

Paper title: **Visualising power discourse in the Museum: The 'Unseen Archives of Idi Amin' exhibition**

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## **Introduction**

This paper seeks to discuss the contested temporary exhibition on 'Unseen Archives of Idi Amin'. The photographic exhibition on Idi Amin was staged in Kampala on 18 May 2019. The exhibition drew the attention of the different public at the Uganda Museum space. Yet the Uganda Museum was reflecting on its old ethnographic space of colonialism and external pressure of redevelopment. Why did the political history of Idi Amin become a hot debate in Uganda? In referring to Amin's regime of a military power which was known for the cause of brutal mass murders and expulsion of Asian communities from Uganda (Mazrui Ali, 1980). Why would a history of blood violence be reenacted at the Uganda the Uganda Museum? What were the reactions of the different audiences in viewing the 'Unseen Archive of Idi Amin? In what Elizabeth Edwards points to the 'multisensory' power of viewing images as evocative (Edwards 2013: 27). The sensory aspects are phenomenological which scholars referred to 'experiences with the materiality of the real world' as consciousness of senses of touch, seeing, smelling rather than suppressed knowledge of colonial power (Edwards, et al, 2006; Latour, 1986).

Based on the visual power discourse, I intended to explore the tension of ethnography and the political history by engaging with the question of visualising power. The paper focused on the question of visualizing power discourse framed in the ethnography of ethnic and tribal cultures of the Uganda Museum. Why would a political history exhibition on 'Unseen Archives of Idi Amin' become a visual power discourse? What were the emotions and experiences in viewing the 'Unseen Archive of Idi Amin both in the urban Kampala area and the countryside spaces? In this paper, I conclude that, the tension of visualising old ethnographic displays and the political history has not decolonised colonial ideas of tribes in knowledge production of museum exhibition.

## The Uganda Museum

The Uganda Museum located in Kampala, is the oldest and colonial founded cultural institution in the Eastern Africa region.<sup>1</sup> The museum in Uganda began during the administration of Sir Harry Hamilton Johnstone in 1900 when the Buganda agreement was signed with the British Protectorate of Uganda.<sup>2</sup> At the time of signing the Buganda agreement, Johnstone undertook a scientific expedition for the colonial protectorate government of the British in Uganda as an effective tribal province. In 1907, the British Protectorate Government instructed colonial administrators, missionaries, army officers and missionaries to start the project of collecting artefacts of the ethnological specimens under the Botanical, Scientific and Forestry department at Entebbe.<sup>3</sup> Why the British colonial administration focused on ethnological artefacts? An assumption was made to implement the code of managing people and the landscape.<sup>4</sup> As Boursiquot, Fabienne argued, cultural objects were part of the anthropological expedition to show evidence of material expression of the other society.<sup>5</sup> Hence, ethnographic artefacts defined the methodological tools of field collection, inventorying and representation by the imperial power discourse. The Uganda Museum was therefore founded on imperial cultural infrastructure of the British East Africa empire (Peterson, 2015, Posnansky 1963). The colonial order described elaborate details about tribes and ethnic cultures in Uganda. As Ranger argued, the inventions of tribes were a methodological tool of colonialism during the scramble for Africa (Ranger T, 1997). Uganda was formed through the diverse and polarized ethnic groups. In Mamdani's articulation of

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<sup>1</sup>Posnansky, Merrick. "The Uganda Museum, Kampala: The Programme and the Organization." *Museum International* 16.3 (1963): 149. See also R. Peterson. "Introduction: heritage management in colonial and contemporary Africa." In Peterson, D. R., Gavua, K & Rassool, C. (Eds.). *The Politics of Heritage in Africa: economies, histories, and infrastructures* (Vol. 48). Cambridge University Press. (2015): 5

<sup>2</sup> H. Johnstone. 'Anthropology' (1902): 471. Racial description of the people in protectorate Uganda according to him were studied through the natural history.

<sup>3</sup> L. Deming. *The History of the Uganda Museum*, (1966): 1. See also D. Peterson, *The Politics of Heritage in Africa*, (2015): 5.

<sup>4</sup> G. Wilson. 'Deputy Commissioner's Circular letter, January 15, 1908, issued to all Collectors.' Colonial administrators were the provincial or district officers, researchers, military officers, missionary and medical workers as well as appointed native chiefs to collect artefacts such as agricultural implements, cooking items, basketry, blacksmith tools, native weapons, fertility, religious and healing objects were acquired by the collectors.

<sup>5</sup> Boursiquot, Fabienne. (2016) "Ethnographic Museums: From Colonial Exposition to Intercultural Dialogue." *The Postcolonial Museum*. Routledge. 63-71. Fabienne Boursiquot refers to the term 'anthropology; ethnology' and 'ethnography, though used differently, refer to the discipline dedicated to the study of man according to geographical and disciplinary contexts. The term 'anthropology' is used in a broader sense and to encompass archaeology, physical anthropology, and social and cultural anthropology. In continental Europe, the term, 'ethnology' is equivalent to themselves as anthropologists. Ethnography' referred to the collection of data. Ethnographic museums remind us of ethnographic expeditions and as centre to collection-building and the establishment of these museums.

citizenship, the indirect rule system of governance was introduced to manage the tribal people in Uganda (Mamdani, 2018). As part of instituting the tribal framework of governing diverse societies, the implementation by colonial special commissioner Sir Harry Johnstone model about the tribal provinces was put into action at the beginning of the twentieth century through the artefacts. The formation of the protectorate museum of Uganda was instituted through a collection of ethnic objects by the British protectorate government. Different codes were designed inform hierarchy of native authorities, tribes, ethnic groups for the colonial system of managing people. Objects were embodied in a representation form to show other people through native agriculture, hunting, warriors, dances, food.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, a systematic approach of crafting artefacts became an administrative form of experiencing codes to the native authorities. Therefore, the nation of Uganda was formed in liaison with the production of tribal craftsmanship at the Uganda Museum. As deputy commissioner, Sir George William of the British protectorate government in 1907 wrote.

*'I am directed to inform you that his excellency the Governor has made arrangements for the opening in Entebbe of a Protectorate Museum, for the collection of local curios of all descriptions, such as articles of interests and specimens of native weapons and manufactures, and local products vegetable and mineral: in fact of all articles of historical, ethnological and local industries of interest.'*<sup>7</sup>

From Sir George William's letter, such artefacts were to be administered under the colonial Department of Botanical, Forestry and Scientific. The artefacts were to be shown to the public. The visuality of material artefacts was scientifically remade through the Sikh Temple Museum in 1908. The indigenous communities were coerced to view the collections on display. The local communities disagreed with the interpretation of the cultural objects as they referred to *enyumba ya mayambe* (a house of spirits) and the curator was called *omukulu ya amayembe*.<sup>8</sup> The indigenous audience were unhappy with the presentation of the objects as they were named witchcraft objects, fetish.

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<sup>6</sup> See for example Edwards, E., Gosden, C., & Phillips, R. (Eds.). (2006). *Sensible objects: colonialism, museums and material culture* (Vol. 5). Berg.

<sup>7</sup>Wilson George. 'Deputy Commissioner's Circular concerning founding of Uganda Museum, January 15, 1908, issued to all Collectors.' Courtesy of the Uganda National Museum. See also Uganda Protectorate: *Report of the Uganda Museum Committee*. (1939): 5.

<sup>8</sup> See L. Deming. *The History of the Uganda Museum*, (1966): 2.

Following the disagreement between the indigenous communities' mode of knowing the cultural objects and the colonial materiality form of interpretation, the project of the protectorate museum collapsed in 1920s and the 1930s. Then in 1937, Margaret Trowell, a missionary trained artist from London came to Uganda and formed an art gallery at the Makerere College. Trowell asked the colonial administration to relocate the ethnological artefacts from the Protectorate Museum of Sikh Temple to the Makerere art gallery. After the transfer of the artefacts, a catalogue for the ethnological materials were developed as '*Tribal Crafts of Uganda*'.<sup>9</sup> Through the publication the Tribal Crafts, the colonial administrative officers, the police and the judiciary services made a systematic classification of tribal people and their material objects as crafts. It was through the artefacts that, native people were collected and categorised into 'Tribal Crafts'.<sup>10</sup> This project was made benevolent for civilizing the people from the primitive cultures.

The Uganda Museum was opened again to the public on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1954 by British colonial Governor Sir Andrew Cohen.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, the opening of the museum had no exhibition display, but the audiences were invited to view the collections of the ethnology in the basement storage.<sup>12</sup> The museum curators created illustrations of the Nilo-Hamitic tribes that described the Karamojong, Iteso, Lango people from the north eastern parts of Uganda. A sound installation of tribal music was played as a form of distinguishing the different tribes.<sup>13</sup> Hence the society was divided into to the tribes in an exhibition style at the Uganda Museum. By making of tribes in a museum, a nation of Uganda was unprepared, undefined and named by the colonial administration. Yet this form of administration was not humanitarian but evolved punitive means of violence. But at the Uganda Museum, the ethnographic artefacts were unmarked with violence. By visualising the Uganda Museum, a nation was viewed in an aggregated tribal people.

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<sup>9</sup> Trowell, Margaret, and K. P. Waschmann. *Tribal crafts of Uganda*. Oxford University Press, (1953): 3.

<sup>10</sup> See the Trowell, Margaret, and K. P. Waschmann. *Tribal crafts of Uganda*. Oxford University Press, 1953.

<sup>11</sup> Wachsmann Klaus, 'Curators Report', *Uganda Museum Occasional Paper* 1954: 3

<sup>12</sup> Wachsmann Klaus, 'Curators Report', 1954: 4

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 1954: 4

## Visuality of power at the Uganda Museum

The practice of displaying ethnic groups was representing 65 indigenous communities.<sup>14</sup> By the nature of intangible cultural knowledge, the materiality of cultural representation through the museum was not connected to the audience. As Annie Coombes argued, the colonial ideology of representing tribal peoples in Africa was political, institutional, and disciplinary (Coombes, 1994: 2). The challenge of formulating identity in a polarised society was the impact it created of a divided group of people according to tribes and ethnic cultures due to imperialism. So the British imperial markers of tribal structures were left unresolved in Uganda after the colonialist abandoned the place. Therefore, the native society reorganised their material culture as a form of difference. The differences led to the post-independence violence of attacking colonial nurtured kingdoms in Uganda and the subsequent confiscation of royal regalia in 1967 by President Milton Obote. The abolition was made nationwide to the Bunyoro, Toro, Ankole and other chiefdoms. The independent nation of Uganda through the political parties argued for a unitary nation. Therefore, a law of confiscating the royal artefacts made the indigenous artefacts to become a national treasure at Uganda Museum.

The problem of visualizing the ethnological artefacts was the visual discourse of power linked to the discipline of anthropology. This practice of anthropology was a racial design in the nineteenth century by the imperial scientific expeditions that categorised people into Bantu, Nilotic, Hamites, Sudanic and nilo Hamites. This was further classified into tribes and ethnic groups to formulate Uganda as a tribal nation. A hierarchy within tribes was also further established in Uganda according to the imperial framework of civilisation. To implement the imperial administration, an indirect rule was therefore imposed on the native societies with violence and therefore, artefacts were signals to the clue of administering tribes. Nevertheless, the histories of establishing tribal hierarchy were decreed with pains of brutal expeditions of gun wielding in various parts of Uganda (Otunnu, 2016: 73-4). The unmarking of these violence was the argument for the visual power that forced viewers to look at Uganda from colonial knowledge.

The colonial power also trained the African elites to be political leaders and the military. Among the leaders were Milton and Idi Amin. It was through these leaders the colonial ideology was evoked in the imperial modes of governance to continue with modes of power.

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<sup>14</sup> Uganda Cultural Policy 2006: 12. See Constitution of Uganda, 1995 schedule 3.

The power was made and recorded as a public spectacular. In so doing, the visual power of 'Unseen Archives of Idi Amin' is also another mode seeing colonial transcendence of power on to the citizens. Cameras were staged to show power, staged, and appropriated for viewing.

### **The unseen Archive of Idi Amin**

The 'Unseen Archives of Idi Amin' was opened to the public on 18 May 2019, at the Uganda National Museum.<sup>15</sup> There were about 200 panel images displayed during the period from 18 May 2018 to 15 January 2020.<sup>16</sup> There various groups of audience on the opening. The dominant people were retired army officers, the academicians and a few government representatives who had also served a leader during Amin's government. The media visuality was made explicitly with contentions of threats and excitements. Although the exhibition was initially planned to be staged only at Kampala city at the Uganda Museum, however it toured regional places out of Kampala. The exhibition then became mobile. In the regional centre of Soroti the display was mounted to be permanent. This was an alternative way of opening regional museum with incomplete ethnographic style displays. Amin's government had little impact in the Teso region of north eastern part of Uganda. However in the west Nile region, in the hometown of Idi Amin in Arua.

### **The UBC archive story**

The story of revisiting the photographic materials of Idi Amin in Uganda began with the formation of the Uganda Broadcasting Service (UBS) that began as a central radio service. The British colonial government in 1953 created the UBC to influence positive public opinion that was against colonialism.<sup>17</sup> After independence of Uganda in 1962, the television was later introduced for the state to engage the citizens participation in the debates of governing the new nation of Uganda. Moreover, the colonial government had created polarised ethnically, racially, and politically divided society to manage the affairs of governance.<sup>18</sup> By having the visual media, the idea of power was enforced to the people. The voices of the

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<sup>15</sup> Abiti, Nelson, Derek R. Peterson, Edgar C. Taylor, and Richard Vokes. "The Unseen Archive of Idi Amin: Photographs from the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation." In *the Unseen Archive of Idi Amin: Photographs from the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation*. 2019. See also <https://africasacountry.com/2019/07/the-unseen-archive-of-idi-amin>

<sup>16</sup> Derek. P, Vokes R, Taylor E and Abiti A.N, 'The Unseen Archive of Idi Amin: Making History in a Tight Corner', to be published in *Centre for Study of Society and Heritage*, (2020): 2.

<sup>17</sup> Chibita, Monica, and Pieter J. Fourie. "A socio-history of the media and participation in Uganda." *Communication* 33.1 (2007): 13.

<sup>18</sup> M. Chibita, and F. Pieter J. "A socio-history of the media and participation in Uganda." (2007): 13-14

natives were repressed and therefore, the colonial powers wield their force for taxation and other exploitative ventures. Ugandan society was seen to no unified language of official media communication in its diverse indigenous language expressions. Thus from 1953, the media was a state instrument to instruct information and to control society.

From 1965 to 1970 the infrastructure of the media house and the photographic studio of the state was centrally under the Ministry of Information and Tourism in which the Uganda Museum also administered 1965. The Uganda Museum also offered its storage room for a recording studio. Until the period of Idi Amin rule, the photography became an important state instrument of strength. The presidential convoy was equipped with the communication to convey events of the state. Amin also introduced the coloured Television with a photographic studio at the Ministry of information.<sup>19</sup> The photographic ensemble were also published in the print papers, *'The Voice of Uganda'* in propagating the state agenda to the wanainzi (citizens) of Uganda.<sup>20</sup>

The global media also had access to write about Amin and the people of Uganda.<sup>21</sup> In most of the foreign publications, the image of Uganda was not only about Amin' but the whole society deemed 'Aminised' in the western visuality. This concept has not changed in the reading of Uganda through the lenses of Amin. It is not surprising the publicness of Amin is contested in the discursive arena even after his death a decade ago.

### **Exhibiting Idi Amin through Photo framing**

By engaging in the production of the 'Unseen Archive of Idi Amin' exhibition, my involvement began in conceptualisation of the exhibition through the contact with UBC archive materials in 2017. This process began with the access to archived negatives at UBC space as a point of conversation between Uganda Museum and the University of Michigan.<sup>22</sup> But this idea had to be drawn through the process of reading the various images of the archives and the textual understanding of the catalogue numbers and their labels on envelopes.<sup>23</sup> This suggests that the access to the archive was through negotiation with the

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<sup>19</sup> Derek.P, Vokes R, Taylor E and Abiti A.N, 'The Unseen Archive of Idi Amin: Making History in a Tight Corner', to be published in *Centre for Study of Society and Heritage*, (2020): 10

<sup>20</sup> P. Derek et al 'The Unseen Archive of Idi Amin: Making History in a Tight Corner', (2020): 10

<sup>21</sup> Taylor, Edgar C. et al. "Archives and the Past: Cataloguing and Digitisation in Uganda's Archives." *African Studies in the Digital Age*. Brill, (2014): 165-7.

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<sup>23</sup> UBC, Film negative archives, 2018.

administration of UBC. After scoping of the archives, this information was presented to the UBC to have all the negatives scanned. Cataloguing was first step that began at the UBC, which identified the cabinet boxes of both wooden and metal cased.<sup>24</sup> However, UBC did not have all the staffing capacity, hence University of Michigan had to source for the finances of purchasing the equipment's.<sup>25</sup> But beyond the technical engagement with the archive, I want to relate this exhibition in Uganda with wider discourses of knowledge involving anthropology, history, art history, politics and international diplomacy. The knowledge was majorly externally influenced. This drew attention to the notion of Uganda as a nation of Amin.

Similarly, there was also the problem of ownership on who has the right to original negatives? Although the copyright and permission of these photographs remained mainly to UBC, however, the University of Michigan was allowed to publish the images in scientific journals and books at nominal fee.<sup>26</sup> The access to the digital images are through UM. Yet it raised the question of ownership, whose images does it belong? When these negatives were scanned, they became digital materials that could easily circulate and co-owned without the knowledge of those who were photographed. Although the panel introductory text tells the researchers discovered these negatives at UBC in 2018, they were digitised, selected, and printed for the exhibition. One of the questions we were asked to whom are you putting the exhibition for, why now and why Idi Amin?

The story layout of the exhibition was displayed chronologically beginning from the periods of precolonial depicting the young Kabaka Mutebi walking with the King of Toro and Omukama Guru from Bunyoro kingdom. While Idi Amin appeared as junior officer at the British colonial government and later, he was pictured being at the rank of colonel with Shaban Opolot and Governor Crawford William. At the same time, the images were carefully selected to show non-racial Asian women associations with Africans before Uganda's independence.

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<sup>24</sup> Derek, Peterson, 'Archival Report on UBC Photographs', October 2017 showed negatives from the UBC as numbered by wooden drawer 3 had negatives as 3170 to 3213, for the year 1971. While the metal drawer contained negatives from 3073 to 6433.

<sup>25</sup> P. Derek, Official letter to UBC 'Digitising UBC Archived Photographic negatives' October 2017.

<sup>26</sup> Derek, Peterson, 'Archival Report on UBC Photographs', October 2017



The independent period had photos showing Milton Obote governance and the religious celebrations. At the entrance towards the temporary hall, an image (Figure..) of Idi Amin was visible captured in front of camera men addressing the media in military uniform.<sup>27</sup> In these photographs the visual power and its historical value as argued by Lindsay French was the choice and motivation towards the photographs.<sup>28</sup> In this case it was very potent to direct visitors into the gallery on the exclusive narrative about Idi Amin.

Another section inside the room, showed the timeline of the Idi Amin government from 1971 to 1979. The visuality of the timeline showed images of first cabinet ministers of Idi Amin and of whom most of them were killed and others exiled. Additional images were celebration pomp's with Makerere university students, the family, diplomatic relations to Moscow, North Korea, with Libya and his personal life of entertainment with accordion musical instrument playing.

After the layout of the time, another set of the few images about the victims were displayed on the third lower level of about eight photos murdered by the Idi Amin regime. The examples of victims known were the ministers, the former vice chancellor of Makerere university (Frank Kalimuzu), the chief justice and Amin's wife, Kay Adroa.<sup>29</sup> The photos on the victims depicted the life of the dead at the time they were not yet murdered. The only surviving image of public execution was on one soldier, Sergeant Baru Archangelo.<sup>30</sup> There were edited voice recordings of Amin with a projector with speakers hanged in the corners. The multi-sensory sound installation enhanced the narratives beyond the images frame. After the sound room, the photographs were redisplayed again to show the economic war regime between 1972 to 1977 depicting a staged photograph of money in the mosque and arrests. The second room depicted the economic tribunal with arrest of civilians as smugglers. While the struggle towards putting on the exhibition had an intention of revealing the violence in Uganda, however the photographs were silenced by lack of contest against the materiality of violence. The question which curators of the exhibition embattled themselves was to critically

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<sup>27</sup> This Image was selected as iconic portrait by curators to bring vitality of Idi Amin, a choice that was used for publicising the exhibition and the image was partly on social media as it did not contain copyright.

<sup>28</sup> French, Lindsay. "Exhibiting terror." *Truth claims: Representation and human rights* (2002): 132

<sup>29</sup> The Ministers who were killed included William Kalema, Michael Odonga, Alex Ojera, Oboth Ofumbi, Joseph Mubiru (Governor Bank of Uganda), Benedicto Kiwanuka (Chief Justice), Alhaji Nkutu, Frank Kalimuzo (Vice Chancellor Makerere University). For more see Table 6.9, Jørgensen, Jan Jelmert. "Uganda: a modern history (1981): 310-13. See also P. Derek et al. 'The Unseen Archive of Idi Amin: Making History Tight Corner', to be published in *Centre for Study of Society and Heritage*, (2020): 16

<sup>30</sup> The Unseen Archive of Idi Amin: Making History Tight Corner' (2020): 17

think beyond the limitation of the imagery representation of violence and finding alternatives? The exhibition did not also explore three dimensional materials.

While the curators chose to represent invisible violence in the exhibition with some of the panel photos crowded to show an economic tribunal in which ordinary men and women were staged and photographed. The images represented victims standing in front of the aligned jerricans with paraffins, soap, salt, and sugar to depict criminal court cases against smuggling. There was no account of what happened to them after the photography. The images especially of those arrested stared out to the photographer with certain knowledge, of, if not their death and powerlessness. They were facing execution in front of the camera.<sup>31</sup> There was no idea and knowledge about those people being staged. What happened to them after the tribunal? The curators did not warn or provide clear advice to the viewers about brutal death and the lack of photographs to show violence by the state perpetrators during Amin's time. Yet the images were viewed in the museum as Lindsay referred to 'unbearably, beautiful, and we appreciate their aesthetics.'<sup>32</sup>

Another controversial aspect of the exhibition was on the design changing the floor of the section gallery into black and white colours. This Blackness of the photos as being attributed to the colour of the white and black images was cast on the floor. The curator's choice of the floor was to enhance aesthetically blending to the white and black colours of the panel images hanged on the walls. The counter response from the viewers in regard to the reproduction of these images into public spaces as in regard to aesthetics, the critical reflection was the racial tone of the images of 'black and white' being that brought reactive moods towards the viewers.<sup>33</sup> Some staff criticised interference with the original museum colour and being driven by the foreign curators to do what they wanted in the museum.

Although the encounters of the photos show the jolly life. There were scary moments. The memories of the Ugandans, visible happens to their daily lives, the struggles of land, safety, economics in which arbitrary arrests were subject to the power. However, as William argued with ethical consideration, the question is not just about who the photographer was but

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<sup>31</sup> French, Lindsay. "Exhibiting terror." *Truth claims: Representation and human rights* (2002): 135.

<sup>32</sup> L.French. Exhibiting terror', (2002): 135

<sup>33</sup> P. Hayes. "The Uneven Citizenry of Photography: Reading the "Political Ontology" of Photography from Southern Africa." (2015): 185.

whether the subject wanted to become public property, endlessly reproduced in the historical representation.<sup>34</sup>

Another failure on the exhibition was also lack of curatorial gender representation and sensitivity. It rather re-imposed Amin's power to author identities and politics? It reconstructed the social order. The order of visualising women as sexual bodies. The images of Amin in cultural dances among women performing and with a team of beauty contests from Miss Tourism had indication of using women bodies. Therefore, the images reflected endangered visual production of violence, commercialisation and sexual abuses that happened during the 1970's.

### **The audience for 'Unseen Archive of Idi Amin'**

'I never wished anything for anyone bad and or I never wished Amin should be killed and his family be killed, and I thank God he lived and died a natural life.'<sup>35</sup>

The opening of the 'Unseen Archive of Idi Amin,' started with a panelist of the former ministers who worked under the Idi Amin presidency. Among the panelists who participated in the dialogue were former Health minister, Dr. Henry Kyemba and Professor Edward Rugamayo, former minister of education.<sup>36</sup> However, Lt. Colonel Obitre Gama, the former minister of internal affairs declined to participate in the panel.

Another public dialogue towards the exhibition making was the testimony of the survivors who experienced violence during Amin's regime for the murder of their relatives. Although many of the victims were not willing to come out to talk about their experiences, however Mrs. Sarah Bananuka and Ms. Phoebe Luwuum narrated their painful stories. For Sarah who lost his father Nekemiah Bananuka with the siblings.<sup>37</sup> Phoebe Luwuum the daughter of former Archbishop Janaan Luwuum talked about his father's death on 26<sup>th</sup> February in

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<sup>34</sup> P. William, 'Photography memory', (2007): 73

<sup>35</sup> Sarah Bananuka, 'Public Dialogue recording at Uganda Museum' 20 May 2019.

<sup>36</sup> This public show was limited to around 100 people but was aired on live TV show for public to view from 11am to 1 pm on 18 May 2019, moderated by Deputy Director Maurice Mugisha, UBC.

<sup>37</sup> Public Talk recording, 20May 2019 at Uganda Museum

Nakesero together with Erenayo Wilson Oryema who was also the minister of Lands, Housing and planning.<sup>38</sup>

The conversation from the survivors raised an issue on what level and when should reconciliation happen in Uganda. No accountability for the loss and death of all these has happened, even many more than 300,000 victims who were killed during Idi Amin and others missing, but they reflected on the histories of Uganda. According to survivors, the period from Idi Amin to the present government, especially in northern Uganda had its problems where people suffered as like in Amin's regime. They also referred to the period of the presidency of Milton Obote 1966-71 and 1981-85 respectively in which violence occurred to the people in west Nile in what Ogenga Otuunu referred they 'were being intentionally and systematically discriminated against, tortured, raped and murdered for being "Amin's people.'<sup>39</sup> The people in West Nile were never considered victims in Uganda because the international and national memory of violence towards Uganda laid emphasis on Idi Amin. The failure of the exhibition was to go beyond the framework of the photos with citizens to engage in accountability of the memories.

However, Phoebe said,

'If you talk about governance of Uganda. I think this initiative can help Ugandans to find way of conversation. The 16<sup>th</sup> February, as family has given us opportunity, as in the last five years has been a big thing, it was only a small thing either with families in UK or lectures at Makerere. This year's something happened, the Kakwa community, they called it repentance and reconciliation, they invited us of Amin's regime and after wards victims of 'Mkobozi' from Kobobo after Amin's ousting so we also went to Koboko in January 2019 for forgiveness.'<sup>40</sup>

Sarah also said.

'I never wished anything for anyone bad and or I never wished Amin should be killed and his family be killed, and I thank God he lived and died a natural life. But indeed we lived a

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<sup>38</sup> Public Talk recording, 20 May 2019 at Uganda Museum. See also P. Derek et al 'The Unseen Archive of Idi Amin: Making History in a Tight Corner', to be published in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (2020): 16

<sup>39</sup> Otunnu, Ogenga. *Crisis of Legitimacy and Political Violence in Uganda, 1979 to 2016*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, (2017): 39.

<sup>40</sup> Public Talk Recording at Uganda Museum, 21<sup>st</sup> June 2019.

miserable life because you could not afford it. We didn't enjoy life and we didn't believe an enemy would turn around and destroy anything you could have in life.'<sup>41</sup>

The Asian representative story by Taylor further spoke on how Amin played a key role in redistributing properties to his relatives and personal friends.<sup>42</sup> But Taylor in his testimony showed a double politics of survival to mediate with Asians and Amin over Asian properties. According to Taylor most Ugandans were happy when Idi Amin took over the power in the government. He argued that, after the Asians were expelled in 1972, Ugandan native communities were happy because the business properties were allocated to them. The people who got rich were those who dealt in *magendo* business from Amin. But 'in all these businesses many Ugandan suffered as he noted, they were only two Indians murdered and more than 60,000 Ugandans disappeared.'<sup>43</sup> Taylor's testimony seemed to suggest he was a dealer and he benefited from the calamity of many Asian communities who were expelled from Uganda. A business that involved smuggling and dealings with lucrative profits in black markets was very high at the time of 'economic war' policy brought by Idi Amin. Moreover, army officers and some technocrats in Amin's government benefited from those businesses. Although the policy of the Africanizing economy began in early 1960's, its implementation was through the rudimentary military action by Idi Amin.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the question of Amin and Asians could not be adequately discussed or shown through the photos.

### **Journalists testimonies**

Although no official photographers were present during the exhibition to tell their stories. However, through the coordination of Edgar Taylor, Richard Vokes and Derek Peterson, the team managed to bring the veteran journalists, Hon. Aggrey Awor, Dick Kasolo and Alhaji Abdul Nsereko to rethink the rights of journalists not only the past stories but the present situation too. While the media was threatened, the news of propaganda about Idi Amin either in prints and musical performances were aired on radios to the public.<sup>45</sup> According to the journalists, Amin was a media survivor, trying to map where he could calculate his moves of

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<sup>41</sup> Public Talk Recording at Uganda Museum, 21<sup>st</sup> June 2019.

<sup>42</sup> Jørgensen, Jan Jelmert. 'The Amin regime, 1971-9', *Uganda: a modern history*. (1981):289.

<sup>43</sup> Public Talk recording at Uganda Museum, 20 May 2019.

<sup>44</sup> Taylor, Edgar Curtis. 'Asians and Africans in Ugandan Urban Life, 1959-1972.' (2016): 249

<sup>45</sup> Public talk recording at Uganda Museum, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2019.

taking over the political leadership at a time when he was still Army Commander in 1969.<sup>46</sup> Richard Vokes noted, the state official images were developed from the colonial period, which was administrative and commissioned.<sup>47</sup> In this case, the camera machine produced images and it could be disseminated in various ways such as print newspaper, magazines.<sup>48</sup> Amin therefore invested in the photographic production by employing dedicated photojournalists. Amin's government also invested in communication equipments by acquiring the colour TV, models and installing satellite stations in Mpoma, Mukono district and Ombaci in Arua.<sup>49</sup> As he expanded his communication project, the visuality of public imagery costed his down during the Israel raid of Uganda.<sup>50</sup> Despite the camera record in Idi Amin's government.

According to Hon. Aggrey Awori, the story of Amin and appearing on TV, emphasise how Amin knew about the media. As such journalism was a key factor in Amin's government. Journalists also worked in the photographic section. Yet the same media was also used against his regime in the western world. The movement against Idi Amin also came in through music performance such as '*Amagulu gamulinya ga maya*'. According to veteran journalist Abdul Nsereko, 'people were using music to discredit Amin.'<sup>51</sup> Nsereko argued that, beyond the official records, there was also popular culture within society conveying political information for citizenry democracy in Uganda.

### **Public audience**

The public audience who visited and toured the Idi Amin exhibition had varied stories and they commented on the images. They looked at jolly face images at the private and public life of Idi Amin and questioned his legacies that were presented to the public as in the media and politics. In the first week before the opening of the exhibition, media stories about Idi Amin with testimonies from different individuals were shown to the public in the evening hours on private television station of Nation Media Television.<sup>52</sup> Series of articles were published on

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<sup>46</sup> Public talk recording at Uganda Museum, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2019.

<sup>47</sup> Vokes, Richard. "On' the ultimate patronage machine': Photography & substantial relations in rural South-western Uganda: Photography in Africa: Ethnographic Perspectives." *Photography in Africa: ethnographic perspectives*. James Currey, 2012. 208.

<sup>48</sup> Hevia, James L. 'The photography complex: Exposing Boxer-era China (1900–1901), making civilization.' In Rosalid C. Morris, et al.(eds). *Photographies East: the camera and its histories in East and Southeast Asia*. Duke University Press, (2009):79.

<sup>49</sup> Public Talk recording at Uganda Museum, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2019.

<sup>50</sup> P. Derek et al 'The Unseen Archive of Idi Amin: Making History in a Tight Corner', (2020): 11.

<sup>51</sup> Public talk recording at Uganda Museum, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2019.

<sup>52</sup> NTV

print newspapers. Although some visiting public to the exhibition were critical of the labels State Bureau Research which was supposed to have been April 1979, but was written, April 1980.<sup>53</sup> Another viewer questioned towards the image of Isaac Malyiamungu's child burial. He wondered if the image was a photoshop because there is no grave at the St. Paul Church in Namirembe. He rather mentioned that, the grave of Malyiamungu's child could be found at Natete (Mackay) next to the grave of the former president of Uganda Godfrey Binaisa.<sup>54</sup> The photo became a sensory story of 'an empty grave that drew attention to secrecy of keeping graves from the public in moments of dangers. Malyiamungu was a fiercely known commander of the SBR, in Uganda during the Idi Amin. The caution against destruction led to false burial with the image at Namirembe church, while the original burial was in another church. The story by the viewer brought into what images can tell different stories. The photo was used as an undercover of Malyiamungu's child burial. But the exhibition revealed the exact burial place, where many including the curators and researchers had no idea. Death has secrecy, for the most part, the grave has lied, and who knows, it might have been mixed with other bones and disinterred and they become an 'invisible crowd' Taussig noted<sup>55</sup>. Malyiamungu went into exile of his ancestral home of Ombgokolo in the northern eastern part of DRC. Malyiamungu knew very well on the where about his child burial, but he also denied the death and grave location. The death of Malyiamungu's child burial place remained secrecy and church also kept it secret story. The memory of the image therefore through the public audience brought into the death story to signify the exact burial ground are always falsified. The viewers also identified photos of their relatives who were murdered. A widow identified her husband who was murdered in 1976.

### **Travelling exhibition on Idi Amin**

The idea about travelling exhibition is when the exhibition is removed, repacked and taken to a rural town and re-exhibited. So the 'Unseen Archive of Idi Amin' was removed, repacked and taken for permanent display in a Soroti regional museum. While in Arua with crowded ex-service men, the exhibition was staged in the former Amin's community hall for only 5 days with vivid stories. On why the exhibition got moving outside of Kampala, the curators argued it was aimed at remaking the exhibition. The production of the exhibition on Amin in

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<sup>53</sup> Responded feedback, May 2019

<sup>54</sup> Respondent feedback, June 2019. Image UBC 62525-003

<sup>55</sup> Taussig, Michael. *Walter Benjamin's grave*. (2010): 4-5.

future would depend on what the public wanted to tell. Based on previous works by the Uganda Museum collaborative projects with the community's memorial and reconciliatory engagements in northern Uganda. Travelling exhibitions were viewed to be appropriate measures for engaging to provide a dialogical narrative. The unstable and volatile stories can be seen in spaces, marketplace, museums, village places. However, this exhibition of 'Unseen Archive of Idi Amin' was aimed at obtaining the views of the communities who were unable to see those images and retell beyond the frames of the images.

The presidents' representative (RDC) of Soroti officiated the exhibition. Akello who served as first woman member of legislative council from Teso region 1960 to 1962, was interviewed in a panel about Amin's governance.<sup>56</sup> According to Akello, Amin lied on the 'dream of God', it was intentional in his mind. His trip to Karamoja was creating fear, murdering people.<sup>57</sup> The British economy was not understood by the local people. Many Ugandans were excluded and therefore, Africanisation of the economy. Corruption was not part of the government system.

In response to Akello's views, the two elders, one the cultural leader of Teso Papa Emorimori and Valentino Opio who was Agricultural scientists. They did not narrate many stories, however, though post traumas of violence of surviving Idi Amin's killing on the agricultural scientists is still visible. The images in Soroti were historically disconnected to the local people. Essentially, most of the images were depicting the events when Amin visited Mbale city frequently. When we enquired, they said Idi Amin did not have much influence of either having supporters of causing violence in that part of the country. However, the elders have an awareness of Idi Amin's stories of military violence.

### **Exhibition in Arua**

Arua is one of the newly created cities in north western Uganda. The town is located at the borders of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan. It was formerly known as West Nile district during the British administrator Weatherhead. Although the West Nile region had multiple colonial powers of King Léopold of Belgium as Lado state and later it became

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<sup>56</sup> Akello Francis was a representative who were involved in protracted negotiation of Lancashire Conference in London, granting Uganda's independence, when Buganda wanted a separate status which was fought by other members of LEGCO led by Milton Obote.

<sup>57</sup> Hon. Francis Akello, Public talk at Soroti, January 31, 2020



under the Anglo Egyptian confluence of southern Sudan and northern Uganda and finally the colonial British Uganda in 1914.<sup>58</sup> Colonial anthropologists classified the Arua people as Sudanic speaking people. There was question on why the exhibition on Idi Amin was specifically taken to Arua and how was the perception of the public towards the exhibition when it was staged in Arua.

By considering the regional identity within the landscape of Uganda's political agenda, Arua provided a platform of larger population in the region with confluence of the neighbouring boundaries with DRC and the South Sudan. There were always legal, persuasive and negotiation from both local authorities, civil activism, and top national governments about the society. General Moses Ali, the retired army officer and the current second deputy prime minister hailed from the West Nile in the district of Adjumani. Ali supported the display of the exhibition in Arua.

The district buildings were old and with limited space. The community centre was built in 1965, was with a dilapidated roof ceiling. The wall was dusty and needed repainting. But this place was where Idi Amin would socialise and dance with the communities during his presidency.<sup>59</sup> The exhibition in Arua was opened by General Moses Ali on 14 February 2020. Ali however, partly praised Amin, although he did not live long to stay in Idi Amin's government. He ended his remark by saying.

I want to thank myself for not to make the mistakes. I will be part of the story. It is important you remember people who are not with us. This should be the history for tomorrow.

Who will name Amin's road? It must be Arua. People should remember him better from here, than anywhere in Uganda. If other Ugandans do not like him and why not you. This time I want to see Amin's name particularly in City Council. In big and at night should be reflected. So that every visitor who comes, and although people do not like him and when they come, they will love to see him.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> See Leopold, Mark. *Inside West Nile: violence, history and representation on an African frontier*. James Currey, (2005).

<sup>59</sup> Image of Idi Amin dance at Arua social centre.

<sup>60</sup> General Moses Ali Speech, 14 February 2020,

Ali's speech was more to encourage the people to speak positively about Idi Amin. Therefore balancing the recovery of the pains, living with traumas, a war fought by your people and with the people coming from your own families is complicated.

### **Ex-Service men of Amin touring the exhibition**

Most people who identified themselves with the exhibition as ex-soldiers and elderly men toured the exhibition more than once during the weeks period. Although youths had come, they walked briefly, took self-photos and posted in social media in their encounters of the narratives they had heard from their parents, in contrast, however the X-soldiers repeatedly revisited and spent most of their time in the exhibitions. The veteran soldiers, some of whom joined the army in 1962 at the time of Uganda's independence had diverse stories about Amin. The veteran soldiers led by Major. Gowan Govule who was army chief of staff during the Amin government was critical and chose to narrate their military careers rather talking about Amin. The veteran soldiers were sceptical on the question of accountability. When I asked, how did the killing of the prominent people from West Nile people occur? for example, Arube Charles, Odonga Michael, Osua, Kay (Fourth wife of Idi Amin). Their response was Amin's State Research Bureau engaged in the missions of the killings.

The lack of accountability was visible in response from the family of Late Michael Odonga to which we wanted to engage with them about Amin.<sup>61</sup> When we asked our local coordinator to arrange a meeting with the family, however, the daughter Phillister Odonga responded, they will not do anything with Amin unless the clan has family reconciliation. The absence of clan reconciliation as it not happened presents precarious unhealed wounds. Odonga's body was found floating on river Nile after the murder, and the daughter who survived that day of kidnap was thrown on the road.<sup>62</sup> Her unhealed wounds of trauma revealed the problems of lack of accountability. The Idi Amin pain is not only in Kampala but also in his home ancestral town of Arua. The victimisation of the society as Amin's people that continued until 2000 was revictimizing them. So the exhibition was not celebrity as was depicted by the curators in showing the pictures of Idi Amin. Although the viewers walked keenly to identify the images and the stories to which they would narrate stories, yet the economic tribunal and

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<sup>61</sup> Michael Odonga was former Minister of Foreign Affairs, he was kidnapped with the daughter Peace Odong, who is now schoolteacher in Arua.

<sup>62</sup> P. Derek et al, 'The Unseen Archive of Idi Amin: Making History in a Tight Corner', CHHS, (2020): 22. cited Library and Archives of Canada RG 25 11446 20-UGDA-1-4 pt. 6: Nairobi to Secretary of State for External Affairs, 9 April 1974.

end of regime in 1979 showed evidence of violence. The images in the archives were purged of the victims and we did not find any single photo of late Odonga.

Despite these images, the viewers, especially the family and ex-soldiers were able to talk about the loss of lives and property while in exile. For example, the relatives to Amin who we interacted shared fond memories of Amin and exile to the home of Late Mohammed Gadhiff in 1979. But the majority of them lived a refugee life, In the account of one of the soldiers.

**Question:** When Idi amin was overthrown, where did you go?

**Response:** For us in the air force, we just came back, and our uniforms were different. So we moved to Zaire (DRC), then in 1980, the UNLF Acholi gave us problems. Then I buried my clothes with guns. Then in 1986 we were given the option to go back to Uganda. So I chose the option to move to Sudan, we got a chief who gave us land. We became self-sustainable, I worked as an interpreter for the languages of Lugbara and Kakwa. I entered enforcement of the camp, I stayed until 1988. Then in 1987, the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army started disturbing Ugandans. Then in 1988, the UN said I should repatriate the Ugandan refugees from Sudan to Uganda.

In concluding this chapter, I argued that the fixed assemblage of displaying the photographic images of Amin was obscured with lack of common public critical engagement. The narratives were mainly aimed to enlighten those interested in Idi Amin's story and not those who were affected and still experienced social violence. In failure to tell the story of victimhood in the troubled history Uganda, basically implied a limitation of the actions of the photographers editing the images after the fall of Amin.<sup>63</sup> As the team argued, a few photos against the blood-stained State Research Bureau of Idi Amin secrete torture house, selecting only a few photos of president Yoweri Museveni.<sup>64</sup> The closure of the exhibition was fixed in rather a muted Amin's narrative of western media controversy.

On visuality of power discourse, the Uganda Museum representation of its ethnographic construction was a mode of colonial power to see materiality. Although the indigenous communities resisted the visuality of being mirrored as tribal people, however the

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<sup>63</sup> P. Derek et al, 'The Unseen Archive of Idi Amin: Making History under Constraint' unpublished (2020): 16

<sup>64</sup> P. Derek et al, 'The Unseen Archive of Idi Amin: Making History under Constraint' (2020): 19

contemporary reconstruction of knowledge has maintained colonialism of visual power. The 'Unseen Archive of Idi Amin' was a visual of state power but also a colonial discourse of framing tribal people. Amin was made in both local and international media. Hence, the thinking around decolonizing ethnographic space by replacing it with the exhibitions of dominant political stories has not brought destabilization to colonialism in the museum. It rather disrupts attention on what could be done to the ethnographies. The audience reaction to the exhibition was a sign of unstable and discontented narratives. The histories of colonial rule were unmarked of the violence and yet Amin's violence was propagated. This calls for deeper investigation beyond the materiality of photographs.

In the critique of the exhibition, it also showed that the authoritarian practices emanating from the museum curators have however been changed and being challenged by the public demands. Paul Williams in chapter on 'Photographic memory: Images from calamitous', questioned; *what does it mean to look?* Williams was responding to questions of looking at photographs in which the museum visitors struggle in viewing the photographs and at the same time attesting to its occurrence. Another person is watching others in the museum. The viewer also turns into another who is viewing the images. In these moments, we also think the viewers try to recall the circumstances that had occurred some time ago. Are the visitors going to like or resist the images?<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Williams, Paul. *Memorial museums: the global rush to commemorate atrocities*. Berg Publisher, (2007):54.

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