

## **THE RELIGIOUS-POLITICAL WARS IN BUGANDA (1877-1900)**

### **(The Wanfransa-Wangeleza wars)**

The religious wars were the unhealthy competition, rivalry and mistrust in Buganda kingdom among the Catholics, Protestants, Moslems and traditionalists. These are sometimes referred to as religious confusion/ conflicts at the courtyard / palace of the king.

### **COURSE OF THE RELIGIOUS WARS**

The first missionary group to come to Buganda was the church missionary society (CMS) that arrived at kabaka Mutesa I's palace in 1877 represented by lieut S. Smith and Rev C.T Wilson and later Alexander Mackey who arrived in 1878.

In 1879, father Simon Lourdel and Brother Amans of the Roman catholic missionary society arrived and joined the protestant Church Missionary Society (CMS) at kabaka Muteesa I's palace.

Between 1879-1880 the two Missionary groups started conflicting with each other especially their leaders i.e. Alexander Mackey of the protestant church missionary society(CMS) and father Simon Loudel of the Roman Catholic Society.

In 1884, Kabaka Mutesa I died and he was succeeded by his son Kabaka Mwanga in 1885 who was only 18 years old by then.

In 1885, Bishop Hannington came from the coast and entered Buganda through Busoga a politically sensitive route and as such, he was arrested and executed on 29<sup>th</sup> oct 1885 on orders of kabaka Mwanga.

Joseph Mukasa Balikuddembe who was by then a page at Mwanga's palace criticized Mwanga for killing the Bishop. The king responded by sentencing him to death and he was killed in November 1885.

In June 1886, a massive massacre of Christians took place at Namugongo, the tradition execution site because of disrespecting kabaka Mwanga and disobeying Buganda's traditional culture.

These became the Uganda Martyrs and they were real Christians because they were singing hymns as they were going to be killed, preached to their persecutors and strongly believed in life after death.

These traumatic events i.e. the killing of Bishop Hannington and Uganda martyrs convinced missionaries that they needed protection from their home government to safe guard themselves and the future of Christianity against Mwanga's brutality in Buganda.

In 1887, the three foreign religions, i.e. Catholics, protestants and Muslims imported arms from home countries organizing themselves into military regiments, the “Bapere”.

By 1888, kabaka Mwanga had got scared by their growing might and thus planned to get rid of all foreign religions in Buganda something that provoked a coup against him in April 1888.

kabaka Mwanga in fear of the coup, fled to the catholic post south of lake in Sukuma land in order to safe guard himself.

The united forces of the new religions divided themselves after the running away of Mwanga because they failed to agree on who should take over power.

The Muslims who were powerful in terms of number and arms over powered the Christians who also fled to kabula on the border with Ankole.

The Muslims enthroned Kiwewa as a Muslim king who refused to be circumcised. It is reported that he was killed and he was replaced by Kalema who embraced Islam.

The Muslims therefore adopted an Islamization strategy in which all people in Buganda were forced to join Islam, harassing Christians through imprisoning and killing them, destroying churches and burning Bibles.

Such events against the Christians, compelled the Catholics and protestants to unite and fight against the Muslims as a common enemy. They fought and defeated the Muslims and brought back Mwanga as a king of Buganda in 1890.

The unity between Catholics and Protestants was short lived as the two groups started fighting and quarreling for political offices where many had been given to the Catholics.

The Protestants were helped by Captain Fredrik Lugard to fight the Catholics and this resulted into the Wafransa-Wangeleza wars between 1890-92.

The climax of these wars came on the 24th January 1892 at the battle at Mengo when the two groups conflicted each other and the protestants won the Catholics at the end of the battle.

After one month later, a truce (an agreement) was signed where the Protestants under the Imperial British East African company (IBECA) were recognized as the leaders of Buganda.

After the agreement, the protestants on several occasions convinced the British government to take over Uganda and this came to pass in 1894 when Uganda was declared a British protectorate

In 1897, kabaka Mwanga attempted to regain his independence through a revolt but he was defeated the same year, deposed and exiled to the Seychelles Islands

In 1900 the Buganda agreement was signed and it consolidated British rule over Buganda and established a special relationship between the British and Buganda under a new king Daudi Chwa and his prime minister Sir Apollo Kagwa

### **CAUSES OF THE RELIGIOUS WARS IN BUGANDA (MWANGA'S RESPONSIBILITY)**

To a large extent, Kabaka Mwanga was responsible for the outbreak of the religious wars in Buganda between 1888-1892 as explained below

Kabaka Mwanga was too young and inexperienced to handle well any religious misunderstandings between religions in Buganda the way his father Muteesa 1 had done thus paving way for the religious conflicts in the kingdom.

The kabaka was inconsistent and had no clear religious belonging which also caused conflicts among religions as he presented himself as both a catholic and a protestant thus keeping the two religions in a conflict that eventually resulted into a war.

Mwanga ordered for the killing of Bishop James Hannington in Busoga which annoyed the Missionaries hence the religious wars'.

Mwanga's unethical behavior of being a homosexual also brought a lot of resistance in the Kingdom thus leading to the religious wars.

Mwanga expected guns from the new religious groups. i.e. the Protestants, Catholics and Muslims and when he did not get them, he hated them leading to the religious wars.

Kabaka Mwanga also ordered for the killing of the Uganda martyrs which brought him into conflicts with the Christian Missionaries leading to the religious wars.

Kabaka Mwanga's arrogance and unfriendly relations with the missionaries also contributed to the religious wars in Buganda. He was such a dictator and when the Missionaries opposed him, it resulted into religious wars.

kabaka Mwanga's desire to protect Buganda's independence against being eroded by foreigners and also maintain himself in power provoked him into killing some Christian converts thus sparking a religious conflict in Buganda.

Mwanga's desire to protect Buganda's traditional norms and cultures such as polygamy that were condemned by foreign religions led to the religious wars. This influenced him into mistreating foreign religions which brought him into conflicts with the white Missionaries thus causing the wars.

Kabaka Mwanga ordered for the expulsion of all foreigners from Buganda due to the fears of their continuous influx and possible threats to his powers and the kingdom. This made the foreign religions to combine forces to fight him hence causing the religious wars.

Kabaka Mwanga over listened and believed in the Muslims who told him that the Missionaries were agents of European colonization which made him to fight the Missionaries in a bid to protect Buganda from colonialism thus leading to a religious war.

### **OTHER FACTORS THAT CAUSED RELIGIOUS WARS IN BUGANDA.**

**To a small extent however, there were other factors that contributed to the outbreak of the religious wars in Buganda as shown below.**

The desire for religious denomination to win converts culminated into wars. This caused unhealthy teachings among religions against each other as unreal, unholy and ungodly which eventually caused mistrusts, suspicions and wars among religions in Buganda.

The religious wars in Buganda were also caused by the desire of each and every religious group wanting to win political favors from Kabaka Mwanga. And as a result, they black mailed themselves before the king hence leading to the religious wars.

The religious conflicts were caused because of the traditional hostility of the Muslims towards Christianity. The Arab Muslims in Buganda increased Confusion in the kingdom because they kept on exerting pressure on Mwanga to expel the Christian Missionaries thus causing hostility between the two religions.

The religious wars in Buganda were also influenced by the conservative traditionalists. These criticized Christianity for undermining the African values and culture such as polygamy and idol worship thus influencing the Mwanga to mistreat foreign religions in attempts to preserve and save Buganda's culture.

The religious wars in Buganda were caused due to the misunderstandings between missionary mother countries like Britain and France. These had long-term differences especially over struggles for superiority and colonies which were also transferred by the Christian Missionaries in Buganda thus causing the religious wars

The untimely death of kabaka Muteesa I a mature, experienced and tactical leader in 1884 also caused the religious wars in Buganda inevitable. His death created a political vacuum in Buganda leading to the appointment of Mwanga who could not control and manage religious confusions in Buganda.

The struggle for political powers in Buganda between the Protestants and Catholics led the two religions into criticizing and reporting each other before the king since each of them wanted a

prime minister (katikiro) to come from their side. This caused hatred and misunderstandings between the two hence resulting into a religious war in 1888.

The involvement of Captain Lugard in the political issues of Buganda also increased the tension that eventually ended into a religious war. He for instance gave the 500 guns to the Protestants in 1891 to fight the Catholics hence leading into a religious war.

The Islamization policy in Buganda where the Muslims forced Christians to join Islam by force, destroying churches, imprisoning and killing those who refused to convert to Islam greatly annoyed the missionaries forcing them to fight the Muslims to defend Christianity.

The Arab Muslims in Buganda kingdom fueled the conflicts between kabaka Mwanga and Christian denominations simply because they wanted to create a market for their guns. They for instance reported missionaries before Mwanga as agents of imperialism thus inciting the king to mistreat missionaries which resulted into war.

Buganda's traditional belief that a foreigner from the East would come and take away their independence caused tension leading to the religious wars. This for instance resulted into the murder of Bishop James Hannington on 29<sup>th</sup> Oct 1885 in Busoga hence causing a conflict between the Protestants and kabaka Mwanga.

The religious wars in Buganda were caused by the earlier religious conflicts between the Catholics and Protestants in Europe which were extended to their colonies in Africa. In Europe, the two religions were always in conflicts and these conflicts were extended wherever they went and Buganda was not exceptional.

The killing of the Uganda martyrs between 1885-1886 also contributed to the religious wars in Buganda. This made the Christians more determined to fight the traditionalists to possibly save their lives from further persecutions thus leading to religious conflicts in Buganda kingdom.

The disobedience of the Christian pages in kabaka Mwanga's palace also contributed to the religious wars in Buganda. These for instance refused to serve in palace shrines and denounced to eat the sacrificial meat which threw them into a conflict with Mwanga, who eventually ordered for their murder hence sparking off a conflict with Christian denominations.

kabaka Mwanga's autocratic (dictatorial) behaviors also led to the outbreak of the 1888 religious wars in Buganda. It was there for his cruel characters against the foreigners that forced the missionaries to take up fire arms in self-defense which eventually ended into a religious war.

The religious conflicts in Buganda were caused because of the unhealthy teachings amongst religions in Buganda. These referred and preached against one another as unreal, ungodly and unholy something which caused suspicion, mistrust and eventually led to religious wars in Buganda.

## **THE GENERAL EFFECTS OF THE RELIGIOUS WARS IN BUGANDA**

The wars had both positive and negative effects on the general social, political and economic life of people as shown below.

### **POSITIVE EFFECTS**

The religious wars in Buganda also led to eventual colonization of Uganda simply because missionaries called on their home governments to take over Uganda in order to protect their lives and interest and those of their converts.

The religious conflicts in Buganda finally led to the formation of political parties in Uganda along religious lines. The Uganda People's Congress (UPC) was for the protestants and the Democratic Party (DP) belonged to the Catholics.

The 1888 religious wars in Buganda also resulted into the division and allocation of 20 counties in Buganda on religious grounds with the protestants taking a lion's share of ten counties, eight for the Catholics and two for the Muslims whereas the traditionalists came out empty handed without any county.

The religious wars in Buganda led to the end of absolute and monarchy rule in Buganda by the king because it brought in the use of constitutional leadership after the colonization of Buganda and Uganda in general by the British government thus enabling people to enjoy their fundamental rights.

The religious wars in Buganda greatly popularized Christianity in Buganda as people recognized of its existence in Buganda hence leading to its rapid spread in the religion.

The religious conflicts in Buganda led to massive competition over converts among different foreign religions something that made them provide abundant social services like education and health to Ugandans in order to convert them.

The religious wars in Buganda forced the Catholics and protestants to unite against their common enemies such kabaka Mwanga and the Muslims. This as a result, gave rise to the current ecumenical movement (UJCC) among different Christians groups which has greatly contributed to the spread of Christianity today.

Religious wars greatly degraded Buganda's traditional cultural practices by exposing off the evils caused by some of its cultural practices and believes such as polygamy, pulling among girls and human sacrifices etc. thus consequently saving many Baganda's from the brutalities caused by the practices.

## **NEGATIVE EFFECTS**

The religious wars in Buganda caused family and clan disintegrations and disagreements based on religious denominations as people fell in different religious groups hence destroying the unity that existed in families before the introduction of various religions.

Many people lost their lives during the religious wars in Buganda with over 200 people being estimated to have died during the conflicts thus greatly reducing on the country's general population.

Religious wars in Buganda also led to the massive destruction of properties as they characterized by burning of churches, Christian homes, plantations, Christian literatures like bibles, hymn books, prayer books and basic needs of life such as shelter, food items and clothes among others hence causing misery and suffering.

The religious wars in Buganda led to unnecessary imprisonment of people especially during the Islamization strategy where those who refused to convert into Islam, were imprisoned without trial in a bid to eradicate Christianity in Buganda kingdom.

The religious wars in Buganda also led to general insecurity and anarchy in the kingdom as many people lived into a state of fear. Some people in Buganda were sent into exile and forced to seek for refuge in other areas like Bunyoro, Toro and Ankole in order to safeguard their lives.

The religious conflicts led to division of Buganda on religious lines where two counties were allocated for Muslims, 8 counties were for Catholics and 10 counties were for Protestants something that brought total division and disunity among people in Buganda.

Religious wars in Buganda also led many people into being sent to exile especially during the adoption of the Islamization policy for fears of losing their dear lives. In 1897 Kabaka Mwanga was also sent into exile to Seychelles Island when he attempted to regain Buganda's independence from Britain.

The religious wars led to the spread of foreign cultures in Buganda kingdom and this led to eradication of some traditional practices and cultures such as Polygamy, shrines, worshiping of small gods among others that were strongly condemned as evil practices by foreign religions like Catholicism and Protestantism.

The religious conflicts also interfered with the rapid spread of Christianity in Buganda as many people feared to join Christianity until the wars were over. This was worsened during the adoption of the Islamization strategy where being a Christian was viewed as committing a crime.

Religious wars laid a platform for the loss of Buganda's independence as missionaries called upon their home countries for protection. This eventually led to the colonization of Uganda by

Britain as the Protestants called upon the British government to come and take over Uganda after winning the Catholics in 1892 at the battle of Mengo.

The religious wars in Buganda greatly disorganized Buganda's political and traditional order of monarchism because kings were now being enthroned by the different religious groups. After the overthrow of Mwanga, Kabaka Daudi chwa was appointed after the signing of 1900 Buganda agreement.

The religious wars finally ended with the signing of 1900 Buganda agreement which reduced on the powers of the kabaka and intensified the British control over Buganda kingdom. This resulted into slowing down the spirit of nationalism in Uganda as people were divided on religious lines and greatly disunited.

Religious conflicts in Buganda divided the Ganda society and later Uganda at large along religious lines. This for instance created enmity between the followers of different religions to the extent of killing each other and cutting down each other's crops.

The religious wars in Buganda also reduced on the economic prosperity of Buganda kingdom as agricultural production was reduced as people abandoned their gardens for fears of losing lives. Some farms were also set ablaze and other crops cut down hence causing famine and starvation in some parts of Buganda.

The religious wars resulted into political imbalance in Buganda kingdom. In terms of administration for instance, the protestants benefited more since they were victors in the religious war and as such, the prime minister and most chiefs were appointed from the protestant side.

Religious wars in Buganda led into discrimination in the provision of social services like education and health in Uganda as each denomination built its own schools to attract converts. Kings college Buddo was for instance built for the protestants and St. Mary's college Kisubi for the Catholics something that created unnecessary rivalry and competition among schools.

## **THE EFFECTS OF RELIGIOUS WARS ON THE CHURCH**

The religious wars that broke out in Buganda kingdom affected the church in two ways i.e. positively and negatively as discussed below.

### **POSITIVE EFFECTS**

The religious wars made the church more popular in Buganda and Uganda at large because it directly diverted the attentions of missionaries from other activities towards preaching the gospel of Christianity in order to attain more converts.

The religious wars in Buganda inspired religious competition among the Catholics and protestants which made them to spread the gospel at all times and costs thus leading to the spread and expansion of Christianity in Buganda and Uganda as a country.

The religious wars made Christian converts and evangelists to scatter into different parts of Buganda and Uganda for fears of losing lives and being imprisoned hence leading to spread of gospel wherever they finally settled for refuge.

The religious conflicts in Buganda also produced more aggressive and committed Christian evangelists such as Apollo Kivebulaya who were inspired to spread the gospel of Christianity under all forms of mistreatments hence contributing to the rapid growth of the church in Buganda.

The religious wars in Buganda produced Uganda martyrs who out of their heroic actions attracted many people to join Christianity. The martyrdom further confirmed that Christianity had actually taken deeper routes in Buganda in spite of the existence of other religions hence wining the church more financial support from Europe.

Religious wars in Buganda ended kabaka Mwanga's persecution and hostility towards Christians simply because he tasted their bitter side a factor that gave missionaries an opportunity to spread the gospel of Christianity in Buganda without any more fears from the king.

The religious wars led to the division of Buganda's counties on religious grounds. This eased tension and gave each religious group an opportunity to concentrate in preaching the gospel in its locality thus promoting the spread of the church in Buganda kingdom.

The religious wars in Buganda also brought a short term unity and co-operation between the Catholics and protestants against the Muslims more especially during the implementation of the islamazation policy which also favored the spread of Christianity in the region.

The wars led to the British control over Buganda something that led to the recognition of the church as the state religion hence favoring its spread

The religious wars ended with the final defeat and overthrow of Islamic religion out of Buganda kingdom a factor that left Christianity as the only dominant religion in the region with no competitor hence favoring its rapid spread and growth.

The religious wars led to the British final takeover of Uganda in 1894 as Buganda was declared a British protectorate. This as a result, enabled the Christian missionaries to attain enough security from the British government that enabled the spread of the gospel in Buganda without interference.

Religious wars in Buganda attracted more Christian missionaries to come to Buganda to support their colleagues in evangelical struggles hence attracting more manpower that helped towards the spread of Christianity in Buganda and Uganda in general.

The religious wars in Buganda enabled the Christian missionaries to easily attract enough financial support from their home government to aid the struggle in Buganda. This money was in turn used to put up schools and churches that enabled the church in Buganda and Uganda to grow.

## **NEGATIVE EFFECT**

The religious wars in Buganda led to massive death of Christians more especially during the implementation of the Islamization strategy where many Christians were murdered by Muslims hence reducing the church congregation.

The wars scared away many potential Christian converts from joining the church for fear to lose their lives simply because joining Christianity, was equated to committing suicide in Buganda under the leadership of Kabaka Mwanga and hence hindered the expansion of Christianity in the kingdom.

The religious conflicts brought instability/ insecurity that scared many Christian teachers from moving from one place to another to spread Christianity for fear of losing their dear lives hence hindering the spread of the church in the region.

During the course of the wars, some Christian followers were imprisoned by the Muslims specifically during the Islamization policy a factor that greatly threatened many people from joining the church in Buganda.

The Islamization strategy forced very many people to go into exile for fear of losing their dear lives and hence this reduced the number of Christians in the region thus hindering church expansion.

The religious wars portrayed the missionaries as people fighting against the Kiganda traditional culture something which annoyed the conservative and rigid Baganda thus stopping many of them from joining Christianity.

The religious wars also revealed the missionaries as colonial agents as it was mostly catalyzed by the Arab Muslims a factor which also scared many people in Buganda and Uganda from joining Christianity hence hindering its growth.

The religious wars favored the spread of Islam in Buganda especially when Kalema was enthroned as a Muslim king something that greatly hindered the progress of the church in Buganda because all church activities were illegalized and stopped in the kingdom by then.

The religious wars also resulted into massive destruction of church property such as Holy Bibles and church structures which were burnt by the Muslims during the implementation of the Islamization policy in Buganda kingdom.

The religious wars in Buganda scared some Christian missionaries in Europe from coming into Buganda to assist their fellow missionaries in spreading Christianity for fear of losing their lives and personal belongings. This thus denied the church enough manpower for growth and expansion in Buganda kingdom.

Religious wars in Buganda made the Christian missionaries to concentrate on conflicts and wars rather than their major objective of preaching the gospel of Christ a factor that indirectly undermined the expansion of Christianity in Buganda and Uganda as a whole.

The religious wars delayed the spread of Christianity in Buganda and Uganda because of the hatred and mistrust that occurred between the Catholics and protestants as they could not come together to spread Christianity in Buganda and other parts of Uganda.

Religious wars in Buganda gave every bad image to the Christian missionaries and Christianity as a whole. This is because Christianity in Buganda and Uganda came to be perceived as a religion with political motives other than spiritual motives thus undermining its spread and growth in the region.

The religious wars in Buganda made Christian missionaries to spend a lot of money to purchase and import fighting weapons from abroad to fight against Kabaka Mwanga and Islam. This as a result, caused the church to undergo into financial constraints that greatly deterred the growth and expansion of Christianity in the region.

## **STUDY QUESTIONS:**

1. Assess/examine the impact of religious wars in Buganda and Uganda at large
2. Assess the impact of the religious wars on the spread of the church in East Africa.
3. How did the religious wars hinder the expansion of the church in East Africa?
4. How did the religious wars contribute to the expansion of the church?
5. To what extent did the religious wars contribute to the spread of Christianity in East Africa?
6. Describe the course of the religious wars in Buganda between 1877-1900.
7. account for the W'Fransa and Wingeleza wars in Uganda.