INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY

STUDIES IN AFRICAN FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY

ARCL 2040 ½ Unit 2015
Year 2/3 option

Uganda, 10\textsuperscript{th} – 25\textsuperscript{th} February

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Aims and Objectives
The course aims to provide students with a practical understanding of research conditions and archaeological environments encountered on the African continent. It does this by providing students with direct experience of a range of archaeological contexts. The course operates by visiting one African country for a two week period and examining a selection of issues and themes by visiting archaeological sites, environmental locations and museums.

Through this course students will gain an understanding of the practicalities of archaeological research, the nature of debate and the material it is based upon, and the problems faced in managing heritage resources in African settings. Clearly not every pertinent issue can be addressed, but the intention is to examine a representative spectrum of archaeology within a single African country.

Essential in the process is the need to think outside the narrow confines of the archaeological record. This is important from an academic perspective so that we appreciate the ways in which contemporary physical and cultural environments can be used to construct analogies for past behaviour. Equally, archaeologists need to think about the other interested parties in heritage management, such as government (national and local), ownership and possession of resources, development agendas and the role of the past in the emerging nation.

The course will examine the archaeological record and how it has historically been constructed but it also questions the nature, and varied definitions, of heritage and the past by considering a wide range of social groups.

In 2015, the course will make its fourth visit to Uganda, which has proven to be very different to previous visits to Kenya. Kenya is in many ways an easy country to visit because it has an extensive archaeological sequence, from early hominids to the present, it has a lengthy history of these investigations, it has a wide range of different environments in which humans have been living and it has an active Museums service and conservation policy. Uganda has a completely different emphasis on the past, not rooted in centralized institutions or in official infrastructure. Whilst this presents more of a challenge, our presence enables fundamental debates on the appropriate manner for the setting up of operational systems at national and local levels that might work for a country like Uganda. Students will gain an appreciation of the contested significance of archaeological materials and interpretations and the potential relevance of these to the social, political and religious concerns of people today. They will also get a basic grounding in the nature of research agendas and the construction of the archaeological record.

Students will become aware of some of the ethical considerations of undertaking archaeological or curatorial work in a very different part of the world and will be knowledgeable of the need to consider diverse interest groups in advance of any research or archaeological intervention. Students will learn to give careful consideration to a range of divergent and deeply held beliefs, they will develop their ability to evaluate information and ideals reported by other people and, where appropriate, to develop clearly expressed opinions of their own.

COURSE PRESENTATION
The course consists of half hour lecture sessions discussing general issues and introducing concepts prior to physical visits. A series of discussions will also be instigated to help students explore the issues. These lectures are punctuated by a series of visits to archaeological sites, museums and to locations which provide important points of reference for the living conditions and resources used on archaeological sites. To help students engage with these locations each
student has been asked to prepare an introductory statement about one of the sites (or an aspect of one of the sites).

**PREREQUISITES**  
There are no prerequisites for this course.

**WORKLOAD**  
The course comprises 16 lecture sessions. In addition there will be visits to at least 16 archaeological sites and museums and two different national parks/reserves. Students will be able to read around the course whilst in Uganda by using the basic library resources that have been made available there. You will need to read and think about the issues as we move through the country. You will also need some 40 hours to research and write the assessed essays.

**METHODS OF ASSESSMENT**  
This course is examined by means of two 2375-2625 word essays.

If students are unclear about the nature of an assignment, they should discuss this with the Course Co-ordinator.

The Course Co-ordinator is willing to discuss an outline of the student's approach to the assignment, provided this is planned suitably in advance of the submission date.

**Word-length**  
The following should not be included in the word-count: title page, contents pages, lists of figure and tables, abstract, preface, acknowledgements, bibliography, lists of references, captions and contents of tables and figures, appendices. Penalties will only be imposed if you exceed the upper figure in the range. There is no penalty for using fewer words than the lower figure in the range: the lower figure is simply for your guidance to indicate the sort of length that is expected.

**TEACHING SCHEDULE**  
The course will take place in Uganda between the 10th and 25th February.

**SESSION SUMMARIES**  
The following is an outline for the course as a whole, and identifies essential and supplementary readings relevant to each session. Information is provided as to where in the UCL library system individual readings are available; their location and Teaching Collection (TC) number, and status (whether out on loan) can also be accessed on the eUCLid computer catalogue system. Readings marked with an * are considered essential to keep up with the topics covered in the course. Copies of individual articles and chapters identified as essential reading are in the Teaching Collection in the Institute Library (where permitted by copyright) or are available online.

**CORE TEXTS**  
There are no core texts as such for this course.

**1. Introduction: history of research**  
This lecture will introduce the course by exploring the history of research in Uganda. Contrary to two well-established colonial models in Africa (typified by Great Zimbabwe and Kenya’s fixation with earliest contexts) Uganda’s status as a protectorate and its emphasis on indirect rule focused historical spotlights firmly on the largely uncontested pasts of the kingdoms. Whilst archaeological research in the 1960s had begun to drift away from such a focus and Uganda had a workable heritage infrastructure by the end of that decade, decline in the moral standards of the state had already set in, the kingdoms were abolished in 1967 under Obote, Amin assumed power in 1971 and the nascent state crumbled. The increasingly harsh conditions Uganda found itself in through Amin’s collapse into the anarchy of the second Obote regime did
not facilitate good conditions for research and heritage. Antiquities officials were barred from visiting Bigo bya Mugenyi, despite it being a gazetted monument which they were legally required to protect. Since 1986 and the coming to power of Yoweri Museveni, Uganda’s fortunes have steadily improved but there has been little or no development within heritage institutions. Frequently Antiquities and the Museum fell under the ministerial control of Brigadier Moses Ali, who despite being a former minister in Amin’s time, was an important symbolic member of government being from the north west of the country. He was not however granted any real ministerial authority and antiquities suffered accordingly. In the 1990s several of the kingdoms were restored, serving to bolster the accepted court histories and discouraging alternative forms of examination. Archaeological research has picked up but Uganda has laboured in the absence of a trained or effective infrastructure. Nevertheless the past clearly has power as revealed by the number of cults which occupy archaeological sites. Equally instructive is the resilience of the Kasubi tombs throughout the dark years of the 1970s and 1980s. Its destruction in 2010, probably by accident, serves to emphasise that it was unharmed during some very bad times.


2. The historical kingdoms of Uganda

The historical kingdoms of Uganda have dominated views of the past as indeed they have tended to feature in post-colonial politics. We will be looking at the emergence of these polities later, but at the beginning of the consideration of the archaeology of the country it is necessary to discuss their influence and to consider their impact on investigations of the past. Undoubtedly, the prominence given to these polities has contributed to the enmity with which they are regarded by some. For instance, what do people whose heritage does not relate to these major polities focus on: are they in some way culturally inferior. Has archaeological research provided equal coverage to all areas of the country? Almost certainly it has not.


3. Managing heritage in Uganda (at Uganda Museum)

The kingdoms notwithstanding, heritage management in Uganda has not been a major historical focus of attention. Locations that we would consider to have been of heritage interest, were either protected because they continued to function, or alternatively were almost entirely ignored. Add to that the disruptions of the 70s and 80s and the situation becomes still worse with no appropriate historical model to structure such activities. Clearly, there has to be a carefully worked out and restricted strategy for successful management of resources and promotion of heritage themes. Such strategies also need to recognize intangible forms of heritage which may have considerable popular resonance.


4. Museums and education in Uganda (at Uganda Museum)

Following on from previous lectures, there is a real need to rationalize the activities of museums, and in particular the Uganda Museum. Set up originally as an essentially colonial institution, defining and in some sense possessing Uganda’s people, its role needs careful revision to assist with, advise and coordinate heritage activities within the country. The museum’s relationship with Ugandans has changed significantly, but its displays largely date from the 50s and 60s. Are new displays not a top priority or would they be an unnecessary expense, which the low level of practical training at the museum would find it difficult to achieve? Despite these problems of development, the Uganda Museum remains one of the most visited institutions by Uganda’s school children, which offers scope for future developments.


5. Iron working and society

Investigations of iron production in Africa have developed significantly since the 1970s with the recognition of the residual knowledge of an extremely varied and essentially African practice. Whilst the basics of bloomery smelting are essentially the same there is a huge degree of variation in the basic forms of furnace and smelting that take place across the continent. Uganda has featured in some more recent work on iron smelting, most notably the ethnographic account made by Terry Childs on Toro smelters. There have however been no formal ethnoarchaeological studies. Instead work in Buganda has begun a new strand of research amongst historical communities for which the memories of smelting have essentially been lost. The work in Buganda demonstrates the complexity that will be needed in order to make worthwhile studies of African iron working.


6. Agriculture

African agriculture consists of a complex mosaic of different crops, some of African origin, others from beyond the continent but all of which have become typically African. No better example of this exists than bananas which must have been introduced from SE Asia, possibly as early as 4000 years ago. However from around AD 800 bananas became adapted and suited to plantation cultivation and it was this development that made possible the growth of influence of the Buganda kingdom. Subsequently, some 120 different cultivars were established within Buganda alone, adapted for distinct conditions and functions. Whilst we need to develop methods for recognizing crops such as bananas and yams in the archaeological past, there are already some means for identifying the presence of crops such as sorghum and finger millet. At sites such as Ntusi these have proven to be of major significance, demonstrating how research has in the past overlooked cultivation in favour of more glamorous issues such as pastoralism.


7. Pastoralism

Pastoralism has a much vaunted status on the African continent amongst researchers. Typically such studies have focused on “traditional” pastoralist populations such as the Maasai. Whilst Uganda does have similar populations, principally the Karamajong in the NE of the country, a much more unique form of pastoralism lies in examining the Bahima in the south. Bahima and Tutsi pastoralists in neighbouring Rwanda, were closely associated with the development of states. Furthermore, we can see the development of Bahima pastoralism in the archaeology of Ntusi. The development of this pastoralist culture is obviously manifest in the striking Ankole cattle themselves. Over time pastoralist aesthetics clearly increased.


8. Ethnoarchaeology and meaning

A major problem in archaeology generally but in African archaeology in particular lies in how archaeologists infer meaning and significance to the elements they recover. Early ethnoarchaeological studies focused on the African continent because of its rich ethnographic record but subsequently the relevance of such examples for global generalizations has been debated. Nevertheless, ethnoarchaeological studies can still play an important role in enlivening the African past. More recently, actualistic studies, based on observations of animal behaviour have helped develop more effective understandings of early hominid behaviour and the broader ecological place of hominids within animal communities.


9. The archaeology of early hominids and other Stone Age research

Uganda, like many African countries has long been known for its early archaeological remains, now known to be the earliest in the world. Early work was characterized by pre-occupations with typology. Yet many of Uganda’s earliest sites, rich though they may be in lithics, are of little significance in the broader continent wide understanding of these earliest tools and their makers. Many of these sites are clearly secondary if not tertiary episodes of deposition and so the association of materials is questionable. More importantly they lack animal bone remains with which to contextualize the activities on sites. Also these sites are situated in contexts entirely lacking in volcanic activity and the all-important volcanic ash layers that can be dated. Yet such deposits do exist in the western rift, particularly at the southern end of lake Albert. In the case of Uganda it is perhaps the absence of persistence amongst early researchers which has failed to make the most of such sites rather than that such sites are lacking potential.


10. **Ceramics, material culture and identity**

Like lithics, ceramics have also been an area in which archaeologists have become weighed down by the seeming need to define typologies. This is typified by the notion that “pots equal people”. This has most obviously been demonstrated in the association of the spread of Bantu speakers with certain indicator ceramics. A different approach has recently been taken in the examination of ceramics on the northern shores of Lake Victoria, in both Uganda and Kenya. Particularly in western Kenya ceramics which are imitative, yet markedly inferior, have been recorded associated with delayed return hunter gatherer communities. As a result the notion of interactive cultural frontiers has been developed. Similar processes of transformation can be seen on the Ugandan shores of the lake suggesting a transformative process rather than the rigid dichotomy that was once focused on between Urewe and roulette decorated ceramics.


11. State formation and economic specialization
Having seen a range of different sites in Uganda, particularly relating to the last millennium, it is important to consider an overview of the processes of transformation which ultimately led to the states encountered by Europeans in the 19th century. From around AD 800 there are a series of economic specializations that develop across the region exploiting increasingly more marginal locations. Bananas, cattle, iron and salt are all key elements which contribute to the regional economy. These have varying signatures in the archaeological record that can in some cases be traced. This view encourages the idea that despite the diversity the region developed essentially as a single unit with polities feeding off one another and borrowing symbolic items and beliefs so as to retain their comparable status.


12. **Resource selection, minerals exploitation and mining**

Resources and minerals have long been identified and made use of in the African past. We can make inferences about likely hominid resource utilization through identifying the kinds of animal protein that are likely to be present in savanna environments. In more recent times selection of clays has been important for ceramics. In Uganda, kaolinite has seen widespread use and a number of locations have been identified where the mineral was mined. Methods of extraction were in places similar to that seen for iron ore. Finally Uganda has a number of locations at which salt was being produced.


13. The past and the future (discussion with Dismas Ongwen)

It is all very well identifying problems in the archaeology of Uganda from the past or in its management and conservation in the present, but what should its future be. In the context of a developing country with basic services still in need of creation in a sustainable form, how can archaeology be justified. On the other hand, what are the consequences if archaeology continues to be marginalized.


14. Religion
Archaeology is notorious for the problem it has in dealing with religion, other than established world religions. Precolonial religion in Uganda was clearly very important with numerous shrines devoted to spirits and ancestors. Manifestations of these religious practices are still evident at places like Kasubi and Mubende hill today. They are also echoed in the new “traditional” religions growing up at places like Bigo bya Mugenyi or Tanda. These modern manifestations make it difficult to establish exactly what was taking place in the past. Equally, religious experience seems to have differed little in practical detail, and indeed religion could be said to be present in all aspects of life rather than separated and distinct.


15. The lake and its impact on the past
All too often Lake Victoria has been considered to be a barrier to cultural activity and contact, largely because it was marginalized in the colonial world. Recent research has however demonstrated that it is far more likely that the lake facilitated contact and exchange far more than its forested shores could have done. Indeed these activities may well have been crucial to regional transformations of societies. Palaeoenvironmental data further demonstrate how important the lake has been in the more distant past radically transforming the regional landscape.


16. Art in precolonial Uganda

Precolonial art in Uganda has not received much coverage, but rather can be seen as a number of lost opportunities. Its rock painting traditions, manifest at Nyero and Lolui are small in number and extremely vague in their likely meaning. There is neither the volume nor the quality to warrant much attention. Equally rock engravings, other than the emyeso boards, are extremely vague and seem to be associated with herding. Two other elements have passed largely unnoticed. The first is the Luzira head, or more correctly the Luzira figures. The second is the Entebbe figurine. Both were the result of construction work and not formal excavation and both fail to be considered in regional conspectuses of artistic traditions. Yet both can now be seen as being related to the lake based transformations that took place from AD 800 onwards and may relate to new forms of political power.


**Libraries and other resources**
In addition to the Library of the Institute of Archaeology, other libraries in UCL with holdings of particular relevance to this degree are the Geography and Anthropology sections of the Science Library. SOAS also has an outstanding African collection

**Dyslexia**
If you have dyslexia or any other disability, please make your lecturer aware of this. Please discuss with your lecturers whether there is any way in which they can help you. Students with dyslexia are reminded to indicate this on each piece of coursework.

**Health and safety**
The Institute has a Health and Safety policy and code of practice which provides guidance on fieldwork. This is revised annually and the new edition will be issued in due course. All work undertaken by the Institute is governed by these guidelines and students have a duty to be aware of them and to adhere to them at all times. This is particularly important in the context of the visit to Uganda which will be undertaken as part of this course. There are plenty of potential health and safety problems which have been identified in the Risk Assessment for this course. Whilst we make every effort to ensure your health and safety, students must take the initiative in reporting any health issues or other problems that they may be suffering from so that we can ensure appropriate and swift attention to the problem

**INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY COURSEWORK PROCEDURES**
General policies and procedures concerning courses and coursework, including submission procedures, assessment criteria, and general resources, are available in your Degree Handbook and on the following website: [http://wiki.ucl.ac.uk/display/archadmin](http://wiki.ucl.ac.uk/display/archadmin). It is essential that you read and comply with these. Note that some of the policies and procedures will be different depending on your status (e.g. undergraduate, postgraduate taught, affiliate, graduate diploma, intercollegiate, interdepartmental). If in doubt, please consult your course co-ordinator.
Assessment

Course assessment will consist of two essays, each 2375-2625 words in length.

Essay 1 (due Friday 6th March)
Choosing one site from Uganda, discuss the academic debates and issues that have occurred as the result of investigations at this site and suggest future research initiatives at the site and what these initiatives might achieve.

Essay 2 (due Monday 27th April)
Choose one of the following options:
1. What are the principal factors which shaped the development of archaeology and of archaeological research in Uganda?
2. Can observations of contemporary animal behavior and natural environments, such as those you have seen in Uganda, help our understanding of the subsistence strategies likely to have been practiced at Early Stone Age sites?
3. Why has the study of the “Stone Age” in Uganda concentrated so heavily on stone tool typologies? What other directions could profitably be followed?
4. What has preoccupied the study of archaeological ceramics in the Great Lakes region and do you think there are other ways these ceramics could be explored?
5. Critically assess the work in Uganda of one of the following pioneers of Uganda’s archaeology and how they influenced the development of the discipline: E.J. Wayland; E.C. Lanning; Merrick Posnansky.
6. What have studies of iron smelting in the Great Lakes (past and present) revealed about the organization of iron production systems?
7. What were the principal factors that led to the emergence of states in the Great Lakes region?
8. What is the place of museums in Uganda and how could this be improved in the future?
9. Evaluate the means which have been used to reconstruct past environmental conditions in Uganda and suggest which hold the best potential for future development.
10. What evidence is there for precolonial religious practice in Uganda and how were these practices related to social formations?
11. Compare and contrast the evidence for the extraction of minerals such as salt, iron ore and kaolinite. What was the significance of such activities to broader society?
12. Critically assess current understanding of EITHER rock art OR the Luzira and related figures and suggest future priorities for investigation.
13. How has Lake Victoria impacted the archaeology of the surrounding region?
14. Choosing one cultivated plant, discuss the evidence for its presence in precolonial Great Lakes Africa and suggest future directions of archaeological investigations into its use.
15. What is the future for archaeology in Uganda?