

COMMENTARY

Introduction

It was never my intention to do any more detailed research about Kigezi. However, I was tempted to sample some of the archives listed in the *Kigezi Mountain Mosaic* (KMM) bibliography to see what they had to offer. These were limited to Church Missionary Society (CMS) archives, University of Birmingham and White Fathers (WF) archive, Rome.

So this is not a second edition but a series of notes, synopses and scans of material from the two archives; a bibliographical addendum; and a few essays. Essays written (2014) before this research have separate links; the essay below was written after (May 2015). For more detailed research on which most of the opinions are based see *Kigezi Mountain Mosaic*.

The impact of European conquest and colonisation on African society was profound. The cultural and technological gap was such that it caused major cultural rifts as its people sought to adapt to an alien over-lordship and its re-arrangement of society's traditional ideologies, belief systems, networks and infrastructures. This essay focuses on the impact of invasion, colonialism, religion and education and some of their consequences up to independence in the Kigezi Mountains.

Historical Background, a Synopsis

Historically the general Virunga mountain area can be divided into three regions, South, Central and North. An east-west chain of volcanoes divides south from central, these are active at the DRC western end, and Kayonza (Bwindi) Forest divides central from north.

The independent chieftainships of the southern section were conquered by Rwandan monarchs with ever greater control from the early 1800s and were absorbed into the Rwandan kingdom. These clans maintained their spirit of independence, which is why Muhumusa was so popular in northern Rwanda when she sought allies in the post-Rwabugiri succession struggle. She was less successful further north where many clans wanted nothing to do with Rwandans at all, mostly among the recent migrant Basigi clans who had a long period of conflict with Rwandan monarchs.

Rwanda, in 1910, included Bafumbira; it had been intermittently under its control from the 18th century. Successful conquest and control was based on an alliance with the Virunga-based Batwa who had a long military association with the Rwandan monarchy. Their rebellion under Basebye may be also seen as establishing a negotiating position to deal from a position of strength with Musinga's family. The reason that Bafumbira ended up in the Uganda Protectorate rather than German-controlled Rwanda has all to do with pre-WWI European politics.

The central section of Rubanda, Rukiga and the northern half of Ndorwa became the core of colonial Kigezi with Kabale as district capital. Prior to conquest it had become increasingly unstable due to a combination of factors. These included Rwandan king Rwabugiri's three late 19th century invasions, civil war over his succession, 19th century migration of southern defeated clan elites the south who displaced traditional land-holders creating a domino effect of eviction and resettlement, the rise of the warlords Basebye, Muhumusa and Katuregye,

rinderpest, man-eating predators and the severe famines of 1895 and 1905 that lasted three years each.

The northern section comprised of the stable independent chieftainships of Kinkiizi and Kayonza, though they came under increasing pressure from the 1880s due to instability in the south, incursions from the Belgian east, and power struggles with Rujumbura and Ankole. They were absorbed into Kigezi colonial district and became its largely ignored periphery.

Rujumbura (now Rukungiri) was rarely part of mountain polity; it was more associated with Ankole, though the 18th century kingdom of Mpororo had control of most of the central region for a short period of time. The only reason that it became part of Kigezi district was because its officials made the initial contact followed by Mbarara district's refusal to take it due to budgetary limitations.

Political Impact

The overall cumulative effect of these disasters and setbacks in the central region was, by the first decade of the twentieth century, the destruction of traditional clan networks, Rubanda, Rukiga, Ndorwa and others, which resulted in a set of independent clans based in easily defensible valleys.

The pressure of scarce resources elevated aggression between clans with each defending their enclaves. Traditional rain-maker chiefs were shunted aside and replaced by military leaders. Networks of chiefs and court officers, drawn from allied clans, and tribute negotiations were replaced by raiding; every clan for itself.

In this rough and tumble of clan competition, some had more success than others; the Bakongwe warlord, Katuregye, may have conquered as many as 40 clans by 1910, judging by the number of wives he had.

One of the many consequences in areas with high clan enmity, where it was against social custom to marry within ones clan, unmarried women from another clan were kidnapped while working alone in some distant field, with subsequent negotiations on bride-price through neutral third parties.

Any meetings between clans to conduct some necessary business or social function involved short truces to prevent conflict and death; often only married women could travel between clans without fear of attack. For men blood brotherhood pacts were the only effective way of surviving away from one's home territory.

This was very different to the adjacent lowlands, mostly pastoral, kingdoms which had established royalties backed by an elite group of princes, military officers, administrators and civil servants ruling kingdoms with systems of governance and tax collection. Also common was social stratification between the rulers and agricultural farmers who were often treated as second class citizens or serfs.

This led early colonial officials and missionaries to describe the highland polity as 'anarchy'. It took them twenty years to incorporate mountain clans into the colonial 'protectorate' by

eliminating all military, political and religious resistance to the conquest. By contrast, lowland kingdoms were easy; basically the systems of government were annexed, tweaked and reapplied in cooperation with the 'progressive' men from the conquered regime, sometimes with the assistance of Baganda Christians when local chiefs were deemed 'unsuitable'.

The one positive result of the conquest on highland society was that inter-clan hostility, aggression and enmity faded and mostly disappeared though some rivalries remain. Clan identities subsumed over time into the new colonially-created 'tribal' identities, the Bakiga, Bafumbira and Batwa.

But what of the people who had to endure the political and social chaos of the 1850-1910s followed by conquest and colonisation? It is fair to say that society was physiologically fragile as a result of the cumulative insecurity on land and food caused by warfare, famine and disease up to 1920s. On to this, the imposition of a new colonial order and religion created a fractured society dislocated from their traditional culture and beliefs.

Politically, adaptation took a couple of generations. Leaders divided into resisters and supporters and, due to superior military force, resisters were defeated. Passive resistance continued in isolated valleys along the borders with fiercely independent clans who were ground down through imprisonment, for non-payment of tax, and cattle confiscations. By the 1930s the colonial political system was part of life – as was grumbling about it.

Religious Impact

It was the impact of the invader's Christian religions that had the deeper consequences. Overlooked is the fundamental difference between traditional religion and Christianity, whether God is transcendental or immanent. It is difficult now to reconstruct how this deep-seated shift in a person's knowledge of and relationship with God affected them.

It is reasonable to assume that it added to the psychological insecurities and doubts that they already had. For many it was a tipping point to conversion, for others a more dramatic tipping point was to come with the emergence of the Balakole movement in the mid 1930s.

It was hopelessly naive of the early missionaries to believe that with baptism and bible lessons they could eradicate a culture, thousands of years old, in the hearts and minds of people. But this they did; they so firmly believed in their innate superiority, doubt was never a part of the character of English leaders, that the effect they were having on people was never considered.

This was more an issue among the mono-cultural Protestant English missionaries, represented by the Church Missionary Society and its offshoot the Ruanda Mission, compared to the multi-cultural European Roman Catholics, represented by the French Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers).

The White Fathers were far more in tune with traditional sensibilities of Africans and explored these in many writings on histories and cultures. Père Joseph Nicolet, for instance, wrote 34 unpublished articles (in French) on these topics, mostly covering western Uganda. The first written description of Kigezi and its people (in French) was by Père Henri Le Veux,

c. 1910, though there is an earlier account of an expedition by Père Felix Dufays in 1903 when they met Muhumusa and had a confrontation with the 'Banyandorwa'. Père Felix Geraud wrote the first definitive accounts (in English) of the history, culture and religion of pre-colonial Kigezi clans in the 1960s and 1970s.

By contrast the Protestants attempted to suppress all things African that was tainted in any way with 'paganism'. In this they were supported by district officials for whom Nyabingi represented rebellion, since most resisters espoused Nyabingi. Any association with Nyabingi therefore became illegal, a criminal offence. There was, however, a certain amount of double-think among officials as the *emandwa* were seen as 'good witchdoctors' and the *bagirwa* as 'bad witchdoctors'.

Many parish chiefs were *emandwa*; that is how they became chiefs – by having prestige within their clan. So long as they kept quiet about it, divested all Nyabingi associations (there were many crossovers) and fulfilled their duties they were acceptable to district officials. In practice *emandwa*, who accepted English rule when it arrived, became chiefs while the *bagirwa*, who survived their wars against the English, got minimum six months imprisonment and were often forcibly exiled, if captured.

But the Nyabingi bagirwa was not a secret society. They were many hereditary families and solo individuals across the mountains that practiced a wide variety of fertility beliefs and rituals. Only some became involved with resistance to invasion and imperialist religious ideologies, whether Rwandan Ryangombe or English Christianity. The fact that a Nyabingi cell could exist in Bwama leprosy settlement in 1951 is evidence of a much deeper non-political relationship with the goddess (which quietly exists underground to the present day).

The Protestant repression of traditional cultural life led to the repression of emotional life. The loss of festivals, celebrations, drums, dance and natural joy coupled with an unforgiving dry religion preaching hell and damnation led to the loss of certainty and confusion as an intrinsic part of natural cultural life suddenly became satanic. Ruanda Mission leaders also introduced Christian millenarianism, which further added to the mix. People were set adrift of familiar roots and cast into a psychological alien unknown, individually and as communities.

Balakole – The East African Revival

By the mid-1930s the dam that held back African natural character and mode of life burst. The tipping point was a teacher in Gahini confessing publicly to having stolen some items from the school. This revelation triggered an outpouring of emotionally charged fervour among staff and students which rapidly spread like wildfire to Kabale and beyond.

This wave of fervour sent large numbers of people (including some traditionalists and Catholics) into altered states of normality. Millenarianism philosophy was realised; the end of the world and Last Judgement were believed to be nigh. Abandoning everything many fled to mountain tops to await an apocalyptic Armageddon.

While there was genuine spiritual experience, much behaviour was based on mass hysteria similar to other millenarian cults and movements throughout Christian history. The main

difference being that Africans had no previous cultural Christian roots; for them this was something completely new for which they were totally unprepared.

Everyone was unprepared, district officers, chiefs and missionaries alike. All were concerned at the breakdown of law, order, respect for authority and rejection of social mores and customs.

Protest and disruption primarily came from the young, 16-25 year olds who, with the end of the world around the corner, felt free to reject all authority, clan and colonial. Parish chiefs, who had been traditionally raised but converted and elevated to their position, were very annoyed to find groups of teenagers outside their door publicly berating them for their sins. Their attempts to shut them up, including imprisonment and caning, usually failed.

English officials, though never directly harassed, were in a quandary. On one side these rebels were typical of the activities of youth rejecting authority and could have been treated as such but for the fact that they were of the same religion and were not actually breaking the law by demanding that people repent, be without sin and be born again. However, officials were fearful of the consequences of their 'anarchy' and, despairing of the missionaries' efforts to stay in control, passed laws attempting to repress the worst excesses with mixed success.

That they were radical in their beliefs is not unexpected. It is often the case that converts, regardless of religion, feel the need to prove their genuineness and be more extreme in their beliefs and practice of rituals as compared to those who have been converted for generations and feel no need to aggressively assert their religion.

Some historians have linked Nyabingi and Balakole in that both rejected authority. However the origins and dynamics of both were very different; hardened Nyabingi-inspired warriors fighting a guerrilla war against the English had little in common with obstreperous teenagers and young adults disrespecting their leaders and elders.

Another aspect to this rejection of authority was the rejection of the traditional conservative mores and tribal law that treated women as second-class clan members; they sought equality as implied by Protestant teachings. In doing so they rejected the duties that were expected of them as servants to men. This obviously did not go down too well with clan elders who resisted this attack on their rights and privileges.

The perfunctory rejection of this criticism by young people who couldn't care less what old people said, thought they knew everything and were having too much fun (perhaps that's not the right word) berating their betters led to some excellent rejoinders' such as these definitions of the Balakole, i.e., *Tinfayo* (I'm not bothered), *Bafaki* (Don't worry about me) and *Binkwatiireki* (I'm not concerned about anything).

Over time the youths got older and lost their fiery nature as they took on the responsibilities of adulthood. While those who had had genuine spiritual experiences never lost their intensity of belief; in general, society absorbed the social and religious revolution and settled down into a new quieter state of normalcy. The better educated among them became civil servants, teachers or officials in the Ruanda Mission and became part of the mainstream. It was not until the 1970s, under the inspired leadership of Festo Kivengere, that a more mature revival spirit was reawakened.

In the beginning, missionaries were taken totally by surprise and, individually and as a group, they attempted to control the movement. Their attempts were akin to trying to tame a bucking bronco. They first had to overcome their feelings of superiority and treat African as equals; this many did successfully, Dr. Joe Church being a leading example.

Others, however, were more cautious due to the direction of the movement, which came from the perceived relative importance of religious experience versus biblical knowledge. This later led to controversies and power struggles within the Ruanda Mission between the African and English. A brief look at the careers of the three missionaries most associated with Kigezi highlights this point.

Constance Hornby, whose main focus was female education in Kigezi rather than the aims of the Ruanda Mission, had little time for the Balakole and refused involvement. She never had problems over this; such was her formidable status and reputation, nobody messed with Constance Hornby.

Dr. Stanley Smith lived for ten years in Kabale (before the Balakole eruption), went to Rwanda and Burundi, and then lived in Mbarara where he was involved in the work that he is most remembered by, a new translation of the Bible in Rukiga and Runkole.

He was thus somewhat uninvolved in local controversies except in 1944 when he threatened to resign as Secretary of the Ruanda Mission over the direction Balakole enthusiasts were taking. This brought a dose of reality among the wiser of them and a split was averted.

Dr. Len Sharp, who had spent ten years in Burundi, was generally very critical of the abandonment of the biblical knowledge in favour of personal religious experience. After the above incident he wrote, "they practice tyranny or domination over the consciousness, thoughts and opinions; there is no real freedom only conformity and subjugation".

And, notwithstanding his contribution to Kigezi he attracted antipathy and was harassed during his second period there until, due to his wife's illness worsened by the virulent negativity, they moved to Mombasa. The only time he returned was to assist his son, John, in the foundation of Kisiizi hospital. The residual hostility continued and was probably a major factor in him not being honoured by the Kigezi District Council's Brotherhood awards given to Hornby, Stanley Smith and four others in 1964.

(In the last thirty years the increase of independent Born Again churches and leaders reflects the severance of organisational ties with the worldwide Anglican Communion and the development of Native African Churches. Now anyone can become a Born Again leader and found a church, analogous to the pre-colonial period when anybody could become a Nyabingi *mugirwa*; in both cases they had/have to prove they had/have the power.)

Roman Catholicism

A difficulty of Kigezi religious history during the colonial period is the different approaches the Protestant and Catholic clergy had to their missions. The Protestants wrote in great detail about themselves, what they were doing and their achievements to an English audience who supported them with donations. The Catholics wrote little about themselves but were pioneers in the recording of African history and culture. (An idiosyncrasy is that P. with a

surname as author usually stands for Père, they often didn't give their baptismal name.) They reported to Rome and felt little need to record or publicize their activities. For extra funding, priests tended to work through their birth parish's charitable networks.

Being celibate, their correspondence was more likely to be private within the priesthood and immediate families. They had multiple unconnected origins from around Europe in comparison with the CMS who were, and still are, based on strong family networks often with several generations involved in missionary work; intermarriage between them was, and probably still is, common.

Any history is therefore inevitably skewed. Apart from the 1973 booklet celebrating 50 years since the foundation of Kabale Diocese, there has been little published material on Kigezi's Catholic history. A further barrier to mono-lingual English-speaking historians is that the core language of the White Fathers is French.

(Native English-speaking Catholics mostly joined the St. Joseph's Missionary Society, Mill Hill Missionaries, though there was overlap in their catchment areas as both attracted priests from Flanders, Netherlands and the Tyrol. They arrived in 1895 at the invitation of the English Government who wanted an 'English' order to stabilize the situation among Catholics after the Kabaka power struggle. In practice, however, the White Fathers ministered west of Kampala and the Mill Hill Fathers to the east as far as Nairobi.)

The Balakole movement did not affect the Catholic population to anywhere the same extent though there was some collateral damage with the harassment of Catholic chiefs, officials and priests. The White Fathers' hierarchical structure and methods of religious education combined with a greater affinity and empathy for African culture led to a more seamless, less damaging, transition. Similarities between traditional and Catholic organisation and hierarchies provided psychological continuities.

(The Kanungu tragedy, 2000, was not of their making. Though the cult leaders were originally Catholics with roots in the Legion of Mary; they subsequently left the Church and absorbed Protestant millenarianism ideology, which ultimately led to the deaths of c. 600 men, women and children.)

A useful source of research into Kigezi Catholicism is the *Notices Nécrologiques* which gives obituaries (in French) of its clergy. Two synopses and extracts are given as example from the very beginning and near the end of their mission in Kigezi.

Père Joseph Nicolet, 1884-1954. He was born in France, ordained in 1906 and sent to Mbarara until 1911 and thence to Kigezi. He then spent nine years in Ibanda, Kenya, 1911-21, when he returned to Kigezi. In 1946 he returned home but spent much time in the Vatican, acting as an adviser. He also collected his unpublished essays to which he added a few more for the Missionary of Africa's archive. In 1950 he returned to Mbarara, where he died on Feast of the Baganda Martyrs. His time in Kigezi is best covered in Kabale Diocese's 1973 commemorative booklet.

“Si le chroniqueur parle à propos du Le Père Nicolet de son brin d'originalité et des ses vaste connaissances, qu'il n'oublie pas de dire combien il était zélé, travailleur, dévoué, affable, généraux, loyal, homme de Dieu, homme de règle, vrai Père Blanc et de grand support mutuel.” (*Notices Nécrologiques*, xxxviii, 1954-56)

Père Felix Geraud, 1927-2011. As a youth he lived in Algeria, Spain, Switzerland, Tunisia and Morocco while his father was a prisoner of war. In 1944 he did military service and became sous-lieutenant. On completion, 1950, he entered the priesthood and was ordained in 1957. Sent first to Mbarara; he then served in various parishes, Kitabi, Nyakibale, (1957), Bukinda (1962), Nyarushanje (1965) and Rwengire (1989), some twice with parish responsibility overlap. In 1994 he returned to Mbarara until 2007 when he retired back to France. In 1965 he spent a year in Toulouse, France, where he wrote the first drafts of his history of the Bakiga. The Missionary Society of Africa's archive has a 2008 interview (in French) with photos of his time in Kigezi.

“Les chrétiens refusent de traverser ces cours d'eau bordes de papyrus pour venir prier le dimanche (1967). Avec l'aide du Secours catholique, le marécage est drainé, sa population de singes s'enfuit et les partager 70ha de jardins, 60 sac de sorgho de la première récolte viennent remercier le cure, et l'on se met à construire une église principale.

Deux fois en sept ans, L'Ouganda connaît les souffrances des conflits politiques, En 1977 Amin Dada, obsédé par le complot, ordonne de tuer secrètement tous les fonctionnaires de la tribu Acholi. Un jour, Felix, va visiter un paroissien, chef de la police à Kabale. Cet homme, quand il le voit, monte dans une voiture et lui ordonne de l'emmener le plus loin possible: il refuse de tuer des agents de police sous cet ordre.

Plus tard – peut-être à cause de cela – lors d'un voyage au district, des amis avisent Félix, qu'on va barrer la route pour l'arrêter. De fait. Sortant vite du district, il est poursuivi par un Land Rover qui, heureusement, tombe et pause d'essence : il reste tout de même une année sans retourner à Kabale et aménage une issue de secours dans la maison, au cas où. ”
(Notices Nécrologiques, xxxviii, 2010-11.)

Literacy, Education and Gender

It is somewhat easier to compare their approaches to the introduction of literacy and education. The first literates to arrive in the Lake Victoria region were Islamic Swahili traders for whom literacy was purely for commercial trading; missionary work was a secondary consideration and what education existed was primarily for Muslims in their mosques' madrassas. Outside of Kampala it is unlikely that there were any schools before the arrival of the English.

For Christian missionaries literacy was one of the most important tools of conversion. Both Catholics and Protestants had the policy of learning local languages, giving them an orthography, and then printing Bibles and related religious material. The vast majority of early local language publications were related to religion. (It is interesting to speculate how these publications differ from a linguistic perspective given that the Protestants were monolingual English while the Catholics were at least tri-lingual Latin, French, English and often others, i.e. Dutch and German.)

There were differences in approach. The White Father's strategy focused on converting clan chiefs and elders, reasoning that, if successful, then everyone else would naturally follow their leaders. This tried and trusted technique has its roots in the early medieval conversion of Europe. Once the religion of the Baganda leaders was established they further sought to identify the most suitable candidates, regardless of origin, for the future native priesthood.

Protestants were more egalitarian in their approach in that one's role in society was irrelevant. The fact that the Protectorate's officers and Baganda monarchy were also Protestants was an added incentive for chiefs considering conversion, though government officials sought balance between all religions, including the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains and Parsis that migrated or were imported from their Asian colonies as civil servants; generally they didn't religiously discriminate.

The other major difference was the paths to conversion. The White Fathers taught literacy so that the aspiring convert could learn the catechism off by heart during a four year preparation period that included lengthy residential periods with the White Fathers. Only then would the catechist be baptised. The initial structure was later adapted to accommodate the needs of students who also had to earn livelihoods and pay taxes.

Out of this system came the Catechumenate; many of these laymen then became trailblazers in the introduction of Catholicism to far-flung districts; they were unconcerned about social origins and led by example. Yohana Kitegana is Kigezi's prime example; he built on the work of Yohana Ssebalijja, the district's first African administrator, also a Catholic.

The priest was the arbiter and mediator of religion to his congregation. This was a familiar role to the mountain clans for whom the *emandwa* and *mugirwa* had served the same function as mediators with the spirit world. The priest became the Christian *emandwa*, which gave a continuity of religious observance and devotion assisted by the Legion of Mary that provided a substitute for Nyabingi.

CMS missionaries on the other hand taught literacy so that candidate could read the Bible on their own aided by supporting texts, hymnals and other literature. There is a wonderful 1930s photo (reproduced in KMM) of village women in hide clothes, each with a tablet, learning how to read and write. Much of the credit for early female education in Kigezi belongs to Constance Hornby who trekked all over Kigezi for many years on this mission.

Missionaries insisted on biblical understanding as a foundation for any religious experience – to be born again, which led to the East African Revival and it was conflicts over interpretation that led to later controversies within the CMS; both covered above.

As the Uganda Protectorate stabilised, the government began to develop secular educational policies and grant-aided schools, teachers and supplies. All schools in Uganda were run by religious personnel, or their employees, with no overlap of students between them. They had to introduce government-approved curricula on secular subjects to be eligible for grants. Over time government standards got higher which brought reform to outlying areas.

Kigezi District officials had a high opinion of the education provided by the White Fathers around the district, though they would have preferred some more 'suitable' subjects, appropriate to local government. Vocational training and craft-making were an important part of the curriculum.

CMS schools in Kabale had an excellent reputation given the direct involvement of senior missionaries. But officials were scathing about the CMS schools dotted around the valleys. They were hastily built, prone to fall down, and led by barely literate men with a smattering of religious knowledge who were more interested in farming the associated plot ground using their luckless students as slave labour.

By 1950 the situation had improved and a reasonable quality of education was available to most. The process was aided by the growing number of native teachers coming through Teacher Training colleges, also run along religious lines.

Looking at the broader picture of the overall impact of literacy in Kigezi (like much of sub-Saharan Africa) the question can be asked: What opportunities did a pre-colonial African have? The answer is very little.

The vast majority farmed, kept livestock, hunted, fished and gathered, supplemented by a few basic crafts, or some combination thereof. A small percentage was born into ruling elites and led a life of power and privilege. Another tiny minority were the spirit world mediators, *emandwa* and *mugirwa* in Rukiga and their equivalents elsewhere, who were either born into or had a solo vocation for their calling.

The introduction of literacy gave a whole new set of possibilities from which women benefited more than men. For the average mountain farming man women were chattels; they were bought in marriage, farmed the fields, bred and raised children, and were required to be totally subservient to their husband – their lord and master. Of course it wasn't always like that in practice; subservience was sometimes only a public ritual.

The answer that Constance Hornby got from one elder when she asked him why she hadn't seen his daughters at school: "Would you send a cow to school? Would you send a cow to church?" is typical of attitudes of the time.

In terms of rights, one advantage women had over cows was that they couldn't be sold or bartered, though they could be inherited by a brother-in-law if her husband predeceased her. None could dispossess her of her home and land (a right now seriously compromised by modern day law and its practice). Meanwhile the complications of divorce were such that it was very rare.

Overall, the potential careers open to an African now as compared to 150 years ago has increased markedly with women also freeing themselves from many of the shackles of traditional culture. That these potentials are often unrealised is a debate belonging to today.

Religion and Politics – Catholic versus Protestant

Religion became inseparably entwined with politics during the power struggle of the three claimants (Catholic, Muslim and Protestant) to be Baganda Kabaka, 1894-7. The Protestant faction, who won, was supported by Frederick Lugard, Military Administrator of Uganda for the British East Africa Company with the assistance of a large cache of arms 'lent' to him by Charles Stokes, Irish ex-CMS missionary turned arms for ivory trader. The trade was illegal in the colonies so a convenient fiction was found to turn a blind eye in exchange for a loan of the guns and ammunition.

One of the consequences of victory for the Protestant faction was that it introduced a new divider into political life: religion, starting in Kampala and spreading to the rest of Uganda. In Kigezi inter-clan rivalry, which was declining as Bakiga and Bafumbira identities took root, was replaced by inter-religious rivalry.

This became significant when power was transferred to elected Africans prior to independence; rivalry went through periods of intensity when emotions ran high and occasionally descended into petty violence, akin to what was happening in the rest of Uganda where political parties were religiously based with the same consequences.

In a pre-independence election the UPC and DP, Catholic and Protestant parties, actively campaigned in churches to gain support. Animosity grew in the run up to the extent that the District Commissioner invited religious leaders to come together to cool it down. However the Protestants refused to come as they didn't see the point. Catholics wrote that this was a period of mass Protestant baptisms that they described as 'indiscriminate' and purely for the purpose of building a vote bank.

In the colonial period the relationship between the two missions in Kigezi was non-existent; instead there was strong competition for converts and land for churches and schools. The district officials who had the responsibility for allocating land found it a bit of a headache; firstly they had to cope with trying to rationalise grants made by earlier officials and often ended up as referees in inter-religious land and rights disputes. It wasn't until the 1960s that the two religions negotiated a treaty that formalised their relationship by ensuring that all new foundations would be a minimum distance from each other.

In one instance this lack of communication was possibly counter-productive in the treatment of leprosy. In Buluba, and Nyenga, Baganda, there were two leprosy centres founded by Mama Kevin, 1875-1957 (originally Teresa Kearney, Ireland; her contribution to Uganda medicine and education merits a good biography). One would have thought, and it would be standard nowadays, for information sharing on the best methods of treatment and rehabilitation.

In all the writings by Ruanda Mission staff there are few references to their religious neighbours with the odd exception, converts who tried Catholicism but became Protestant and complaints about preference shown to Catholic missions in Belgian-controlled Ruanda. It is not yet known what the White Fathers wrote privately to their superiors as that has yet to be researched.

One example is indicative. In 1932 King Albert of Belgium made a surprise visit to Kigezi with a few days notice to allow district officials time to organise hospitality, set up welcoming committees and invite dignitaries to receptions in Kisoro. He visited Mutolere Mission and Bwama Island Leprosy settlement, but neither the Catholics nor Protestants mentioned the other in their descriptions of his respective visits.

It wasn't until much later that they started to acknowledge each other's existence. Ecumenical initiatives inspired by Vatican II, such as the Windsor Statement on the Eucharist, began to have a positive impact. The Christian Rural Service, founded 1962, included Catholics in village development initiatives by the 1970s. By then it was accepted that most had converted and respect and tolerance began to be shown for personal choices.

The Kabale Diocese commemorative booklet, 1973, is forthright. They devote several pages to 'The Scandal of Christianity' detailing, from their point of view, some of the issues that divided them such as CMS pressure on parish chiefs, the allocation of mission plots going back to the early 1920s and interventions by District Commissioners. In another section they describe how one of Yohana Kitegana's catechists, Paulo Muhimba, was falsely charged when

he refused to convert; he was released by the District Commissioner when Kitegana explained the background to him.

They go on to laud their shared Christian heritage and add “But in the minds of simple folk, it must be made clear that what divides us is not something having to do with politics. With all the injustices and hurts registered in the hearts of many, this will be hard to root out”.

They thus argue for committed Christians to actively bring about reconciliation between the two faiths. They thought it good that Catholics were involved on both sides of the *Banyama* versus *Baboga* controversy as it showed that religion was no longer a political determinant.

Concluding Thoughts

Was life better under colonial rule? Many older people who remember those times and have survived post-independence dictatorship, civil war and political insecurity, believe so; much to the horror of modern African leaders striving to improve their country, they see it as a rejection of independence, national identity, modernity and social progress.

Perhaps the nostalgia of fond memories of peace and prosperity, law and order and days of sun-filled youth has been coloured by time but they are genuine none the less and rightly critique the failings and losses of modern day life.

Colonisation brought a peace to Kigezi’s troubled land that lasted for near 50 years, a peace that brought new possibilities, security and prosperity to a grateful people. Unfortunately the cost was high, the loss of a culture with a 2,000 year history, eradicated in a few generations.

Political events after independence brought a second period of cultural dislocation and loss, particularly during the Idi Amin dictatorship. The nascent scholarship of the first generation of Kigezi scholars that flowered in the 1970s was almost wiped out, leaving many 21st century Banyakigezi, as with many other Ugandans, with little knowledge of their historical and cultural roots, estranged by time, geography and loss of memory.

While scattered oral memories can fill in some gaps they will undoubtedly be coloured by colonialism and Christianity whereas the lack of a collection programme means that as the older generations pass on their knowledge will be lost forever. Kigezi’s rich past will soon be only known from museum artefacts, photos and the writings of strangers.

Finis