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The kingdom of Buganda lay on the shores of Lake Victoria and emerged sometime in the 14th century. Buganda like many other chiefdom level societies around the world sustained themselves on a mixture of agriculture, hunting, and animal husbandry.

In the case of Buganda, many clans lived off of cereal and tree crops as well as bananas, yams, and cassava. Those who lived near Lake Victoria fished. Women generally speaking tended to the crops and men to the cattle. Once again like other tribal or clan-based structures necessity forced Buganda to evolve into a more sophisticated state-level society in order to compete with the neighboring and expanding Bunyoro kingdom. As Buganda became more stratified they too began to expand to the North and West developing a powerful army and fleet. Bugandan Bataka or clan structure was based on about twenty matrilineal clans. Each clan had distinct identities based around religious cults and shrines known as Lubare (Robinson 154).

Clan relations in Buganda were often fractious which made it a place where clan struggles were not uncommon and rapid change in the religious and political landscape was possible depending on the extent of external and internal pressures. Later outside influences such as Islam and Christianity helped to dramatically reshape the political face of the country. Buganda palace politics was a place of intense clan competition, intrigue and scheming mothers attempting to get their children next in line to the throne. As mentioned previously Buganda clan structure was matrilineal, but Kabakas came from the father's line.

When a new Kabaka gained the throne he was encouraged to take more wives in order to cement his authority. It was this system that fueled clan rivalry within the ruling class itself. (Robinson 154). This competition was perpetuated by page schools which saw young boys brought to the palace to apprentice at court. These pages in addition to performing their assigned tasks also took in the sights, sounds and intrigues of palace life and learned to emulate the drive for prestige and power. The Kabaka too was a slave to many of these clan rivalries and tensions. Though he was the head of state and had the ultimate authority he often found it difficult to operate smoothly within a system fraught with tension.

Even religion and gods were linked to various clans as were their priests. Clans constantly offered wives to the Kabaka praying that “ their” wife would father the next leader of Buganda. Creating an environment capable of immense and rapid change and violence brought on by intense inter-clan competition. Due to the lack of an official state religion, Islam was able to take root in Buganda virtually unopposed by any native priestly class. The coming of Islam and Christianity and their theological components would greatly weaken the Bugandan state and open the door to instability, revolution and colonization. Islam first came to Africa in the form of Arab traders from Oman and other countries on the Arabian Peninsula. Initially, these traders interacted with locals up and down the Swahili coast who for one reason or another quickly began to convert to Islam.

Some cite this rapid conversion as a desire to gain wealth and status.

Regardless of reason the Swahili coast soon became heavily Muslim but the

religion did not spread far inland. Islam was rarely practiced in interior Africa until the second half of the 19th century.

The Omani Sultan Seyyid Said moved his capital from the city of Muscat to the island of Zanzibar in the 1840s drawn there by the ivory and slaves, which would enlarge the Arab slave trade significantly. He then extended his control over polities in Kenya and Tanzania and began organizing caravans to send into the interior of the continent. Ivory would be sold to burgeoning Asian and European markets and slaves would be brought back for use on coastal plantations. It was these Swahili and Arab traders that would bring Islam to interior kingdoms such as Buganda.

The first Muslim caravans arrived in Buganda in the 1840s in search of ivory during the reign of Kabaka Suna. Frequent visitors to the palace, they developed a close relationship with the ruling elite as well as lower classes and began reading the Quran and teaching classes in the palace. Perhaps spurred by the growing presence of Christian missionaries who were gradually spreading across Africa, Muslims felt an obligation to increase the spread and scope of their own faith. Similar to coastal Swahili areas Islam here too, was seen as a vehicle to greater power and influence in the wider world.

Islam gained a greater foothold under King Mutesa in the 1850s. Mutesa desired to spread Bugandan influence both militarily and commercially and saw Islam as the perfect vehicle to achieve those ends. He began encouraging his people to read the Quran and he observed major Muslim holidays (Robinson 158). Islam spread in Buganda from the top down starting with Mutesa who by the latter half of the 1860s likely thought himself a Muslim. With his encouragement, a growing section of the population began

to practice this new religion. Mutesa at this juncture had something of a falling out with Islam. Rumors began circulating that members of the court had accused him of not being a true Muslim due to that the fact that he refused to be circumcised and ate meat that had not been properly slaughtered by an Imam.

Mutesa's reaction was to have around seventy-six leading Muslims burned at the stake. These persecutions would only intensify the 1870s when Mwanga took over control of the Kabaka from his father whose health was rapidly failing. As both Christianity and Islam gained a larger foothold they began to congregate into the four chieftaincies led by Muslims and Christians respectively. The Muslims lived in Kapalaga and Katege and the Christians were concentrated in Nyonyintono and Kagwa (Twaddle 58). This clustering allowed Mwanga to effectively play these groups off one another. According to Twaddle the groupings of Muslims and Christian within these four chieftaincies led to an increase in insecurity within the Buganda kingdom which in turn introduced an "unpredictable element" into the Bugandan political scene under the reign of Mwanga (Twaddle 58).

Within Buganda, there arose four favored chieftaincies: those of Ekisalosalu, Eggwanika, Ekiwuliriza, and Ekijasi (Twaddle 57). These chieftaincies were given various rights and privileges by Mwanga seemingly without end. Other Bugandans began moving into these three chieftaincies and brought their guns with them, a commodity that was quickly become more and more accessible. These three kingdoms became more and more powerful and gained substantial amounts of firepower. These chieftaincies, now powerful well-armed and given preferential treatment, became quite a powerful force.

Furthermore, many of the people living in them and in many parts of Buganda had memories of severe persecution in the not so distant past. Among them were many Christians whose loyalty to the state had not always been of the first priority.

Fearing a potential challenge to his reign, Mwanga demanded that Christians within Buganda apostatize or face the consequences. Many refused to do so. As a result, Mwanga did just what his father had done when his authority was challenged by Muslims, he launched a wave of persecution. In 1886 Mwanga gathered together around fifty Christians who were taken to Namugongo and executed, including many members of his own court.

This would later prove to be a grave political mistake which would have far-reaching consequences for both Mwanga and the future of the Buganda Kingdom. The first coup to shake the Buganda state occurred in 1888 after concerns by leading chiefs that they would be lead to their death should they embark on a planned raiding expedition. The instigators of this plot were the Muslim leaders Muguluma and Kapalaga, who did their best to rally Christian chiefs and clans to their banner. This task was not always easy as Catholic and Protestant missionaries were encouraging their converts not to participate in the revolution but instead to flee from Buganda.

At the time of the revolution, there were many Christians within Buganda who favored this option. Without pressure from Muslim leaders it is doubtful whether Christian chiefs would have taken part in the coup at all (Twaddle 61). However, in the end, Christians agreed to take up arms and Mwanga was overthrown in a lightning-like coup that would usher in an era of quick

royal succession and religious tension not previously seen in Buganda. Next on the Buganda throne would be Kiwewa, something of a Luke-warm Muslim.

He like other Kabakas before him refused to be circumcised which did not exactly endear him to many Muslim members of his court, already upset that their victory had not given them a greater hold over the government. It did not take long for this alliance between Christians and Muslims to deteriorate. Many Christians among the Buganda court and elsewhere who had been practicing in secret amidst fears of renewed persecution now declared themselves openly. Muslims in Buganda began to worry that their own position may be threatened by this substantial increase in Christians.

Muslim control over the Kabaka was not unassailable due to luke-warm Kiwewa, combined with a growing number of Christians the Muslim power dynamic, so short-lived, was now under threat. In the October of 1888, this growing rift between Muslims and Christians would explode once again into bloody civil strife and see Kiwewa wrenched from his still warming throne. Various schools of thought, most of which are conjecture, attempt to explain what happened on that fateful day.

Christian sources, mainly from missionaries in Buganda at the time, claim that Arabs began whispering in the ears of Muslims in the Kabaka encouraging them to attack Christians and remove them from positions of power. Wanting to reserve rule of Buganda to Muslims alone. Another explanation states that Muslims had requested that the position of palace cook be awarded to a Muslim so that he could properly prepare the food so as to be fit for Muslims consumption. This was originally agreed to, however,

“ a Christian chief Antoni Dungu, insisted on having the post of kauta (cook) and threatened to fight for it. While both sides were discussing his ultimatum, one of Dungu’s pages stabbed the Muslim chief Sirimani Lubanga to death” (Oded 16).

However it began it was not a battle that the Christians were destined to win. In his Muslim Revolution in Buganda Twaddle explains what most probably happened according to an eyewitness. A Christian chief Nyonyintono overheard that he was to be replaced as the first minister by Muguluma. Rumors of Muslim soldiers forming around the capital also began to reach him just as two Muslim subordinates pointed their guns at him laughing, followed by a mock salute (Twaddle 65). Throughout the course of the day a fight broke out in court, which then turned into a Muslim Christian brawl. Several Christian chiefs not wanting a bloodbath fled the country. Christian missionaries on the advice of Arab traders in the country were put in prison and were later released and forced to leave along with other Buganda Christians who had initially stayed behind.

Muslims now occupied and controlled Buganda, though elements of discontent soon began to stir among the non-Muslim population, now made up of followers of traditional religions. Muslim rule proved to be too theocratic and rigid for many, including Kiwewa who devised a plan to assassinate influential Muslims at court. Muguluma, the powerful Muslim chief mentioned previously, managed to escape and rallied others to his banner and secured the release of a Muslim prince from prison.

The next day there was a battle in and around Kyebando, a section of the capital city. Muslim forces were outnumbered but were able to take Kiwewa captive and by carefully utilizing their guns were able to secure a victory. With this the Kabaka became a Sultanate and Islam was expected to be the law of the land.

The non-Muslim population now not ready to admit defeat began to consider a possible alliance with Christian forces. Scattered bands of Christians found themselves thankful that it was not they who had begun a theocratic rule in Buganda. The few Christians remaining in the country, as well as those in exile, realized that if they wished to return it must be in the form of a partnership with traditionalists in order to overthrow the Muslim regime. In 1889 Christians forces once again entered Buganda and fought alongside traditionalists to oust Muslims from power.

The fighting took place in the capital, which had by this time seen much bloodshed in the space of just a few short years. The fighting in this battle was of an older and more brutal archetype — hand to hand fighting. Accounts of the battle paint a picture of up close and personal combat where guns were more often used as clubs than long-distance weapons. As the capital city was attacked it became clear that what counted most was numbers and those numbers were on the Christian side especially considering the popular support among Bugandans they had at the time. This was no longer a simple action confined to the palace and chieftains vying for important governmental positions.

It was an attempt by both Christian and traditionalist factions to not only gain control of the government but to completely reshape the forces behind it. This would be achieved in the aftermath of the battle as Christian forces were victorious. The Buganda state was left in a much-weakened condition and the victorious Christians, once briefly united, fell back on the age-old bickering between Catholics and Protestant which would do nothing but undermine an already fragile government and make it that much easier for British colonial forces to take control. Throughout this period of civil strife in Uganda, the British lion had been exploring in the area and liked what it saw.

In 1889 as Mwanga struggled to maintain his throne Britain's hegemonic rule was threatened as Germany began nosing its way into East Africa. Various explorers sent out by the National Geographic society returned to London with tales of gorgeous lands full of fertile soil and abundant food, perfect for European habitation. Britain's sparked interest in Uganda happened seemingly by chance in the form of a rescue mission for Emin Pasha, a German explorer and eventual colonial governor, born Eduard Schnitzer and currently the governor of Equatoria, an isolated province cut off from British Cairo due to a Mahdist revolution. Beginning in 1881 the Mahdist revolted against British colonial rule in both Sudan and Egypt and now controlled large swathes of both areas. Emin Pasha was in need of a rescue mission that would turn into a near disaster and controversial affair. Mackinnon would then turn his eyes towards Uganda. In 1889 Frederick Jackson an explorer whose goal it was to open up land between Mombasa and Lake Victoria and if possible obtain news of Emin Pasha.

Mackinnon, well aware of the political climate of Buganda at the time, ordered Jackson not to engage in exploration in the area. What Jackson would find was a King eager to keep his throne and ready to accept outside British help in order to do so despite potential consequences in future. In direct violation of his orders, Jackson began negotiation with Mwanga. His offer of help was initially rejected, but Mwanga soon found his grip on power rapidly fading and was encouraged by his advisors to accept the British offer for help. Britain, as well as Germany, were well aware that they could use the current political turmoil to their advantage by playing one group off the other, which as we have seen was all too easy to accomplish in Buganda. News began to creep into British territory that Germany was planning a move into Buganda to secure the territory for themselves and to eject British influence in the region by supporting the Catholic factions within Uganda. A move that if successful would ensure that British domination in the area was threatened, something England was not prepared to accept. The British consul-general Charles Euan Smith stated that " if Uganda passes under German influence, the British company has no future before it" (Gjerso 840).

The company referred to the Imperial British East Africa Company or IBEA, which would up till this point had been a highly profitable venture for its owners. If Uganda was lost, however, they would be left with too much land that didn't have much to offer. They would be left bankrupt. As Britain and Germany began negotiations for who would control East Africa, Buganda was again in turmoil.

This time Kiwewa found himself in the midst of a palace battle between Christian and Muslims. As mentioned previously this is the battle where most

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Christians were told to convert or leave the country. At the same time Britain and Germany had signed the Hinterland agreement which lent Uganda to the British Empire. Unfortunately for the new Muslim state this meant that Christian factions would now receive the support of one of the biggest Empires on the planet. In the subsequent wars in which both Christians and traditionalists attempted to overthrow the Muslim regime it would be the Christian forces that would receive international backing. In 1891 British troops would enter Uganda under the command of Captain Frederick Lugard who was tasked with patrolling the area and keeping trade routes open during the religious conflict still plaguing the country. Lugard was one of those men possessed with a desire to protect both native people in Africa and the interests of the British Empire both commercially and in the form of new territories. While in Buganda Lugard came to see the economic advantages that the country could supply to Britain rich in the form of ivory, coffee, rubber and wheat.

Lugard would later argue to stay in Buganda amidst what would become a hotly debated topic in England. Much of the debate would revolve around a desire to suppress the slave trade which was once again on the rise, in fact to such an extent that numbers in slave trafficking had not been as high since the mid-1870s. Others would argue that to leave Uganda would be a public relations disaster and would be an embarrassment to the British people and Empire. An argument that had been used in other parts of the Empire to maintain British control. In the end it was decided that Britain should stay. The imperial advantages were too great and a state in the midst of endemic civil strife would be no great challenge to overcome.

In 1893 the British government would officially take possession of all matters Ugandan and the IBEA Company would withdraw. At first, British colonial rule did not change Bugandan lifestyle to any great extent. They maintained traditional clan and Kabaka structure and their economy remained relatively unchanged. However, Mwanga II and subsequent rulers were gradually degraded by the actions of Lugard the British colonial government. British commissioners slowly began to take precedence over Baganda chiefs and even replaced the king in matters of traditional gift exchange (Twaddle 69). It is tempting to speculate what might have happened had British colonial interests arrived at Buganda's doorstep during a more tranquil period, though the end result would most probably have been the same.

A country wracked by tribal, clan as well as religious differences is not one that can usually effectively withstand outside pressures. Three coups in the span of just a few short years had weakened the state significantly. Britain was able to exploit these differences, playing one faction against the other to take control of the country much more easily than would have been possible had they been dealing with a united government.