

**A Mask of Calm:
Emotion and Founding the Kingdom of Bunyoro in the 16th century**

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ABSTRACT

Rich vernacular traditions about the aftermaths of the social trauma of a major famine, sometime in the 16th century in eastern Africa, narrate the founding of a new dynasty in Bunyoro, one of the region's oldest monarchies. Scholars around the world have understood traditions about the founding of new dynasties as charters for the new political order. Whether traditions credit that order with the aura of antiquity or strengthen it by excluding social elements discordant with the new orchestrations of power, they are exercises in legitimation. When scholars recognize that such traditions were set in the aftermath of widespread violence, a spirit of mourning emerges in them. In what ways do spirits of mourning, joined to those of legitimation, shape traditions about the founding of a new dynasty by deftly inflecting the problem of accountability? In Bunyoro, traditions about its founder depict him as a barbarian cultural neophyte of fluctuating emotional stability. These unflattering and realistic representations of a founding dynast's affective comportment were designed to appeal to the emotional repertoires in the different life experiences of audience members, enlisting their participation in the project of reviving sovereignty in the aftermaths of traumatic violence. Mourning and legitimation run through historical narratives initiating an aftermath to structural violence, revealing that loss and worry shape narratives of transformed sovereign authority, reviving it in the aftermaths of structural violence. Mourning lends emotional depth and counterpoint to matters of bureaucracy, economy, gender, and so forth, in crafting satisfying accounts of transformation and accountability in political life. That emotional depth, in turn, helps explain the durability of traditions.

Biographical Paragraph.

David Schoenbrun studied philosophy at Lewis & Clark College and African Studies at UCLA, where he completed an MA in African Studies and a PhD in African History. He taught African History at the University of Georgia before joining the faculty of Northwestern University as Associate Professor of history. His book, *A Green Place, A Good Place: Agrarian Change, Gender, and Social Organization between the Great Lakes to the 15th Century*, was named a 1999 Choice Outstanding Academic Title. He has also published *The Historical Reconstruction of Great Lakes Bantu Cultural Vocabulary: Eytmologies and Distributions* (Köln, 1997). He has published articles in *Uganda Journal*, *Azania*, *Journal of African History*, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, *History in Africa*, *African Studies Review*, *Sprache und Geschichte in Afrika*, *African Archaeological Review*, *History Compass*, *History and Theory*, and *The American Historical Review*. He has drafted a book on the transformative effects of violent aftermaths between the Great Lakes over the last millennium.