

Spring 4-15-2010

Gather us Together as Jews From the Four Corners of the Earth: The Emergence and Endurance of the Abayudaya in Uganda

Maggie A. Yates

Macalester College, myates@macalester.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/anth_honors



Part of the [Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Yates, Maggie A., "Gather us Together as Jews From the Four Corners of the Earth: The Emergence and Endurance of the Abayudaya in Uganda" (2010). *Anthropology Honors Projects*. Paper 7.
http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/anth_honors/7

This Honors Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Anthropology Department at DigitalCommons@Macalester College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Anthropology Honors Projects by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Macalester College. For more information, please contact scholarpub@macalester.edu.

**Gather Us Together as Jews From the Four Corners of the Earth:
The Emergence and Endurance of the Abayudaya in Uganda**

Maggie Yates
Professor Dianna Shandy
Anthropology
2010

Abstract

This thesis contributes to the emerging body of literature on African Jewry by exploring factors contributing to the emergence and endurance of the Abayudaya, a Jewish community located in eastern Uganda that converted to Judaism in 1919. Ethnography coupled with theories stemming from Globalization Studies, Anthropology of Religion, and African Studies, reveal that the Abayudaya's conversion and continued existence is the result of a complex relationship between the community's constructed ethnicity and globalizing forces. While aspects of globalization threaten the Abayudaya's existence, globalization ultimately provides them the space and strategies to maintain and reinforce their ethnic identity – even if such benefits are constrained according to specific hegemonic structures.

Acknowledgments

I began this paper with little appreciation for the magnitude of this undertaking. Looking back, I am humbled by the support and guidance I have received throughout the research and writing process that has made this final product possible.

Thank you to those in the SIT Uganda office who made my initial fieldwork possible. To Rachman Nagwere and Sadati Mulilo for your role as friends and interpreters in the village. And to my families in Uganda: Leokadia, Robert, Martha, Douglass, JJ and Miriam, Gershom and Tziporah.

My deepest thanks to Dianna Shandy, my honors advisor as well as my academic advisor for the past four years. Since fall of my freshman year, I have grown tremendously as I reach for the standards you set for me. Thank you for introducing me to anthropology, your continued confidence in my work, and your invaluable feedback with each baby step of the writing process. My thanks also to Barry Cytron for your guidance, consultation, and compassion throughout this project, as well as for my various other endeavors.

Thank you to others in the Macalester Community, including friends, my honors support group, and the Lilly Keystone seniors and faculty for your encouragement along with the much-needed perspective.

I am also grateful for those at the other end of long-distance phone calls who sustained my perseverance and commitment to this project. Thank you mom, for learning the language of anthropology to provide feedback on drafts and sharing your knowledge of Judaism with me. To both my mom and dad for your unfailing support and strength and for giving me wings and encouraging their use. And of course to my sisters for your constant presence in my heart.

Finally, I am indebted to the people of the Abayudaya for welcoming me into your homes and families. May you go from strength to strength.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER ONE: <i>IN THE BEGINNING</i></u>	6
MODELING METHODS	8
BREADTH AND ITS BOUNDS	11
APPLICABLE APPROACHES	13
ORGANIZATION OF THESIS	28
<u>CHAPTER TWO: <i>TO YOUR SEED I WILL GIVE THIS LAND</i></u>	31
THE NATION: A BRIEF HISTORY OF UGANDA	22
THE PEOPLE: A CURRENT OVERVIEW OF THE ABAYUDAYA	37
<u>CHAPTER THREE: <i>I WILL MAKE A COVENANT</i></u>	43
PRECIPITATING CHANGE: REVITALIZATION MOVEMENT STAGES 1 THROUGH 3	46
REALIZING CHANGE: THE PERIOD OF REVITALIZATION AND THE NEW STEADY STATE	48
CONTINUOUS CHANGE: “MINI-REVITALIZATION MOVEMENTS”	55
<u>CHAPTER FOUR: <i>A STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND</i></u>	64
CONSTRUCTING ABAYUDAYAN ETHNICITY	65
THE TRANSNATIONAL COMMUNITY	67
CULTURAL PRODUCTION	73
CULTURAL CONSUMPTION	79
<u>CHAPTER FIVE: <i>IF I AM NOT FOR MYSELF, WHO WILL BE?</i></u>	85
NOTHING COHESIVE ABOUT “COMMUNITY”	87
THE WESTERN HEGEMONY	89
THE ASHKENAZIK TRADITION AS AUTHORITY	89
DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES AS AUTHORITY	91
WESTERN ORGANIZATIONS IN ACTION WITHIN THE “TRANSNATIONAL COMMUNITY”	92
THE LOCAL HEGEMONY	97
THE BENEFITS OF HEGEMONY	100
<u>CONCLUSION: <i>ONE GENERATION PASSETH AWAY AND ANOTHER COMETH</i></u>	105

Chapter One:

In The Beginning

Tucked away in the shadows of Mount Elgon of eastern Uganda, live the Abayudaya, a Jewish community numbering just over 1,000 members. The Abayudaya (translated as “People of Judah”) converted to Judaism in the early 20th century under the leadership of Semei Kakungulu after breaking away from a religious movement known as Malakite Christianity. Although the community had no known contact with Jews prior to their conversion, the community did have limited contact with outside Jews following their conversion until the 1970s when Idi Amin severed ties with Israel. In the early 1990s, however, relations with the West were reestablished and amplified after two young Jewish Americans backpacking across East Africa happened to meet the Abayudaya’s current rabbi. Following this encounter, the Abayudaya have gained increased notoriety throughout the Jewish Diaspora that has led to significant flows of Western visitors and capital to the community.

Through their burgeoning transnational connections to Western Jewish communities, the Abayudaya have emerged on the world stage. Yet they remain nearly invisible in the scholarly literature despite an increase in overall attention to African Jewry. Instead, Jewish visitors to the community have produced the majority of material pertaining to the Abayudaya and such accounts largely essentialize them as “undeveloped” and spiritually devoted. The Abayudaya do value spiritual endeavors over Western economic ones, but the existing literature

fails to move past this mere observation to ask the next logical question, “Why?” Why do the Abayudaya favor spiritual endeavors over Western economic initiatives? How do they incorporate Western initiatives into the community today? And most curious of all, why did they ever convert to Judaism? This thesis attempts to take the next steps past observation and speculation to explore the confounding reality the Abayudaya present.

Not only has the existing literature failed to take account of the Abayudaya’s experience, however, it has also neglected the environmental, political, historical and global factors that contributed to the Abayudaya’s conversion and that continue to contribute to the community’s endurance. By paying close attention to globalization, which John Tomlinson defines as “complex connectivity,” I identify global shifts including colonization and accelerated globalization, which have preempted significant changes in the community’s development (Tomlinson 1999:2).

By combining the community’s perspective with a current and historical valuation of global shifts, the following analysis reveals that the Abayudaya’s conversion and continued existence is a complex and contested relationship between the community’s constructed ethnicity and globalizing forces. While aspects of globalization threaten the Abayudaya’s existence, global flows ultimately provide transnational relationships and tools critical for the community's survival. These tools, identified as local cultural production and Western cultural consumption, are necessary to maintain and reinforce the Abayudaya’s ethnic identity – even if the employment of these tools is

constrained according to specific hegemonic structures. In other words, the spread of people, ideas, and systems of authority provide the foundation for the Abayudaya's existence and their growth within a given set of limits.

Modeling Methods

Shortly after I was accepted to the School for International Training's (SIT) Development Studies program in Uganda, I received a call from an SIT associate, "Your application says you keep kosher." I explained that yes, I did not eat pork and other foods in the United States, but that I have a flexible diet when traveling. Both she and I agreed that it would be difficult to keep kosher while living in East Africa. Little did either of us know, however, that not only would I keep kosher in Uganda, but that I would adhere more strictly to Jewish mandates abroad than when living in the United States.

While in Uganda, I lived with the Abayudaya for five weeks. When I first left for the Abayudaya's main village about five hours east of Kampala, I was filled with anxiety regarding the feasibility of my research. But once I reached the rural village of Eddembe, I had no time to contemplate these anxieties. It was Friday afternoon, and the women and children were rushing about in preparation for Shabbat¹. I had only set down my belongings in the village guesthouse when I was swept up in the preparations as well. Making challah² with the Rabbi's wife, I was immediately thrust into the role of participant observer, a role that I

¹ The Jewish Sabbath is observed from Friday at sundown to Saturday at sundown. Traditionally all work is prohibited during this time including cooking and writing.

² Jewish braided bread traditionally blessed and eaten during Shabbat

remained in for the next several weeks. My personal Jewish background and knowledge allowed me to participate in religious rituals and festivals, enhancing my understanding of the community's lifestyle in relation to Jewish mandates. I, like most visitors to the community, was astounded by the survival of this group's Jewish identity in such a unique environment. The longer I spent with the community the more I also became impressed with their ability to maintain their strict religious observance in spite of the effects of globalization and Westernization in the community.

Though the community prefers not to label its observance, they practice a form of Judaism similar to Modern Orthodoxy. Throughout my time with the Abayudaya I was constantly vigilant in respecting and mirroring the community's level of religious observance, although it was quite different from my own. For instance, most of the community did not use electronics, cook, clean, work, or carry bags and purses from Friday at sunset until sunset on Saturday, since the Hebrew Bible prohibits specific activities during the Jewish day of rest. I attended Shabbat services every Friday evening and Saturday morning, prayed alongside the women, and at times was called upon to recite a blessing over the Torah. I prepared and ate Shabbat dinners with the Rabbi's family as well as with my host family, and joined my host brothers and sisters in performing Kabbalat Shabbat³ services and Havdallah⁴. I was also present for Passover, a major Jewish holiday that celebrates the Jewish exodus from Egypt. For days preceding

³ A service held Friday at sundown to welcome the Shabbat

⁴ A service held Saturday at sundown that signifies the conclusion of the Shabbat and the beginning of the new week

the holiday I joined the community in emptying the houses of bread, cleaning, and cooking. When the holiday began, I attended and participated in the community's two Seders.⁵

In addition to religious festivals and observances, I was present for the mundane tasks of daily life in rural Uganda. I prepared and ate meals with my host family, washed clothes alongside them, visited the schools of my siblings, as well as the homes of my friends. When I was not partaking in the normal activities of daily life, I spent the majority of my time carrying out ethnographic interviews. Over my five-week stay, I conducted thirteen formal interviews with eleven individuals including the Rabbi, the school headmasters, and local healthcare workers. I also conducted six focus groups: two in the non-Jewish Ugandan community and four within the Abayudayan community. All interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed, except for those conducted on Shabbat (electronics are prohibited on the Jewish days of rest). All but one of the formal interviews was conducted in English. Focus group discussions, however, switched between English and one of the local languages, Lugwere or Lugisu. As a result, I used an interpreter during these sessions. In order to foster the greatest sense of trust and the highest level of rapport, the interpreter I used depended on the location and religious orientation of the group that I was interviewing. For instance, when interviewing members of the Abayudaya, a 23-year-old respected

⁵ The traditional service and ritual meal held on the first two nights of Passover which retells the story of the Israelites Exodus from Egypt. Over the course of the festival, Jews refrain from eating bread.

male Yeshiva⁶ student, accompanied me as my interpreter. When I interviewed non-Jewish communities consisting of Muslims and Christians, however, a Muslim college student who was raised in the area acted as my interpreter.

Between the formal interviews, I was constantly pursuing informal interviews with friends, host family members, neighbors, and acquaintances. I recorded fieldnotes from these conversations at the end of each day.

For all interviews and focus group sessions, informants were told of their rights, my intentions as a researcher, and the final purpose of the project. I obtained verbal consent from all informants to use their words in later writing. Because, the research was conducted in such an identifiable group with potential repercussions in terms of international donations, anonymity is crucial to this case. All names of the informants as well as the names of villages have been changed in order to protect the privacy and identity of the individuals.

Breadth and its Bounds

Community members, suspicious of my intentions, conscious of my differences, and not fully aware of the potential impact of my research seemed to censor themselves during interviews and focus group discussions. I also found that my white skin color allowed me (and at times forced me) to cross gender lines, consequently blurring my perception of gender roles, and power structures

⁶ Derived from the Hebrew root “To sit.” A yeshiva is a religious school that studies Jewish legal and religious texts. This is one way in which to ordain rabbis. Those enrolled in the Abayudaya’s Yeshiva, however, are currently learning Hebrew before they can begin studying the Talmud and other texts.

within the Abayudaya. It also discouraged most of my informants from being critical of the role of Western Jewry in their community's activities. Additionally, because I was an outsider capable of returning home and advocating on their behalf, my fieldwork, in a sense, was based on notions of some sort of implicit reciprocity between me and my informants and the rest of the community. My similarities to the Abayudaya also emerged as obstacles. Because of my Jewish identity my informants often assumed I understood or shared their sentiments and they therefore did not need to articulate them to me. Although a challenge, my Jewish identity opened as many doors as it closed for my research. Upon learning of my Jewish heritage, informants often became more at ease and eager to speak with me.

Despite an informant's eagerness to share, language was a prominent limitation to the research and I was often dependent on an interpreter. Although I selected interpreters based on religious and community affiliation, I was unable to completely hold interpreters accountable for the words they attributed to me, or the statements they attributed to my informants. My limited amount of time with the Abayudaya further restricted the thoroughness of my research, the number of interviews I was able to conduct, and the number of activities I participated in and observed. Additionally, a scarce offering of scholarly works written about the Abayudaya limited the number and type of resources I was able to employ in my final analysis. Finally, in order to ensure the protection of the community and my informants from any negative consequences, I refrain from addressing certain topics. Nonetheless I offer a unique perspective into the inner-processes of the

community that has not yet been offered through academic literature and can be utilized as a point of takeoff to better understand the Abayudaya and their relationship with globalization.

Applicable Approaches

Few scholars have explored the limited phenomenon of Jewish communities in Africa, and how they negotiate their history and everyday experience according to their geographical and spiritual loyalties. *The Black Jews of Africa*, written by Edith Bruder (2008), is one of the few exceptions. Bruder attempts to link all African Jewish communities together under a single explanatory thesis that “explores the ways in which Africans have interacted with ancient mythological substrata of both Westerners’ and Africans’ idea of Jews in order to create a distinct Jewish identity.” According to Bruder, “Synagogues have been formed spontaneously in western, eastern, and southern Africa while various African groups proclaim that they are returning to long-forgotten Jewish roots and trace their lineage to the Lost Tribes of Israel” (Bruder 2008:3). My work diverges from Bruder’s in that I locate the emergence of the Abayudaya, not as a spontaneous event, but as a process rooted in political, economic, and social shifts occurring in Uganda in the early twentieth century.

Bruder’s logic suggests that African Jewish communities have been formed as a result of two processes, the first of which is their shared or similar history to the Jewish people (Bruder 2008:7). Liisa Malkki would clarify that this shared history is not fact, but rather what she identifies as “mythico-history,” or a

collectively constructed history meant to provide meaning for a community (1995:54). The mythico history plays an important role within the Abayudaya, forging community not only at the local level but across the global Jewish Diaspora as well. The second process Bruder identifies in addition to a constructed history was the use of the Old Testament and Jewish history in Christian missionary work throughout Africa. Bruder claims that missionaries spread the story of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel⁷ among the indigenous population in order to convince these populations to convert to Christianity. According to her interpretation of missionary ideology, missionaries believed it would be easier to convince Africans to shift from a “lower” religion into a “higher” one (Christianity) if they believed themselves to have Jewish origins (Bruder 2008:93). These claims were later furthered by the influence of Black American Jewish movement and its involvement in some Jewish communities in Southern Africa⁸ (Bruder 2008:175).

Bruder devotes only six pages out of her 193-page work to the Abayudaya⁹. Her analysis is flawed, because in applying her broad theoretical model to the Abayudaya, she neglects the importance in the fact that the

⁷ Ten of the Twelve Tribes of Israel inhabited the Israel’s Northern Kingdom. When the Northern tribes were exiled in the eighth century BCE, they divided and disappeared. There is a myth that once the Twelve Tribes of Israel are reunited, a messianic era will occur (Bruder 2008: 11).

⁸ William Crowdy, an African American who claimed to receive visions from God that he was meant to “recreate the religion of the biblical Jews for the black people” (Bruder 2008: 174). Crowdy worked with Southern African communities (mainly in South Africa and Zimbabwe) to convert them to Judaism.

⁹ Through an exhaustive library search, Bruder’s *The Black Jews of Africa* is the only published, academic text discussing the Abayudaya (in addition to Oded’s historical account of the community). The majority of the literature is written by non-academics, almost all of which I have cited in this paper.

Abayudaya, unlike almost all other Jewish communities, do not claim Jewish ancestry.¹⁰ She notes their particularity in this regard but suggests that, “The case of the Abayudaya is not unique: this phenomenon of spontaneous adherence to Judaism, without any direct contact with a Jewish community, reminds us of the case of the Italian village of San Nicandro, Italy, where a small group of people adhered to Judaism between the two world wars” (Bruder 2008:161). Ultimately, Bruder fails to identify the specific factors that contributed to the Abayudaya’s emergence. This is a theme that is perpetuated in accounts by contemporary visitors to the community.

Most of what is written on the Abayudaya, and African Jewry in general (see Berg 1997; Wetzler 2006, 2007, 2009; Frank 2008) is produced not by scholars, but by the Western Jews who have visited the communities. These accounts either provide a limited historical background of the community, or the author’s personal and spiritual experience during their time in the community. These works do not address why the Abayudaya converted, but rather tend to essentialize the Abayudaya as black, underdeveloped Jews who maintain superior spirituality to Western Jews perhaps because of their raw, natural, and “underdeveloped” circumstances. For example, two young men, some of the first documented outside visitors to the community wrote in a publication:

¹⁰ *The Israelites* in South Africa in addition to the Rusape community of Zimbabwe do not claim roots in the Ten Lost Tribes. Both movements, however, were heavily influenced and encouraged by Crowdy’s involvement and teachings (See Bruder 2008, page 177 for further reading).

For us, the answer is clear. When we hear the Lecha Dodi¹¹ sung to a beautiful *native Buganda rhythm*, echoing through the open windows of the community's only permanent synagogue, *one with no doors or windows*, and women methodically preparing for Shabbat, *hiking up hills carrying ten gallon jugs of water on their heads*, there is a certain degree of comfort and belonging. They look nothing like us, but behave in a way that shows great reverence for the Torah that ancestors of our people have lived and died for. (Italics added for emphasis) (Schultz 2000:477).

The authors highlight the differences between themselves and the Abayudaya, despite their shared Jewish observance, while emphasizing the natural surroundings and “underdeveloped” lifestyle of the Abayudaya. Hence, they essentialize the community by casting them as the “Exotic Other”.

Recent visitors to the community embrace and reproduce such essentializing descriptions. One New York Jewish family decided to travel to Uganda for their son's Bar-Mitzvah. In his Bar-Mitzvah speech, the thirteen-year-old explained that he wanted to commemorate his coming of age with the Abayudaya as an alternative to the overt materialism of American Bar-Mitzvah¹² ceremonies explaining that, “Our family thought that this could miss some of the spirit of the Bar Mitzvah day.” He went on to say, “In our desire for material things, we have lost much of the spirit, community, and carrying out of the mitzvot¹³ that your community has. Even though your hardships are many, you seem like you have so much. You are so rich in spirit” (Cohen 2007). The reason I highlight this experience is because it serves to illustrate the assumption among Western Jewish families that African Jews hold superior spirituality to those in

¹¹ A Hebrew prayer translated as “come my beloved.” The Lecha Dodi is chanted on Friday nights to welcome the Shabbat.

¹² Coming of age ceremony for a Jewish boy in which the boy is called up to bless the Torah. Typically performed at the age of thirteen. (Bat-Mitzvah, feminine).

¹³ Good deeds, Mitzvah (singular)

the West. One philanthropist visiting the community during my fieldwork confided that, “It’s a fine line to balance between helping what you love, and destroying what you love through too much help.” The community’s relative material deprivation, coupled with their religious practice lends to the essentializing statements describing the “spirit” that visitors attribute to the Abayudaya. Because the essentializing rhetoric which currently exists to describe the Abayudaya is one-dimensional and neglects the complexity of the individuals and the collective, and because works like Bruder’s neglect the unique factors contributing to the Abayudaya’s emergence, a new analytical framework must be introduced to explain the community’s actions.

Ethnography, therefore, provides a much needed perspective in the construction of a meaningful portrait of the Abayudaya. A perspective which distances the viewer from essentialism and the crystallization of difference and instead moves us closer to the individual and to the community; a perspective in which the community is better understood through the words of its members rather than the preconceptions of outsiders; a perspective in which distance ultimately yields intimacy – and ideally, understanding. In other words, it is the anthropologist holding the paint brush as well as the responsibility “to be called out of himself to as close an inhabitation in local views as possible...It is a calling with a tolerance of ambiguity amidst its striving for method” (Fernandez 1978:230). Ethnography represents a qualitative method that combines the informant’s understanding of the culture and the anthropologist’s analysis primarily through interviews and participant observation in order to illuminate an

explanatory model for the Abayudaya's existence and their Jewish observance. I do not believe that a single discipline can solely account for the emergence and endurance of the Abayudaya, nor do I believe that the community can be fully appreciated through a scholarly perspective. Anthropology of Religion, Globalization Theory and African Studies, however, combine to reveal factors contributing to the existence of the Abayudaya through a meaningful and sensitive framework that has not yet been applied to this community. By putting these disciplines in conversation with one another, we come to understand the Abayudaya's religious practice not as a search for spiritual absolutes, nor a spontaneous occurrence, but instead one that we can only begin to understand as a culmination of historical, religious, and global factors. Ultimately, this conversation will reveal globalization's primary role in the Abayudaya's development as a revitalization movement, their resulting ethnic identity, and the complexity of their negotiations with Western communities today that simultaneously threaten and perpetuate their existence.

Anthony F.C. Wallace introduced the model of a revitalization movement in 1956 as a conscious effort to alter a society's culture in order for the group to return to a "steady state" in response to stress, or a condition that threatens the social organization "with more or less serious damage" (Wallace 1965:265-268). In the case of the Abayudaya, globalization, or more specifically, colonization, presented the stressors that ultimately triggered the Abayudaya's conversion. A basic historical understanding of colonization, then, is crucial to an appreciation

of the Abayudaya as a revitalization movement and the community's current positioning within the global Jewish community.

The history of Uganda's current territory, which is outlined further in Chapter Two, did not, of course, begin with colonialism in the 19th century. Colonialism did, however, function as a significant historical catalyst for the revitalization movement, which is why I begin this discussion with an overview of Uganda's colonization. The British colonized Uganda in 1890 and pursued a policy of indirect rule and customary law in Uganda, as in all of their other African colonies. Indirect rule, a system of decentralized control which placed Africans in intermediary positions of power, allowed the colonizing government to maintain control of colonies like Uganda despite a lack of personnel, poor communication systems, and health threats to European officials in the colony (Mamdani 1996:73). This false power and the violation thereof was a stressor introduced by colonial rule that significantly contributed to the rise of Abayudayan leadership. An additional stressor was Britain's policy of customary law, meant to simplify indirect rule by manipulating and crystallizing indigenous cultural practices to support and enforce British authority. According to anthropologist Mahmood Mamdani the model imposed by customary law, "was monarchical, patriarchal, and authoritarian," leaving behind a legacy of "decentralized despotism" in Britain's African colonies (Mamdani 1996:39). Such a malignant legacy in addition to the limitations to cultural growth as a result of the customary law, surely contributed to the stress experienced in the colony. For "Cultures are made of continuities and changes...Societies without

change aren't authentic; they're just dead" (Appiah 2006:3). Ugandans were ill-equipped to cope with globalization and changing demands when forced to comply with the static roles and expectations of the colonial regime.

As a result of these "stressors" among others that I introduce in Chapter Three, the Abayudaya moved from what Wallace refers to as the "Steady State" to a Period of Increased Individual Stress. In order for a culture to re-achieve a "Steady-State" once it has been threatened by stressors, the community works to move from the Period of Increased Individual Stress, to the Period of Revitalization, Cultural Transformation, and finally the New Steady State (Wallace 1956:268). The concept of a "steady state" is highly problematic since societies are continuously coping with biological, physical, psychological, ecological, and cultural threats to survival. Wallace, like most theorists, was inevitably informed and shaped by the period in which he wrote, thus explaining his belief in a historic "harmonious" steady state. Despite the flaws inherent within his belief in a steady state, however, his model remains extremely useful in addressing abrupt social and cultural change.

According to Wallace's model, the Abayudaya exemplify a typical revitalization movement as one that, "involves a group declining in political power, wealth, well-being, population, or a combination of these that develops a movement out of bricolage of its own cultural materials, with the explicit purpose being able to eliminate or at least exclude the dominant group" (Harkin 2004:xxix). Some revitalization movements are not a result of losses facing the community, but rather function as "projects" to accomplish a specific goal

(McMullen 2004:272). Whatever the situation may be, culture emerges in every revitalization movement as the “institutional contract of the rules of the road, enabling everyone to move smoothly in the same direction” (Siikala 2004:90). For the Abayudaya, the new “rules of the road” was Judaism.

An incidental by-product of establishing Judaism as the foundation of Abayudayan culture was the community’s constructed ethnicity as “Ugandan Jews” that I describe in Chapters Three and Four. Constructed ethnicity, “on the basis of territorial contiguity as villages” (Mamdani 1996:41) was a common result of colonization in Africa due to customary law. The Abayudaya are unique because they did not develop according to colonial structures, but nonetheless did develop because of them. Originally these African social groupings were understood by scholars as a “tribe” or “natural,” “ancient,” and static African social organization (Atkinson 1999:19). Beginning around the 1970’s, however, there was a theoretical push away from “tribe” in favor of “ethnicity” in order to better understand the social and historical processes that contribute to identity and politics in Africa today (Atkinson 1999:29).

Fredrik Barth is one theorist who made significant contributions to the study of ethnicity. According to Barth, an ethnic group is any community that is “biologically self-perpetuating” shares cultural values and practices, constitutes a system of interaction, and has a membership “which identifies itself, and is identified by others as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order” (Barth 1998:10). Once an ethnic group is established, it must continuously maintain what Barth refers to as “ethnic

boundaries” (Barth 1998:15). These ethnic boundaries function to preserve the unique group identity while allowing for interaction with others outside of the group, thus demanding “criteria for determining membership and ways of signaling membership and exclusion” (Barth 1998:15). The Abayudaya’s understanding of Judaism and their religious practices denotes their ethnic identity since Jewish practices function as ethnic boundaries determining marriage, social organization, and education within the community. Jack Eller clarifies in *From Culture to Ethnicity to Conflict* that religion does not always constitute ethnicity, but it does function within some groups as the foundation of an ethnic identity (Eller 1999:9). In the Abayudaya’s case, religion, culture, and ethnicity *are* intimately linked. Judaism determines how the Abayudaya conduct their daily lives. It does allow room for aspects of Ugandan culture to remain, but in Chapter Four we will see that Judaism trumps any conflicting cultural practices. By altering their existence according to Jewish teachings, the Abayudaya differentiate themselves from their non-Jewish neighbors, thus erecting ethnic-boundaries inherently tied to their Jewish identity.

Ethnicity provides a powerful alternative to tribe in understanding local identities and social groups since it acknowledges the different historical, political and social process which contribute to the construction of ethnicity (Yeros 1999:8). It also promotes an understanding of identity as “a fluid, complex, and contested category” (Atkinson 1999:15). The Abayudaya’s Jewish identity that is rooted in the community’s unique historical development and location provides more than just an ethnic identity. It provides a flexibility that allows groups and

communities to maintain cohesion and unity while also coping with new developments often resulting from globalization.

Globalization has always been significant in anthropological theory, but it lies directly in the center of this case study since revitalization movements are inherently “one of the most obviously transcultural mechanisms by which groups attempt to articulate with the outside world.” Colonialism, a manifestation of globalization, introduced stressors to Uganda inadvertently initiating the Abayudaya’s emergence. Globalization has continued to shape and reshape the community, while maintaining the community’s ethnic identity. Many anthropologists criticize Wallace’s model of a revitalization movement for neglecting the ongoing process of adaptation and change in the face of globalization and is therefore “too static” (Roscoe 2004:163). Anthropologist Michael Harkin notes that the model lacks “adequate feedback mechanisms and reflexivity” (Harkin 2004:xxx). Some of the shortcomings of Wallace’s theory, however can be addressed through my concept of “mini-revitalization movements” which I elaborate upon in Chapter Three. I argue that the constant interaction of a culture with different peoples and new technologies will invariably incur new stressors, thus inciting a revitalization movement as a cyclical process rather than a linear one (Vokes 2007:322). Despite the flaws identified within Wallace’s analysis, many anthropologists still agree on the model’s ability to provide clarity to cases that otherwise remain muddled. By continuing to apply Wallace’s model to recent historical developments in conjunction with an anthropological understanding of globalization, we can

understand why communities take certain actions in light of their cultural identity. But as I note in Chapter Five, these actions take place within a particular set of circumstances and constraints.

The discipline through which globalization is analyzed will inevitably shape one's conclusions regarding global processes (Appadurai 1996:11). This paper is rooted in an anthropological understanding of globalization because of anthropology's holistic and multi-dimensional approach that views globalization as a dialectical process. Viewing globalization in this light, functions as a heuristic necessity for understanding how globalization shapes new ethnicities and reinforces local identities. Most theorists of globalization, despite their differences across disciplines, agree on several characteristics of globalization, including its response to technological change, its power to reconfigure states and intensify regionalization, as well as its uneven effects across the globe (Pieterse 2004:8). On the other hand, however, several disagreements also exist primarily stemming from a central schism within globalization studies: whether globalization homogenizes cultures across the world according to the hegemonic cultural system of the time, or whether, the current hegemonic discourse combines with other cultures in order to produce something new and unique to the locality. It is useful here to consider the concept of cultural hegemony, introduced by Antonio Gramsci, as the idea of mass control through consent to ideology rather than control through coercion or force. His concept of consent, though, does not address or include the many instances of cultural negotiation and creation in response to hegemonies.

The Abayudaya highlight a flaw in the theory of homogenization and hegemonic consent since the community did not comply with colonial rule, nor adhere to previous cultural norms. Hence, the idea of homogenization emphasizes capitalism and Westernization as globalization's central feature rather than culture (Pieterse 2004:20). This approach, which is the origin of development theory, emphasizes Eurocentrism and neglects to acknowledge or address "the impact nonwestern cultures have been making on the West. It downplays the ambivalence of the globalizing momentum and ignores the role of local reception of Western culture..." (Pieterse 2004:69). During a recent visit to Ghana, Kwame Anthony Appiah recalls how Western visitors were uncomfortable with "what they regard as the intrusion of modernity" on a traditional Ghanaian ritual, thus illustrating their belief that all societies are moving in a linear path toward uniformity (Appiah 2006:1). Western visitors to the Abayudaya community hold similar perceptions. They are cautious of "not harming" that which they love through technological developments for fear that it will wipe out the Abayudaya's "authentic" culture. What this perception fails to consider, however, are the numerous changes that the Abayudaya have undergone, beginning with their conversion in 1919, followed by mini-revitalization movements, and continuing today as they navigate the forces of rapidly accelerating globalization.

A recent development of globalization that anthropologist Ted C. Lewellen refers to as "contemporary globalization" (Lewellen 2002:7, Pieterse 2004:3) continues to interact with and influence Abayudayan culture. This

change in globalizing processes began with the printing press and the subsequent mass literacy that allowed societies to construct “dialectically generated nationalisms” (Appadurai 1996:28), or ethnicities in the case of the Abayudaya. This phenomenon continued to gain speed within the past century as a result of what Arjun Appadurai refers to as a “technological explosion” (1996:28). This explosion, which includes the invention of new modes of transportation (e.g. steamship, automobile, airplane) as well as mediums for informational flows (e.g. the camera, computer, telephone, and internet) have created an unprecedented level of interconnectedness between real and imagined communities (Appadurai 1996:29). Today, the Abayudaya, like all societies are wrapped up in the heightened level of global interconnection. In fact, they have established a transnational community with Western Jews and Western Jewish organizations that is described in depth in Chapter Four.

Other anthropologists who have studied religion emphasize the importance of globalization and transnational flows in a population’s religious practice. Dianna Shandy, for instance, who studied Christian religious identities within the Nuer of Sudan explains that “a Christian religious identity links southern Sudanese to a wider international community” and that “These transnational ties are significant in their ability to leverage international support for the resources directed towards Sudan and Southerners’ quest for political autonomy” (Shandy 2002:215). Members of a religion, whether it is considered a revitalization movement or not, often use their religious identity within a global context in order to create relationships that provide important material and non-material support

for the community's survival. This is common among Christian groups in Africa as a result of the "precarious role of the African postcolonial state, with its run-down structures of governance and failure to achieve legitimacy" (Meyer 2004:465). Christianity, and for the Abayudaya, Judaism, therefore fulfills a spiritual, as well as political role in the construction of a religious population's identity. Because African states are unable "to bind the citizens in to the vision of the nation," citizens instead bind themselves to a religious doctrine (Meyer 2004:466).

The interactions between Westerners and Abayudaya within this community however, do not give credence to the theory of homogenization or the fear that all communities are proceeding down a single path toward development and identity. Through close analysis it becomes apparent that the Abayudaya do not completely surrender their ethnic identity or cultural practices to mirror their Western counterparts. Rather they act creatively as a collective to preserve their unique practices. Appadurai suggests that creativity, or "imagination" "in its collective forms, that creates ideas of neighborhood and nationhood... is today a staging ground for action, and not only escape" (Appadurai 1996:7). According to Appadurai, the collective imagination is firmly rooted in culture. The imagination allows communities to reinterpret global processes at work within their society as well as to reproduce their culture in the face of new global pressures. Imagination that correlates to culture allows individuals to become cultural consumers by adapting "products to suit their own needs," just as the Abayudaya interpret Western involvement in ways that reinforce their ethnic

identity (Appiah 2006:3). With the help of globalization, “cultural consumers” are able to manipulate imagination to reshape and reinforce ethnic borders, understandings of locality, and transnational relationships. Ultimately, however, they must use such techniques to reinforce “community” on a local and international scale in order to survive as a whole within the constrictions of hegemonic structures.

Organization of Thesis

The following chapters draw from the theories discussed in the previous section in order to explain the emergence of the Abayudaya and how they continue to survive today. Chapter Two situates the Abayudaya in time and space since location is critical to understanding the emergence of the Abayudaya due to the significant role of Uganda’s historical and colonial experience shaping the Abayudaya’s religious practice and maintenance of their ethnic identity today. This chapter provides a historical account of Uganda from pre-colonial times through the nation’s independence in 1962. It situates the Abayudaya within this history and emphasizes the community’s relative isolation and how this shaped the development of their constructed history. Finally it provides an overview of the Abayudaya’s current economic situation and modes of livelihood in Uganda in order to provide the reader with an understanding of the community’s current activities, how Judaism shapes these activities, as well as how international actors shape them.

Chapter Three employs Wallace's model of revitalization movements and globalization theory to explain the community's conversion to Judaism. Pressures resulting from globalization, most notably colonization, initiated the movement. The conversion, led by the renowned Ugandan military leader, Semei Kakungulu, was initially Kakungulu's attempt to regain personal authority, but ultimately allowed the community to reassert individual and collective autonomy by consciously restructuring their culture. For a time, the resulting Jewish practice continued to be restructured through mini-revitalization movements.

Chapter Four explores how the Abayudaya are able to survive as a distinct community in light of mounting pressure from Westernizing forces. By drawing on Fredrick Barth's definition of ethnicity, I'm able to attribute the Abayudaya's survival in the 21st century to the maintenance of their ethnic identity through the processes of local cultural production and Western cultural consumption. The Abayudaya actively create a familiar, yet unique Jewish practice to attract Western involvement that grants the Abayudaya legitimacy as a Jewish community. The Abayudaya are not "blank slates," however, blindly accepting and incorporating Western involvement in their community (Appiah 2006:5). Instead, I illustrate how they function as "cultural consumers," within the transnational community. The Abayudaya attribute religious meaning to Western initiatives, thus reinforcing their ethnic identity. Although the Abayudaya's relationships with the West hold the potential to threaten the Abayudaya as a community, the Abayudaya continue to endure today in a complex, dialectical relationship with globalizing forces.

The final substantive chapter examines how the Abayudaya concede to the hegemonic systems in order to prosper within them. By employing Kate Crehan's notion of "community" and Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony, I illustrate how the Abayudaya are enmeshed in multiple hegemonic systems due to their situation within a transnational community. The Ashkenazik Jewish tradition, the Western development discourse, and the local leadership structure function as voices of authority within the Abayudaya that create and strengthen conceptions of community, which although limiting, ultimately promote the survival of the Abayudaya's religious observance and ethnic identity as a whole.

The conclusion summarizes the main points of the chapters and highlights future areas of research by asking how the Abayudaya will continue to cope within their local and transnational Jewish community in light of the powerful forces of globalization.

Chapter Two:

Locating the Abayudaya

The Abayudaya of Uganda are the only known Africans to have seemingly spontaneously converted to Judaism without external Jewish involvement or influence. In order to understand how and why this conversion occurred, it is crucial to discuss the historical circumstances that contributed to their conversion as well as the economic, political and social circumstances they currently navigate in order to maintain their Jewish observance. In this chapter I therefore, first outline a brief pre-colonial and colonial history of Uganda and then move to the Abayudaya's historical development as a community. I have not attempted to triangulate all of the oral histories I collected from my informants in addition to the few histories published by scholars in order to write an objective history of the community. Instead, through this chapter, I attempt to present the Abayudaya's understanding of their own history. In doing so, I invoke Liisa Malkki's concept of a "mythico-history" in order to highlight the current significance of the Abayudaya's constructed past (Malkki 1995). Once we have located the Abayudaya within Uganda's pre-colonial and colonial history and identified the meaning of the community's constructed history, we can begin to explore the factors that led the Abayudaya to a Jewish conversion.

The Nation: A Brief History of Uganda

Nestled in East Africa, Uganda is neighbored by The Democratic Republic of Congo to the west, Sudan to the north, Kenya to the east, and Rwanda and Tanzania to the South. Lake Victoria also constitutes most of the country's southern border (Ofcansky 1996:3). The country is lush with tropical fauna due to its fertile land and ample rainfall. Uganda's population of over 32



Map of Uganda. The Abayudaya live in the East of the country near Mbale. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ug-map.png>

million consists of approximately 40 ethnic groups speaking over 30 languages that never considered themselves in pre-colonial times as single, unified nation (Ofcansky 1996:74).

The history of these groups and the antecedents of the nation of Uganda date back to the fourth century BCE when hunter gatherers, agriculturalists and pastoralists, originating from West Africa migrated to the forests surrounding Lake Victoria, while inhabitants from northern Africa settled in the northern and eastern regions of the country (Ofcansky 1996:14).

As the population grew due to agricultural abundance, four kingdoms emerged. The Bunyoro-Kitara was the first kingdom to develop and was centered in West central Uganda, followed by the Buganda Kingdom in the south central region of the country, and later the Ankole Kingdom and the Kingdom of Toro (Ofcansky 1996:15). These kingdoms were often in conflict with one another, but the Buganda Kingdom was historically the most influential group (politically and militarily) in Uganda. Although comprised of immigrants, the Baganda “developed a highly refined sense of its superiority, which caused a backlash among other peoples” (Ofcansky 1996:15). Due to strong resentment, the Baganda were forced to control their kingdom with military force. Following the arrival of the British in Uganda, the shared sense of resentment among other kingdoms for the Baganda intensified due to special privileges granted to the Baganda as an ally of the colonial power (Ofcansky 1996:15).

Although Muslim traders from the North arrived in the country in the 1830’s, thirty years before British forces entered the region, it was the European missionaries who began to alter the region’s internal structures (US Department of State 2010). Prior to European contact, each ethnic group had varying religious traditions. Most centered around a single supreme being, except for the Baganda who believe in multiple gods (Ofcansky 1996:74). Islam was introduced to the region through Muslim traders around the 1830’s. King Mutesa of the Buganda Kingdom actually converted to Islam in order to access the superior technology of Muslim traders, and he encouraged his subjects to convert as well (King, Kasozi, Oded 1973). In 1877 British missionaries from the Church

Missionary Society arrived in the Buganda Kingdom, followed by French Roman Catholic Missionaries in 1879 (affiliated with the Society of Missionaries of Africa) (Ofcansky 1996:18). Initially, King Mutesa pitted the missionaries against each other in order to avoid the spread of their influence and the further intervention of foreign powers. But many European states were interested in the region, if not for religious motivations then due to speculation that the territory held the source of the River Nile. The British ultimately gained full control over the country in 1890 after Germany signed a treaty relinquishing control of Uganda to the British Government. Four years later, Britain officially declared Uganda a British Protectorate (Ofcansky 1996:19).

But the British lacked the military forces in Africa to expand their territory and enforce their rule, so they recruited Ugandan military leaders and their forces to aid the colonial conquests of surrounding groups. Semei Kakungulu, a Muganda¹⁴ and a central figure in Uganda's military history as well as in the Abayudaya's development, led several successful military campaigns, significantly extending British rule north and westward. In addition to military forces, the British also lacked trained administrative personnel in Uganda. As a solution, the British enforced a policy known as indirect rule in the colony. Colonial officials appointed Ugandan figureheads to collect taxes, maintain stability, and report back to the colonizers (Mamdani 1996:39). Positioned as British allies, the Baganda elites were the popular candidates to fulfill such administrative roles. The British "preserved Buganda's traditional ruling

¹⁴ A member of the Baganda ethnic group, singular.

hierarchy” and “gave Buganda special status enjoyed by no other kingdom” (Ofcansky 1996:22). Consequently, officials solidified Baganda traditions and political structures as the customary law of the colony, forcing different kingdoms with differing traditions to abide by Baganda custom.

Ugandans were entwined with British interests. In fact, thousands of Ugandans served in the British forces during WWI and WWII. The return of these “approximately 55,000 ex-servicemen, many of whom possessed political and organizational skills” helped incite national discontent against the colonial regime (Ofcansky 1996:26). The exile of the Baganda King as a result of disagreements over policy changes with Uganda’s governor Andrew Cohen heightened the discontent of the nation’s most prominent constituency in Uganda (Ofcansky 1996:35). Yet compared to other African colonies, Uganda lacked a unified nationalist movement prior to independence (Ofcansky 1996:34).

Despite the absence of a nationalist movement, Uganda attained independence in 1962 under the leadership of Milton Obote and the United People’s Congress (UPC). Uganda continued to be plagued by division and instability following the country’s independence, though, and several leaders cycled in and out of political office as a result. Obote ruled as Uganda’s first president until 1971, when the tyrant Idi Amin usurped power and instituted a military dictatorship. Over the course of the next eight years Amin’s regime slaughtered an estimated 300,000 Ugandans and Asian Ugandan citizens, and terrorized and tortured thousands more. Following Amin’s fall from power, four different presidential administrations were installed over the next seven years,

including a second term by Obote (Decalo 1998:115-186). In 1986, after years of ethnic and political violence that centered around a competition for power between the National Resistance Army (NRA) and the Ugandan National Liberation Front Army (UNLA), Yoweri Museveni and the NRA claimed control of the country (Ofcansky 1996:58).

Museveni remains in power today. In 1995, he ratified the constitution. Ten years later, he amended the document to extend the number of consecutive presidential terms permitted for an individual to serve (Musoke 2009). Museveni has made some improvements to the nation's infrastructure and healthcare system, but his administration has been notorious in Uganda for corruption, hypocrisy and stagnancy. Despite the apparent governmental failures, however, Uganda continues to receive significant financial subsidies from the United States and other non-governmental organizations including the IMF and World Bank (US Department of State 2010). Although Uganda has vast natural resources including valuable minerals such as cobalt, its resources remain underexploited (Central Intelligence Agency 2010). Currently, an estimated 80% of the country's labor force is involved in the agricultural sector and the GDP per capita as of 2008 was \$1,300, thus reinforcing Uganda's financial dependence on international donors (Central Intelligence Agency 2010). It is within this national history and current economic context that Abayudaya negotiate among local, national, and global forces.

The People: A Current Overview of the Abayudaya

In the eastern region of Uganda near the border with Kenya, live the 1,050 members of the Abayudaya. The community, which consists of an amalgamation of several Ugandan ethnic groups is dispersed among eight villages that lie within 1 to 15 kilometers of each other and are primarily linked by dirt roads.

Community members travel between villages or into Mbale, the nearest city, by foot or using public transportation, since they cannot afford the more expensive fare of motorcycle taxis.

With the exception of religious practices, the Abayudaya live similar lifestyles to their non-Jewish neighbors in the rural villages. The majority of the community, for instance, relies on subsistence farming and survives on less than a dollar a day. Families live in mud or concrete homes with thatched or tin roofs on small plots of land. Young children are responsible for hauling jerry cans full of water from the boreholes to their homes, since running water and electricity have not reached the majority of rural villages. Most of these children attend primary and secondary school, though not all, since some families cannot afford school fees and school supplies and need their children to help with agricultural pursuits. When children return home from school at the end of the day or during a holiday break, the young students accompany their mothers into the fields to tend to the crops, which include beans, bananas, plantains, and a variety of fruits. Men also farm, but women, as in all of Uganda, are a central if not the primary agricultural worker within the domestic unit. My Abayudayan host father explained to me that his wife is largely responsible for their gardens. Although he owns the land,

she determines what crops to cultivate as well as when and where to plant and harvest them.

The community's rural geographical "frontier" location and their isolation from basic technological developments (e.g. running water and electricity), are significant factors that shape the context in which the community reproduces and reinforces its religious and cultural practices (Kopytoff 1987; Malkki 1995:137). An African frontier location is defined by Igor Kopytoff as located "at the fringes of the numerous established African societies" (1987:3), and provides an "institutional vacuum" which allows communities like the Abayudaya to create or intensify the culture that they bring to this location (1987:14). The Abayudaya, however, interpret this "institutional vacuum" as "isolation" and associate it with hardship when re-telling their past. The community's experienced isolation serves as a central motif within the constructed history of the community - or what Liisa Malkki refers to in her study of Hutu refugees as the "mythico-history" (Malkki 1995).

A mythico-history is a past constructed by the collective that emphasizes certain themes or events that provide the community with moral meaning. Malkki explains that the "mythico-history is misread if it is seen simply as a series of factual claims," for the "facts" included are merely "building blocks for the construction of a grand moral-historical vision" (Malkki 1995:104). An appreciation for the Abayudaya's understanding of their past is necessary to comprehend how they currently navigate transnational flows, which I discuss in following chapters. In addition to isolation, I suggest that the Abayudaya's

mythico-history also emphasizes themes of spirituality, persecution, and benevolent outsiders.

According to Abayudayan members today, their community initially broke off from a larger religious movement known as Malakite Christianity, in the early twentieth century (For further reading on Malakite Christianity see Hansard 1937; Lipschutz 1986)¹⁵. Informants emphasized the purely religious justifications for the break, detailing how their leader Semei Kakungulu noticed contradictions between the Old and New Testament and was compelled to declare himself a Jew based on his convictions rooted in the Hebrew Bible. Community members today perpetuate the feeling of pride associated with Kakungulu's declaration of the community's Jewish values.

Following this declaration, Malakites shunned the break-off sect, exacerbating the Abayudaya's geographic and spiritual separation. As the community followed Kakungulu to a frontier location, the Abayudaya were removed from the influence of other religious movements, colonialists, and the pressure to abide by strict customary law, thus allowing them to develop a unique religious practice. Informants, however, note this sense of isolation not as a crutch to the community's survival, but as an obstacle to it instead. According to current leadership in the community, their isolation was exacerbated by their non-Jewish neighbors' dislike for them and their later blatant discrimination and persecution against the Abayudaya during Idi Amin's regime. In almost every

¹⁵ Note for future research: The British archives may contain more detailed information about the Malakite sect and perhaps the Abayudaya's formation as well.

interview I conducted, the Abayudaya discussed some form of experienced discrimination on the basis of their religious practice. Such an experience seemed to validate their religious identity, especially when the community explicitly drew parallels between their own persecution and the historical persecution of Jews. During the festival of Passover, for example, instead of discussing the persecution of the Israelites at the hands of the Egyptians that the holiday commemorates, the community shared stories of their own persecution under Idi Amin. By drawing comparisons between their own experience and Biblical precedents, the Abayudaya imply their spiritual worth and establish moral meaning within their mythico-history, not only for themselves, but also for foreign Jews interested and invested in the community.

The Abayudaya's first interactions with non-Ugandan Jews began with a single visitor from Jerusalem in the 1920s known in the community as "Joseph." Several years later another foreign Jew involved with infrastructure construction in Uganda met the community. Then, in the 1990s the Abayudaya established significant contact with Western Jewry¹⁶ and American Jewish institutions through their initial introduction to Kulanu, a New York-based, Jewish non-profit. Whenever speaking to me of foreign involvement in the community, community members consistently portrayed visitors as kind and knowledgeable and emphasized the benevolence of these outsiders. I was constantly aware, however,

¹⁶ It is important to note that although Jews from several Western countries including Great Britain and Canada visit the Abayudaya each year, my fieldwork revolves around the role American organizations and Israeli politics play in the Abayudaya's reality. As a result, my discussion in the following chapters regarding the activities of "Western" or "international Jewry" in the community focuses primary on the roles of American and Israeli actors.

that the community viewed me as an outsider who held the potential to personally donate to the community, or return to my Jewish community in the United States and raise awareness and funds on their behalf. I am sure the Abayudaya were also well aware of this possibility as they shared with me their collective past. In her fieldwork, Malkki observed the ability of the Hutu's mythico-history to provide meaning to "the socio-political present." The Abayudaya's constructed past serves the same function today as it informs their present actions and interactions with increasing numbers of outsiders (Malkki 1995:105). These actions are constantly being contextualized within their mythico-history, thus providing meaning and moral continuity (Malkki 1995:55).

In the past two decades, two United States based Jewish organizations, Kulanu and the Institute for Jewish and Community Research, have become deeply invested in all sectors of the community. In 2002, a delegation of American and Israeli rabbis traveled to Uganda to perform an official Conservative conversion for community members.¹⁷ Although this conversion made the community "officially" Jewish according to the Conservative movement, the Abayudaya have identified as Jews since 1919, and since then have held worship services several times a week, observed the Jewish day of rest as well as kosher dietary restrictions. Israel, however, denies the legitimacy of the Abayudaya since the state only recognizes converts who undergo an Orthodox

¹⁷ The documentary *Yearning to Belong* records the Abayudaya's 2002 conversion (Gonsler, Vinik 2007)

conversion¹⁸ as eligible for Jewish entitlement to Israeli citizenship (See Lacey 2003). Israel's refusal to acknowledge the community reinforces the Abayudaya's emphasis on themes of spirituality and persecution during the telling their mythico-history.

Every history is subjective. Yet it is important to understand a community's subjective interpretation of historical events in order to analyze their past and present activities as well as inter and intra-community relationships. Although the Abayudaya seem like an anomaly in a rural setting with a long history of Christian missionary work and Western oppression, Uganda's historic context and the Abayudaya's understanding of such a context, provides the starting point for understanding the emergence of this Jewish community.

¹⁸ Conservative and Orthodox conversions are similar processes. Both instruct the convert about how to live as a Jew and both require the convert to be immersed in a ritual bath in addition to making an agreement to live by the Jewish commandments. Male converts also undergo the ritual circumcision. An Orthodox conversion requires, however, that the members of the jury who determine the sincerity of the convert must be Orthodox Jews. Additionally the tradition requires that an Orthodox rabbi must oversee the conversion. Orthodox Rabbis do not recognize conversions done by Conservative or Reform rabbis (Jewish Virtual Library 2010).

Chapter Three:

I Will Make a Covenant

“My Muslim friends taught me how to knit these,” Jack tells me as he fingers his kippah.¹⁹ Most of the men in the community wear large knitted kippot, which dip below their brow with bold colors of red and green providing the backdrop for white Jewish stars. Men wear them as they make mud bricks in the scorching sun, young boys during soccer games, and elders as they discuss the day. For the first several days I spend among the Abayudaya I am caught off guard when I cross paths with a Ugandan man wearing a kippah, or when on Friday afternoons, young kids greet me with “Shabbat Shalom!” The only Judaism I have known is a Judaism of affluent American synagogues, filled with white, yuppie couples and their children, old men with drooping ears and long noses, and plump grandmothers who sprinkle their speech with Yiddish. To me, the Abayudaya’s Judaism is as alien as the African environment. Back home, there are high ceilinged synagogues and lavish sanctuaries. Here there are thatched huts and red dirt roads. I blush with the awareness of my own preconceptions and catch myself wondering, “How exactly did Judaism take root here when it seems physical survival is more pressing than spiritual salvation? Or are the two mutually exclusive?”

¹⁹ A skull cap traditionally worn by Jewish men. Kippot, plural.

The Abayudaya's existence as a Jewish community in remote, rural Uganda comes as a surprise to most Jews in the Western world. Why would a group with no prior ties to Judaism spontaneously convert? Upon closer examination of the individual and environmental factors at play in the Abayudaya's conversion, however, it is possible to understand the community's conversion as a conscious effort to alter the collective's culture in order to combat cultural losses (Wallace 1956). Such an effort is labeled and explained by Anthony F.C. Wallace in his seminal text *Revitalization Movements* (1956). Wallace's concept of a revitalization movement serves as a heuristic device that sheds light on the development of the Abayudaya. It is necessary to clarify, however, that this is not an understanding shared or promoted by the community, or those who visit it. Consequently, flaws emerge in the application of the model, due to its disregard for the Abayudaya's experienced spirituality. Nonetheless, it provides the foundation necessary for further understanding in the following chapters as well as a takeoff point for future analysis.

According to Wallace, a revitalization movement is "a deliberate organized conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture" (Wallace 1956:265). New stressors to the community incite the movement which include "climactic, floral and faunal change; military defeat; political subordination, extreme pressure toward acculturation resulting in internal cultural conflict; economic distress; epidemics..." and so on (Wallace 1956:269). Revitalization movements consist of five stages: The Steady State, The Period of Increased Individual Stress, Cultural Distortion, The Period of Revitalization, and

the New Steady State. The application of these stages to the Abayudaya's development reveals the community's roots as a revitalization movement.

Just as the rise of colonialism increased the construction of ethnic groups due to the need for Africans to adapt to the "exigencies of the colonial situation" (Markakis 1999:73), most theorists of the Anthropology of Religion agree that colonization also increased the "number, geographical distributions and general intensity" of revitalization movements (Vokes 2004:314). The introduction of powerful foreigners disrupted the balance of the "steady state," identified by Wallace as a period in which "culturally recognized techniques for satisfying needs operate with such efficiency that chronic stress within the system varies within tolerable limits" (Wallace 1956:268). Wallace defines stress as a "condition in which some part, or the whole, of the social organism is threatened with more or less serious damage" (Wallace 1956:255). In other words, when significant stress accrues it preempts the community to take active (and at times drastic) steps in order to preserve the continuity and integrity of their cultural values and once again reach a steady state.

Because written historical records largely do not exist for much of pre-colonial Africa, however, the distinction (not to mention the concept) of a pre-colonial "steady state" in Uganda is problematic. In order to highlight the difficulty in identifying a pre-colonial "steady state," Mamdani cites Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch who asks, "How far back do we have to go...to find the stability alleged to be so characteristic of the pre-colonial world?" (Mamdani 1996:39). Revitalization movements may have been ongoing in Uganda and other

regions of Africa prior to colonialism since cultures are always changing (Appiah 2006:3). By observing indigenous reactions to colonialism, however, it appears that the introduction of the colonial system triggered significant stress within the community after proven coping mechanisms were ineffective in asserting a group's autonomy against colonizing forces.

Precipitating Change: Revitalization Movement Stages 1 through 3

Before Uganda was officially declared a British Protectorate in 1894, the kingdoms within Ugandan territory had relationships with Muslim traders and nations, yet ties with Muslim nations did not precipitate revitalization movements of the same scale as colonization. Why? Perhaps because Islam's introduction to the region was classified as "peaceful, dependent neither upon conquest or Holy War" (Oded 1974:23). The religion therefore did not threaten the indigenous culture in ways that required cultural revitalization. In fact, Islam could be incorporated into daily life without drastically altering indigenous culture. The Baganda King Mutesa, for example, converted to Islam, yet he refused to be circumcised which is required for a Muslim conversion since the Baganda (unlike other traditions in the region) forbids circumcision (Oded 1974:60). Although some Baganda did undergo circumcision, King Mutesa's refusal illustrates the ability to maintain indigenous (ethnic) traditions while also declaring oneself a Muslim. I highlight the function of cultural adaptation within the Abayudaya in Chapter Four, which continues to defuse the potential for irreconcilable stress within the culture, just as it did for King Mutesa during the late 19th century.

Before Islam could take root in Uganda, however, Protestant and Catholic missionaries aggressively established themselves within the territory. In the early 1890s the British government backed the Protestant mission which aimed not only to “teach the principles of the Christian religion, but also...to inculcate western civilization and to uproot the local customs” (Oded 1974:169). During this campaign, Britain (Protestants) and France (Catholics) were vying for territorial and religious control over Uganda, along with several other European powers. The religious and political conflicts which occurred as a result of the power struggle (Oded 1974), inevitably nurtured the second stage of Revitalization Movements: *The Period of Increased Individual Stress*, during which the local population “...experience[s] increasingly severe stress as a result of the decreasing efficiency of certain stress reduction techniques” (Wallace 1956:269). Initially, Islam was successful at holding its ground in the Buganda kingdom, but the realization of “another powerful foreign religion” coupled with the fact that “Christians possessed technical superiority, greater force, wider resources and more wealth than the Arabs...” challenged King Mutesa’s and his subjects’ faith in Islam and their traditional practices (Oded 1974:221).

The Third stage of revitalization movements, *Cultural Distortion*, followed closely after this realization. Although the missionary work played an important role in the stress that eventually triggered the Abayudaya’s revitalization movement, it was the colonial presence that ultimately incited cultural deformation. Colonizers forced local populations into unfamiliar and constricted patterns according to customary law and other prescriptions that

disrupted the previously established structural, social, and economic systems (See Mamdani 1996). I am not suggesting that this is the first case of cultural distortion experienced in the region; rather I am suggesting that colonialism had undeniable effects on the local population and functioned as a central precursor to the Abayudaya's emergence.

Realizing Change: The Period of Revitalization and the New Steady State

According to Wallace, "a point is reached at which some alternative way must be considered" (Wallace 1956:269). It is this alternative which leads to the fourth stage known as *The Period of Revitalization*. It is important to note that the Abayudaya's movement was neither the first nor only revitalization movement in the region attempting to cope with the unfamiliar (colonial) stress. Malakite Christianity, described as a fusion of Scientology and Jewish components, developed prior to the Abayudaya in response to Ugandans' disillusionment with colonial officials (Bruder 2008:162). Malakite Christianity "opposed the British administration and the white man's superiority in the Church hierarchy and demanded the establishment of African leadership" (Oded 1974:169). The group severely prohibited idol worship, eating pork and the use of medicine. By 1921, the community of believers included 100,000 followers (Oded 1974:173), attracting new members in the face of "cultural and traditional losses" through "reclamation and invention to deny the reality of loss" (McMullen 2004:271). Eventually the colonial government suppressed the group for refusing to participate in a government-run vaccination program (Brockman 2006). During

the movement's peak, however, one of its many believers was renowned Ugandan military commander and future founder of the Abayudaya, Semei Kakungulu.

Wallace notes the importance of several variables for the success of the period of revitalization, including effective leadership. Semei Kakungulu, who was a powerful political and military leader within the Buganda kingdom as well as the British colonial system, was bred for leadership positions. Although Kakungulu's origins are unknown, he is thought to be the son of Semuwemba who, although a member of the Baganda, lived in a smaller kingdom, outside of Baganda jurisdiction. Semuwemba endeared himself to this king, but he and his wife were ultimately assassinated in a royal plot (Twaddle 1993). Following the death of his parents, Kakungulu fled to territory controlled by the Buganda kingdom, and as a result of "his talented and persuasive personality" was appointed by the Bagandan king as a District Chief. Later, in their quest to extend the borders of the Ugandan colony, the British approached him to lead the conquest of neighboring kingdoms (Oded 2010:2). Kakungulu led armies of thousands in order to assist British land-grabs across Uganda and conquered large swaths of eastern territory.

In order to gain increased favor with his colonial superiors, Kakungulu declared himself a Protestant in the 1880s. Following his conversion, Arab ivory and slave traders seized control of the territory and supported the Muslims in a war with the Christians. Again, Kakungulu led his armies on behalf of the British and his "military capability was decisive in routing the [Muslims] in 1891" (Oded 2010:2). Kakungulu gained favor not only with the royal Buganda family (he

wed the daughter of King Mutesa I, and the daughter of King Mutesa's successor), but also with colonial officials. In fact, the first British governor of Uganda, Fredrick Lugard, referred to him as "the first and most renowned warrior in Uganda" (Oded 2010:2) and later pronounced him military governor of the eastern province of Uganda. Kakungulu functioned largely as unofficial king of this region and he asked British forces to grant him the official title of king in 1901 (Oded 1974:172). According to the limited documentation of the time, colonial officials initially agreed to Kakungulu's political demands, but soon thereafter reneged on their promise to crown him (Oded 1974:172).

Disillusioned with colonial rule, Kakungulu slowly distanced himself from the colonial regime and undertook an individual revitalization, which Jukka Siikala identifies as a movement "which enables individuals to express their own intentionalities through orchestrated social action" (Siikala 2004:93). In *Canny About Conflict*, Ann McMullen claims that the core of revitalization movements is the "relationship between superordinate and subordinate and not about cultural difference" (McMullen 2004: 267) which explains why Kakungulu, after being insulted by his colonial superiors initiated his personal revitalization that eventually grew into a popular movement as an alternative to colonial authority. This process began in 1913 when Kakungulu joined the Malakite sect (Bruder 2008:161).

After following Malakite Christianity for approximately six years, Kakungulu became concerned over contradictions between the Old and New Testaments (Bruder 2008:162), thus fostering a sense of personal discontent, or

“stress.” His individual revitalization continued as he recontextualized and reinterpreted Malakite logic in order to transform himself from a slighted colonial military leader to a religious and spiritual prophet, thus transforming the shape of his power, though not the power itself (Siikala 2004:99). Kakungulu demanded that all laws of the Old Testament be observed, including that of circumcision. But the Baganda tradition “abhorred and forbade any mutilation of the body and regarded circumcision as a violation of their traditional law” (Oded 1974:174). Despite traditional beliefs, according to the Abayudaya today, Kakungulu established a strong following of 3,000 individuals hailing from a variety of ethnic groups. As Shandy observed among the Nuer of Sudan, I suggest that the shared Jewish identity of these individuals created an “idiom of kinship” that united varying ethnic groups (Shandy 2002:215). At a time when colonial forces were attempting to conquer Uganda by dividing the different ethnic groups, Kakungulu’s revitalization movement provided an outlet for passive resistance against the British colonizers under an umbrella of unity.

In many cases, religion may unite different groups, but it does not supplant their profound ethnic loyalty. In the case of the Abayudaya, however, this umbrella of unity grew to do just that, by constructing difference, internalizing it, and enforcing it through boundary maintenance (Barth 1998). As Barth explains in his description of ethnicities, “...the persistence of ethnic groups in contact implies not only criteria and signals for identification, but also a structuring of interaction which allows the persistence of cultural differences” (Barth 1998:16). Circumcision functioned as the first boundary of what was to become many that

enforce and identify difference between the Abayudaya and other groups. Most of Kakungulu's male followers underwent circumcision, thus highlighting Kakungulu's exceptional skills as a leader of the movement as well as the people's demonstrated acceptance of him. Through his unique interpretation of religious texts, Kakungulu confronted his followers with a new alternative to their current cultural system, which they symbolically accepted through the circumcision and the inscription of difference.

In addition to acceptance of the leader, Wallace emphasizes the importance of the communication and organization for a movement's survival. Kakungulu relayed spiritual directions through sermons he delivered at every time of worship. He even compiled a "special book of rules and prayers in Luganda"²⁰ for the members of his community" (Oded 1974:174). Kakungulu developed the prayer collection to effectively inform the observance of his followers, but also because, as McMullen notes, the invocation of native language "suggests perfect continuity with the distant past and is part of ongoing resistance to assimilation" (McMullen 2004:272). By translating prayers into one of Uganda's native languages, Kakungulu distanced the religion from any affiliation with Western colonial forces. The use of local language in Jewish prayers furthered his community's autonomy through the emphasis of boundaries between the community and colonialists. Likewise, the content of the prayers reinforced differences between the Abayudaya and their neighbors. Isolation highlighted in their mythico- history and the emphasis on resulting suffering was actually

²⁰ The language of the Baganda Kingdom and one of the official languages of Uganda today.

partially due to the stringent boundaries erected by Kakungulu and enforced by his followers. The community has therefore always been an important factor in the maintenance of their ethnic identity through the construction of boundaries, which I discuss further in the following chapter.

Before erecting boundaries of difference, however, Kakungulu had to attract converts through a doctrine that promised them the protection of a supernatural entity, as well as material benefits for the individual and the community that would result “from an identification with some definable new cultural system” (Wallace 1956:273). Kakungulu exploited the material needs of his followers by paying the salaries of teachers who educated individuals in the Jewish religion with wealth he had accumulated from his position as chief in the colonial regime that he held until 1923 (Oded 1974:176). Additionally, for those who converted to Judaism, Kakungulu granted easier “terms of work and a more honourable status.” He also gave gifts and clothes to the converts as well as paid their taxes and “took a paternal interest in them” (Oded 1974:178). For many Ugandans, a conversion to Judaism was spiritually and materially satisfying.

Despite Kakungulu’s large following and his respected status across Uganda, he and his followers encountered pockets of resistance as Wallace’s model predicts (Wallace 1956:274). Colonial officials, in addition to the Malakites were in strong opposition to Kakungulu’s alternative religious practice. Colonial officials pressured Kakungulu to abandon his new religious convictions for they viewed Kakungulu’s movement as “a retrogression, a backward step in acculturation of a subordinate society to the customs and values of another...[a]

hurdle to be overcome before integration of the subordinate group could be brought about” (Sanford 1974:504). Colonial officials must have feared that such a movement would hinder their authority, and foster disregard for the established customary law.

The first Jewish visitors to the community, however, strengthened the new ethnic identity of the Abayudaya by strengthening their Jewish observance and Jewish education. A man the community calls “Joseph” or “Yosef,” whose origins are unknown although elders in the community believe he was from Jerusalem, was the community’s first outside Jewish visitor. Joseph learned of Kakungulu around 1926 (Bruder 2008:163), when the military leader traveled to Kampala for a trial with the imperial government regarding Kakungulu’s land holdings. Joseph, who was working in Uganda’s capital, attended the trial in order to meet this man who was rumored to be a Jew.²¹ Eventually the two men developed a friendship and Joseph traveled to spend time with Kakungulu’s Jewish community for several months.

During his visit, Joseph found many of the Abayudaya’s “Jewish” traditions inconsistent with modern Jewish practices and helped Kakungulu alter the community’s observance in order to comply with the widely accepted current form of Judaism. Once community members accepted Joseph’s challenges to their practice and his proposed changes, cultural transformation blossomed within the community. During cultural transformation “noticeable social revitalization occurs, signaled by the reduction of the personal deterioration symptoms of

²¹ Note: possibility of further research within Uganda’s archival and court records for more details regarding Kakungulu and his meeting with a foreign Jew.

individuals, by extensive cultural changes, and by an enthusiastic embarkation on some organized program of group action” (Wallace 1956 275). As a result of Joseph’s influence, the Abayudaya no longer believed in Jesus Christ, they kept the Jewish Sabbath from Friday at sundown to Saturday at sundown, and men wore turban-like head coverings (Bruder 2008:163). Such religious alterations further distinguished the Abayudaya in opposition to their neighbors and the colonial regime. The Abayudaya community became empowered, not by the colonial government or the contradictory Malakite sect, but through their own understanding and belief in Judaism. According to the Abayudaya’s current Rabbi, Michael, “...in 1919 the break was not only from what other religions did, but from African tradition.” The Abayudaya broke from previous ethnic constraints and resisted the colonist’s constructed traditions. Judaism became the “institutional contract of the rules of the road” (Siikala 2004:90). Thus, the Abayudaya’s cultural transformation became routine, and ultimately resulted in a transitory *New Steady State*.

Continuous Change: “Mini-Revitalization Movements”

Although Wallace notes that many revitalization movements may incur challenges and eventually disband (Wallace 1956:275), he does not address revitalization movements that are capable of continuing to react to challenges in order to maintain communal stability. As Appiah explains, “Cultures are made up of continuities and changes, and the identity of a society can survive through these changes.” (Appiah 2006:3). The Malakites, for example completely disappeared

by the 1930's after the death of their leader and external challenges to their system of beliefs (Brockman 2006). Revitalization movements that do successfully adapt, however, are “in essence, transitory or liminal forms – which across the various stages [Wallace] describes – serve to transform a society from one (original) ‘steady state’ to another (final) one” (Sanford 1974:322). Over the course of globalization's acceleration, the Abayudaya have confronted several challenges, because “in times of change, controversy, ritual, or performance, people are led to examine their culture” (Bruner 2004:300). Such an examination has led to significant changes in the Abayudaya's cultural structure following their first steady state in order to preserve their religious beliefs. These changes support the fact that their community's revitalization process did not end with their first new steady state. Rather, it continued in what I refer to as “mini-revitalization movements.” By mini-revitalization movement, I suggest an innovation to the revitalization movement to a matter of degree. I propose that a mini-revitalization movement is a set of actions that follow the same stages as a revitalization movement; however instead of completely abandoning an old culture and constructing a new one, mini-revitalization movements restructure significant aspects of the already established culture. These movements are organized around concentrated leadership that provides explicit directives to the followers.

The first challenge the community faced following their established steady state was Kakungulu's death in 1928. Following the death of their leader, the community lacked strong direction and many members returned to Malakite

Christianity or converted to another form of Christianity. In the frantic search among the community's elite for effective leadership, a central schism developed. Zakayo Mumbya, the appointed religious "priest," and Samson Mugombe, the appointed secular leader, held differing religious interpretations of the Old Testament and fought with one another for ultimate authority over the community. The community divided along lines of support for the two men but Samson who "was active and shrewd, succeeded in isolating Zakayo and winning the loyalty of the community" (Oded 1974:180). Thus the practice of separate secular and religious leaders ended in order to reconcile the community under a single leader, thus preserving their Jewish identity.

Shortly after the community's reunification, they were faced with yet another stressor: Idi Amin. Under Amin's regime from 1971-1979, non-believers of Islam and Christianity were forcibly converted or killed. According to the community's mythico-history, synagogues were destroyed, and houses of non-Jews erected upon their foundations. The Abayudaya no longer met in public to pray, but instead gathered in banana plantations outdoors or in private homes to hold services. One elder, Jajja²² Sarah remembered, "we weren't allowed to enter the synagogues for worship; we had to hide in bushes, caves, for worship." One Shabbat, when some Abayudaya had gathered to pray "one Muslim came and said, 'My friends, if you really want to survive, become Muslims.' So we were like, 'We can't leave the truth of God and God is our religion.' So we decided to pray within our houses." The Abayudaya were forced to adapt their practice to

²² "Grandmother"

the severe circumstances and find alternative sites of worship. “Infiltrators,” however, sought out these new places of worship and lashed their Jewish neighbors as they traveled to services, forcing the Abayudaya to move their prayer sites yet again. Children were forced to attend school on Shabbat and were required by their teachers to identify their religion in the classroom. Jack, a prominent leader in the community also emphasized the sense of discrimination in the community explaining, that if you identified yourself as a Jew, “the other kids laughed at you and sang a song meaning ‘Jews are bad people. You killed Jesus’,”

Although the Abayudaya attempted to adapt their new culture to the severe political and social upheaval by “going underground,” some Jews were murdered and hundreds more forced to abandon their religious convictions. “We were really worried about our religion” Sarah explained, “We were really worried about losing it.” By 1979, the Jewish population had dwindled to 150 and the community was called “to act in ways which reduce stress at all levels of the system” in order for the system to survive (Wallace 1956:266). The isolation and persecution that constitute central themes in the community’s mythico-history were the extreme stressors that forced the community to adapt their young Jewish observance.

Jajja Sarah recalls a meeting her family held as Amin’s reign was coming to an end:

My husband and I had a meeting with our children and we asked them, you are like three boys, young men. What are you really going to do to put back the community as it was? It is going to be very impossible. So let’s continue what we are doing, let’s continue praying in our houses.

And Sarah was right. Putting the community back “as it was” would be impossible, for it had to respond and adapt to new pressures if it was to survive. Survival was therefore possible through another mini-revitalization movement.

Wallace notes that the amount of force “exerted against the organization by its opponents” is one of the main variables that determines the success of the movement. Sarah’s sons realized that staunch resistance was threatening the only culture they knew and the community had to be restructured if their Jewish observance was to survive. Thus, the young men initiated a mini-revitalization movement in the mid 1980s. The community’s mythico-history recounts the bravery of these young men in the face of discrimination who along with three others collected the remaining Jewish youth (about 50 young men and women) and “converged on the hill at Eddembe” in order to reclaim the land Kakungulu had donated to the community. But according to Sarah, the neighbors who had usurped the land resisted this new movement, “the leaders of the society were against them...they were dragged and arrested. They were taken to jail naked.” During the Jewish festival of Sukkot,²³ a group of non-Jewish men came looking for Michael and his older brother Jack. But the young men had been warned of the impending confrontation and so Jack spent the night in another village.

Michael remembers braiding his hair:

... so I would look like a girl, I was young, no beard, I didn’t look like a man. So, at night, in the middle of the night, I was very alert. I heard boots and I knew they were actually coming for us. They began to knock on the door, they didn’t know we were outside in the Sukah....so they

²³ Harvest festival observed in the fall.

came into the Sukah,²⁴ looking for me particularly...They feared to search the girls, for then they would be charged for rape, or anything – misconduct...my hair was protecting me! They wouldn't imagine me with girl hair.

Despite such humiliation and threats of violence, the young men and women persisted in creating what they refer to as “the kibbutz” where they worked collectively building the synagogue during the day, and studying together at night. The construction of Kibbutzim²⁵ across Israel was a tactic employed by European Jewry in the first half of the 20th century in an attempt to reclaim their homeland and their Jewish identity (Israeli Ministry 2002). By naming their resistance to assimilating pressures “the Kibbutz” the Abayudaya again emphasize historical parallels to the Jewish community. Like the young Jewish immigrants to Israel, they successfully spearheaded a movement to transform and protect their Jewish practice.

Yet they still had not reached a new steady state, for Michael and the other young men realized that “running an organization in isolation is impossible.” The tenuous ties the Ugandan Jewish community had with the larger Jewish world were lost after Amin broke diplomatic relations with Israel. Consequently the community lacked a Jewish calendar, a crucial tool in leading a Jewish lifestyle. This lack of information prevented the community from observing Jewish festivals at the correct time, consequently threatening the credibility of their Jewish identity, and subsequently their constructed ethnic unity.

²⁴ Three-walled structure erected outside during the festival of Sukkot. The Bible commands Jews to dwell in the Sukah during the 7 Days of the festival to remember what their ancestors lived in while traveling in the desert.

²⁵ Kibbutz, plural.

During the period of the Kibbutz, Jonathan, another of Michael's older brothers, recalled how the young men and women studied together, but lacked answers to many of their religious questions. Often the students would exclaim in response to unsatisfactory answers, "We need someone with knowledge more than that!" Their isolation, and lack of understanding increased the stress experienced among the young members of the Abayudaya. Consequently, in the early 1990s Michael (the current rabbi) and Jack attempted to connect their small community to the larger Jewish world by establishing a relationship with a synagogue in Kenya comprised primarily of foreign expatriates. Although they were unsuccessful in gaining support from the synagogue, the Rabbi remembers that:

Through our frequent visits in Nairobi, we came across a younger man, Matt Meyer, from America actually, who was surprised that there was a Jewish community here that dated way back. He came with a friend...in 1992. And he came to the U.S., he became our mouthpiece of the community in the United States. He even began to get donations for our products. That began in 1995.

Following their visit, the Jewish backpackers connected the Abayudaya community with Jewish resources abroad, thus establishing another liminal steady state through the provision of Western material and spiritual support to the community.

The Abayudaya continue to make slight alterations to their culture, but so does every culture if it is to survive (Appiah 2006). Recent adaptations in the community as a result of the involvement of Western Jewish organizations

include refined laws of kashrut²⁶ in the community by officially classifying chicken as a meat as well as a more egalitarian religious observance. Tourism “encourage[s] inventions and reifications” (McMullen 2004:274) and the Abayudaya continue to adapt their “rules of the road” as a result of introspection forced by foreign visitors to the community. Although these adaptations are quite necessary to the health of the community they no longer match the scale of a revitalization or mini-revitalization, since these adaptations do not follow the steps outlined in Wallace’s model, nor do they necessitate strong leadership as required of a revitalization movement.

Although the community of Abayduaya has increased to 1,050 and vast improvements have been made in the people’s standard of living due largely to international Jewish support, the Abayudaya are facing another period of stress as a result of the international community’s “discovery” of the Abayudaya and the introduction of new religious and economic practices to the community. External involvement has rapidly increased in conjunction with the accelerated globalization of the 21st century. Hundreds of young Western tourists visit the community every spring for Passover, and once a year delegations of American Jews travel to the community’s main village to evaluate Western development initiatives.

²⁶ Dietary restrictions outlined in the Book of Deuteronomy.

Although the Abayudaya's practices continue to be challenged as a result of increased foreign involvement, their culture remains firmly rooted in their original revitalization movement. The Abayudaya's Jewish observance, emerging as a result of collective discontent with British colonial rule, has remained strong despite serious challenges, including physical harm. With each of these challenges, the Abayudaya were able to circumvent disaster by identifying what component of culture was experiencing stress and how to remedy it. In some instances this meant repealing a belief in Jesus, in others it meant restructuring social organization, as seen in the development of the "Kibbutz." As the Abayudaya navigate new relationships resulting from foreign involvement and international renown, they continue to maintain a unified Jewish identity through cultural adaptation.

Chapter Four:

A Stranger in a Strange Land

It's the day before Passover and families are boiling their dishes, sweeping the last bits of bread crumbs from their homes and looking forward to the ritual feast to come. A tent has arrived near the synagogue in case of rain during the outdoor Seder and the children place chairs around the tables set beneath it. More and more muzungus²⁷ trickle into the community for the celebration. Israeli men and women just out of the army and backpacking across East Africa have now set up base at the guesthouse and are armed with guitars and cameras. American college students studying abroad in the region have taken a short break from their programs and stroll throughout the village. A Californian Jewish couple outfitted in khaki cargo pants and fishing vests have just arrived. I sort rice in the shade watching these outsiders watch the Abayudaya.

This chapter focuses on the complex and contested interactions between the Abayudaya and outside Jews through the lenses of ethnic group formation and globalization. It appears that aspects of the transnational community of the Abayudaya and Western Jews threaten Abayudayan unity through Western practices and conceptions of Judaism, but it also equips the community with

²⁷ Translated as “outsider” but most often meaning “White Person.”

relationships and strategies useful in promoting and reinforcing their ethnic identity and ethnic unity. The following analysis builds on concepts I discussed in Chapter Three regarding the emergence of the Abayudaya as a response to broad historical, economic, and political processes. I argue that the Abayudaya are not paralyzed by their ethnicity, but rather that the flexibility of the global system (Lewellen 2002:201) allows the Abayudaya to promote their ethnic identity and unity within the transnational community through cultural production and cultural consumption that is rooted in a religious framework. I develop this argument in three parts. First, I define what I mean by “ethnicity” in the context of the Abayudaya. Next I consider the role of religion in globalizing processes, specifically within the transnational community. Finally, I turn my attention to what all of this might tell us about the primacy of ethnicity in consuming and producing culture.

Constructing Abayudayan Ethnicity

The Abayudaya’s constructed ethnicity first took root in Judaism during the revitalization movement when members from a variety of regional ethnic groups banded together in the early 20th century under the leadership of Kakunugulu. Today, the Abayudaya still identify with the African ethnic identities from which they came including Baganda, Bagwere, Bagisu, Busoga, Langi, and Banyole,²⁸ but believe they “come from a tribe into the religion” and that Judaism takes precedence over all other social obligations. The Rabbi

²⁸ Young men and women from the Kikuyu of Kenya have begun arriving to the community to study with the Abayudaya and convert to Judaism.

explained that “in 1919 the break was not only from what other religions did, but from African tradition. So what remained was the [African] language, the dressing, and names...Judaism has brought the culture and the religion. So on a daily basis we observe Judaism and it has become part of our daily life.” Judaism provides the foundation for Abayudayan culture, or their “rules of the road,” and is employed by the community and outsiders alike as an identifying marker for Abayudayan members. If it is true that, as Eller (1999:9) suggests, “Any part...of a group’s trait list can make a perfectly adequate marker” of ethnicity, then surely Judaism, which determines the Abayudaya’s daily lives, constitutes their primary ethnic identity. In effect Judaism creates an “ethnic boundary that defines the group.” According to Barth, these “ethnic boundaries,” consisting of male circumcision, endogamous marriage, religious rites, festivals, and days of rest and worship within the Abayudaya, maintain difference and ethnic identity (Barth 1998:15).

Because Abayudayan ethnicity *is not* rooted in an ancient origin, but is instead a relatively recent consequence of colonization, the Abayudaya must meticulously reinforce these boundaries that are “associated with a culturally [Jewish] specific set of value standards” (Barth 1998:15). In other words, because the community chose to be Jewish and are not descendants of one of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, a heightened level of observance is crucial to their credibility as a Jewish community, even for the young generations. Noah, a yeshiva student, explained that:

Judaism is by birth, but observing is the most important thing. If you are born Jewish and you don’t observe the laws, and another person who was

not born Jewish is observing, then that one is more [Jewish] than you! We always say if you are a goat and you do not eat grass, then you are not a goat. If you are born Jewish and don't observe the Torah, then you are just a goat which eats chicken!²⁹

Yeshiva students all agreed that if their African ethnic identity comes into conflict with their Jewish one, they always favor Jewish mandates. For example, the yeshiva student Natan, a Mugisu, explained that his ethnic group performs male circumcision at the age of sixteen. But he (along with all other Abayudayan Bagisu) was circumcised on the eighth day of life as stipulated by Jewish law. I suggest that it is the production and reproduction of these ethnic-boundaries that attracts Jewish involvement from around the globe. A community of self-proclaimed Jews in Africa who did not follow Jewish law would not attract foreigners especially if they were not born Jewish. Hence, globalization and the active transnational community reinforce local identities (Lewellen 2002:190).

The Transnational Community

Since the Abayudaya first began to equate their ethnicity with a Jewish observance, globalization has gained more force and a greater ability to influence different societies due to cheaper means of transportation and new modes of communication. I demonstrate the continued importance of these globalizing processes in the Abayudaya's existence through a study of the transnational community established between the Abayudaya and Western Jewry. Although

²⁹ Research shows that Jewish converts emphasize the importance of observance for a credible Jewish identity, whereas Jews by descent note birth as a more significant factor for an "authentic" Jewish identity. For further reading see: Tenebaum 2007.

the Abayudaya did have minimal connections with the outside Jewish world since they met “Joseph” in the 1920s, accelerated globalization has led to “an altogether new condition of neighborliness, even with those most distant from ourselves” (Appadurai 1996:29). Information, ideas, and people now flow faster and more easily than ever, thus paving the way for increased opportunities for interactions between the Abayudaya and external Jewish communities. Such interactions also occur in part because of the Jewish identity shared by these communities.

Members of any religion share a special affinity for one another which is why religion has historically served as a source for mass mobilization from the crusades of the eleventh century to faith-based humanitarian organizations today. Many theorists believe that these opportunities and the unlikely relationships they create ultimately result in global Westernization (Pieterse 2004:61). But by utilizing globalization in a dual process of local cultural production and Western cultural consumption, the Abayudaya reinforces their ethnic identity while deflecting threats of homogenization. By first introducing the actors of the transnational community, we can better understand how this dual process unfolds.

Since the early 1990s two American Jewish organizations, Kulanu and the Institute for Jewish and Community Research, have been involved in Abayudayan activities. Their perceived connection to the community based on a common religious affiliation and assumed responsibility has established a relatively new transnational community between Jews in the West and Jews in Uganda. Relationships within a transnational community such as this “may be economic social, cultural, or political; as often as not, they are all of these at once”

(Lewellen 2002:151). In the Abayudaya's case, they are all of these. Funding and project initiatives provided by Kulanu and The Institute pervade all sectors of Abayudayan society, thus engendering an unprecedented level of intimacy between two previously separate societies.

Kulanu, a New York based Jewish non-profit, officially became involved in the community after Matt Meyer, the backpacker who visited the community in 1992, alerted the organization to the Jewish community's existence in rural Uganda. Kulanu, which means "all of us" in Hebrew, is currently funding the Abayudaya's primary and secondary schools. Shimon, an Abayudaya health worker explained, "Kulanu, they are funding us! Not in health, but in the community. They are funding the education sector, and the microfinance...they are basically doing grassroots work." Kulanu was the primary force behind the erection of the Jewish primary and secondary schools, and despite a restricted budget Kulanu continues to subsidize these institutions, in addition to sending American Jewish volunteers to the community.

The Institute for Jewish and Community Research (The Institute) is a larger organization involved with the community. Shimon explained that the Institute:

...is meant to build capacity for Jewish communities around the world. Rural Jewish communities. So they are trying to make them build their capacities...helping the Jewish communities in India, in West Africa, Nigeria, South Africa, Congo. They have like a workshop, a seminar, a conference they organize every year, called Be'chol Lashon, "in every tongue," so it collects Jews all over the world. And it's about the diversity of the Jewish identity and apart from that they say that Jews are not only about color, so they help build their capacity.

It was actually through the Be'chol Lashon conference that the Abayudaya were first introduced to The Institute. The Rabbi explained that The Institute “learned about us through Kulanu and they got our contact and they wrote to me and invited me to a conference... they have a Be'chol Lashon conference every year, and that's where we met.” Since that first meeting, the Institute has constructed a clinic and a guesthouse in the main village, and has helped to extend other welfare projects such as the distribution of mosquito nets and clean water. The Institute also paid for Michael, the community's current rabbi, to attend rabbinical school in the United States. In 2006 he became the first ordained African rabbi.

The involvement of Kulanu and the Institute has greatly altered the Abayudaya's economy. As Jan Nederveen Pieterse so aptly suggests, “what makes economies tick is not just individual skills and endowments (human capital) but social networks” (2004:35). Although not officially documented, a survey of recent economic developments in the region suggests that its economy has grown rapidly since Kulanu and The Institute established relationships with the Abayudaya. Income generating projects offer employment opportunities not just for the Abayudaya but for their non-Jewish neighbors as well. For example, the primary school employs ten non-Jewish teachers and two Jewish teachers, while the secondary school employs seventeen non-Jewish teachers and three Jewish teachers. The guesthouse and clinic also provide work opportunities for qualified individuals, and in 2003 an interfaith fair trade coffee cooperative was started by an Abayudayan farmer and supported by Kulanu. Today, the cooperative buys coffee from over 1,000 Jewish, Muslim, and Christian farmers

in the area and pays a fair trade price in order to promote livable wages (Peace Kawomera Cooperative 2010). A percentage of profits from income generating projects (excluding the coffee cooperative) are funneled to the community's general fund, which helps provide school fees and medical care for needy Abayudayan families.

The distribution of materials and stimulation of the economy is an important component of the transnational community, but it is not of primary importance to the Abayudaya. Rather the importance of international involvement articulated by Abayudayan members lies with the legitimacy it grants the community as Jews. Noah explained that it is important for the Abayudaya to be "linked to outside Jews" who "call us their brothers...it is important for us to also be counted as Jews." Community is a crucial aspect of Judaism, and the Abayudaya have internalized this principle. As the Rabbi noted in Chapter Three, you can't be Jewish "in isolation." If you attempt to do so, separated from the religion's adaptations to globalization, you are no longer Jewish. The religion changes according to time and space, and when communities fail to keep up with developments to some degree, they are no longer identified as Jews. The community must continue to be connected to contemporary Jewish discourse through the transnational community if they are to maintain legitimacy.

Legitimacy within the transnational community is especially significant since the State of Israel does not recognize the Abayudaya as Jews. Jewish

converts who do not convert to Judaism through an Orthodox conversion³⁰ are not counted as Jews by Israel, and consequently they are not eligible for “the right of return,” or the Jewish entitlement to Israeli citizenship. Because the Abayudaya did not undergo an Orthodox conversion, they are not recognized politically by the Israeli government and are unable to assume Israeli citizenship. This reality severely reinforces the Abayudaya’s need to produce a legible and legitimate Jewish practice. This is, perhaps, so Israel will eventually recognize them as Jews, but more likely so they remain connected to the transnational community – their only international Jewish outlet.

But heightened permeability of borders coupled with the Abayudaya’s need to welcome foreigners into the community for recognition holds the potential to blur the ethnic distinctions between societies. Visitors traveling to the Abayudaya range from five to fifty a month, with the month of Passover reaching up to eighty visitors. Although most of these Jews are less observant than the population they are visiting, the Abayudaya accept them as members of the transnational Jewish community since they practice some form of Judaism. As the Abayudaya continue to welcome foreign Jews into their community, however, the Rabbi posits that increasing numbers of his community are becoming less observant. The increased presence and involvement of foreign Jews may grant legitimacy but it also introduces differences of lived experience and religious practice, which challenges the Abayudaya’s religious commitment – the very foundation of their ethnic identity. The Rabbi explained that:

³⁰ An Orthodox conversion does not necessitate an Orthodox level of religious observance.

A visitor shouldn't come here and begin to work, wash clothes. We have had those visitors. So on Shabbat we're in synagogue and they are washing and drying their clothes. And so when people see, they say 'Eh! They are working! Rabbi! Work is forbidden on Shabbat!'

The visitors' lack of religious adherence undermines Abayudayan religious practice, which consequently threatens to distort the ethnic boundaries between the two Jewish populations. The Rabbi fears the disintegration of the community as a result of these external influences, explaining:

How do you keep yourself in a way that maintains your relationship with [your] neighbors] but also maintains your Jewish relationship? How do you decide on colleges? How do you travel? There are so many influences that challenge your Jewish identity.

Yet the Rabbi and the majority of Abayudayan members continue to welcome foreign involvement due to the legitimacy and recognition the transnational community grants the Abayudaya.

Cultural Production

It is apparent that Western Jews are deeply interconnected with a variety of Abayudayan activities, but how did the Abayudaya first attain these connections and how do they continue to maintain them today? The answer lies in the community's process of cultural production. This process is not intended to appeal to the pocketbooks or international Jewry; rather the Abayudaya are seeking to attract Western authority in the community that will recognize them as a legitimate Jewish community. The production of culture within the Abayudaya, therefore, has two central aims. One, to produce a culture that is legible, or familiar to Western Jews, since like Christianity among the Nuer, Judaism, holds

“the potential to unite disparate ethnic groups...” (Shandy 2002:215). The second aim of this process is to produce a culture that creates interest among the outside Jewish population through difference. Perceived difference is important to foreign involvement since as Nelson H.H. Graburn suggests in *Tourism: The Sacred Journey*, the contrast between the “ordinary” and “nonordinary” state of being is “fundamental” to why people travel (Graburn 1989:25). Or put in John Urry’s words, western visitors, or “tourists,” travel to the Abayudaya to “gaze upon or view a set of different scenes, of landscapes, or townscapes which are out of the ordinary” (Urry 1990:1,3). The Abayudaya’s location allows foreign visitors to identify them as different, or a distinct ethnic group. The Abayudaya must therefore produce a culture that attracts foreigners through differences between the communities while simultaneously evoking a sense of affinity between them. These processes, working in tandem with one another, increase foreign involvement, thus boosting the community’s connection to contemporary Judaism and their legitimacy as Jews.

The community’s strict and legible observance has already been rewarded by the transnational community through an official Conservative conversion to Judaism conducted by American and Israeli rabbis, thus enhancing their recognition as Jews worldwide. Despite the community’s strict observance, some outside Jews contended that the community was not “technically” Jewish since the Abayudaya converted to Judaism in 1919 without any official rabbinic supervision. Noah believes the conversion that resulted from this debate is the greatest contribution Western involvement has provided his community:

I think the biggest benefit we have acquired [from being connected] is the conversion. Because in 2002...we had a conversion that was a Conservative conversion. The conversion itself linked us to outside Jews and they think that in that sense they call us their brothers. Before that they saw us, a few years back we were just in isolation. Nobody knew us. But because of the conversion we are linked to other Jews. So that is the biggest benefit. Because we are counted as Jews.

The conversion would never have occurred if the Abayudaya did not produce and reproduce a recognizable Jewish practice. Because they did and continue to, however, the conversion took place and has increased the flow of people and support to the Abayudaya community, subsequently reinforcing their ethnicity on a global scale by “counting” them as Jews.

The Abayudaya often refer to their conversion as a “recognition,” since they already believed themselves to be Jews. Pieterse explains that, “Recognition and difference are a function of the existing identities and boundaries that are available on the social and cultural maps” (2004:86). The recognition the community received as a result of the conversion therefore flattened differences of kinship, tradition, and lived experience within the transnational community by recognizing the legitimacy of the Abayudaya. Such recognition makes external Jewish investment in the community more acceptable by creating a common denominator of identification within the transnational community. Although there is a wide spectrum of Jewish practices across the globe, the Abayudaya practice a form of Judaism legible to their transnational community that identifies them as Jews and reinforces their ethnicity rooted in Jewish observance and values.

As the community’s external connections funnel more Jewish resources and opportunities into the Abayudayan community, the Abayudaya continue to

produce and reproduce a legible practice by incorporating these new materials into their observance. During my fieldwork, for example, a Jewish couple affiliated with the Institute visited the community and financially subsidized a large portion of the Passover Seder, bringing boxes of matzah³¹ and bottles of Maneshewitz³² from the United States. The Abayudaya did not have access to these materials earlier in their history, and the lack thereof did not make them less Jewish, nor does the incorporation of them today make them more Jewish. Rather, the utilization of these materials introduced by Western Jewry allows the Abayudaya to produce a Jewish practice that external actors recognize. The community's traditional religious observances "are selected as convenient objects for the tourist gaze and are edited...furthering cultural objectification..." (McMullen 2004:274). The use of Maneshewitz wine and brand-name matzah in Seders held in rural Uganda emphasize a sense of familiarity between the Ugandan Jewish community and its Western counterparts, while it simultaneously works to reproduce the Abayudaya's constructed ethnic identity that is tied to religious observance. Hence the reproduction of culture not only garners international recognition, but it also reinforces the Abayudaya's constructed ethnicity.

Although the Abayudaya are increasingly being accepted by the larger Jewish world due to their recognizable Jewish practice, it is important to note as

³¹ Unleavened bread eaten by Jews during Passover to remember the Exodus from Egypt when Jews had so little time to escape slavery that their bread did not rise. (Jews in Israel observe Passover for seven days. Jews in the Diaspora traditionally observe the holiday for eight days).

³² A brand of kosher wine

Barth does that, “a drastic reduction of cultural differences between ethnic groups does not correlate in any simple way with a reduction in the organizational relevance of ethnic identities, or a breakdown in the boundary-maintaining processes” (Barth 1998:33). The Abayudaya’s localized ethnicity and their differences from Western Jewry are still important to the community in regards to promoting local ethnic unity and to attracting international support. In fact, Barth states that:

...stable, persisting, and often vitally important social relations are maintained across such boundaries, and are frequently based precisely on the dichotomized ethnic statuses. In other words, ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of social interaction and acceptance, but are quite to the contrary often the very foundations on which embracing social systems are built (Barth 1998:10).

The Rabbi understands the importance of maintaining his community’s “ethnic status” in order to maintain the transnational “social system” which has been erected around it. He therefore perpetuates cultural production and reproduction by functioning as a “tour guide” to foreign visitors in order to highlight his community’s distinct ethnic boundaries. Barth notes that in order to initiate change (in this case change through external involvement), a cultural agent or leader “may choose to emphasize ethnic identity” (Barth 1998:33). The Rabbi does so by inviting guests to his home to observe the community’s strict observance in daily life as embodied by how he and his family live. Visiting women are often invited to make challah with the Rabbi’s wife, Rebecca, and their daughter on Friday afternoons.

On my first Shabbat with the Abayudaya I helped Rebecca make the dough for challah and watched as she cracked the eggs in a separate container to

look for blood spots before adding them to the flour. If blood is found in the egg, it is not considered kosher. Sure enough, she found blood in the yolk of an egg and threw it out. I was surprised that a community with few resources would adhere so strictly to kosher law and I mentioned this later to an Abayudayan friend. He, however, assured me most families would not throw away a blood-spotted egg, even though kosher law demands it. Through the act of making challah, Rebecca led me to an initial belief in a certain level of Jewish practice within the community— a belief I would have kept if I had not crossed-checked it with another community member.

Regardless of whether or not my presence influenced Rebecca's actions, this scenario illustrates how the Rabbi's family functions as a "guide" to foreign visitors in the community by demonstrating Jewish observance. The Rabbi, like a tourist guide, understands what visitors want to see and therefore creates "representations" of his community "for the consumption of tourists" by emphasizing their Jewish identity and heightened level of observance (Guneratne 2001:534). The Abayudaya exploit the circumstance in which their Judaism is practiced in order to maintain their Jewish legitimacy that has become dependent upon their relationship with the transnational community. The Abayudaya use their Jewish identity to obtain the benefits of membership within a transnational community, and use the transnational community to contribute to the Abayudaya's Jewish observance, thus highlighting transnational flows and transnational communities as dialectical spaces of affirmation and creation.

Cultural Consumption

All of the outcomes that result from this cycle of affirmation and creation, however, do not contribute to the maintenance of their ethnic identity. In order to cope with the potential for harm inherent in international involvement, the Abayudaya have developed strategies through which they reinforce (rather than diminish) their ethnic identity while still participating in the transnational community. In so doing, the Abayudaya partake in a process that Appiah describes as “cultural consumption” (2006). According to Appiah, cultural consumers “can adapt products to suit their own needs, and they can decide for themselves what they do and do not approve of” (Appiah 2006:3). The Abayudaya consciously consume Western culture by rejecting lax religious observances and interpreting Western development initiatives through a religious framework, thus reinforcing their Jewish credibility and related ethnic identity. Interactions with Western communities are not understood as practical development initiatives or altruistic friendships, but rather as a transaction that yields profound cultural currency. By filtering Western initiatives through a cultural framework that is inherently linked to their ethnicity, the Abayudaya reassert their ethnicity and difference through “ethnic boundary maintenance” as discussed earlier (Barth 1998:15). The application of the concept of cultural consumption is not intended to minimize the experiential components of the Abayudaya’s religious identity through this analysis. Instead, it aims to explain the processes by which the Abayudaya community engages with Westernizing

forces in order to maintain a distinct identity from Western Jewry even as Western Jewry feeds their identity.

Education, a common initiative pursued by Westernizing forces as a mechanism to socialize young, underdeveloped populations into a Western worldview, is one example of how the Abayudaya engage with and interpret Western projects. Kulanu enacted the first education initiatives in the community during the early 1990's. These initiatives still function as Kulanu's primary work in the community today. Although it is unclear if Kulanu's motives are to induct Abayudayan youth into a Western world system, it is important to note that the education Kulanu delivers is not rooted in religion; yet the Abayudaya associate these initiatives with their religion. The community believes that education is a crucial component of Judaism. As the Rabbi explained, "Judaism encourages thinking and intellectual challenges to our members." He believes that in churches across Uganda, young members will not raise their hands to challenge the religious leader or ask questions of the text. Abayudayan youth, however, eagerly question the Rabbi during Saturday worship services and even disagree with him, thus illustrating Judaism's emphasis on critical thinking and revealing why educational initiatives are invariably reinterpreted by the community and couched in religious terms.

Rather than enculturating Abayudayan youth into a Western reality, education initiatives provide space for the youth to reaffirm their ethnic boundaries through religious education and practice. Kaleb, the secondary school headmaster, recalled that before Kulanu funded the Jewish primary and secondary

schools, Jewish students attended “Christian schools. So we followed the laws of the Christians. In fact, every morning we could go to worship in a church. Or a mosque. So we would follow the ideologies of the Christians.” The Abayudaya took advantage of Western (missionary) education initiatives prior to Kulanu’s involvement in the community, but they defined themselves in opposition to these projects, rather than consuming them due to their religious affiliation. Today, though, Jewish students are instructed in Hebrew and Jewish studies in religious day schools and recite Jewish prayers rather than Christian ones. With projects funded by Jewish communities the Abayudaya cannot define themselves in opposition to such initiatives while maintaining their benefits. Instead, the Abayudaya interpret and consume Kulanu’s involvement in ways that are meaningful within their own “historical, linguistic, and political situatedness” (Appadurai 1996:33). They therefore consciously and creatively consume educational initiatives in ways that are consistent with their constructed ethnicity, which is why Kaleb believes the religious freedom within their schools is the most significant benefit the Abayudaya have gained from the Western educational initiatives.

The yeshiva students also emphasize the benefits of their education in terms of Jewish observance. They all agree that they joined the yeshiva not to improve their economic livelihoods following the completion of their studies, but in order to obtain knowledge that will allow them to improve the practice of Judaism in their home villages. Abraham joined yeshiva because in his words, “most of the elders are illiterate, so I came to be in yeshiva, so that I can get an

idea, and so that I can teach people at home. So that we can pull up Judaism.” Hence, literacy is interpreted by the community as a means to promote their unique culture through theological study and enhanced religious observance. Although it is impossible to discern the “truth” within the narrative of these yeshiva students, as Malkki points out in the analysis of refugee narratives, it is important to note the meaning these students ascribe to their experiences in order to appreciate their “ordering and reordering of social and political categories, with the defining of self in distinction to other...” (Malkki 1995:55). In doing so we see that despite the fact that Western education is used to alter ethnic identities and practices, the Abayudaya consume such initiatives through a religious lens that refracts whatever the intentions of Western actors may be, in order to color their ethnic identity.

This narrative of Jewish reinforcement through cultural consumption is applied to other development projects as well since “there is a lot of discretion available at the local and individual level to take what is perceived as useful or desirable and reject what is not” (Lewellen 2002:54). For example, the Abayudaya perceive electricity, a Western invention that development projects utilize in order to minimize Abayudayan energy output while increasing economic output and profits, as a tool to aid food preservation on Shabbat when cooking is prohibited. Although the presence of Western Jewry in the community functions as a pressure for assimilation, the Abayudaya maintain the distinction of their unique ethnicity and the unity it provides the community by differentiating themselves through the subtle interpretation of Western projects.

Shimon remembers as a child listening to his father, a spiritual leader, explain during his sermons that “even if you are Jewish, even if you are not a white person [he] could show you a quote somewhere that even if you are not white if you keep kosher, if you observe Shabbat, all these things, perhaps when God is collecting all the Jews from the four corners of the earth, perhaps you will be collected.” The importance of observance implied by Shimon is crucial to the Abayudaya’s constructed ethnicity, as well as the maintenance of the transnational community.

The Abayudaya’s religious adherence informs the community’s social, organizational, and political activities, thus defining them as a distinct ethnicity. The Abayudaya continue to organize themselves as an ethnic group because of interactions with the transnational community as well as in spite of such interactions. Western Jewish communities are drawn to the Abayudaya because of their unique ethnicity, but their involvement in the community introduces new ideas and inventions that undermine the very culture they are attracted to. Ethnic boundaries can change due to such inputs “and the cultural characteristics of the members may likewise be transformed, indeed, even the organizational form of the group may change” but the central dichotomy “between members and outsiders” remains (Barth 1998:14). Abayudayan social organization and material lifestyle has altered due to their incorporation of development initiatives and will likely continue to do so. But local ethnic identity remains largely intact, due to the importance of ethnic identity in Abayudayan cultural production and

consumption within the community. The Abayudaya's ethnic identity attracts Jewish involvement as well as interprets this involvement in ways that maintains Abayudayan distinction as well as the benefits of the transnational community.

Appadurai suggests, "the most clear index of modern ethnicity is that it draws together groups that by their sheer spatial spread and numerical strength are vastly larger than ethnic groups of traditional anthropology" (Appadurai 1996:139). The production and reproduction of the Abayudaya's ethnicity does draw Western and Ugandan Jews together, yet the Abayudaya's ethnicity has not blurred to include Western populations despite increased transnational activities. It seems that the Abayudaya's experience with Westernizing forces discredits proponents of homogenization as a discursive model for understanding contemporary globalization. Homogenizing threats of the transnational community are actually consciously and culturally - not to mention creatively (Appadurai 1996:5) consumed by the Abayudaya in ways that maintain their ethnic integrity. Ultimately, the collusion of these two cultures, negotiated by the production, reproduction and consumption of culture, results in new ways of creating meaning— just as the Abayudaya's initial conversion was intended to. As the following chapter addresses, however, creativity and the allowance for diversity within a community are limited according to the dominant world systems.

Chapter Five:

If I am not for Myself, who will be?

It's my last week with the Abayudaya. Until now I have resisted any urge to document my visit with photographs for fear of surrendering my place in the community and joining the ranks of tourists. But now I can't help myself and I walk around the village, taking pictures of the "important" sites with the Rabbi's three-year-old daughter, Leah, for company. We walk from her house 30 yards to the small clinic. Click! A Borehole. Click! The guesthouse. Click... Many of these structures have signs in front of them stamped with a Star of David declaring, "Funded by The Institute of Jewish and Community Research." By the time we reach the outskirts of the village Leah has tired and I carry her on my hip back up the cracked dirt road that leads to the synagogue. A man is trimming the grass outside the building with a machete. "Webale," I say, thanking him for his hard work – a common greeting in Uganda. Leah looks up at me laughs, "You said 'webale'! But you're a muzungu!"

By building on ideas introduced in the previous chapter regarding the relationship between globalization, religious identity, and cultural production and consumption, I consider how conceptions and realizations of "community" help or hinder the Abayudaya's survival. I argue that, by invoking the concept of community, the multiple hegemonic systems in which the Abayudaya are situated limit diversity as well as the Abayudaya's scope of action. These systems force

the Abayudaya to act at best as “choosers” rather than free agents (Appadurai 1996:42). Ultimately, however, these systems of authority ensure the Abayudaya’s survival in an era of global interconnection and Western dominance. Although the Abayudaya have merely become “choosers,” they are still able to make choices within these systems that promote their survival; choices such as accessing life-sustaining resources through international relationships or ethnic unity through uniform religious observance. With their revitalization movement, the Abayudaya began using dominant world systems in conjunction with cultural consumption and production in order to survive and maintain unity. They continue to take advantage of these systems today, as obstacles presented by globalizing forces are ever-present.

To frame this discussion, I introduce the concept of “community,” as used by Kate Crehan in *Silencing Power: Mapping the Social Terrain in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (2002). Crehan, drawing on a Gramscian understanding of cultural hegemony, problematizes our understanding of the concept of community by noting its use to cover-up differences of experience, class, or beliefs within an identified population. Her work on the concept of community is important to what I argue here because Western and local hegemonic structures exploit the concept of community in order to legitimate authority and encourage conformity to established norms. I identify Kulanu and The Institute as actors of the Western hegemony that are shaped by the Western Jewish tradition and the Western Development Discourse. The local hegemonic ideology on the other hand, is determined by the power concentrated in the Rabbi. In the sections that

follow, I first consider how American-based Jewish organizations encapsulate a Western Jewish as well as a Western economic experience and how the hegemonic positioning of these ideologies shapes contemporary Abayudayan realities. Next, I explore the local concepts of community among the Abayudaya in order to investigate the impact globalization and the resulting Western involvement has had upon the diversity found within the Abayudaya's community. Finally, I discuss how voices of authority, or hegemonic systems, are necessary for the maintenance of the Abayudaya's unity in light of the rapid globalization of the 21st century.

Nothing Cohesive about "Community"

Raymond Williams, as cited by Crehan, notes that the term "community" blurs actual social groups and common identity and is always associated with positive connotations (Crehan 2002:178). But this conception of community represents a false unity within the Abayudaya's transnational and local communities. A seemingly shared identity and affinity within the Abayudaya's transnational and local communities through religion does not necessarily overcome or discredit the differences inherently linked to locality. Even though post-modern anthropological theorists argue for the deterritorialization of space (Gupta and Ferguson 1992), the geographic location of individuals defines them, differentiates them from others elsewhere who are supposedly ascribing to the same beliefs. Barth acknowledges the significance of local, geographic factors in his analysis of the development of ethnic groups. Groups faced with unique social, environmental, and economic factors will inevitably develop differently

than similar populations faced with different circumstances (Barth 1998:60).

Location matters and so does difference.

Stark differences in economic, religious and social experiences exist between the Abayudaya and Western Jews as well as to a lesser extent between Abayudayan members, thus highlighting the problem of applying the term “community” to either of these populations. Crehan realized that in South Africa “although the outlines of ‘the community’ might seem clear enough at a distance, close up they [have] a frustrating tendency to dissolve into messy incoherence” (Crehan 2002:184). She argues that “community” is a hegemonic concept that masks diversity in order to establish consent within or between populations (Crehan 2002). It is therefore important to understand the concept of hegemony as introduced by Antonio Gramsci in relation to community as political leadership through “an intellectual unity and ethic in conformity with a conception of reality that has gone beyond common sense” (Gramsci 1971:333). Hegemony is a powerful tool for social cohesion since it is “based on the consent of the led” through ideology rather than direct domination (Bates 1975:352) and allows for the dominant class to “establish its own moral, political and cultural values as conventional norms of practical behavior” (Femia 1981:3). In this chapter, I use Gramsci’s notion of hegemony in conjunction with Crehan’s understanding of community to illustrate how Western and Abayudayan authority invoke the concept of community in order to muffle diversity and subsequently reinforce the prominence of their ideology as well as social cohesion and unity.

The Western Hegemony

Kulanu and The Institute work at the intersection of two hegemonic systems: Ashkenazik Jewish tradition and the Western development discourse. By first defining these structures, I identify how these Western Jewish organizations work within the Abayudaya under false notions of community in order to quiet differences between the two localities and establish consent for a specific system of authority. Joseph V. Femia argues that Gramsci's concept of consent is ambiguous but Femia attempts to explain it as a "psychological state, involving some kind of acceptance – not necessarily explicit – of the socio-political order or of certain vital aspects of that order" (Femia 1981:37). Although consent is difficult to identify, by accepting a specific order, differences are quieted and organizations such as Kulanu and The Institute are able to enhance the legitimacy of their work in a foreign location. Consent within the Abayudaya is obtained through the authority of the Ashkenazik tradition in addition to Western development initiatives.

The Ashkenazik Tradition as Authority

Rich differences have always existed within the global Jewish community. Jews are historically divided and identified either by their level of religious observance (i.e. Orthodox, Conservative, Reform) or by their place of birth. Jews of European descent, for example, are labeled *Ashkenazi*, whereas Jews hailing from Africa and the Middle East are identified as *Mizrahi*.³³ There is a long

³³ Some scholars classify Jews according to three categories rather than two: 1) *Ashkenazi*, descendants of Jews from France, Germany and Eastern Europe 2)

tradition within the Jewish world, however, of disguising differences through the prominence of Ashkenazik ideology. Ashkenazi Jews (Western Jews) dominate politics and culture within Israel today as well as within Jewish institutions in other Western countries, including the United States. Ashkenazik institutions in Israel have also set a precedent of forcing Mizrahi Jews to abandon their traditional beliefs and customs in the name national unity (Smootha 2004).

All hegemonies attempt to claim ultimate authority over a population, like the Catholic Church of the Medieval Ages which sought “the subjection of all practice to a unified authority, to a single authentic source that could tell the truth from falsehood...only a single church could become the source of authenticating discourse” (Asad 2002:121). Similarly, the Israeli government determines Jewish legitimacy according to Orthodox standards. As stated in Chapter Four, this means the Abayudaya are ineligible for Israeli citizenship. Recently, some of the Abayudayan youth were invited to a Kibbutz in Israel in order to learn Hebrew. Those invited obtained Ugandan national passports, yet they were never granted a visa by the Israeli government. Despite the Abayudaya’s high level of observance and commitment to Judaism, Israel refuses to recognize them as Jews and prohibits them from entering the country. Because of the differences that space and place have inscribed upon the Abayudaya, the government sees them as likely to claim asylum or another form of protection once in the country. The Abayudaya claim only to want to visit Israel in order to enhance their Jewish knowledge and observance, since living in Uganda is crucial to their ethnic

Mizrahi, descendants from North Africa and the Middle East 3) *Sephardic*, descendants from Spain, Portugal, North Africa and the Middle East.

identity. The Abayudaya's scope of action, however, is restricted by a hegemonic order founded on the bedrock of their identity – Jewish identity.

Israel's response to the Abayudaya illustrates that the Ashkenazik Jewish world today continues to seek a voice of authority and authenticity for the religion in order to monitor and reinforce its elevated position in the Jewish hierarchy, thus silencing “other ways of naming and mapping the world” (Crehan 2002:173). It also emphasizes that “what is a Jew” is a contested category – a category that is defined and enforced according to the hegemonic discourse of the time. Currently, that category is determined through a Western lens of Jewish practice, which reemphasizes the Abayudaya's need to practice a legible form of Judaism as outlined in Chapter Four. It also highlights the authority ascribed to Ashkenazik (Western) Jews working within the community.

Development Initiatives as Authority

The Western development initiatives function in conjunction with the Ashkenazik tradition in order to reinforce Western dominance within the Abayudaya's transnational community. These initiatives are typically based “on a positivistic and ethnocentric interpretation of a particular historical process, the emergence of capitalism, and the industrial revolution in Western Europe” (Hoben 1982:350). Situated within this discourse is an inherent dichotomy between “Developed” (Ashkenazi) and “Developing” (Mizrahi) or what others call “Undeveloped.” This leads to an “assumption that whatever it is that ails the ‘developing world – that these countries, particularly the African ones, *are* ailing is taken for granted – the problem is ultimately one of lack of ‘development’”

(Crehan 2002:174). Like “community,” “development” is often associated with a positive connotation and development work is therefore perceived as a tool by Western Jewish populations to improve the lives of their Mizrahi brothers. In reality, though, development initiatives are a popular way for Western communities to decrease differences between these populations and reinforce their ideological dominance, especially when considering Gramsci’s emphasis on the importance of economics and class in forms of dominance (Femia 1981: 24).

Western Organizations in Action Within the “Transnational Community”

Both Kulanu and The Institute emphasize the importance of sustaining Judaism as a “community” through the (capital) support provided disenfranchised Jewish populations. Hence the concept of community is employed to cloak significant cultural and historical differences stemming from race and location between Ugandan and Western Jewry in order to legitimize foreign involvement. Kulanu’s website states that the organization “supports isolated and emerging Jewish communities around the world...Our connections help all of us enrich our Jewish lives” (Kulanu 2010). Implicit in this statement is the assumption that “Jewish lives” are uniform across space. The Institute’s partner organization, Be’chol Lashon is explicit about their desire to not only enhance but also increase membership in the global Jewish community. The organization’s vision states, “We believe the Jewish population, through proactive efforts, could grow to 20 million by 2020, and 40 million by 2060. *We seek to overcome the significant organizational, cultural and ideological barriers to growth in the Jewish*

community (*Italics added*)” (Be’chol Lashon 2010). Consequently, Western Jews assume the authority to influence Abayudayan activities since they are after all part of their own “Jewish community” (Crehan 2002:192).

Through their involvement these organizations employ the Ashkenazik legacy and Western development initiatives in order to overcome “ideological” and “cultural” differences between the populations, yet, Bechol Lashon’s mission goes on to emphasize the importance of Jewish diversity:

Be’chol Lashon (In every Tongue) grows and strengthens the Jewish people through ethnic, cultural, and racial inclusiveness. We advocate for the diversity that has characterized the Jewish people throughout history, and through contemporary forces including intermarriage, conversion, and adoption. We foster an expanding Jewish community that embraces its differences (Be’chol Lashon 2010).

Although both organizations highlight the importance of incorporating diversity, diversity within the transnational community is actually diminished through the involvement and influence of Ashkenazik religious traditions and Western development initiatives in Abayudayan villages. Because the application of the concept of community disregards internal differences, the number of choices available to the Abayudaya become limited not only to local cultural, social, political, ecological factors but also to the intersection of these factors with the policies of Western Jewish communities and organizations.

Constrictions on the Abayudaya’s scope of action are intensified as a result of Western Jewish organizations neglecting the needs stated by the Abayudaya, since the Abayudaya are perceived by them as “underdeveloped” and in need of guidance from the “Developed.” As a result, initiatives that are pursued flatten differences of religious practice and economic experience within

the transnational community as observed through the Western organization's emphasis on egalitarian observance and economic growth.

Prior to Kulanu and The Institute's involvement in the community, Abayudayan women were responsible for maintaining a Jewish home, and the men were responsible for activities in public religious sector including the synagogue. After Rabbi Michael was sent to rabbinical school in California by The Institute and was exposed to Western-feminist ideology, he decided that his community must increase religious opportunities for Abayudayan women.

According to him, he realized:

We were actually doing a disservice to ourselves by giving a backseat to all our girls and women and not giving them the opportunity to go up...I think that we need to give our women, our girls, that opportunity to go up...I think that we need to give our women, our girls, that opportunity to play a role that might even be better than the men that we put forward. I think to have both men and women play equal roles in the community will help this community.

From the United States, Michael wrote to his home community demanding that women be allowed, "to do whatever they are capable of" in regards to worship services. After some initial unease and outright opposition in his home community, women began to assume more responsibility during religious services. Today, Abayudayan women are permitted to lead services, recite blessings over the Torah, and chant the Haftarah,³⁴ thus decreasing difference between the two localities by demanding that women's gender roles mirror those within Western Jewish congregations. It is important to note that the process of making Jewish observance legible that was discussed in Chapter Four is not the

³⁴ A selection from the Books of the prophets that is chanted during worship services after reading the Torah.

same process as minimizing differences between communities according to hegemonic structures since establishing legibility is merely incorporating materials or practices, rather than altering fundamental ideological principles.

While Western ideology has allowed for increased spaces for female public responsibility, it has not provided increased space for public worship, since economic initiatives are more valued in Western development than religious ones. Only two permanent synagogues currently exist among the Abayudaya's seven villages, one in the main village of Eddembe and the second a few kilometers away in Katogo village. Another synagogue is under construction in the village of Omwaaka, but progress is slow and the older generation doubts they will ever see it completed. In villages where permanent structures have yet to be built, the Abayudaya gather to worship in small, mud huts with either tin or grass-thatched roofs.

I visited a synagogue like this in Omwaaka. On an endless flat, mud plain amidst farm lands and mango trees, stands a synagogue smaller than most Ugandan classrooms with broken wooden benches planted in the ground. An empty hole in the wall had been carved symbolizing the ark where the Torah should be kept. Abraham, a Yeshiva student, described his synagogue similar to this one in his home village, "the synagogue itself has no windows, it is not cemented down, there is no floor, we lack seats. Nothing. Nothing." Even though all of my informants identified the need for improved synagogue conditions in their villages, donor organizations refuse to devote funds to synagogue construction and maintenance. According to community members, the

organizations ask the Abayudaya, “What will that really do for you?” When I asked the same question, yeshiva students countered that synagogues are “assets to this community” partly because they will re-attract individuals who left the community during Amin’s regime, and partly because of their contribution to ethnic visibility and pride among the Abayudaya. Without improved conditions and enhanced security (e.g. doors, locks, and glass windows), the Rabbi will not permit the distribution of the Torahs from the main synagogue to other villages. The focal point of any Jewish Shabbat service is reading from the Torah. But because most of the synagogues are deemed unsuitable to house one, the majority of the Abayudaya are unable to read from a scroll during Shabbat services. The Torah is the physical representation of God’s word, and its absence from worship services is devastating to community members.

The deteriorating synagogues are also a source of great humiliation for Abayudayan youth. Natan confided that, “You can’t show your friend that is where you go to pray. They think you are just going to visit a family member there.” If synagogues fail to function as visible markers that reinforce ethnic boundaries, then ethnic maintenance decreases as happened when the community lost its physical markers tied to the Jewish tradition during Amin’s regime. With synagogues in poor condition, Noah believes that “the ones [who converted] in the Amin era are gone forever.” It appears that Kulanu and The Institute assume that “development” is the ultimate goal of the community (Crehan 2002:175), where, in fact, I would argue that development, in the Western sense, is not. Rather, the Abayudaya’s ultimate goal is to enhance their spiritual lives, as

supported by Abraham's description of his vision for the community. Abraham explained that if the organizations will not help build a synagogue, then he wants an income-generating project whose profits will be devoted to synagogue construction. He therefore highlights not only the emphasis the Abayudaya place on spiritual structures over economic ones, but also the sense of constricted agency experienced among the Abayudaya as a result of their dependence on Western organizations and Western ideology.

The Local Hegemony

It is not only difference within the transnational community that hegemony seeks to control. Difference exists within and between Abayudayan villages and is often exacerbated due to Western involvement. Although the Abayudaya are all native Ugandan Jews, "The cozy embrace of community can too easily obscure real inequalities and conflicts of interest existing both within it and across its imagined boundaries" (Crehan 2002:193). Although differences have always existed between community members, Western initiatives contribute to these divisions due to the unequal distribution of resources. One of Crehan's informants in South Africa explained that once there is competition for resources "you haven't got a community anymore" (Crehan 2002:183). Kulanu and The Institute funnel the majority of resources to the "headquarters" where the Rabbi lives, resulting in a sense of neglect among community members who live in the seven villages outside of the "headquarters." Additionally, most of the individuals living outside of the central village lack money for transport and are

therefore unable to access these resources; thus, differences are inscribed and exacerbated between villages due to Western involvement.

The creation of division within the community is especially apparent in the economic initiatives aimed at Abayudayan women. For example, one of the activities of the women's cooperative that was established in the 1990s is making paper-bead necklaces for sale in U.S. markets. I attended one of the cooperative's weekly bead-making meetings at the guesthouse in Eddembe village. When I arrived, only Rebecca was at work cutting paper and gluing the beads. She assured me that more women would come shortly. Other than her sister-in-law who came for an hour and to eat lunch, though, no one else arrived. Finally Rebecca explained that it was planting season and women could not leave their fields to make paper beads. Regardless of what the current agricultural cycle is, women struggle to participate in income generating projects since they cannot afford transportation from their fields to the guesthouse. Nor can they afford to leave their agricultural and domestic responsibilities for capitalistic endeavors identified by Westerners. Depending on location some women are situated in a better position to succeed within the initiatives developed by Kulanu and The Institute, thus deepening differences between Abayudayan members and families. In an attempt to establish similarities within the transnational community, Western organizations inadvertently contribute to differences within the Abayudaya's local community through the distribution of resources and initiatives rooted in wage-labor capitalism.

Although differences exist within the community, they are controlled and quieted through strong, local leadership. The local system of authority and leadership structure has always served the community as a mechanism for survival since Kakungulu. Abayudaya leadership today continues to reinforce its authority in order to discredit conflicting interests and maintain a sense of unity. Currently, the Rabbi primarily determines Abayudayan ideology. His authority comes partially because of his rabbinic ordination, but also because, as Michael notes, rabbis are deemed by the Bible as “Judge of the time.” Michael explained that:

The Torah says you should listen to what [the judge of the time] says. So the Judge of the time means that Judaism is aware that different times come with different demands and we cannot judge the future. There must be somebody in the future who should be at the center of that kind of judgment.

The Judaic concept of what Michael calls “Judge of the Time” outlined in the Book of Deuteronomy,³⁵ grants Michael the ultimate authority in determining how to proceed in the face of accelerated globalization and within the constraints presented by Western communities. Michael perceives his central responsibility as maintaining religious observance as well as a cohesive community which is why he labels himself “the CEO of the community,” responsible for all financial, administrative and religious matters. He stated, “We think that, in order to maintain the unity, we thought we needed to have one set of rules and one law and not agree to any of those divisions.” When Michael says “we” he is not referring to a general consensus among the Abayudaya, but rather to a select

³⁵ Deuteronomy 16:18

group of leaders within the Abayudaya, the majority of whom are related to Michael by blood or by marriage. By maintaining authority, the Rabbi and his group of supporting elites perpetuate a uniform image of the community to visitors and Western organizations. Hence, the Abayudaya's local system of authority overlooks and overrules differences in order to promote consent and maintain cohesion and ethnic unity within their local community.

The Benefits of Hegemony

It is interesting to note that the Abayudaya, who originally developed in opposition to a Western presence now embrace it and in some cases conform to it. This does not contradict their roots as a revitalization movement in opposition to colonialism; rather, it highlights their strategy of continuous adaptation to potential stressors, whether that is defining themselves in opposition to such stressors, or incorporating aspects of threatening structures into their own practice in order to avoid mounting external pressure. As Femia explains, individuals and communities conform because it provides for “the reciprocal conduct of others, which is a necessary condition of success in achieving one's own goals” (Femia 1981:40). Thus far such a strategy has proved successful for the community, for, as the Abayudaya incorporate aspects of the Western system into their reality, they gain substantial benefits. For instance, the Rabbi explained to me that before The Institute undertook several healthcare initiatives that the community could not afford on their own, he would spend several minutes listing off the names of

the sick during Saturday worship services before the prayer for healing.³⁶ “But this Shabbat, how many names were there? Two or three! That is because of The Institute’s help.” Because today’s global system is dominated largely by the Western industrialized and capitalistic experience, the Abayudaya cannot force the initiatives they most desire due to their lack of capital coupled with the subjugation of their reality within the historic hegemonies of Ashkenazik Jewish authority and Western development initiatives. But they can continue to interpret initiatives that reinforce their ethnic identity as explained in Chapter Four, while simultaneously obtaining life-sustaining resources provided by Kulanu and The Institute. The unity within the transnational community is crucial to the Abayudaya’s existence since these organizations provide life-sustaining resources as well as the legitimacy the Abayudaya seek as a Jewish community discussed in Chapter Four. Legitimacy, after all, can only be granted by the prevailing ideology or authority of the time (Femia 1981:38). Although hegemonies do limit the scope of action for individuals and communities, they also allow for new conceptions of community and coordinated action and cooperation across difference – all strategies necessary for navigating an always-changing reality.

As a result of globalization and the Abayudaya’s exposure to different conceptions of Judaism and economic modes of livelihood, the Abayudaya’s strong local leadership is needed to maintain ethnic unity and enhance the collective’s well being through the dismissal of difference. The Rabbi believes that the religious diversity that exists in the Western Jewish world, “is beginning

³⁶ *Refuah Shlema*

to drip into our community... We have a group in Malakwang that chooses to be Orthodox... We have Reforms, Conservatives, Orthodox, so maybe our community will divide, despite the fact that we are small in number.” In *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci proposes that in order to cope with a bourgeois hegemonic system, the proletariats should “develop political strategies which undermine the consent of the present ruling class....a central foundation of such strategies is the attempt to build an alternative proletarian hegemony...” (Adamson 1980:170).

The Abayudaya’s revitalization movement and current ideology was not necessarily intended to challenge Western global dominance. Instead, it was initially meant to provide an alternative to the Western system. Today it also allows for cohesion within the local community as they participate in the transnational community. In addition to cultural consumption and production, local cultural hegemony functions as an adaptive strategy within the Abayudaya to maintain unity as they confront obstacles presented by globalizing forces.

One such obstacle to unity is increased mobility. This ability could potentially threaten the unity of the Abayudaya if Ugandan Jews no longer equated their Jewish experience with the community, resulting in a movement of Jews out of Abayudayan villages. Individuals who migrate to urban centers would be forced to seek employment that does not grant days off for the Jewish Sabbath. Likewise, Jews away from the village would struggle to observe other Jewish mandates that function as Abayudayan ethnic-boundary markers, such as kosher dietary restrictions. Hence, the community and the ethnic identity they have created would diminish. Even if Jews migrated as a community to cities,

they would sever themselves from their “headquarters” which has served as the centerpiece for much of their mythico-history and their Jewish identity. Additionally, they would surrender the frontier location that provides them the space for a unique religious practice as explained in Chapter Two. The Abayudaya’s dominant ideology, however, emphasizes the significance of these factors through the perpetuation of the community’s mythico-history, as well as through the demand for uniform observance. Because a high level of observance is bound to rabbinical authority, the Abayudaya elect to remain near Michael in the rural villages of eastern Uganda, thus preserving communal and ethnic unity.

Compatible with Gramsci’s hypothesis of hegemony then, a voice of authority must exist in a “stable social order” as “a substratum of agreement so powerful that it can counteract the division and disruptive forces arising from conflicting interests” (Femia 1987:39). In this light, Abayudayan authority that demands uniform observance and unified political support seems favorable to the Abayudaya’s cultural continuity in the face of new global opportunities and the spread of Western thought. Maintaining the local authority also acts as a safety net by providing an alternative reality for the Abayudaya if the Western dominant system is ever to break down. The Abayudaya can then utilize this framework to implement a new vision of success.

Part of cultural survival, adaptation, and change is not only a result of cultural interaction, but also of cultural domination. In fact cultures such as the

Abayudaya that result from revitalization movements spring up as a response to such domination. The Abayudaya have the ability to interpret reality as illustrated in Chapter Four, but they do not hold the capacity to force Westerners to perceive reality through their same lens. Hegemony is the safest means to ensure the survival of particular values, yet the only way to construct one is for a group “to find a new, and to it more accurate, way of naming the world it sees.” In order to do so, however, a group must have, “...the power to impose its new account of reality” (Crehan 2002:184). How does a group obtain such power? What does this power constitute? And will the Abayudaya ever possess it on a global scale to ensure the compatibility between their cultural values and the reality they face? At this point in time considering the permeation of Western concepts across the globe, it seems unlikely. But then again, a group converting to Judaism in rural Uganda in the early 20th century didn’t seem too likely, either.

Conclusion:

One Generation Passeth Away and Another Generation Cometh

By the time I left the Abayudaya, I no longer found the African environment and Jewish culture contradictory. I had become comfortable within the community's strict Jewish observance and enjoyed the excuse to take naps on hot Saturday afternoons following Shabbat services. Though I was at ease with the culture and the daily activities, I left the community still unsure of how they came to be. When I asked informants why they were Jewish, they would simply state, "Because I was born Jewish," or, "Because my mother or my father was born Jewish." When I then inquired over their lineage, it seemed that it only went back as far as their Judaism did, with no hints as to how the Judaism appeared in the first place. These explanations rooted in their faith and family did not fully satisfy the question I had asked myself during my weeks with the Abayudaya, "Why are the Abayudaya Jewish? And why do they make the conscious effort to maintain their Jewish practice?"

This thesis attempted to address the question that was left still unanswered upon my departure from Uganda in regards to how the Abayudaya emerged and how they continue to endure despite Westernizing pressures of the 21st century. In answering this question I have attempted as Brigit Meyer suggests in her call for ethnography to not only "understand what charismatic religion can and, equally importantly, cannot do in such configurations, but also to grasp the power of identity without naturalizing it, to deconstruct reifications without neglecting their power" (Meyer 2004:463). I have introduced a new framework for understanding the Abayudaya's initial conversion and current reality by favoring the community's understanding of their development in conjunction with

theoretical in analysis. Ultimately, my ethnographic data wrapped in theory from the Anthropology of Religion, Globalization Studies, and African Studies revealed that although aspects of globalization (especially Westernization), threaten the community's distinct ethnic identity, the space, strategies, and world systems that globalization provides reinforces the Abayudaya's ethnic unity as Ugandan Jews. The Abayudaya first turned to Judaism as an alternative to colonial rule that resulted from a new phase of globalization. Today, the community continues to maintain their constructed ethnic identity that is rooted in Judaism through cultural consumption of Western involvement and local cultural production. Although the hegemonic systems at work among the Abayudaya limit the community's scope of action and the acknowledgment of difference, the disregard of difference actually allows the Abayudaya to gain legitimacy, life-sustaining resources, and maintain unity.

In Chapter One, I began this study with a brief introduction of the Abayudaya and emphasized the significance of my work. Because literature on the Abayudaya is limited and because of the little that is written on the community largely essentializes them, I argued that it is necessary to introduce a new framework for understanding the community. I recognized the limits of my study, but still suggested that ethnography in conjunction with a theoretical discussion revolving around topics such as ethnicity, religion, and Uganda's colonial legacy will provide deeper insight into the Abayudaya's Jewish observance and existence. Finally I presented a summary of the arguments in the chapters to follow.

Chapter Two, noted the importance of context and provided a concise background of Ugandan pre-colonial history in order to provide context for the country's colonial legacy. I explained that although the region's history began long before colonialism, British control in the area functioned as a significant historical shift, which ultimately led to the Abayudaya's emergence. Britain seized control of Uganda's territory in the late 19th century and attempted to unify the various ethnic groups through a policy of indirect rule and customary law (Mamdani 1996). But the colonizing powers failed to establish unity by the time of independence in 1962. The Abayudaya, however, have been successful in uniting members of various regional ethnic groups. In order to explain the Abayudaya's unity I shifted here to first provide a current description of the community that lives in eight villages in rural Eastern Uganda, primarily surviving on subsistence farming. Next, I applied Liisa Malkki's concept of a mythico-history to the Abayudaya. According to Malkki's definition, the Abayudaya's mythico-history is not necessarily a factual representation of the past, but a meaningful one that allows us to better appreciate the Abayudaya's development and current navigation of globalizing pressures. The Abayudaya's collective history begins with Kakungulu's break from the religious sect, Malakite Christianity, and the conversion to Judaism of him and his followers. The history goes on to recount the persecution experienced by the community under Idi Amin, and finally their current relationships with outside Jews. According to Malkki these "collective histories flourish where they have a meaningful, signifying use in the present..." (1995:242). I noted that themes of persecution and isolation are

emphasized within these stories, thus linking them to the broader Jewish historical narrative. The chapter concluded with a brief discussion of current foreign involvement in the community, thus setting the stage for the following examination of the Abayudaya's development in relation to historical processes and contemporary pressures.

With a basic understanding of colonialism's role in the region, it was possible to employ Wallace's model of a revitalization movement in Chapter Three. I employed the model as a heuristic device in order to explain the Abayudaya's conversion to Judaism as a "deliberate, organized conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture" (Wallace 1956:265). The application of Wallace's framework to the Abayudaya revealed that the Abayudaya's revitalization movement adheres to stages Wallace set forth including: the Period of Individual Stress, Period of Cultural Distortion, the Period of Revitalization, and the Abayudaya's first transitory New Steady State. I explained that the period of individual stress began with the arrival of missionaries and the ensuing political and religious conflicts. Then, cultural distortion followed due to the imposition of indirect rule and customary law by the British colonial officials. These policies threatened traditional customs by selecting and crystallizing a single ethnic tradition as means for order among all Ugandans, thus preventing different groups from coping with change through cultural adaptation. As a result of this sense of "stress" members of varying ethnic groups banded together under Kakungulu's leadership in order to construct a more meaningful and satisfying culture, through the period of revitalization.

This period initially began as an individual revitalization movement for Kakungulu to reclaim personal authority after being slighted by the colonial regime. He first sought to resolve this need through the Malakite Christian movement, and then ultimately by spearheading the emerging Jewish movement. Through effective leadership, communication, and a persuasive doctrine, Kakungulu constructed the foundation of the new steady state, which was solidified by the religious teachings of “Joseph,” a Jew from Jerusalem.

This new steady state did not last long, though, for the Abayudaya were faced with several pressures following the death of Kakungulu. They coped with the resulting stress through several of what I labeled “mini-revitalization movements.” These mini-revitalization movements follow a similar structure to regular revitalization movements, but they are of a smaller scale, merely reconfiguring a single component of culture rather than the entire cultural bricolage. The mini-revitalization movements the Abayudaya conducted following their conversion included a restructuring of leadership following Kakungulu’s death as well as a restructuring of worship following Amin’s regime. The idea of smaller, recurring revitalization movements is important because it highlights flaws within Wallace’s concept of a “final” steady state and instead suggests that these stages are transitory since cultures are ever changing (Appiah 2006:3).

Chapter Four shifted to examine how the Abayudaya navigate between their need to attract foreign involvement and their need to maintain ethnic unity in the face of global pressures. I began the chapter by first describing the

Abayudaya's current ethnicity as one rooted in and marked by their Jewish observance. Next, I addressed the role of Western organizations in the community and the significance of the transnational community as bestowing credibility to the Abayudaya's Jewish identity. I argued that the Abayudaya's cultural production is what initially attracts foreign actors to the community. This process is informed by the community's need to emphasize difference between themselves and visitors as well as to establish a sense of affinity between them. As a result of this process, the Abayudaya were officially converted to Judaism in 2002 by American and Israeli rabbis. Although the Israeli government does not identify the Abayudaya as Jews, the involvement of the transnational community and the 2002 conversion provide the Abayudaya with international Jewish credibility.

I acknowledged in this chapter, however, that all of the benefits the community receives from Western actors do not necessarily reinforce their constructed ethnicity. The Western development initiatives enacted through Kulanu and The Institute hold the potential to Westernize or at least secularize the Abayudaya's ethnic unity. The Abayudaya, are able to maintain the essence of their identity, however, through a process identified by Appiah as "cultural consumption," or the act of adapting "a product to suit their own needs" (Appiah 2006:3). Cultural consumption allows the Abayudaya to welcome Western development initiatives and then reinterpret these initiatives through a religious framework in order to support the foundation of their ethnic identity. I used the example of Kulanu's education initiatives in the community to reveal how the

Abayudaya perceive Western concepts and constructs. In this instance, the community associates education with the ability to engage critically with Jewish texts. Therefore Kulanu's education initiatives, though not religious in nature, are understood by the community as a space in which they can further their Jewish observance.

In the final substantive chapter, I complicate the notion of a transnational "community" as well as a "local" community. By using Crehan's understanding of the concept of "community" in combination with Gramsci's work on hegemony, I suggested that hegemonic ideologies at work among the Abayudaya invoke the concept of community in order to muffle difference and justify specific systems of authority. Regardless of these constrictions, however, I concluded that differences at times must be overlooked in order to gain needed resources and relationships for the maintenance of a community and the well being of its members.

Kulanu and the Institute are largely responsible for dismissing differences between the Abayudaya and Western Jewry. The initiatives of both of these organizations are informed and shaped by the Ashkenazik Jewish tradition in addition to the Western capitalistic and industrialized economic experience. As a result, these "Developed" actors determine what development projects are to be enacted in the community, rather than Abayudayan community members. Rather than improve the community's deteriorating synagogues, Kulanu and the Institute pursue policies and projects of egalitarian religious observance and economic development. Because resources and projects are centered in the Abayudaya's

headquarters, though, differences arise between community members related to locality. For example, women outside of the main village do not participate in the women's cooperative income-generating projects since they cannot afford transportation to the headquarters, nor can they abandon their domestic responsibilities. The local ideological hegemony then emerges as a mechanism to control local difference and maintain community. The Rabbi understands his primary role as maintaining unity as well as a single religious observance, which is why he influences all sectors of society, from finances to life-cycle events.

Despite some restrictions, the dismissal of differences by the transnational and local systems of authority, are not completely detrimental to the community's well-being. For example, the Western organizations provide in addition to international Jewish legitimacy, life-sustaining resources which strengthen the well being of Abayudayan members, and consequently the well being of the collective. Additionally, the local system of authority maintains a uniform religious observance that reinforces the Abayudaya's ethnic identity and the perpetuation of their existence as a community. Although the Abayudaya's multi-hegemonic reality presents intricate complexities, it also presents effective coping mechanisms for globalization. Hegemonies allow for cooperation and collaboration across borders and division in place of confusion and contestation.

So what is next for the community? Thus far they have maintained their ethnic identity, but their Jewish practice has come to resemble more a Western practice stereotyped as less observant, more egalitarian, and deeply materialistic. How long will their adaptation and interpretation last in the face of hegemony

until their adaptation become assimilation? As Jews have adopted the highly technical modes of daily life in Western societies, their Judaism has transformed. Families drive to synagogues for Shabbat services, and typically cook on Shabbat, or at least use electronic devices to warm and preserve the food. Sanctuaries are lit with electric lights and services are broadcast through microphones. As a result, synagogues have grown in size and decreased in number and affiliation. Technology makes working on Shabbat easier than *not* working. Western Jews embrace the Western worldview signified by this technology along with other forms of materialism. Yet to an extent, they too remain bounded – a distinct population within the larger society.

I do not doubt that the Abayudaya will be able to maintain their ethnic distinction within their local district and national borders. But as the significance of national borders continue to change in our globalized world; I wonder whether the Abayudaya will be able to maintain their distinction within the larger Jewish community. This is especially salient as their unique location is slowly eroded by the Western hegemony through development initiatives and neoliberalism. In order to answer this question we must ask, “What made the Abayudaya survive as a distinct community and ethnicity resulting from a revitalization movement, while the Malakite Christians died out?” Perhaps an answer to this question will provide insight as to whether or not the Abayudaya will continue to successfully reinforce their ethnic boundaries within the transnational community.

According to Barth, “Since ethnic identity is associated with a culturally specific set of value standards it follows that there are circumstances where such

an identity can be moderately successfully realized, and limits beyond which such success is precluded” (Barth 1998:25). It is therefore important to consider, the possibility of an Orthodox conversion for the community that would allow them to travel freely to Israel and present them with new conceptions of ethnic identity. How likely is this possibility? And if it comes to fruition will the Abayudaya remain in their villages or emigrate to Israel? These questions take us back to our discussion of hegemony. A hegemonic shift, both within the local and transnational community must precipitate an Orthodox conversion and Abayudayan migration.

In the end we are unsure of the twists, turns, and shifts globalization holds for the future. As a result, any predictions made here will most likely be futile. As Lewellen suggests, “life will be so profoundly different than anything we can even contemplate that such prediction is absurd.” A “certain amount of theoretical humbleness,” is therefore required (Lewellen 2002:27). Because Abayudayan individuals and the collective have an undeniable role to play in the interpretation and inclusion of globalizing forces in their community, it is especially difficult to determine what the future of this community holds.

When I asked Shimon why he was Jewish he gave me the standard answer, “I was born Jewish.” When I pushed, though, asking why he makes choices every day to keep kosher, and observe other Jewish laws he said, “Judaism makes me think. It gives me the freedom to question.” Jews have been asking questions about their Jewish identity and how to maintain it through

genocides, diasporas, and globalization. The Abayudaya inserted themselves into this dialogue once they decided to convert to Judaism in 1919 in the face of growing globalization and oppression. They have remained active participants in the conversation as they alter Western projects to compliment their ethnic identity, actively produce their own culture, and exploit hegemonic systems for significant gains. The challenges the Abayudaya are facing are not unique to their community, or to Judaism for that matter. How they will cope with them depends largely on how globalization continues to impact the small community. Judaism, like every religion provides answers to these challenges. And fortunately for Shimon and the rest of the Abayudaya, Judaism also provides the space to ask them.

Bibliography

Adamson, Walter L.

1980 *Hegemony and Revolution : A Study of Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Appadurai, Arjun,

1996 *Modernity at Large : Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press.

Appiah, Kwame Anthony

2006 The Case for Contamination- Why Cultural Preservation is Not Always a Good Thing. *The New York Times Magazine* (January).

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/01/magazine/01cosmopolitan.html>

Asad, Talal

2002 The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category *In A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*. Lambek, Michael, ed. Pp. 114-113 Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers.

Atkinson, Ronald R

1999 The (Re)Construction of Ethnicity in Africa: Extending the Chronology, Conceptualization and Discourse *In Ethnicity and Nationalism in Africa : Constructivist Reflections and Contemporary Politics*. Yeros, Paris, ed. Pp. 15-45. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Barth, Fredrik, and Universitetet i Bergen.

1998 Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference.

Bates, Thomas R.

1975 Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony. *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36(2):351-366.

Bechol Lashon

a. 2010 Abayudaya Jewish Community of Uganda. Electronic document, <http://www.bechollashon.org/projects/Abayudaya/abayudaya.php>, accessed 5 February 2010, 2010.

b. 2010 Electronic document, <http://www.bechollashon.org>, accessed 5 February 2010.

c. 2010 Vision: A Global Jewish People. Electronic document, <http://www.bechollashon.org/about/mission.php>, accessed 5 February 2010, 2010.

Berg, Irwin

1997 Among the Abayudaya.

Commentary(January):<http://www.commentarymagazine.com/viewarticle.cfm/among-the-abayudaya-8663>.

Brockman, Norbert C.,

2006 *An African Biographical Dictionary*. Millerton, NY: Grey House Pub.

- Bruder, Edith,
2008 *The Black Jews of Africa : History, Religion, Identity*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bruner, Edward M.
1996 *Tourism in Ghana: The Representation of Slavery and the Return of the Black Diaspora*. *American Anthropologist* 98(2):290-304.
- Crehan, Kate
2002 *Silencing Power: Mapping the Social Terrain in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. George C. Bond, Nigel C. Gibson, eds. Boulder, Colo.; Oxford: Westview.
- Central Intelligence Agency
2010 Uganda. Electronic document,
<http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ug.htm/>,
accessed 1/20/2010, 2010.
- Chitando, Ezra
2005 *VaJudha (African Jews) in Harare: Expressing Contested Identities in Tight Spaces*. *African Studies* 64(2):135-155.
- Cohen, Zak
2007 *My D'var Torah (Bar Mitzvah Speech)*. Electronic document,
http://www.kulanu.org/abayudaya/zak_Cohen_dvar_torah.php, accessed 26 February 2010, 2010.
- Decalo, Samuel
1998 *Psychoses of Power : African Personal Dictatorships*. Gainesville, Fla.: FAP Books, Florida Academic Press.
- The Economist
2007 *Museveni, Munificent with Monarch*. *Economist* 385(8557): 62-62.
- Eller, Jack David,
1999 *From Culture to Ethnicity to Conflict : An Anthropological Perspective on International Ethnic Conflict*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Femia, Joseph V.
1987 *Gramsci's Political Thought : Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process*. Oxford [Oxfordshire]; Oxford [Oxfordshire]; New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press.

- Fernandez, James W.
1978 African Religious Movements. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 7:195-234.
- Frank, Jocelyn
2008 Celebrating Passover with Uganda's Jews. National Public Radio (April 19, 2008).
- Glazier, Stephen D.
1997 *Anthropology of Religion : A Handbook*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.
- Gonsher, Debra A., David Vinik, New York Board of Rabbis., and Diva Communications (Firm)
2007 *Yearning to Belong*.
- Graburn, Nelson H.H.
1989 Tourism: The Sacred Journey *In Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*. Smith, Valene L., ed. Pp. 21-36. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Gramsci, Antonio, Quintin Hoare , and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith
1971 *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*; London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Guneratne, Arjun
2001 Shaping the Tourist's Gaze: Representing Ethnic Difference in a Nepali Village. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 7(3).
- Gupta, Akhil, and James Ferguson
1992 Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference. *Cultural Anthropology* 7(1):6-23.
- Hansard
1937 Uganda (Malakite Sect). Electronic document,
<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1937/mar/17/uganda-malakite-sect>.
- Harkin, Michael Eugene, and American Anthropological Association. Meeting
2004 *Reassessing Revitalization Movements : Perspectives from North America and the Pacific Islands*.
- Hoben, Allan
1982 Anthropologists and Development. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 11:349-375.

- Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs
2002 Jewish Settlement in the Land of Israel. Electronic document,
<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/History/Modern%20History/Centenary%20of%20Zionism/Jewish%20Settlement%20in%20the%20Land%20of%20Israel>, accessed March 15, 2010.
- Jewish Virtual Library
2010 Conversion. Electronic document,
<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/Conversion.html>.
- Klass, Morton,
1995 *Ordered Universes: Approaches to the Anthropology of Religion*.
Boulder: Westview Press.
- Kopytoff, Igor
1987 *The African Frontier : The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Kulanu
a. 2010 Abayudaya. Electronic document,
<http://www.kulanu.org/abayudaya/index.php2010>.
b. 2010 Kulanu All of Us. Electronic document, <http://kulanu.org>.
c. 2010 The "Mirembe Kawomera" Multi-faith coffee Project. Electronic document, <http://kulanu.org/abayudaya/coffee.php>, accessed February 1, 2010.
- Lacey, Marc
2003 600 Ugandans Struggle for Recognition by Israel as Jews. *New York Times International*(February 19, 2003).
- Lambek, Michael
2002 *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers.
- Lewellen, Ted C.,
2002 *The Anthropology of Globalization Cultural Anthropology Enters the 21st Century*. Westport: Bergin & Garvey.
- Lipschutz, Mark R., and R. Kent Rasmussen
1986 *Dictionary of African Historical Biography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Malefijt, Annemarie de Waal,
1968 *Religion and Culture; an Introduction to Anthropology of Religion*.
New York: Macmillan.

- Malkki, Liisa H.
1995 *Purity and Exile : Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mamdani, Mahmood,
1996 *Citizen and Subject : Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Markakis, John
1999 Nationalism and Ethnicity in the Horn of Africa *In* *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Africa : Constructivist Reflections and Contemporary Politics*. Yeros, Paris, ed. Pp. 65-81. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Mathers, Andrew, and Mario Novelli
2007 Researching Resistance to Neoliberal Globalization: Engaged Ethnography as Solidarity and Praxis. *Globalizations* 4(2):229-249.
- McMullen, Ann
2004 Canny About Conflict *In* *Reassessing Revitalization Movements: Perspectives from North America and the Pacific Islands*, Harking Michael, ed. Pp. 261-278. American Anthropological Association. Meeting.
- Meyer, Brigit
2004 Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Pentecostal Charismatic Churches. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33:447-474.
- Musoke, Cyprian
2009 Revisit Presidential Term Limits. Electronic document, <http://www.allafrica.com/stories/20090580233.html>, accessed 2/20/2010, 2010.
- Nederveen Pieterse, Jan
2004 *Globalization and Culture : Global M lange*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Oded, Arye
a. 1974 The Bayudaya of Uganda. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 6(3):167-186.
b. 1974 *Islam in Uganda; Islamization through a Centralized State in Pre-Colonial Africa*. New York: Wiley.
2010 A History of the Abayudaya Jews of Uganda. Electronic document, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Judaism/Uganda1.html>.
- Ofcansky, Thomas P.,
1996 *Uganda : Tarnished Pearl of Africa*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.

- Roscoe, Paul B.
 2004 The Evolution of Revitalization Movements Among the Yangoru Boiken, Papua New Guinea *In Reassessing Revitalization Movements : Perspectives from North America and the Pacific Islands*, Harking Michael, ed. Pp. 162-182. American Anthropological Association. Meeting
- Sanford, Margaret
 1974 Revitalization Movements as Indicators of Completed Acculturation. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16(4).
- Schultz, Kenneth, and Matthew Meyer
 2000 Reunited with our Ancient Faith: Practicing Judaism in Uganda. *Judaism* 49(4):470-436.
- Shandy, Dianna
 2002 Nuer Christians in America. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 15.2:213-221.
- Siikala, Jukka
 2004 The Politics of Voice in the Pacific *In Reassessing Revitalization Movements : Perspectives from North America and the Pacific Islands*, Harking Michael, ed. Pp. 88-103. American Anthropological Association. Meeting.
- Smoooha, Sammy
 2004 Jewish Ethnicity in Israel: Symbolic Or Real? *In Jews in Israel: Contemporary Social and Cultural Patterns*. Chaim Rebhun, ed. Pp. 47-80. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press.
- Tenenbaum, Shelly
 2007 IT'S IN MY GENES: Biological Discourse and Essentialist Views of Identity among Contemporary American Jews. *The Sociological Quarterly* 48:435-450.
- Tomlinson, John,
 1999 *Globalization and Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Twaddle, Michael
 1993 *Kakungulu & the Creation of Uganda, 1868-1928*. London; Nairobi; Athens; Kampala: James Currey ; E.A.E.P ; Ohio University Press ; Fountain Publishers.
- Uganda
- Urry, John
 1990 *The Tourist Gaze : Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*. London; Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

- US Department of State
2010 Background Note: Uganda. Electronic document,
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2963.htm>2010.
- Vokes, Richard
2007 Rethinking the Anthropology of Religious Change: New Perspectives
on Revitalization and Conversion Movements. *Reviews in Anthropology*
36(4):311-333.
- Wallace, Anthony F. C.
1956 Revitalization Movements. *American Anthropologist* 58(2):264-281.
- Ward, Kevin
1998 The Church of Uganda and the Exile of Kabaka Muteesa II, 1953-55.
Journal of Religion in Africa 28(4):411-449.
- Wetzler, Laura
2006 It's a Joy to do this Work. Kulanu,
<http://kulanu.org/abayudaya/wetzler.php>
2007 Lots of Exciting News from Uganda. Kulanu April.
http://kulanu.org/abayudaya/wetzler_report_07.php
2009 Delicious Peace Spreads to Poorest Villages. Kulanu.
<http://kulanu.org/abayudaya/delipeacespreads.php>
- Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia
2010 Uganda. Electronic document, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uganda>
2010.
- Wimmer, Andreas
2008 Elementary Strategies of Ethnic Boundary Making. *Ethnic and Racial
Studies* 31(6):1025-1055.
- Yeros, Paris,
1999 *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Africa : Constructivist Reflections and
Contemporary Politics*. New York: St. Martin's Press.