tius allowed Malagasy-speakers to form their own settlements of freemen. Together with the introduction of mass literacy training, these factors led to a renaissance of the Malagasy language and a resurgence of Malagasy identity in the late 1830–'40s. But this was not a Malagasy tied to one single political kingdom on the Big Island, for it came to reflect the influence of several languages, especially French, and portrayed the entire island as home. In this way, the "inchoate Malagasy national identity" arising in Mauritius (291) was the product of an entangled creolization.

A frenzy of letter-writing, or *Briefwut*, fed this process as ex-slaves and Christian refugees expressed their belonging in messages composed in the Malagasy language. Pier Larson is at pains to stress that historians have ignored the importance of the Malagasy diaspora because of their ignorance of this language and its history. This history of "invisibility" rested on the earlier refusal of slave masters to take an interest in the culture of servile laborers considered little more than commodities. It was also built into the letters and reports of missionaries, such as those at the Cape, who remained ignorant of the language and culture of Malagasy slaves and freemen. Pier Larson successfully challenges this invisibility in *Ocean of Letters*, and through a keen eye for the relationship between language and identity, both recaptures this forgotten history and makes an important contribution to debates about creolization.

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D. A. Low. *Fabrication of Empire: The British and the Uganda Kingdoms, 1890–1902.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. xix + 361 pp. Bibliography. Index. $111.00. Cloth.

Anthony Low is arguably the most comprehensive British historian of the British Empire; he is certainly the *doyen* of British historians of East Africa. From 1951 to 1958 he taught at Makerere University College, Uganda; for a while he was Uganda correspondent for the London *Times*. After five years in Canberra he moved to the University of Sussex, where he took a leading part in setting up the School of African and Asian Studies. From 1973 to 1982 he was back in Canberra, where he became vice-chancellor of the Australian National University. Then followed a decade in Cambridge, England, as professor of the history of the British Commonwealth.

Low's first research, for an Oxford doctorate, concerned relations between the British and the Baganda up to 1900. His first major publication, in 1960, was a brilliant analysis of the negotiations that resulted in the Uganda Agreement in 1900. As a seminal investigation of African agency, it was comparable in importance to Terence Ranger's 1967 study of the

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1896–97 rebellions in Rhodesia. Low drew on his thesis for chapters in the *Oxford History of East Africa,* and he also wrote on Uganda in the twentieth century; but then he turned his attention to politics in British India; and his Australian sojourns also gave him a perspective on Pacific history. Now, in retirement, Low has returned to his first field of study. His new book offers the "Fabrication of Empire" in Uganda as an exemplary episode in imperial as well as African history.

The overarching theme of *Fabrication* is the "forced amalgamation" of thirty-odd rulerships into five kingdoms: Buganda, Bunyoro, Toro, Ankole, and Busoga. To the specialist, this will be largely familiar territory, but Low has done much more than recycle his earlier research: he has kept abreast of the literature and pulled together much relevant work by Rowe, Twaddle, Wrigley, Medard, Reid, Karugire, and Steinhart. (He also lets us know that he interviewed President Museveni in 1993.) The main narratives are punctuated by schematic interludes (which may owe something to Low's association, since his days at Makerere, with political scientists). Low outlines four stages of "defining conjuncture": precursors (the factors bearing on British officials and Africans on first contact); the assertion of British hegemony; a "determining vortex" of resistance, revolt, and mutiny; and finally, colonial settlement. Drawing on a 1975 article of his own, Low shows how far "new model warbands"—characteristic of much of eastern Africa in the nineteenth century—shaped the polities that confronted the British: it was leaders of warbands who filled the offices of state in three of the five kingdoms. Low concludes by describing the visit to Britain in 1902 of the prime minister of Buganda, Apolo Kagwa. This was Kagwa's idea, but officialdom turned it to account by displaying British industrial and military might, as well as introducing the eminent visitor to high society: "Hegemony tempered by honour left awe greatly reinforced" (332).

I have two cavils. The armory of citation from the secondary literature is formidable, but there are chinks. Low might have modified his remarks on the East African ventures of Sir William Mackinnon had he consulted Forbes Munro's magisterial *Maritime Enterprise and Empire* (Boydell Press, 2003). And given the slippery nature, in this context, of two words, *Uganda* and *protectorate,* I was surprised to find no reference to an article of my own on this matter *(Uganda Journal,* 1963). More substantially, it must be admitted that *Fabrication* is often heavy going. I wearied of "eventuality"; there are several elephantine subordinate clauses, and infelicities which should have been smoothed away by a publisher's editor. In the copy sent for review, some pages are imperfectly printed.

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