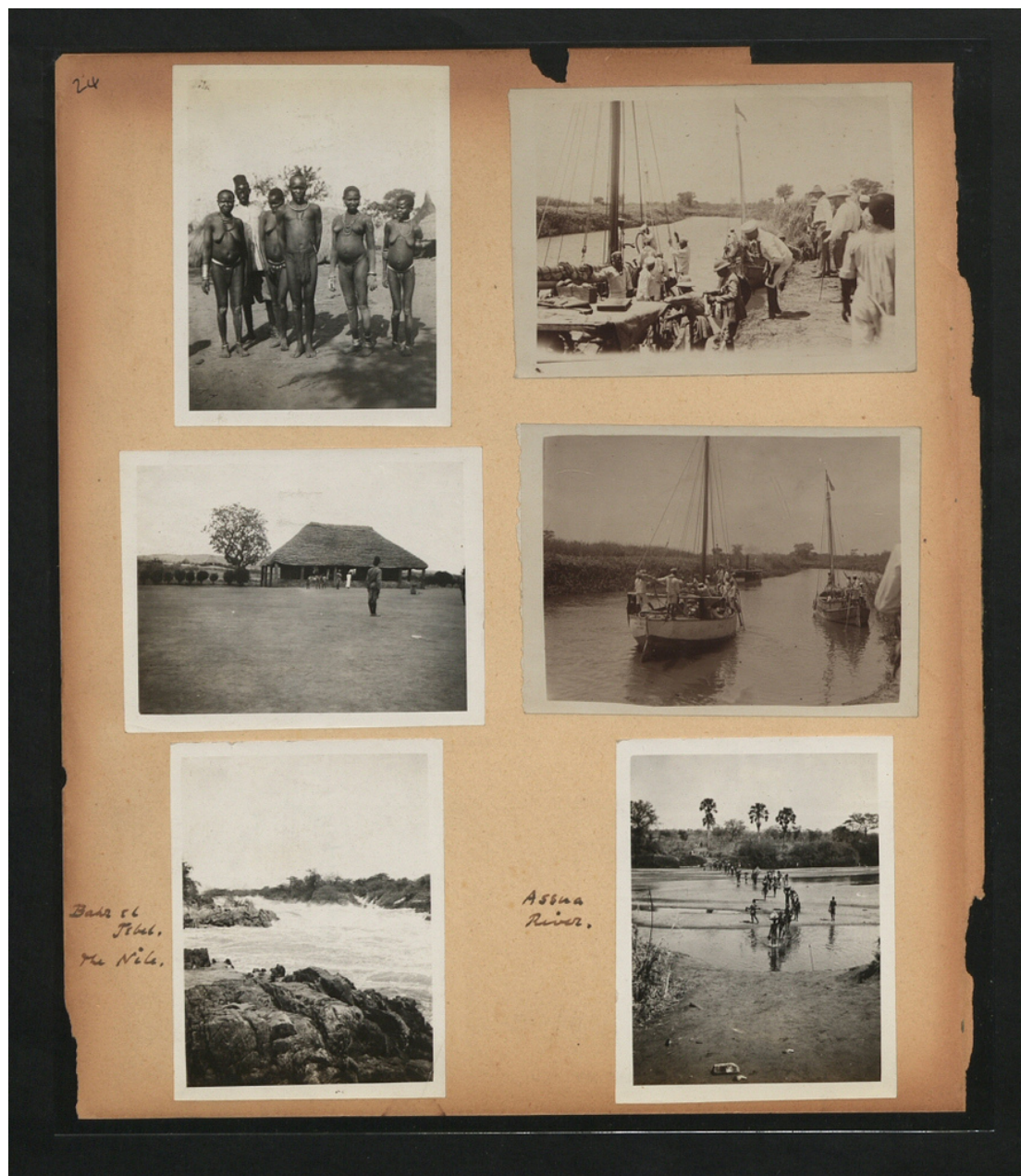
Figure 6: The National Archives, CO 1069-189-27

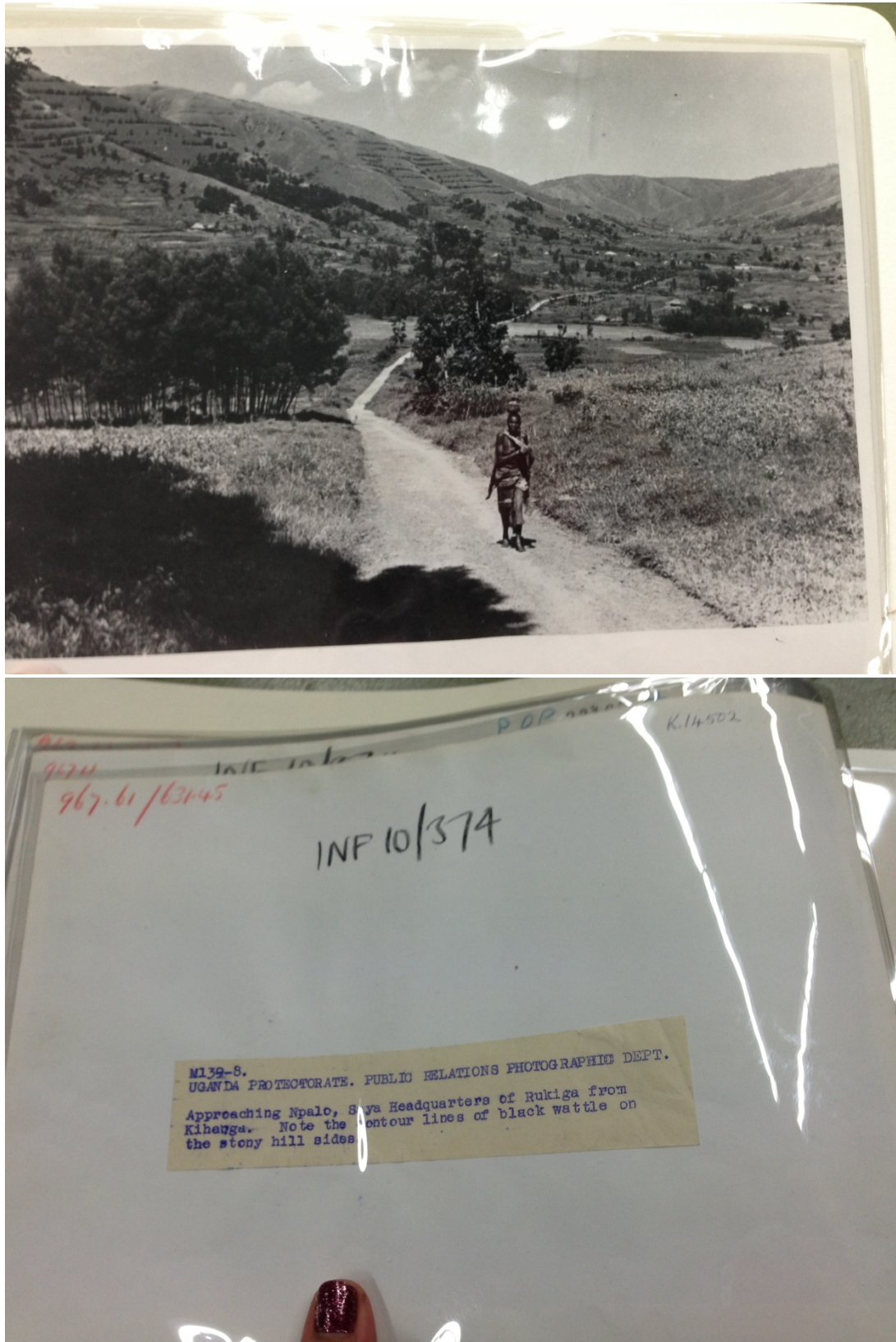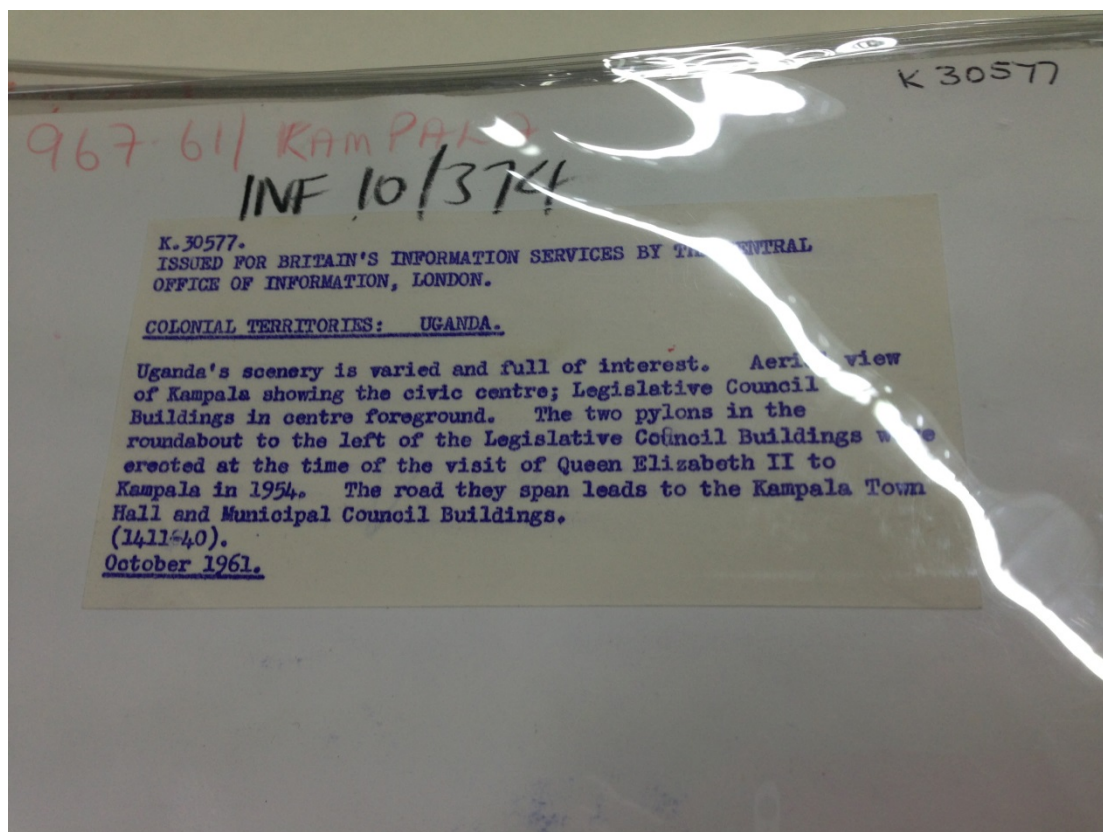Figure 7: The National Archives, CO 1069-189-3

Figure 8: The National Archives, CO 1069-189-16

H.E. GOVERNOR TAKING SALUTE. PRISONS TRAINING DEPOT. DECEMBER 1959.

Figure 9: The National Archives, CO 1069-192-28

MRS MELMOTH RECEIVING FLOWERS AT OPENING OF INDUSTRIES EXHIBITION

Figure 10: The National Archives, CO 1069-191-23

H.E. GOVERNOR PRESENTING PRIZE TO RECRUIT, DEPOT. 1959.

Figure 11: The National Archives, CO 1069-189-5

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ISSUED FOR BRITAIN'S INFORMATION SERVICES BY THE CENTRAL OFFICE OF INFORMATION, LONDON.

COLONIAL TERRITORIES: UGANDA.

Uganda's scenery is varied and full of interest.   Aerial view of Kampala showing the civic centre; Legislative Council Buildings in centre foreground.   The two pylons in the roundabout to the left of the Legislative Council Buildings were erected at the time of the visit of Queen Elizabeth II to Kampala in 1954.   The road they span leads to the Kampala Town Hall and Municipal Council Buildings.
(1411-40).
October 1961.

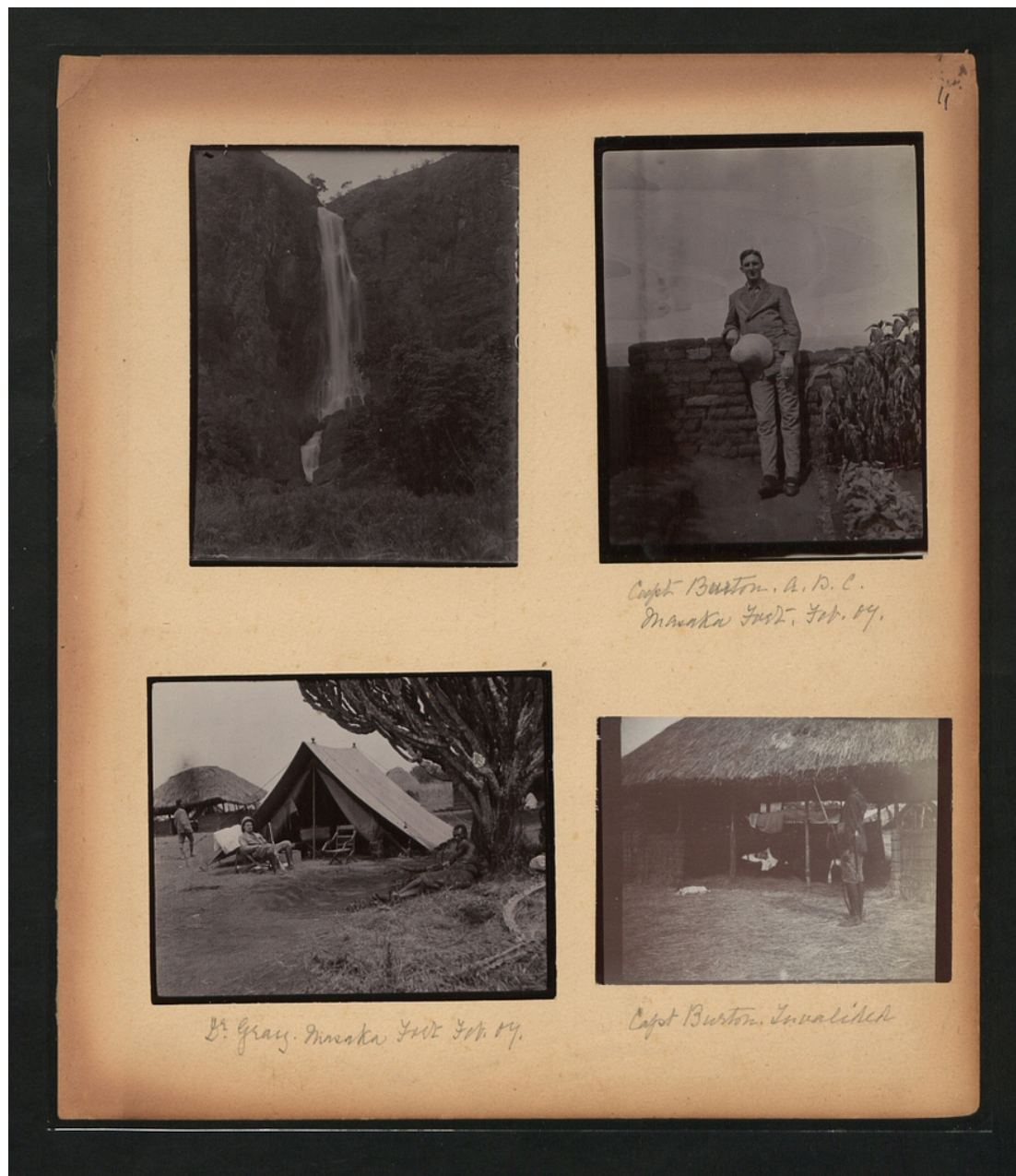Figure 12: The National Archives, CO 1069-189-14

Figure 13: The National Archives, CO 1069-189-15

Figure 14: The National Archives, CO 1069-189-17

Figure 15: The National Archives, CO 1069-189-23

Figure 16: The National Archives, CO 1069-190-7
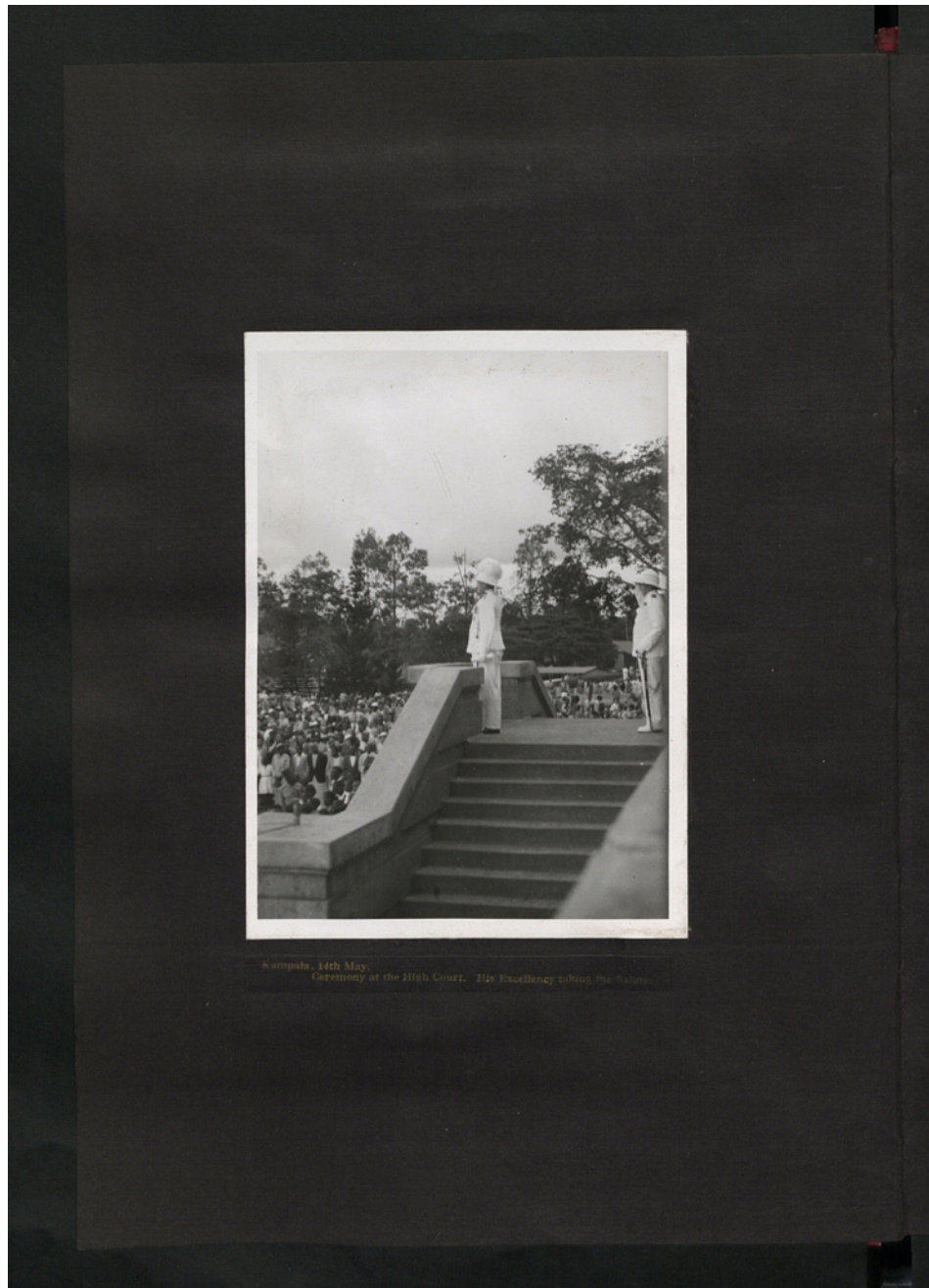
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Figure 18: The National Archives, CO 1069-189-28
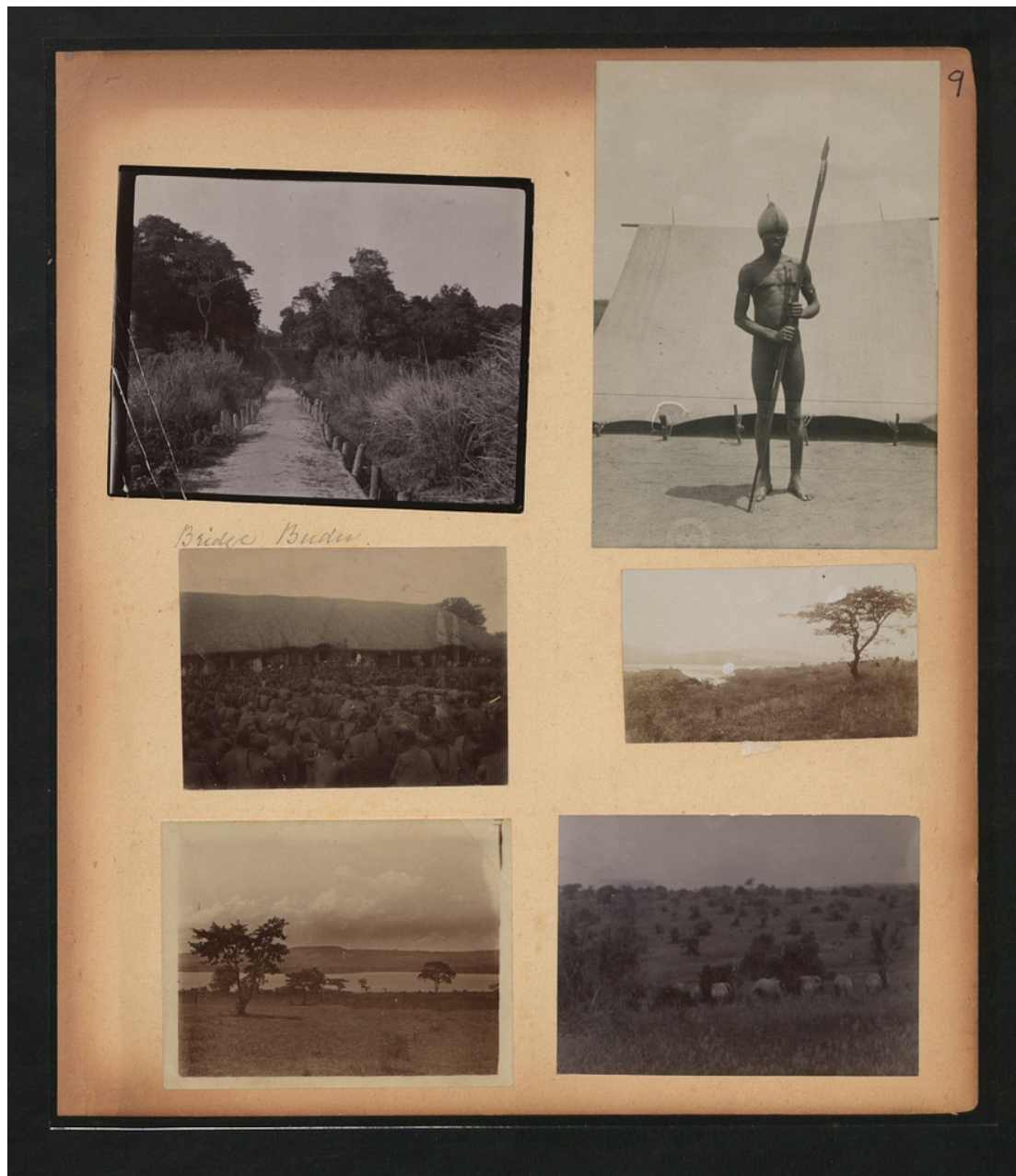
Figure 19: The National Archives, CO 1069-189-12

Figure 20: The National Archives, CO 1069-189-26

Figure 21: The National Archives, CO 1069-191-7

Figure 22: The National Archives, CO 1069-189-22

Figure 23: The National Archives, CO 1069-131-1
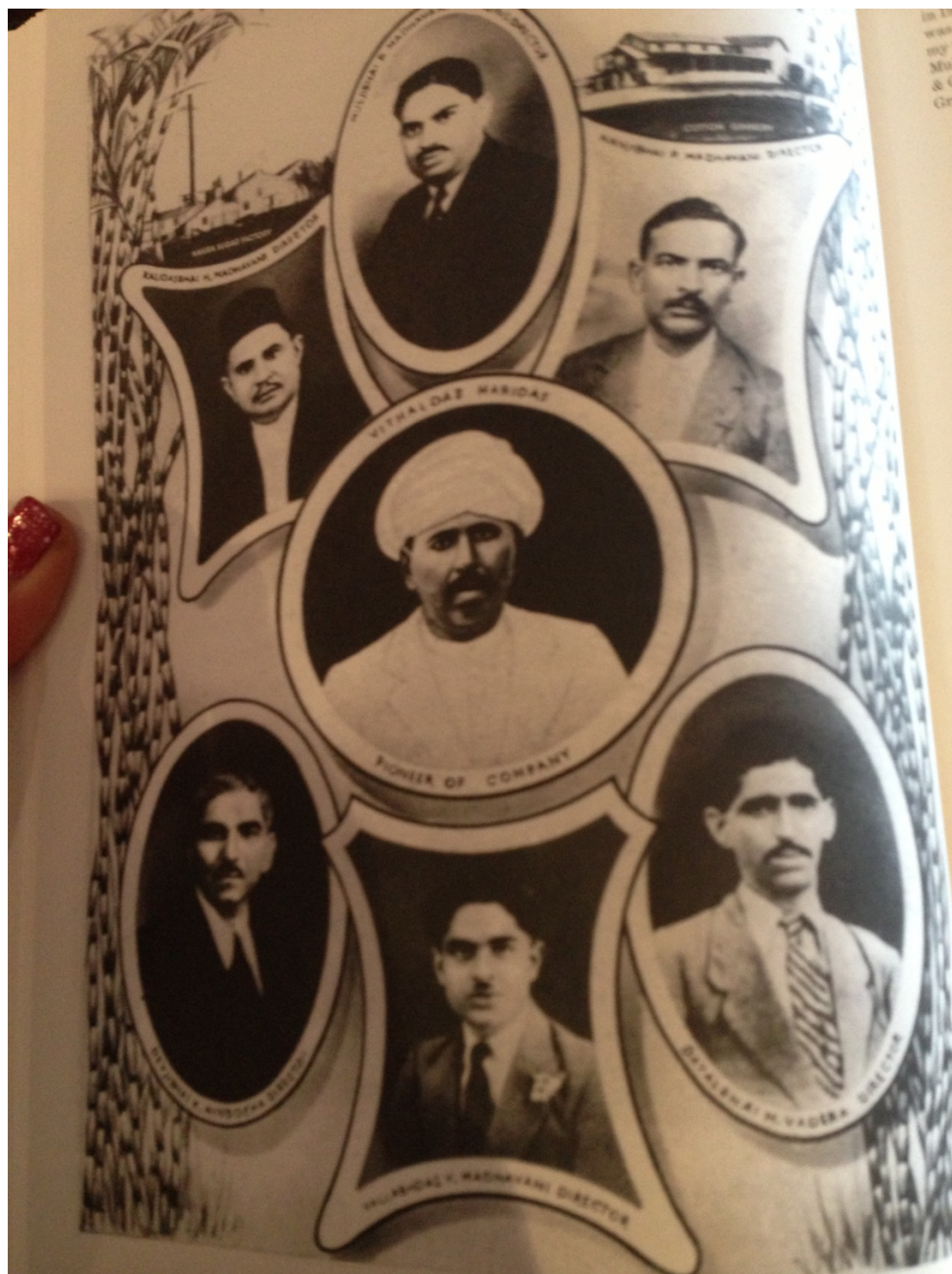
Figure 24: A 1937 poster showing the forerunner company to my great-grandfather's

Figure 25: Contemporary Map of Uganda