

WHITE FATHERS, ISLAM AND KISWAHILI IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY UGANDA

Viera PAWLIKOVÁ-VILHANOVÁ

Institute of Oriental and African Studies, Slovak Academy of Sciences,
Klemensova 19, 813 64 Bratislava, Slovakia

Though present on the East African coast for nearly a thousand years, Islam only began its expansion into the interior in the nineteenth century. One of the most significant areas of Islamic penetration in East and Central Africa was the Kingdom of Buganda, where Islam predated the arrival of Christianity by several decades and secured a strong foothold. Buganda was won to Christianity amidst much turmoil and bitter struggle between the adherents of Islam and of two forms of Christianity, represented by the Anglican Church Missionary Society and Roman Catholic White Fathers, for the dominant position in the kingdom. Despite severe defeats suffered in Buganda in the late 1880s and throughout the 1890s Islam recovered and survived as a minority religion. However, the latent fear of Islam influenced the language policy and ruined the prospects of Kiswahili in Uganda.

“I have, indeed, undermined Islamism so much here that Mtesa has determined henceforth, until he is better informed, to observe the Christian Sabbath as well as the Muslim Sabbath...” boasted the famous traveller Henry Morton Stanley when describing his visit to the Kingdom of Buganda in April 1875.¹

Though present on the East African coast for nearly a thousand years, Islam only began its expansion into the interior in the nineteenth century.² One of the most significant areas of Islamic penetration in East and Central Africa was the

¹ Stanley, H.M.: *Through the Dark Continent*. London, London, George Newness, 1899, vol. I, p. 164.

² Alpers, Edward A. 1972. Towards a History of the Expansion of Islam in East Africa: the Matrilineal Peoples of the Southern Interior. In: Ranger, T. O. – Kimambo, I. N. (Eds): *The Historical Study of African Religion*. Berkeley – Los Angeles, University of California Press, 182 pp. Cairns, H. Alan C. 1965. *Prelude to Imperialism. British Reactions to Central African Society 1840-1890*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp. 132-139. Also Bennett, Norman R. 1968. The Arab Impact. and Alpers, Edward A. The Nineteenth Century: Prelude to Colonialism. Both in: Ogot, B.A. (Ed.): *Zamani. A Survey of East African History*. Nairobi, E.A.P.H. – Longman Kenya 1968 and 1973, pp. 210-228 and 229-248. Constantin,

Lacustrine area, namely the kingdom of Buganda, where Islam secured a strong foothold. At the time of Stanley's visit in 1875 the initial process of Islamization in Buganda reached a climax, Islam's position was strong and after the arrival of Christianity in the country became its formidable rival.³

According to all available sources, Islam came to be known in Buganda under Kabaka Mutesa's father Suna several decades before the arrival of Europeans. Although there were indirect commercial contacts between the Kingdom of Buganda and the East African coast long before Kabaka Suna's reign, there are no indications of Islamic influence at that period. Islam was brought into the kingdom of Buganda by Arab and Swahili traders who arrived in the Kingdom of Karagwe in the second quarter of the nineteenth century via the southern, i.e. Bagamoyo – Tabora – Karagwe – Buganda route and during the reign of Kabaka Suna also visited Buganda. From the available sources it is impossible to ascertain the exact date of the arrival of the first Arab and Swahili traders in the kingdom.⁴ However, most of the sources consulted testify that the pre-existing commerce with the south, dating from the end of the eighteenth century, stimulated Zanzibari traders to open up their sphere of interests as far as Buganda by roughly the 1840s. Kabaka of Buganda Suna, who ruled at that time, attempted to cultivate his commercial relations with the Arab and Swahili traders coming from Tabora. The northern part of present-day Uganda, the Bunyoro and Acholi-Lango area, had contact with Islam from the north since perhaps as early as 1850, but Islamic impact on Buganda from the Sudan and Egypt was limited. Zanzibar and the East coast were the main centres of Islamic influence. The Kingdom of Bunyoro, which enjoyed the major share of the iron trade around the shores of the Lake Kyoga, experienced a notable revival under Mukama Kamurasi and was trading not just with the Zanzibaris to the south, but (unlike Buganda) with the Khartoumers as well. Ivory and slaves were the main items of export, and among the imports there was a steadily rising hunger for guns, eagerly demanded not only by ivory hunters but also by the rulers and their chiefs.

As on the coast in the past, Islam in the interior of East and Central Africa tended to spread slowly and gradually. A combination of spiritual and secular

François 1991. *Communautés musulmanes et pouvoir politique en Afrique orientale (XIXe-XXe siècle)*. In: *Histoire de l'Afrique de l'Est (XIXe – XXe siècle)*. Actes du Colloque de Bujumbura (17-24 octobre 1989). Paris, Éditions Karthala, pp. 103-116.

³ Vilhanová-Pawliková, Viera: *Crescent or Cross? Islam and Christian Missions in Nineteenth-Century East and Central Africa*. In: Ulrich van der Heyden – Jürgen Becher (Hrsg.): *Mission und Gewalt. Der Umgang christlicher Missionen mit Gewalt und die Ausbreitung des Christentums in Afrika und Asien in der Zeit von 1792 bis 1818/19*. Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag 2000, pp. 79-95.

⁴ Gray, Sir John M.: *Sheik Ahmed bin Ibrahim, the first Arab to reach Buganda*. In: *The Uganda Journal*, Vol. XI, No.1, 1947, pp. 80-97. According to Oded, Gray's claim that Ahmed bin Ibrahim reached Buganda in 1844 is supported by insubstantial evidence. See Oded, Arye: *Islam in Uganda. Islamization through a Centralized State in Pre-Colonial Africa*. Jerusalem, Israel Universities Press, 1974.

factors and material influences expressed in the introduction of many innovations and new skills played a vital role in the spread of Islam in Buganda and incidentally prepared the ground for later missionary activities and the advance of Christianity. The coastal influence was most visible in the use of cloth which was rapidly replacing barkcloth, the adoption of the gown or garments and many other goods, in cultivating some vegetables, fruits and crops, wheat and rice, in building square houses and in introducing new skills and crafts. Though Muslim religious ideas had an impact on Africans, Islam was initially attracting new adherents mainly by the attractions of Islamic culture and civilization.⁵ Reading and writing was no doubt one of the most important skills introduced by the Arab and Swahili traders who propagated their religion especially in the cases when through proselytization and by conversion of an influential chief or ruler, in our case the Kabaka of Buganda, they could increase their trade. An important aspect in the process of Islamization during this early period was the attitude of toleration and the spirit of compromise and flexibility assumed by Muslim traders who placed modest demands on new adherents to Islam. Islam was propagated by ordinary adherents, Arab and Swahili traders present in Buganda, not Muslim scholars, and allowed gradations in knowledge and practice.⁶ Islam reached Buganda from two different corners, an accommodating version of Islam was first introduced into Buganda by Kiswahili-speaking merchants from the East African coast, later on, in the 1870s, a stricter version of Islam was brought by Sudanese teachers from Khartoum.⁷ The alterations of life habits demanded by the first version of Islam were not radical (the only exception being circumcision), Islam was accommodating to African traditions and culture, but the advantages acquired by the African Muslims were considerable. These features, coupled with Islam's permission for polygamy, have been often claimed in explaining the expansion and diffusion of Islam in Africa. Adherence

⁵ Kasozi, Abdu B.: *The Spread of Islam in Uganda*. Nairobi, Oxford University Press in Association with the Islamic African Centre, Khartoum 1986, pp. 13-32.

⁶ Apart from the already quoted sources, such as Oded, Arye. 1974. *Islam in Uganda, Part One*, pp. 1-142. Kasozi, Abdu B. 1986. *The Spread of Islam in Uganda*, The Penetration of Islam into Buganda 1844 to 1875, pp. 13-32, see Kasozi, A.B.: *The Spread of Islam in Uganda*. polyc. 1970, 45 pp., map. W.F.A., P 200/14. King, Noel – Kasozi, Abdu – Oded, Arye 1973. *Islam and the Confluence of Religions in Uganda 1840-1966*. Tallahassee, Florida, American Academy of Religion. Constantin, François: *L'islam en Ouganda*. In: Prunier, Gérard – Calas, Bernard (Eds.): *L'Ouganda contemporain*. Paris, Karthala – Nairobi, IFRA 1994, pp. 209-220.

⁷ Twaddle, Michael: Kakungulu & the Creation of Uganda 1868-1928. London, James Currey – Nairobi, E.A.E.P. – Athens, Ohio University Press – Kampala, Fountain Publishers 1993, pp. 23-24. According to Twaddle, "This brought division among Ganda Muslims, when one northern *shaykh* sharply criticized mosques which were built facing westwards. When this stricter type of Islamic teaching also took root among palace pages, it brought the first known persecution of Muslim personnel for following their religion in Buganda." Ibid., p. 24. Cf. with Katumba, A. – Welbourn, F.B.: Muslim Martyrs of Buganda. In: Uganda Journal 28, 1964, pp. 151-63, Mukasa, Ham: Simuda Nyuma. London 1938, pp. 18-23.

to Islam was expressed mainly by observing some basic rituals, adopting some external symbols and outer forms of worship, and by imitating Muslim traders' manners and customs. Basic outward forms of worship and exterior manifestations of the cult, such as daily prayers, the fast of Ramadan and the consumption of lawful meat, had, however, to be observed.⁸ The process of Islamization of Buganda gained momentum during the reign of Kabaka Suna's son Mutesa who encouraged trade with Zanzibar, especially after 1866. At about the same time he decided to adopt Islam (even though he refused to be circumcised), and continued to observe Ramadan for over ten years. Mutesa also learnt to read and write Arabic and Swahili, adopted Arab dress and manners, started to read the Qu'ran and maintained diplomatic relations with the Sultan of Zanzibar. He was especially fond of Arabic poetry and could converse fluently in Arabic with European visitors, Charles Chaillé-Long in 1874, Emin Pasha in 1876 or the C.M.S. missionaries Felkin and O'Flaherty. A by-product of the presence of Kiswahili-speaking coastal merchants in Buganda was the diffusion of Kiswahili and literacy. Literacy enhanced the popularity of Islam. Some of the pages, chiefs and dignitaries at court became interested in the teachings of Islam and learnt to read and write. During the 1870s knowledge of the Arabic script and of the Arabic and Swahili languages spread among the court élite. Literacy was inextricably connected with Islam and Christianity, both religions of the Book, because it enabled converts to read their Holy Books, the Qu'ran and the Bible. The concept of reading okusoma became a synonym for the adoption of the new religions of Islam and later Christianity. The converts were called "readers". The court became Islamized, mosques were built by chiefs and a number of future Christian converts who were young pages at this time, adopted Islam. Between 1867 and 1875, the impact of Islamization began to be felt not only at the court but in the countryside as well. For a time Islam was proclaimed the state religion of Buganda and Islamic observance made compulsory throughout the kingdom.⁹

The history of the introduction of Christianity and Islam into Uganda has been described in books and articles too numerous to be mentioned here. The origins of the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Uganda date in Uganda from almost exactly the same time. The Church Missionary Society mission decided to open a station in Buganda in response to an alleged invitation of missionaries by Kabaka Mutesa expressed in Stanley's famous letter published in the Daily Telegraph on 15 November 1875, in which he eulogized the Kingdom of Buganda as a most hopeful field for missionary endeavour. As a consequence, the first two missionaries of the Church Missionary Society arrived on 30 June 1877, but due to a number of misfortunes and difficulties the work of

⁸ Oded, Arye: *Islam in Uganda, Part One*, pp. 1-142, op. cit. and Kasozi, Abdu B.: *The Spread of Islam in Uganda*, op. cit.

⁹ Ibid., also see Vilhanová-Pawliková, Viera: *Crescent or Cross? Islam and Christian Missions in Nineteenth-Century East and Central Africa*, op. cit.

evangelization did not actually begin until the arrival in February 1879 of the second party of the C.M.S. to be followed in only one week by the famous Father Lourdel and Brother Damas of the White Fathers' Society, a new Roman Catholic missionary institute founded in 1868 in Algiers by Cardinal Lavigerie. The aim of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa or White Fathers was at first to maintain a non-proselytizing presence in Muslim countries, and this was reflected in the Muslim dress which the members of this missionary order still wear and from which their nickname White Fathers derives, but soon the principal object of Cardinal Lavigerie's zeal became an apostolate in Africa south of the Sahara. Lavigerie was intrigued by the schemes of King Leopold of Belgium and his International African Association for the exploration and civilization of Central Africa and worked out his own detailed plans for a Central African mission.¹⁰ Towards the close of the 1860s philanthropic attention switched from the trans-Atlantic slave trade to the atrocious situation in East and Central Africa and the slave trade on the East African coast so vividly described by European travellers, especially by David Livingstone. Livingstone's writings revealed to the nineteenth century Britain the cruelties and brutalities of the East African slave trade, Lavigerie's Anti-slavery campaign aroused the consciousness of the rest of Europe. His Secret Memorandum on the evangelization of Equatorial Africa, dated 2 January 1878 and addressed to Pope Pius IX, contained his ideas on how to organize Catholic missions in Central Africa: by creating four new missions, promoting the transformation of Africa by the Africans, training a plentiful number of auxiliaries, particularly of doctor-catechists and, last but not least, fighting against slavery and the slave trade, which was in the hands of Kiswahili-speaking merchants from the East African coast. "Hoisting the flag of the abolition of African slavery by the Cross, in the name of the Church" became Lavigerie's slogan when seeking the means of launching a crusade against East African slavery and the slave trade. On 24 February 1878, the decree of Propaganda entrusting the organization of missions in sub-Saharan Africa to Archbishop Lavigerie was ratified by the new Pope, Leo XIII and Lavigerie promptly organized the first caravan of ten missionaries to Equatorial Africa.¹¹

¹⁰ Vilhanová-Pawliková, Viera: White Fathers Archives as Sources for Reconstruction of Ugandan History. In: Ulrich van der Heyden – Heike Liebau (Hrsg.): *Missionsgeschichte – Kirchengeschichte – Weltgeschichte. Christliche Missionen im Kontext nationaler Entwicklungen in Afrika, Asien und Ozeanien*. Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag 1996, pp. 177-189, also see Mercui, J. M.: *Les origines de la Société des Missionnaires d'Afrique (Pères Blancs)*. Algiers, Maison Carrée 1929, Bouniol, J. (Ed.): *The White Fathers and their Missions*. London, Sands 1929. One year later, in 1869 Lavigerie founded the White Sisters. See Sr. Marie-André du Sacré-Cœur: *Histoire des Origines de la Congrégation des Sœurs Missionnaires de Notre-Dame d'Afrique*. Kouba (Algiers), 1946. Lavigerie, Charles Martial (1825-1892) was appointed Archbishop of Algiers in January 1867 and Cardinal in 1882. For his life see: Lamey, R. X.: *Cardinal Lavigerie. Selection of Articles*. Rome, Missionari d'Africa, Archives, Historical Department 1970. 223 pp.

¹¹ Lamey, R.X.: Cardinal Lavigerie, op. cit.

It is commonly maintained that Christianity achieved in Buganda one of its most rapid conquests and helped Buganda into its position as the nation most favoured by the British administrators. The Baganda no doubt proved to be eminently responsive to Christian teaching at a later date, but there is enough evidence to prove that the beginnings were rather disappointing and the great expectations of both Anglican and Roman Catholic missionaries were not met during the first years of the missionary presence in Buganda. "Comme tous les voyageurs qui ont visité l'Ouganda, nous avons été trompés par l'apparence de civilisation du roi et des grands du royaume, et surtout par le grand désir qu'ils assuraient avoir de connaître et d'embrasser notre religion," complained Father Livinhac in a letter of 20th January 1880. "Il nous a fallu plusieurs mois pour connaître les vraies dispositions des gens qui nous entourent... Nous avons été trompés par les récits de Stanley, et trompés aussi, tout le long de la route, par les nègres et les Arabes à qui nous demandions des renseignements..."¹²

Initially the Christian message aroused interest at Buganda's court and made some impact. During the first half of 1879 relations between the Kabaka and the missionaries seemed friendly and their letters sent to the headquarters sounded very optimistic. Kabaka Mutesa was at that time anxious to widen his country's diplomatic, political and commercial contacts. Impressed by Stanley's visit, he was keen to welcome white men with their technological superiority in the hope that they would help him to understand the wider world that was increasingly impinging upon him and his country and get him the much desired military and technical assets associated with the European culture. Soon, however, the bitter hostility and rivalry between the representatives of the two Christian denominations present at his court, the Anglican and Roman Catholic, thwarted Mutesa's enthusiasm. Kabaka started to waver in his attitude towards Christianity, Islam and his ancestors' religion and missionaries in their despatches started to sound rather pessimistic about the prospects of Christianity ever making headway in Buganda. "Le roi et les grands qui paraissaient si bien disposés à notre arrivée, se montrent maintenant très indifférents," complained Livinhac in a letter to Lavigerie.¹³ The missionaries were at first coveted for their goods and their technical abilities. "Ce qu'il veut," Father Livinhac wrote to Cardinal Lavigerie describing Mutesa's policy, "il ne cesse de le dire, ce sont des fusils et des munitions, pour pouvoir aller se procurer chez les voisins, femmes, enfants et troupeaux. Si les blancs étaient réellement ses amis, ils lui donneraient des armes. S'ils ne lui en donnent pas c'est parce qu'ils ne veulent pas qu'il soit grand. Ils veulent le laisser avec ses lances, pour pouvoir s'emparer plus facilement du

¹² Livinhac to Superior General, 20 January 1880, *Chronique de la Société des Missionnaires d'Afrique*, No.84, I. de 1879-1885. Also Livinhac à Lavigerie, White Fathers Archives (W.F.A.), Rome, C13-9, C13-15, C13-17, C13-22, C13-27 etc. covering the years 1879-1882. For the opinions of the Protestant Missionaries see respective entries in the C.M.S. Archives, G3/A6, e.g. O'Flaherty to Wigram, Dec.1881, C.M.S. A., G3/A6/01, "Mutesa is as far from Christianity as ever...there is little chance of doing good here".

¹³ Livinhac à Lavigerie, 22 January 1880. W.F.A., C13-9.

pays.”¹⁴ The missionaries were compelled to adapt to the fact that the Kabaka of Buganda had to be treated with respect, his permission had to be asked and no one could march recklessly through the territory of Buganda. “Nous sommes peu connus, au loin surtout, et il nous est impossible de faire des voyages, même des promenades pour nous faire connaître; quand on voit un blanc se promener en dehors de Roubaga, on ne doute plus qu’il ne soit venu uniquement dans dessin d’étudier le pays pour pouvoir le manger plus facilement.”¹⁵

Dissensions between the two Christian denominations present at Mutesa’s court, Protestant and Roman Catholic, which had started immediately after their arrival in the country and later led to serious political and armed conflicts, hostile relations of the representatives of the two forms of Christianity, their mutual recriminations and insinuations and their adverse attitude to Islam soon revealed to the Kabaka that to adopt one of them would be unpolitic. The missionaries’ letters and journals suggest that the mutual suspicions and hostility between the two branches of Christianity were as strong as between Christian missionaries and Muslims, which no doubt undermined Mutesa’s appreciation of Christianity and strengthened the position of Islam.¹⁶ After a short initial enthusiasm for Christianity Mutesa gradually came to the conclusion that the presence of missionaries was unprofitable and already by December 1879 abandoned Christianity for the Kiganda religion and Islam. Towards the year 1880 the presence of missionaries at the court was no longer regarded as an asset.¹⁷

Despite royal disfavour, Mutesa’s inclination to Islam and a rather troubled and insecure situation in Buganda, religious instruction commenced by the C.M.S. and White Fathers’ missions in 1879 continued because the missionaries of both denominations were allowed to teach. Public debates and quarrels at the royal court between Roman Catholic and Anglican missionaries over doctrinal differences were closely followed by Baganda pages and dignitaries and as a consequence both Christian missions managed to gain groups of followers. To get converts, the White Fathers started with self-supporting orphanages for children ransomed from slavery. Thus the first group to receive a religious instruction were former slaves, mostly children who had been presented to them as their attendants or who had been bought free by the Fathers and then gathered in

¹⁴ Livinhac à Lavigerie, 11 April 1880, W.F.A., C13-15.

¹⁵ Livinhac to Lavigerie, 28 August 1880, W.F.A., C13-22. See also Livinhac to Lavigerie, 19 August 1879, W.F.A., C13-303.

¹⁶ The C.M.S. missionaries in Buganda prevailed on Mutesa not to let the Catholic missionaries enter the country. Mackay was a bitter enemy of Roman Catholicism. See *A.M. Mackay – Pioneer Missionary of the Church Missionary Society to Uganda*, by his Sister. London, Hodder and Stoughton 1898, pp. 118, 116-136. For the hostility of the Protestant mission see also Wilson to Wright, 11 March 1879. C.M.S. Archives, CA 6/025. Cf. with Nicq, A.: *La Vie du Vénérable Père Siméon Lourdel*. Algiers, Maison Carré 1906, pp. 135-142.

¹⁷ It is difficult to give a meaningful selection of references, but for the first years of the missionary presence in Buganda, the White Fathers’s evaluation of the situation in the country, their disappointment and attitude to Islam, there are many letters in W.F.A., C13.

the "orphanage". Christianity in Buganda was initially a slaves' religion and some of the first Christian adherents and converts executed by Kabaka Mwanga in 1885-6 were slaves.¹⁸ This tiny nucleus of White Fathers' and C.M.S. adherents was soon enlarged by free Baganda who became interested in their teachings, and the number of inquirers from among the palace pages, dignitaries and artisans continued to swell. From the very start the teaching of literacy was a particular concern of both the C.M.S. and White Fathers missions. The efforts of both missions met with an enthusiastic response. Though each group of missionaries advised their adherents not to consort with followers of the other mission, according to Luganda sources adherents of the C.M.S. mission, in the White Fathers' jargon "heretics", continued to visit Lourdel and other "Papists" and vice versa.¹⁹ Early missionaries in Uganda left vivid accounts of Baganda "readers" drifting from one mission station, one set of instruction to another, often frequenting both mission stations as well as the Zanzibari camp at Lunguja, and of Baganda lads sitting on the hay-covered floor in the royal palace reading or scribbling on boards or any scrap of paper they could pick up and, lacking paper, sometimes even practising with a stick or just their own fingers in the dust of the royal courtyard.²⁰ During this early period of the missionary presence in the Kingdom of Buganda Islam remained a formidable rival to Christianity. The Kabaka's shift to Islam caused grave regret and embarrassment both to the CMS and the White Fathers. In November 1882 the latter reacted to the tense situation in the country, opposition from Mutesa and the insecurity of the Christian position by a temporary evacuation of their mission. They went south of the lake where the station of Notre Dame de Kamoga, Bukumbi, was founded and returned only after Mutesa's death and his son Mwanga's accession to the throne two years later. By the time the White Fathers left the country, the first baptisms had taken place and though by the time of Mutesa's death in October 1884 Christianity still did not enjoy a position comparable with that of Islam, Christian teachings attracted an ever increasing number of inquirers and converts.²¹

¹⁸ Twaddle, Michael: *The Ending of Slavery in Buganda*. In: Miers, Suzanne and Roberts, Richard (Eds): *The End of Slavery in Africa*. Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press 1988, pp. 119-149, esp. p. 124, "Simply to get followers and converts initially, both the CMS and the White Fathers purchased slaves in Buganda. The CMS mostly used them as personal retainers, whereas the White Fathers bought them to start an orphanage and also used them as house servants. These were the first Christian converts. Christianity was thus initially a slaves' religion in Buganda – because slaves "redeemed" by missionaries were regarded by local people as falling into the category of "those bought," or "abagule."

¹⁹ *A.M. Mackay* by his Sister. London 1890, pp. 116-136; Nicq, A.: *La Vie du Vénérable Père Siméon Lourdel*. Algiers 1906, pp. 135-142.

²⁰ Pawliková, Viera: *Sir Apolo Kagga and the Origins of Luganda Literature*. In: *Asian and African Studies* XI, 1975, pp. 197-203.

²¹ On 27 March 1880 Lourdel baptized four converts and four more on 14 May. Cardinal Lavignerie's instructions, received on 1 June 1880, which allowed no baptisms, except in case of dying, without a four year catechumenate, slowed down the work of evangelization. Lavi-

As soon as the White Fathers in their station south of the lake heard of Kabaka Mutesa's death, they decided to return as soon as possible to Buganda, since Mutesa's son and successor, Mwanga, was thought to be favourable to a missionary presence.

*Il s'est toujours très bien montré à notre égard et sera selon toutes les apparences favorable aux blancs... Il avait plusieurs de ses gens qu'il envoyait chez nous pour avoir instruire, et quelques uns de nos catéchumenes ou néophytes étaient toujours avec lui. Il connaît parfaitement nos intentions. Il est donc urgent de rentrer au plus tôt dans Buganda, si l'on veut profiter de ses bonnes dispositions actuelles qui, peut-être, pourront changer vite sous l'influence des Arabes.*²²

Baganda Muslim sources claim that Mutesa died a Muslim, which is, however, not corroborated by other sources. Catholic writers agree with the Muslim claim that at the time of his death Mutesa inclined to Islam. "Mtésa! Le pauvre Mtésa est mort, le Coran sur la poitrine, aveuglé de plus en plus depuis notre départ par les Wanganas musulmans avec qui il se plaisait à s'entretenir," wrote Lourdel to his Superior.²³

Mutesa's successor, his son Mwanga, was at the time of his accession considered to be a perfectly acceptable kabaka. He was a very good friend of young men who had been instructed either at the C.M.S or the White Fathers, he shared their background and was thought to be more favourable to the missionary presence in Buganda than his father. History, however, took a different course and historians of Mwanga's reign have judged him rather harshly.²⁴

The first twenty years of missionary presence in Buganda was a rather troubled and insecure period. The twists and turns of the first four years of Mwanga's rule led in 1885 and 1886 to the persecutions of Christian "readers" and catechumens during which about a hundred of them were murdered and culmi-

gerie, *Instructions aux Missionnaires*, Nantes, Editions Grands Lacs 1950, pp. 109-110. In April and May 1882 they baptized eight more Baganda. At about the same time the C.M.S. missionaries made their first baptisms, the first five Protestant Baganda were baptized on 18 March 1882. The Catholic mission survived the White Fathers' absence. When they returned to Buganda in July 1885, Lourdel estimated the number of néophytes to be two hundred, seven hundred catéchumenes and forty children ransomed from slavery. See *Chronique trimestrielle*, No. 31, July 1886.

²² Lourdel to Superior, 1 December 1884, W.F.A., C 14-48. The departure of the White Fathers from Buganda was considered by Lavigerie ill-founded. He expressed his opinion quite clearly in a letter to Livinhac of August 1885 in which he spoke of "cette mission si malheureusement interrompue par de vaines terreurs". Lavigerie to Livinhac, August 1885. *Instructions aux Missionnaires*, op. cit., p. 216.

²³ Lourdel to Superior, 1 December 1884. *Chronique trimestrielle* No. 26, April 1885, also O'Flaherty to Wigram, 18 November 1884, C.M.S.A., G3/A6/02, Mackay. By his Sister, op. cit., pp. 186-187, Mukasa, Hamu. *Simudda Nyuma*, op. cit., I., p. 91. For Muslim sources see Sekimwanya, Sheikh Haji A.M. 1947. *Ebyafayo Ebitonotono Kudini Ye Kiyisiramu Okuyingira mu Buganda* (A Short History of Islam). Kampala, Baganda C.S. Press, p. 5.

²⁴ Pawliková, Viera: Kabaka Mwanga and Early Anti-Colonial Protest in Buganda. In: *Asian and African Studies* XIV, 1978, pp. 89-118.

nated in 1888 in the open confrontation between the kabaka and the adherents of the two Christian denominations and Islam. Muslims with their numerical preponderance over Christians during the coup of 1888 played a decisive role in the religious wars of 1888-90. According to White Fathers sources, Catholics refused to take part in the overthrow of Mwanga, but promised not to render him any support.²⁵ The overthrow and expulsion of Mwanga by the allied Christian and Muslim forces was a quick business, but within a month the alliance between Christian and Muslim chiefs was broken, Muslims became the sole masters of Buganda, and a Muslim Kabaka Kalema was placed on the throne. The Christian converts with the missionaries were driven from the country.²⁶

At the time of their exile the Christian grouping as opposed to the Muslims was a relatively undifferentiated one.²⁷ The situation changed after the successful campaign to reconquer Buganda from the Muslims. In February 1890 the joint forces of Christian refugees crushed the Muslim faction, Kalema with remnants of his army fled to Bunyoro and Mwanga re-entered his capital in triumph. The victorious Christian chiefs placed Mwanga on his throne and painstakingly divided all the offices of state evenly between Protestants and Catholics. Despite their victory over the Muslims, the situation in the country remained tricky for the two victorious Christian factions. Each of them was striving to gain sole control of the political system and the Muslim faction, though temporarily beaten, was still dangerously hovering on the Buganda-Bunyoro border.

Historical research has covered the events of the last decade of the nineteenth century in the present-day Uganda in the greatest detail. It was a very dramatic period, full of wars and atrocities. As it happened, Buganda was to be won to Christianity amidst much turmoil and bitter struggle between the adherents of the two forms of Christianity and Islam for the dominant position in the kingdom. December 1890 saw the arrival in Buganda of the representative of the Imperial British East Africa Company, Captain (later Lord) Lugard, who was charged with the task to establish the Company's administration in Buganda, conclude a treaty with its ruler and thus prepare the ground for the British Government one day to take over. Lugard managed to conclude a treaty with the

²⁵ L'Ouganda et les Agissements de la Compagnie Anglaise "East Africa". Paris, A la Procure des Missions d'Afrique 1892, p.5.

²⁶ When Mwanga's successor Mutebi or Kiwewa was discovered plotting against the Muslims and refused to be circumcised, they replaced him by a more submissive Kalema who became a Muslim after being enthroned, was circumcised and given the Arabic name of Nuhu. Kasozi, Abdu B. 1986. *The Spread of Islam in Uganda*, op. cit., pp. 39-55. See also Gray, Sir John. 1950. *The Year of the Three Kings of Buganda - Mwanga, Kiwewa, Kalema, 1888-1889: The Uganda Journal*, XIV, No. 1, pp. 15-53. Kiwanuka, Semakula, 1971. *A History of Buganda. From the Foundation of the Kingdom to 1900*. London, Longman, pp. 192-219.

²⁷ Twaddle, Michael: *Kakungulu & the Creation of Uganda, 1868-1928*. London, James Currey - Nairobi, E.A.P.H. - Athens, Ohio University Press - Kampala, Fountain Publishers 1993, p. 36. Cf. with *The Life of Ham Mukasa...* In: Mullins, J.D.: *The Wonderful Story of Uganda*. London 1904, p. 197 and Zimbe, B.M.: *Buganda ne Kabaka*. Mengo 1939, p. 146.

most reluctant Kabaka Mwanga and as soon as his position in the country was strengthened on the 31st of January 1891 by the arrival of reinforcements, Captain Williams as his 2nd in command with 75 Sudanese, 100 Swahilis and a second Maxim gun, he felt confident to set out on an expedition to punish the Baganda Muslims, who were constantly raiding the northern border of Buganda as well as their ally Omukama Kabarega without even considering the possibility of negotiating with them first. The expedition proved to be a great success. Lugard waged war against the Muslims, who were concentrated on the northern borders of Buganda and defeated them in May 1891, but in 1892 he signed an agreement with the Muslims and recognized Prince Nuhu Mbogo, Mutesa's brother and a son of Suna as their leader. Later he used the Muslim faction as an important political card in his negotiations with two rival Christian factions to the extent that he even threatened to put a Muslim Kabaka on the throne. Lugard's intervention in the Battle of Mengo of 1892 ensured that the numerically fewer Protestants gained the chief place in the administration of the kingdom. Ever since religion came to play a major role in Buganda politics. The British policy of bolstering the Protestant faction heightened the incipient divisions between the two Christian factions and continued to divide them. It was at this time that the society in Buganda came to be classified, in descending order of importance, into Protestant, Catholic and Muslim. It is significant that during the civil war of 1892 and in the years to come the chiefs of the Catholic faction supported Mwanga and formed the backbone of the resistance movement, while those belonging to the Protestant faction became enthusiastic supporters of the British. Lugard's successor Captain J.R. McDonald was less generous to the Muslims. He defeated them in 1893 and severely punished them. They lost two of the three counties allotted to them by Lugard and their leaders were exiled.²⁸

The power of the Muslims was crushed, but the latent fear of Islam in missionary circles was not. The Muslim influence in this region of Africa was seen by the White Fathers in the light of the general fear of the "Muslim threat".

Quand comprendra-t-on en Europe le mal que font les musulmans en Afrique? On n'a pas songer à abolir la traite des nègres tant qu'on laissera les arabes dans l'intérieur. Les Européens n'ont pas d'ennemis plus acharnés et plus opposés à la civilisation, à leur commerce et à leur religion... Leur succès

²⁸ Documentation on the events of 1892 in Buganda in the W.F. archives is very rich, C 15 16-84, C 15 85-167 Troubles de l'Ouganda, also Casiers E 11- F 15, E 20 Guerre de l'Ouganda: copies et travaux. Père J.M. (Mercui). 1893. *L'Ouganda. La Mission Catholique et Les Agents de la Compagnie Anglaise*. Paris. A la Procure des Missions d'Afrique. *L'Ouganda et Les Agissements de la Compagnie Anglaise "East-Africa"*. Paris. A la Procure des Missions d'Afrique, 1892. No name, probably by Père Mesnage. In the subsequent settlement Buddu was declared a Catholic county. The first Catholic mission was established at Villa Maria by Mgr. Streicher. Pawliková, Viera: Kabaka Mwanga and Early Anti-Colonial Protest in Buganda. In: *Asian and African Studies*, IV, 1978, pp. 89-118, Vilhanová-Pawliková, Viera: *History of Anti-Colonial Resistance and Protest in the Kingdoms of Buganda and Bunyoro 1862-1899*. Prague, Oriental Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences 1988, pp. 95-176, 222-291.

dans le Bouganda va les exalter encore davantage et je ne serais pas étonné qu'ils ne parviennent à chasser tous les Européens de ces pays, wrote Lourdel to Superior General in April 1889.²⁹ White Fathers had no illusions as to the threat which the Arabs, Swahilis and Islam posed to their missionary prospects. In their eyes Islam constituted a barrier to their work, to the introduction of Christianity, Christian values and Western civilization and to real progress. Convinced that paganism in Africa must yield either to Christianity or Islam, they tried to do everything in their power to counteract the influence and expansion of Islam. The struggle between Islam and Christianity was a prominent feature of nineteenth-century missionary thought. Secular Europeans might idly debate the suitability of Islam for the Africans, but the White Fathers and the C.M.S. missionaries alike viewed this religion as their major antagonist for the spiritual control of Buganda and of East and Central Africa. Since their arrival in Buganda, the chief aim of the missionaries of both denominations was to eradicate Islam and replace it with Christianity, but of necessity they themselves as well as early colonial administrators and officials brought with them groups of Muslims from the coast as interpreters, servants, artisans, masons, carpenters or gardeners and thus helped the spread of Islam in the country. They also depended on the Muslim traders for transport of people, goods, provisions and letters between Lake Victoria and the coast and had to make use of their services.

The White Fathers' attitude to Islam continued to be hostile even after the arrival of the Imperial British East Africa Company and the establishment of the British administration when the position of the Muslim faction was seriously shattered by the victory of the Christian Baganda. Many activities and official policies of the British administrators, especially Lugard, towards Baganda Catholics and Baganda Muslims were bitterly criticized. Mgr Hirth voiced his anxiety over the position of the Muslim party in a letter to Mgr Livinhac written from Mukotany, Kiziba, on 15 June 1892: "...les agents européens négociaient le retour des musulmans dans le pays. Depuis deux ans, ceux-ci, toujours battus et découragés, avaient beaucoup perdu de leur prestige; ils commençaient même à se disperser dans les pays environnants, ou ils vivent ignorés, sans plus faire de propagande. Le moment a été jugé favorable pour les jeter dans la mêlée ... A ces ennemis implacable de toute civilisation, on donne l'administration de trois belles provinces de l'Ouganda, tandis que les catholiques, cinq fois plus nombreux, ont à peine une province pour eux." Lugard's decision to bring Muslim Baganda back to Buganda and to give them some place to settle down, was considered by White Fathers a step towards the war, a return to Islamism and slavery. To quote from their diaries: "...ce n'est certes pas la paix que nous a amenée le capitaine Lugard en chassant les catholiques et en appelant les musulmans à leur place," wrote Père Brard in March 1892, .. "c'est introduire la guerre civile dans le pays at favoriser l'esclavage", ... "amener tout ce monde dans le Bouganda et les pays voisins, c'est les vouer à islamisme et vouloir en

²⁹ Lourdel to Superior General, 11 November 1888: *Chronique trimestrielle*, No. 42, Avril 1889.

chasser le christianism.” While Catholicism could have stopped the spread of Islam, due to the presence of Protestantism and the partiality, “une grande prédilection pour l’élément musulman”, of Lugard and other agents of the IBEA Company, this religion “repren[d] vie par ici”, wrote Mgr Hirth to Mgr Livinhac on 27 December 1891. In a letter to Livinhac of 15 June 1892 Hirth elaborated this idea: “....l’histoire des missions nous montre que ce n’est pas l’habitude des ministres hérétiques d’entamer la conversion des musulmans, – car ils ne s’attaquent à l’islamisme que là où le missionnaire catholique a déjà ouvert la brèche,.. C’eut été la gloire du catholicisme, on pouvait l’espérer pendant quelque temps, d’avoir porté à l’islamisme en Afrique un coup mortel, en arrêtant à la limite de l’équateur ses envahissements vers le sud: l’hérésie protestante est venue tout perdre.” According to the Catholic sources, during Lugard’s absence from Kampala on an expedition against Bunyoro, the IBEA Company’s agents had to rely on the Muslims. In his report of 19 February 1892 Hirth even claimed that one of the British agents confessed to him: “Parmi les trois sectes connues au Nyanza, protestants, catholiques et musulmans, je préfère de beaucoup ces derniers.” And Lugard’s deputy Williams had a school and a mosque built for Muslims at the British fort.³⁰

White Fathers’ worst fears that after the evacuation of the IBEA Company from Buganda, Islam would once again prevail in the country, did not come true. The big campaign fought in England by Lugard himself and various bodies, such as the Anti-Slavery Society, Britain’s leading newspapers and the C.M.S. at the head with Bishop Tucker, eventually solved “the Uganda question”. A provisional treaty was signed by Sir Gerald Portal with the most reluctant Kabaka Mwanga on 29 May 1893, loath to accept the deal but powerless to prevent the inevitable, the Company’s flag was replaced by the Union Jack and the British Government took over Buganda. One year later the British Protectorate over Buganda was declared and the colonial administration set out on its extension. The discontent of Mwanga and some Baganda with the establishment of the British rule and the Protestant Baganda hegemony had become widespread by 1895-6 and finally erupted in 1897 in the so-called Mwanga’s rebellion. Substantial support for Mwanga’s cause in the war of independence of 1897-1899 came from both the Catholic and Muslim Baganda. Rumours about Mwanga’s conversion to Islam encouraged many Muslims to join him. It is likely that at this particular moment the resistance movement derived part of its inspiration from Islam. What is in doubt is the precise nature of the Islamic influence in it. There is evidence that soon after the outbreak of the mutiny of the Sudanese troops in Uganda, one of the ringleaders Gaburieli Kintu attempted to get in touch with the mutineers and link up with them. According to Kagawa,

³⁰ There are numerous letters concerning this particular topic in W.F.A., C13 and C14. Many of them were copied in extenso in *Cronique trimestrielle*, and also published in *L’Ouganda et Les Agissements de la Compagnie Anglaise “East-Africa”*. Paris. A la Procure des Missions d’Afrique, 1892, op. cit.

some sixty Muslims in Kampala joined with Mwanga, and many others with the Sudanese. Other Muslims wished to fight, but were warned and wavered.³¹

After the defeat of the anti-British rebellion in 1899 and especially after 1900 the religion of the cross triumphed over the religion of the crescent. Islam managed to survive the severe defeats suffered in Buganda in the late 1880s and throughout the 1890s, recovered and under the colonial rule it not only continued its existence in Buganda, but also started to expand outside the boundaries of the kingdom. After the defeat of the Muslim faction in the civil wars, any conversion to Islam was on an individual basis. Islam was taken to many parts of the present-day Uganda by refugees of the religious wars in Buganda. Some of the Baganda agents responsible for bringing outlying areas of the present-day Uganda under the British colonial government control were Muslims. A very big group of Baganda Muslims attached itself to Semei Kakungulu. In Bukedi, where a number of Baganda agents were working, Islam made significant gains. Baganda Muslims went to different places as traders and minor officials – interpreters, police, storekeepers or watchmen, they lived among the local people, had direct contact with them and spread Islam while travelling, by the wayside, in the market, in the village. Islam survived in Uganda as a minority religion tolerated by the colonial administration.³²

An important factor, which helped the diffusion of Christianity in the Kingdom of Buganda, was the knowledge of Kiswahili and of the Arabic script. Kiswahili which was widely used in the nineteenth century in the East African interior as a trade language and a means of inter-ethnic communication, also became a lingua franca of East African Christianity, used by early Christian missionaries of all denominations on the East African coast as well as in the interior and the knowledge of Kiswahili in Buganda no doubt helped the work of evangelization. Stanley, who was the first to teach Mutesa about Christianity and boasted to have undermined the position of Islam in the kingdom, had some parts of the Bible translated into Kiswahili and the Ten Commandments in Arabic were written on a board for Mutesa's daily perusal. "Islam may be said to have prepared the way here," admitted Mackay, one of the first missionaries to Buganda and a bitter enemy of Islam.³³ After the coming of Christianity to the

³¹ Vilhanová-Pawliková, Viera: *History of Anti-Colonial Resistance and Protest in the Kingdoms of Buganda and Bunyoro, 1862 – 1899*, op. cit., pp. 257-291.

³² Kasozi, Abdu. *The Spread of Islam in Uganda*, op. cit., pp. 54-76, King, Noel – Kasozi, Abdu – Oded, Arye 1973. *Islam and the Confluence of Religions in Uganda 1840-1966*, op. cit., pp. 14-30, Twaddle, Michael: *Kakungulu & the Creation of Uganda 1868-1928*. London, James Currey 1993.

³³ For Mackay's remark, see Mackay to C.M.S., 26 December 1878. *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, October 1879, p. 609. Alexander Mackay (1850-1890) arrived in Buganda in December 1878 to join Wilson, the only surviving member of the first C.M.S. party, and remained there until the expulsion of all Christian missionaries in 1888. They were joined in February 1879 by three other C.M.S. missionaries, Dr. R.W. Felkin, the Reverend G. Litchfield and Mr. Pearson, who had come by the Nile route.

present-day Uganda, the instruction in reading and writing which went with the work of conversion was in Kiswahili. Of necessity both the Catholic White Fathers and the Anglican Church Missionary Society had at first used Kiswahili as a medium of instruction. In his public debates or quarrels with Alexander Mackay over doctrinal differences between Roman Catholic theology and Anglican Christianity, Father Lourdel and other early Catholic missionaries used biblical texts translated into Kiswahili by the Holy Ghost Fathers. But the position of Kiswahili in Uganda was from the outset in the eyes of both missions jeopardized by its association with Islam, a rival and "inferior" religion and soon both missions strove to introduce local languages, arguing that the Christian message would be properly understood only if it were taught in the mother tongue. White Fathers, who used Kiswahili in their other East African missions, eventually turned away from Kiswahili in Uganda and increasingly favoured the use of Luganda. Initially virtually all contact of European missionaries and administrators was with the Kingdom of Buganda. Luganda thus became the first local language reduced to writing and came to be preferred to Kiswahili and other local languages because of the alleged inherent qualities of the Baganda.³⁴

The linguistic study of Luganda and Bible translations led some White Fathers to a comparison of the two languages and a more positive evaluation of Luganda to the detriment of the Kiswahili. Though not openly voiced, political and religious connotations were always implicit in the missionary thought. While Luganda was in the eyes of the White Fathers, as well as Bishop Tucker and the CMS missionaries, associated with the spread of Christianity, progress and civilization, it was the language through which the Christian truth was being communicated to the inhabitants of the kingdom of Buganda and later also to the rest of the present-day Uganda, Kiswahili was a carrier of slavery, the slave trade and Islam.³⁵

The latent fear of Islam and a Buganda syndrom also played an important role in the language choice discussion which took place in the early period of the colonial rule in Uganda. In the first years of the existence of the Uganda Protectorate Kiswahili was widely used by officials and unofficials alike to suit administrative and educational convenience. However, the pro-Kiswahili language policy in Uganda did not last long. The major role in the language issue discussions was of course played by the Church Missionary Society as a representative of the dominant religion but representatives of the two other missionary bodies present in Uganda, namely the White Fathers and the Mill Hill Fa-

³⁴ Vilhanová-Pawliková, Viera: Swahili and the Dilemma of Ugandan Language Policy. In: Asian and African Studies, 5, 2, 1996, pp. 158-170.

³⁵ For the White Fathers's linguistic work see Diemer, E. : *Essai de Bibliographie des travaux bibliques des Pères Blancs en Afrique*. In: Nouvelle Revue de science missionnaire XVII, 1961, 127 pp. Also Monchamps, Georges Mgr.: *L'Œuvre Linguistique des Pères Blancs d'Afrique*. Bruxelles, Hayes, Imprimeur de l'Académie Royale de Belgique 1904. There are also many letters kept in the White Fathers Archives describing their activities in the field.

thers were also consulted and supported the anti-Kiswahili language policy. Representatives of all missionary bodies argued against Kiswahili and in favour of Luganda. By the refusal to teach Kiswahili in their schools the C.M.S. had succeeded over the years, with the help of the two other missions, especially the White Fathers, in combating the forces within the colonial administration which favoured Kiswahili, and though they did not succeed in making Luganda the universal language of the Protectorate, their pro-Luganda policy ruined the prospects of Swahili ever to become a lingua franca accepted by the whole population of a conflict-prone country like Uganda.³⁶

³⁶ Vilhanová-Pawliková, Viera: *Swahili and the Dilemma of Ugandan Language Policy*, op. cit.