

**Nyabingi Movement: People's
Anti-colonial Struggles in Kigezi
1910-1930**

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Nyabingi Movement: People's Anti-colonial Struggles in Kigezi 1910-1930*

Section One

Introduction

Kigezi is in South-Western Uganda, bordering Rwanda and Zaire. It is a colonial creation of 1911 through the Anglo-German-Belgian Agreement in which the Kivu-Mulera-Ndorwa region was shared among the three imperialist powers. It is about 2045 square miles, with a total population of 985,700 people.¹ What was Kigezi at present spread over the three districts; Kabale, Rukungiri and Kisoro.² Kigezi is a combination of Bakiga, Bahororo, Banyarwanda, Banyabutumbi, Batwa and Bahunde nationalities.

Pre-colonial Kigezi was still at a low level of production, pre-capitalist, pre-industrial. It was composed of small agricultural producers, using rudimentary tools - mainly the hoe and the machete. It was among societies of large-scale cattle owners in which differentiation was taking place. These were very scanty and scattered. They lived in the plains of Bufumbira, Rujumbura and Rukiga. This class formation was still in its nascent stages. They lived side by side with agricultural peasants. Even smiths were in the process of accumulation. Cattle owners exchanged animal products for grains and labour from peasants.

The inhabitants of this area produced their own food, implements of production and weapons for defence and hunting, provided their own shelter, etc. Some form of specialisation and division of labour had emerged, barter trade and exchange of gifts characterised the predominant mode of exchange, while defence was collective.³

At the household level, oppression based on gender and age were experienced. Men dominated the political, social and economic life of the household. At the macro level, male elders dominated the political, social and military affairs of their lineages.

¹ Figures from 1991 Census.

² See Map 1.

³ "Report on the Work of the British Section of the Anglo-German-Belgian Boundary Commission, 1911," London: Darling & Son Ltd, 1912. This conformed with Alavi, Hamza op. cit.

The state did not develop organically in the whole area but was imposed from above by Colonialism. In some areas, state formation was still in infancy. These included Kinkizi, Kayonza and Bufumbira. It was in Mpororo where it was highly developed. The inception of colonialism was through the assistance of local agents as soldiers and chiefs. It introduced forced demands, expropriated people's lands and usurped their independence. All these were bitterly opposed by the peasants. This gave rise to various armed struggles mainly under Nyabingi Movement. The colonial state applied maximum force to suppress them while the missionaries gradually came to play a significant part on the ideological front. This study focuses on how Nyabingi Movement organised in tension, the material conditions that facilitated religion to provide leadership, its programme, the course of this movement and the various tendencies within these struggles. It also focuses on the strength and limitations of this movement, the factors that led to the defeat, etc. Among other things, it focuses on what new consciousness emerged through these struggles, the social-economic and political consequences of these defeats on both parties.

Theoretical Perspective

Various people, scholarships and policy makers have addressed social movements the world over at different times, come up with different facts and have formulated different solutions to it. For us to understand it, it is imperative to analyse the various contributions of these works and see which of them can offer us a suitable and sufficient framework within which to conceptualise this study. The basis of this study is that this area was invaded and conquered militarily, and that peasants resisted in various ways against this force of occupation and against its various demands, impositions and atrocities committed by colonial personnel. Colonialism was forced to reform its system due to peasants' resistance. It created a broader social base etc. This study holds that it is impossible to attribute social and political issues to the irrational category of "distortions", peasants' ignorance, mistakes and obstinacy. See Purseglove (1950).

Are peasants, both as participants and as a class, static and therefore obstacles to development, i.e. are they their own enemies or there are more fundamental social-economic issues? Who has the right to define their priorities and development? Can democracy be foregone for modernisation and should popular struggles be branded "tribalistic", "ethnic", "sectarian", etc? Or conversely, is every "tribal" and "ethnic" struggle necessarily "sectarian" and "anti-people"?

Nyabingi Struggles Against Colonialism.

Various studies have addressed these struggles in different areas and classes at different times. For purposes of our study, we shall begin with a review of works on colonial invasion and peasant movement, deal with works on religion and millenarianism, and then works on people's struggles against the agrarian crisis.

A set of literature gives a historical account of colonial invasion and some description of people's reactions. This literature gives an insight on how these peasants were not objects of history but bitterly resisted it. It also shows forms of these struggles, the forms of colonial repression and terror to crush them and threaten others from resisting. Among these are Sebalija (1911), Brazier (1968), Ngorogoza (1968) et al.

However, it leaves out vital issues about the causes, objectives and leadership of these struggles. Another limitation is the effort to project the inevitable good mission of colonialism and its bounden duty to crush resistances so as to accomplish its mission. As such, they confine their study to the official position of the colonial state, justify its action and glorify both its actions and the role of collaborators. This arises mainly from positions many of them occupied in the colonial set-up. Being actively involved in its service, they could not see what was on the side of the people, the character of colonialism, its motives and dynamics, the forces it represented, how it operated, and the reasons underlying these struggles. Most of these studies were carried out in the seeking ways of how to suppress and defeat them and to demoralise peasants. The first type presents peasants and their resistances to colonialism as the problem and colonialism as the solution. Consequently, they fail to trace the origins of the crisis and to put Nyabingi movement in its proper context. Yet, it is vital to put these peasant struggles in their proper historical context.

Focusing on religions alone in the whole region, one Father de Lacger brings out vital information about religions in this region in pre-colonial times and the position of Nyabingi among them and in society. The limitation of this approach arises mainly from trying to fit all religions within the European religious framework. This assumes that all religions must develop within a pre-designed fixed, linear pattern. As a result there arises distortions in such trials to reconstruct the historical origins of Nyabingi. This is a major limitation to works which are inspired by Philipps Report.⁴

⁴ Op. cit. Also see Bamunoba, Y.K. & Welbourne, F.B. "Emandwa Initiation in Ankole"; *Uganda*

This literature is silent about the motives that underlay colonialism, its role, dynamics, how it operated and the factors underlying the struggles under Nyabingi. Des Forges (1986), in dealing with peasant resistance under Muhumuza shows its complex composition, aims, leadership, and origin of support. He shows how they attacked both local and foreign oppressors and Muhumuza's major failure to unite all the people against British troops. His argument that Muhumuza's forces defeated British troops twice because the latter withdrew voluntarily is value-loaded. Inspired by Sebalijja's work, it denies peasants their military victory. Neither is his assessment correct that some people preferred to stay under British protection, a force which was just being imposed from outside for the first time, a view also propounded by Sebalijja et al. His view that Nyabingi resistance was short-lived is also a distortion of social and historical reality. These are issues that Campbell (1987) addresses. His work is a major step forward in studying the links between Rasta Resistance and Nyabingi Resistance. It brings out the material conditions that gave rise to Rasta movement, its aims, objectives, achievements and limitations. It is this work that tries to put Nyabingi movement in its historical context.

However, it falls in the same problem of generalising that Nyabingi movement was a continuous movement under Muhumuza. Attributing all peasant resistances in Kigezi to Muhumuza's leadership obscures the various peasant struggles that ensued in various areas of the region at different times under different leadership with varied aims, objects, tactics and strategies. It is this problem that has to be addressed.

Changing Roles of Religion

Religion must be studied concretely in each social setting. There can never be universal generalisations on religion. Functions of religions are different in different social settings, depending on the concrete, historical, social, political economic realities. Serious scholarships must therefore analyse historically the factors that gave rise to a particular religion in a particular setting, its dynamics, the series of changes it has undergone, how it addresses social demands, which social forces it serves, its strengths and weaknesses, its handicaps and hindrances to society, etc.

Many works deal with religion and its relation to people's social, political and economic lives, the material conditions that give rise to it and its historical

roles. Colin Turnbull (1972) in his studies on Ugandan societies reveals how the nomadic pattern of hunters and gatherers affords the hunters a much greater sense of security than others like peasants. His studies show that while the peasant may lose a year's inputs overnight without any replacement, the hunter and gatherer is capable of replacing what is destroyed the following day. He shows this as partly the explanation of the rise and dominance of religion among peasant societies unlike among the hunters; "there tends to be little fear of supernatural malevolence among hunters, they live an open life, untroubled by the various neuroses that accompany progress." Their mode of existence is contrary to the peasants' mode of existence; the latter tend to be fixed in the soil like their crops.

In concentrating on religion in developed capitalist societies, some of these works emphasise its ideological nature in class societies best exemplified by Marx, Engels and Lenin (1972). The positive roles in the social-political, economic and cultural aspects of the people is either left out or given secondary importance. These are issues that Amrita Chchachchi, (1989), Guha (1983) and Panikkar (1976) try to address.

Not only does the latter group bring out the central role played by religion in various societies but they also demonstrate how religious movements are not necessarily conservative. Amrita shows the material basis of religious fundamentalism and its ideological functions, its relationship with state ideology and women subordination in a historical context and its implications. Raising the issue of exploitation and discrimination based on gender division, she shows that "Women are neither acknowledged nor allowed to be producers of theology, although they are the main practitioners of religion hence the producers of culture and tradition."

In addition to religious fundamentalism, much literature delves into the question of messianism and millenarianism; the material conditions that give rise to them, their roles and limitations. Karen (1985) discovered that millennia movements provide a new revolutionary consciousness through a vision of the overthrow of civic authority, renewed self-respect and Pan-African content; offer new organisation not based on kinship, ethnic loyalties or customary political leadership, and promote mass expectation of independence. See Hill C. (1981,1986) Van Young (1986) Caplan L. (1987).

These studies show that one of the limitations of messianism and millenarianism was emphasis on external saviours and expectation of miracles. They ignored action by the affected to liberate themselves. As an instance, WatchTower Movement leadership preached that external saviours would come from America. Contrary to this inaction, the Nyabingi Movement leadership mobilised people and armed them politically, ideologically and milita-

rily to resist colonialism. Adas brings out the basis of militancy of millenarian protests against colonialism in five different regions; the social origins of the prophets, their capacity in mass mobilisation and struggles and the reasons underlying their defeats. Its main limitation is that it is silent on the role of women, children and other minorities in these struggles. Yet, as these minorities were part and parcel of these social movements, they cannot be ignored in their history.

David Lan underscores the role of women in these anti-colonial struggles, the role of a female spirit medium, Charwe, who, like many Nyabingi Abagirwa led the 1896 rebellion against colonialism. Like all Nyabingi Abagirwa, she was one of the last to be captured after the rebellion had failed. She maintained her defiance to the new invaders even as she was being hanged. Like Muhumuza, after her deportation till her death, Charwe left behind a promise that her bones would rise to win back freedom from the Europeans. This is a situation most parallel to this study. See Lan, David (1985). It is these studies that show the charismatic character of these leaders. This was characteristic of Nyabingi Abagirwa.

Various works have come up with important findings on various social movements all over the world and the role of different social groups, gender, age, etc. Taking Mau Mau as a case in point, many works deal with its origins and development, the various social groups that participated in it at various levels and their reasons. Some delve into the historical origins of this struggle and its content, how it grew, its leadership, and the role of the colonial state in trying to suppress it. They delve into the role of cultural bondings in the Mau Mau and their contributions to unity, solidarity, devotion, courage and determination among the masses. They contextualise oathing and other rituals of secrecy in a dictatorial situation, and how they are characteristic of rural protest in general, and how such practices have a longer history than these protests. Furedi explains the impossibility of compartmentalising and isolating social movements from previous trends. See Karogo, Tabitha (1987), Gakaara (1987), Throup (1988), Furedi F. (1989). Throup's main limitation arises from his focusing on the policy implementers alone so as to understand the economic, social origins of Mau Mau. In so doing, he attributes its causes mainly to Mitchell and his liberal bias, which led the frustrated educated young politicians to begin the war.

The causes of a social movement cannot be understood simply through a behavioural approach. Social movements cannot be understood by attributing the causes to be continued anxiety among Africans, which led to "the highest degree of unconstraint and violence, a common experience in psychiatric practice in Africa"; nor should social movements' membership be seen to be made up of "unstable, emotional, aggressive people who are a constant me-

nace to society due to lack of medical facilities". It is important to go beyond the narrow view of Carothers that social movements in Africa were caused by African modes of thinking and by egotists for their personal ends "political or often purely mercenary". See Carothers (1954).

It therefore becomes imperative to use a dialectical and historical materialist approach. It is this approach that Hobsbawm uses to probe into the question of social banditry in different continents, its historical origins, causes and course, strengths and weaknesses.⁵ In studying the conditions that give rise to millenarianism and protest, and the conditions that will sustain them and make them grow, he discovers that there is no purely religious movement. Like Fanon, he underscores the role of peasants in these wars. He discovers the role of banditry in societal transformation, distinguishes between various forms of violence, its roles, the limitations of spontaneous peasant revolts and exposes liberal culture which preaches submission and inaction to the oppressed, exploited masses.

It is important to understand the various contending social forces, their objectives, achievements etc. It is impossible to isolate these forces or study them singularly as if they were fighting in isolation, with individual, isolated achievements. It is vital to understand each of them and then analyse a sum-total of their combined efforts and limitations. It is in this line that Hobsbawm brings out the relationship between millenarianism, social banditry and modern guerrillas. He shows possibilities of transformation of bandits into revolutionaries - those truly great apocalyptic moments - and the conditions that lead to it. He explains why and how banditry cannot constitute a social movement although it may be a surrogate for it or even its substitute.

One certainly needs to go beyond the above review to show clearly the various social groups that were involved in these social contests. The focus must go beyond the leadership. The membership cannot be relegated to secondary roles in the background. In Hobsbawm's case, this limits his works from showing if these social bandits organised peasants into struggles, how they did it, if any at all. The question that arises then, if these bandits remained alienated from society as saviours - robbing and looting from the rich for the poor; for how long could such a practice be carried out. A study that stops here has the potential of presenting peasants as objects of history. It presents them as desperate, and deprives them of initiative. It negates the dialectical development process of societies. History shows that bandits do not

⁵ Hobsbawm, E.J. (1959),*Primitive Rebels*; New York: Norton Library. Hobsbawm, E.J. (1969),*Social Bandits*; Harmondsworth: Penguin. Hobsbawm, E.J. *Revolutionaries*, London: Quartet Books Ltd.

always steal for the poor.

A committed study of social movements must go beyond idolising primitive accumulators like bank robbers and paralleling them with Robin Hood. Such romanticisation has the potential of obscuring or falsifying facts about social reality. It is vital to understand the roles played by various individuals, groups, and other sections of society in these social movements. Any serious study of social reality must come to grips with concrete situation. This then demands contextualising the women, youths and other minorities in the whole social movement. What we witness is marginalisation of the various contributors, support and direct participation of these social groups. This has the effect of isolating individuals from the whole movement and creating heroes of these individuals. Attributing social struggles to individuals in the leadership leads to mythologization. It needs to distance the study from gender trappings. Each situation must be studied in its own context. Without such safeguards, we shall end up like Hobsbawm viewing men as the main supporters of peasant families. This approach divorces women, youth and children theoretically from production in peasant societies. Yet, this is contrary to existing reality.

In a bid to halt or pre-empt these social movements in Africa, Huntington became aware of the various social forces in African societies. That is why he underscores the role of authority and control to avoid political decay which might lead to instability and violence.⁶ His modernisation package of increased foreign investments, AID, creation of local allies *inter alia* is aimed at the whole populace. The "solution" goes beyond technical and reactionary solutions for modernisation. It is important to advance beyond this, not to control social reality but to identify correctly both the motive force and the moving force in social movements. It is vital to understand which individuals, groups or sections of society had the capacity and willingness to lead such a movement, their motives, achievements and weaknesses. It is in this light that a committed study must address the various social classes in these movements.

It would be misleading to consider these social classes as geographical, or to dismiss them as non-existent in pre-colonial Africa. Proponents of this view like Nsibambi dismiss class struggles as merely ideological conflicts.⁷ Nyerere, on the other hand, argues that the agrarian question in Africa begins

⁶ Huntington, Samuel P. (1968) *Political Order In Changing Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

⁷ Nsibambi,(1987) "Conflict and the Land Question in Uganda" in Conference on "Conflict" under MISR, 21-25 Sep. 1987. He argues that it is being created by individual "oral documentary radicals" through public lectures and writing in Newspapers exaggerating the plight of peasants."

only with colonialism. Presenting Africa as classless implies continental homogeneity. This implies a uniform linear type of backwardness; a continent without dynamism. This view implicitly condones colonial invasion to unleash the forces of production and put the continent on the capitalist road. This approach raises a variety of conceptual and practical problems. Silence or trying to refute existence of social classes in Africa and their relevance to the agrarian question cannot help us to come to grips with reality. It has the effect of obscuring facts on power relations in understanding social phenomena, the forms of exploitation and oppression and social movements in understanding this agrarian question historically.

The blanket generalisation of continental classlessness masks people's resistance to various forces from within and from without. This view presents them as fragmented individuals, at the mercy of nature, struggling for survival against nature, animals and fellow people. This renders these people in Hobbesian state of war against all these forces. Thus, without external saviours, life remains "nasty, brutish and short". See Roscoe (1922). In such a painted situation of "survival for the fittest", peoples are assumed to be guided by instinct, devoid of consciousness. Whatever relationship that develops is founded on the instinct of survival.

It is the subaltern studies that departs from this approach as it focuses on peasant struggles against colonialism in India. In showing peasant consciousness, they show peasants not as victims of history but as its principals, with a capacity to resist and change events etc. See Guha, R. (1983)⁸ However, this school fails to delineate the various contributions by various social groups, gender, caste, ages etc. as it divides Indian societies into "elites" as collaborators and "subaltern" as resisters. This classification leads to assumptions of homogeneity of the peasantry in pre-colonial and colonial periods. This has the potential of obscuring the dynamics within societies, the impact of colonialism, and how it shaped the colonised to serve British interests. It is important to understand the form of transformation these societies have undergone, how they were transformed to serve capitalist interests and understand the rise of new social relations, etc.

While it is important to note that different historical and social conditions lead to different social responses, it is also important to understand the class character of each social movement. While pre-colonial peasants responded militarily to colonial invasion, it should be noted that they were not the most marginalised individuals that led these resistances. In other words, it is not the level of deprivation that determines the type of revolutionariness. Arguing

⁸ Guha, Ranajit Ed. *Subaltern Studies*; New Delhi: University Press. Vol. I-VI.

that "subaltern consciousness is inherently revolutionary" has the weakness of according supremacy to ideas over matter. While there is no general rule or formula on factors leading to revolutionariness or resistance, historical facts show that the most deprived, most exploited and oppressed often fail to conceptualise correctly their situation and then translate it into struggle.

In no way is this an elitist view. However, it shows the objective limitations confronted in any social struggle and the need for broad alliances and unity between various social groups. Neither does this relegate peasants to secondary roles, nor does it render them into inaction. What is evident is that peasants do not have an independent perspective of development beyond what is existing within their setting. Neither is their outlook broadly informed due to lack of contact with the world beyond their small societies due to lack of travel, massive illiteracy etc. It is in this regard that they are rooted in the soil on their separate plots like their crops.

In studying peasants and their response to social and historical conditions, it is vital to consider what type of class(es) exist in this setting. In a developed, capitalist society, the peasants operate as a class within the ideological framework of its leadership - the bourgeoisie or the working class. It lacks an outlook that can help them to draw up a programme for leading other classes. However, we see peasants in pre-capitalist societies responding militarily to colonial invasion. They went beyond being sacks of potatoes, took initiative and resisted relentlessly. However, what is clear is that their narrow outlook limited their struggles. See Marx, K. (1973), Mamdani M. (1986) and Adas M. (1979). It is in this context that the role of outsiders has been found vital. These became instrumental in organisation - ideological, political and military - in these struggles.

In military contests against a better armed, better organised superior force, it requires a peasant leadership that goes beyond commitments and willingness. This requires ability to lead, organise, plan, as well as a good knowledge of the enemy and his weaknesses. This requires wide experience beyond fellow peasants to lead them into advanced, sustained struggles for years. Lack of this leads to spontaneous uprisings which lead to massacres and repression. It is thus vital to understand concretely each of these social struggles, their character, the material conditions that facilitated various leaderships to come up, the origin and type of leadership, its ideological content etc.

While Marx' dictum is correct that violence is the mid-wife of any old society pregnant with a new one, it is vital to study the type of violence in any social contest, its character; if its objective are popular, criminal or counter-revolutionary. It is not enough to understand social movements by looking at the forms of struggle. Violence is not synonymous with revolutionariness.

Similarly, no individual or section of society has monopoly of violence. Neither is violence endemic in any society. Historical evidence shows it as situational, in application to specific aims and conditions. It is vital to study the various methods of struggle. Not all situations demand the same tactics and strategies.

It is vital to understand that colonial invasion, oppression and exploitation called for new forms of peasants consciousness and responses other than those in use prior to the colonial epoch. New social, economic conditions always call for new consciousness and responses. This then calls for going beyond the subaltern school's view of continuity of subaltern consciousness from pre-colonial to colonial era. There is need to understand the obtaining reality and understand what is to be done, the role of the masses etc. See Cabral A. (1969), Campbell H. (1987), Wamba-dia-Wamba (1986) Mamdani, Thandika and Wamba (1988). It is only through a broad understanding of the motives of colonialism, the class character, the mode of penetration, the various peasant resistances and how they influenced the colonial policies and the practice; and the consequent developments that one is able to come to grips with concrete reality.

A Word on Research Methodology

This study began with a library-based research. It analysed the existing files and works at Makerere and MISR on this study. This was followed by Archival research both at National Archives, Entebbe and then District Archives at Kabale. This availed the study rich historical documents for analysis. After that, there followed research in Government Department at the District level. We studied the available documents, discussed with the relevant officials and people matters related to this study. These officials facilitated this study very greatly. It was at this stage that we designed a questionnaire.

This was followed by field research. In sampling, we followed the same methodology spelled out in our research proposal. We came out with Rukiga, Kinkizi, Ndorwa and Rubanda. From these counties, we selected Nyarushanje, Rugyeyo, Rubaya, Muko, Bukinda, Bubare and Kaharo. From these, we selected R.C. ones out of which we selected 200 respondents. This formed our sample population.

It was after that that interviews were conducted. Interviews were conducted basing on the designed questionnaire. We conducted the interviews. However, some of our respondents preferred to fill the questionnaire themselves. After this field research, we carried out informal

interviews with other people. These were very responsive and assisted this study in cross checking some inaccuracies.

This study used a historical and dialectical materialist approach. This study was confronted by a series of problems. Some arose from land struggles in the sampled areas, which led peasant to suspect the research and its motives. There was a problem of time, broken appointments and loss of questionnaires due to death of one of our respondents. Absence of written material by the resisters forced us to rely heavily on our respondents and on archival material. It was through this field study that we discovered that there were some peasants who lived dual-religious lives. These worshipped pre-colonial religions in secrecy, concurrently with Christianity or Islam, had European or Arab names to show their newly religious affiliation.

This study first deals with the pre-colonial period. It examines the role of Nyabingi, its social, economic and political functions in this area and the factors that led to its growth at the expense of other religions. It then focuses on colonial invasion and peasant responses 1911 - 1930. This is when Nyabingi religion takes up the leadership role to peasant resistance against colonialism. It then examines some of the factors that precipitated this. It then examines colonial methods to defeat it and the decline of these peasant struggles and ends with a few conclusions.

Section Two

Pre-colonial Kigezi

It is imperative to begin by reviewing briefly the pre-colonial political economy of this area. This section deals briefly with the period before colonialism. This will facilitate this study to understand how this area was developing prior to colonialism, whether the agrarian crisis existed and peasants' solutions to it if it existed. It will give us a basis to study reasons that underlay peasants' defeat by colonialism, whether colonialism was a necessary evil, the new social formations that arose from this new encounter and the consequences.

This area was inhabited by different peoples, with varying modes of production, cultures, etc. While the plain lands like Kamwezi, Rujumbura and Bufumbira were inhabited by pastoralists and peasant agriculturalists, parts of the Southern parts of Lake Bunyonyi and the surrounding forests were inhabited by Batwa, a roving nationality. This nationality had no fixed homes. Their mode of existence was predominantly hunting, looting and pillaging. The rest of the region was inhabited by settled peasants, who practised mixed farming.

Their production was mainly for use-values at household level. Their main tool was the hoe. Nearly every household had its own tools of production and livestock. The latter were kept for clothing, bride-price, exchange and livestock products for home use and exchange. It is no wonder therefore that in anticipation of peasants' resistance, Reid's strategy was 'To seize all cattle and stock as the natives are loathe to part with their cattle and to requisition them would be to alienate the natives'.

Despite their self-sufficiency, they were still at a low level of mastering their environment. Communication was mainly by land and water. Walking and human porterage was the mode of transportation on land while swimming and canoe were the mode on lakes and rivers.

Forms of Ownership and Production

Property ownership was basically at household level. Cap Philips described it as

the system by which each valley or hill is occupied solely by a solid block of people consisting each of a different clan.... They do not admit or understand the private ownership of land, which is held by the tribe sub-divided into the

clan, for the benefit of the family or community. They consider land, as the birds, the water, and the air, to be the attributes of mother Earth to provide a sufficiency for the direct maintenance of all.⁹

Purseglove noted that a man owned as much land as he could cultivate and defend with the assistance of his clansmen. They applied shifting cultivation with a usufruct of as much land as the household could cultivate in a season, together with the fallow land that they had cultivated in the past.¹⁰ This type of agriculture prevented soil exhaustion and degradation, soil erosion, invasion of pests and vermins; it maintained soil fertility, and balanced the ecosystem. As it did not encourage environmental destruction, it ensured continuity for the peasants' economic, military and social needs.

While men had control over this land, production decisions in agriculture were made mainly by women. The same applied to matters related to feeding plans. Individuals and households owned their own property namely shelter, livestock, utensils, clothing and ornaments, beehives, instruments of production, weapons, canoes and troughs etc. However, *Nyineka* was the overall controller. When he died, his property would be divided among his family. This was known as *okubagana* (inheriting). The eldest son would take over the economic, political and social responsibilities of the deceased. This gave him chance to get the greatest share of the property.

The *Omuryango* had external control over land of families at lineage level. At a higher level, the *Ruganda* had external control at a broader level. Both came in times of conflict arising from violation of established property rights, or from external threats 'inter alia'.¹¹

Production was based on various factors like nature of the job, the skills, the specialisation involved, and division of labour based on age, gender, location etc. The 1911 Commission noted that most cultivation was done by women and children.¹² In Kigezi, polygamy was a common practice. This was because women were desired for economic reasons. They were required for production of wealth and reproduction of children. This is the basis of women being referred to as *abazaana* or *abairukazi* literary meaning women-slaves. Polygamy was greatly practised. This was because of demand for labour for household production, defence and expansion of *oruganda*. As such, there was no limit to the number of wives as long as a man could pay bride price. This could have been got from the bridewealth of sisters, daughters, exchange or

⁹ op. cit.

¹⁰ op. cit. Also refer to File District Book, Department of Agriculture, Kabale District Administration.

¹¹ Refer to epics on *Ruyooka Rwa Maganya* and *Kakwaya Ka Misherekoo..*

¹² op. cit.

from friends `inter alia'. Boys could marry at a later age than girls, many being restrained by lack of bride price and delays in biological development to reach maturity. At the same time, custom demanded that men had to take over the wives of their dead brothers or the young wives of their late fathers etc. All these reinforced polygamy in the area. An alternative solution was for the young men to go and work for men who had daughters. Payment for their labour would be in form of brides. This process was known as *okutendera*.

The saying goes that women belonged to no Ruganda. This arose from the fact that women did not belong to the lineage in which they were born. Before marriage, they belonged to the father's lineage. They were important in providing labour. Though unmarried women did not have rights to land, they enjoyed the proceeds from it. However, the role of distribution of these proceeds lay mainly with the wives. In a situation of death of the mother, or divorce, then, her children would retain the property attached to the household - in case they were old. The elder daughters would take over the mother's duties in production, utilisation and distribution. Women did not own land. Land belonged to the Ruganda, under direct control of *Nyineka*. However, its products belonged to the household which worked it. The same applied to livestock.

Exploitation based on age was prevalent. Children were initiated and integrated into production at a very early age. They were instrumental in food production and preparation. They fetched firewood and water, scared away birds from grains, grazed and shepherded livestock, and looked after the young ones and ran errands. Drawing from this exploitation of child labour, they developed a saying that the child is for the Ruganda.

Mothers trained their daughters in activities that were prescribed for women. These included food production and preparation, processing milk products, making utensils `inter alia'. Boys were integrated into roles performed by men like bush-clearing, construction, and defence, animal husbandry, tool and weapon-making, and home control.

Seen broadly, females were initiated into roles of direct food production, and minor roles in animal husbandry like processing of animal products, cleaning the cow sheds. Women's education emphasized subordination, faithfulness, polygamous life, managing hardships etc. On the other hand, male initiation was into actual ownership and management. While the main tool of production - the hoe was in the hands of women and children, land and instruments of defence, coercion, suppression and enforcement of discipline like the machete, the spear, the stick, the bow and the arrow were in men's hands. This was with the exception of the Batwa nationality where every grown up member of society had to have his/her instruments of

production and defence.

The exploitative relations that characterised this formation revolved around nyineka. Oppressed minorities included women, children, apprentices and dependants.¹³ Whatever payment that existed was in kind, in form of food, clothing, livestock, accommodation, protection etc. It should not be misconstrued that men did not participate in the production process. They did, both in cultivation, bush-clearing, building and scaring away animals, etc. These were non-repetitive, non-continuous activities, which afforded them leisure and time to think out ideas and plans to control those in production.

Jobs which required skilled labour were also based on gender and age division. Examples of men's jobs included smithing, the main industry, carpentry, leather tanning and cloth-making. Acquiring such skills required a long period of apprenticeship, dedication and care. Other vital jobs included medicine and midwifery, prophesying, religious leadership and rain-making. It was this group which extracted surplus from peasants for their services or as sacrifices or tributes.

In spite of their main role in production of wealth, women and children were prohibited from eating certain delicacies. These included kidney, the heart, the sternum, the tongue etc of animals. Men created and surrounded myths, superstitions and other ideologies around these foods. They also put heavy penalties around this exploitative practice to bar off the women and children from challenging these privileges. Men invoked religions, gods and spirits to which they were the mediums to check members of their families' behaviour in all these and punish all contraveners. Likewise, women were prohibited from eating goat meat or mutton. Meat-cooking and distribution was by men. Eating meat that was being roasted from a roasting-rod was prohibited. A woman caught eating cooking meat which was being roasted would be fined a live goat. If an animal died during nyineka's absence, they preserved the meat until his return. nyineka's meals were sacred. We find that women, who actually played a leading role in production of wealth ate dregs and offals. All these were taught, reemphasized. Sanctions to their violations were clear.

These practices created and multiplied social injustice and grievances within families and society. This created a basis for various struggles, both militant and silent, divorces and separation, poisoning etc. This became a basis for Nyabingi religion to come in at household level on the side of the

¹³ Desperate people from poor families or without any help would go to big families to work for food. In other cases, during wars between *ENGANDA*, women and children would be captured and taken as slaves and wives while the men and boys would be killed for fear of revenge. Slaves were known as *ABASHUMBA*, *ABAZAANA* or *ABAHUUKU*.

oppressed for both their spiritual aspirations and social liberation.

Mode of Politics

Taking politics as the concentrated expression of the contradictions and relations at the economic level, we find that *Nyineka* was the main object of the struggle at household level, in areas where classes had not formed or where they were in nascent stages. Internal struggles within this social formation were mainly between husbands and wives, youths and parents, and between co-wives etc. These struggles revolved around land and movable property especially livestock. These took place at household level. They appeared in various ways and were resolved in different ways like fights, abandoning the wife, etc. Elders would come in to arbitrate.

The main contradiction between daughters and the male revolved around livestock for dowry. Pre-marital pregnancies or loss of virginity before marriage would deprive the males of that wealth. Such acts were condemned vehemently as abominable and punishable by death through throwing her over cliffs Nyakibengo. Resistance to this was in form of escaping by the victims before detection and rendering of the offences into slavery of some wealthy men. Similarly, contradictions between mothers and daughters revolved around this as mothers were expected to train and police the latter. Such Pre-marital pregnancies also caused contradictions between husbands and wives. This would lead to fights between husbands and wives, tormenting the wives or sending them away etc. due to failure to train and police daughters.

At the household level were struggles between wives and mothers-in-law. In her husband's home, the bride was expected to respect her parents-in-law and all those that custom accorded such entitlement. She was expected to rear children, feed her husband, the children and all members in the household, remain faithful to her husband and loyal to the new lineage, was not expected to bring witchcraft or magic to hurt people in this lineage etc.

Mothers-in-law had a big say in the management of the households, in the distribution of resources such as land and livestock to the sons and their wives. In fact the older a woman grew, the more legitimacy and assertiveness she gained. Most of them tended to be very oppressive and demanding. As a sign of respect, daughters-in-law and sons-in-law were outlawed from pronouncing names of their mothers-in-law. This was known as *kusinda*. On their part, mothers-in-law were expected to love their daughters-in-law, counsel them, provide them with some property to assist and facilitate them in marriage. To accomplish this required respect and this was enshrined in their customs. Mothers-in-law were self-appointed overseers and informers on their daughters-in-law to their sons. They counselled the latter on how to tame their

wives. Thus, mothers-in-law occupied an oppressive and exploitative position which was sanctioned by tradition.

There were contradictions between these women and some fathers-in-law over sexual harassment. Such fathers-in-law would argue that they wanted to see where their cows went. This contradiction would be resolved in different ways including fights, divorces, dispute resolution by elders, in naming children allegoric names etc.

Men created ideologies, myths and proverbs to justify and protect their exploitative position. They initiated all brides into this relationship from the first day. A bride was then surrounded by family religions of which Nyineka was the religious head. Obedience was enforced through invoking gods and ancestors, known as *Okuhindiza*. They also ostracised sons for disobedience. This was known as *Okucwa*. This denied the victim the right to inherit property, or to enjoy anything in the family etc. It was also feared as men threatened that it would bring miseries, infertility, disasters, and untimely death etc. Men justified their dictatorship with sayings like the shoulder can never grow taller than the head; two bulls can never stay in the same kraal; two heads can never be cooked in the same pot. They also created and told stories about rebellious characters, and how they met disastrous ends. These stories were passed on to new generations.

Resolving such antagonistic contradictions involved fights, separation, the husband rejecting to eat her food and/or to enter her house at all *Kuzira*. This required elders to come in and arbitrate. In case it was proved that the woman was wrong, she was required to appease the husband by preparing special meals and brewing alcohol etc. for the husband before he returned to her. This was known as *Okuhonga*. On the other hand, if they found that it was the husband who was wrong, he would be asked to return to her. Other methods of resolving these contradictions included naming derogatory allegoric names, or enmity and fights between the two lineages of the husband and the wife etc. Resolutions like divorces and dowry-refunding *kuzimura* depended on the nature of the contradiction, judgment and the attitude of the affected parties. All these formed a fertile ground, which Nyabingi religion exploited to penetrate and gain popularity in this society.

Matters like justice, defence, celebrations, death, crises, etc, marriage cases, property, production, divorce, family social justice, murder, revenge,¹⁴ individual rights, migration, going in search of food etc. demanded greater attention than the head of the household. This was for elders of lineages

¹⁴ Refer to Epics on Kakwaya Ka Misherek; Ruyooka Rwa Maganya and the War Songs. Justice of murder cases included revenging *KUHOORA* and atoning *KUKARABA*. Justice extended to all sections of their existence.

bakuru b'emiryango. They, like Nyineka, were never elected by all members of the lineage.¹⁵ They met together as a body known as *Karuubanda* or *enteeko* to attend to different disputes from different households within their lineages, resolve crises, etc. In these councils of elders, even minorities like women, youths, and children were heard although they could not participate in the hearing of the cases and in passing judgment. However, old women, women with skills and reputation like doctors attended. It was through such processes that they maintained internal cohesion.

Defence was a collective responsibility of all sections of *enganda*. Their weapons included spears, bows and arrows, shields, knives and sticks alarms and horns. They developed complex systems of detecting the enemies and rallying the message through a system of codes which they varied very often. This was aimed to prevent their enemies from deciphering them and penetrate their defence system. Colonialism attributed this system of codes to be the contributions of Nyabingi. The truth is that these codes were developed long before the rise of Nyabingi religion in the area. However, these codes were incorporated into Nyabingi movement. In these battles, they would kill the males, capture women, children and livestock. Women and children were converted into wives and slaves. These increased conflicts and disunity between *enganda*. Before any military campaign, they consulted *Abagirwa* and future tellers *abaraguzi*. All people spied and participated in defending their *Enganda*.¹⁶ The 1911 Commission Report commented in these peasants' military preparations thus:

All able-bodied men are called upon to fight, and in such a case will wear charms, consisting small bucks horns, or small pieces of wood, round their necks. Such charms protect the wearer from death or wounds. Dances take place before the warriors set out for the scene of action and after their victorious return. Their arms are two spears, used either for throwing or stabbing, and bows and arrows. All the male prisoners are killed, and the dead have their hands and feet cut off; but women, and children who can march, are made captives... show great courage and do not hesitate to charge home in the face of rifle fire¹⁷

Religion

This area had many religious beliefs. These religions included *Emandwa*,

¹⁵ *op. cit.* These emerged through personal exploits etc. Songs, stories and oral literature, Nyakeirima Ka Muzoora's great prophecies on imperialism. Ngorogoza, P. (1969) *Kigezi and its People*; Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau.

¹⁶ *op. cit.* During this study, our respondents informed us how women and children would equip men with stones and in some cases use the stones themselves. They would shield themselves with winnowing trays *entara*. In other cases, they would use their husbands' weapons, pestles, etc.

¹⁷ *op. cit.* Also refer to Epics on Ruyooka.

Ryangombe, Mugasya, Kahukeiguru, Kazooba Bitindangyezi, Esiriba and *Biheeko Nyabingi*.¹⁸ Being at a low level of production, with many peasants subjected to the mercy of nature, these peasants still attributed most of what they could not understand and their problems to the supernatural factor. That is why they had so many religions, mostly at household level. While it looked like an ideology of liberation and resistance, Nyabingi religion was an ideology of domination and exploitation by the Abagirwa. They used it to extract surplus value from peasants, and used it to threaten them. On the other hand, heads of households, who were the spiritual heads and mediums of the other religions used them also for dominating those below them. At the same time, those below them attributed any crises/problem to these religions and it was the heads of the concerned households to intercede for them. Nyabingi with time gradually gained dominance over others.

Nyabingi religion depended on coercion, intimidation, curses and threats, the claim to inflict mysterious diseases and deaths. These were plotted and executed secretly by the *Abagirwa*. However, it gained in popularity also because of its spiritual and temporal ideals. In most social conflicts, it was the Nyabingi religion which identified with the oppressed peoples, preached emancipation from oppression and exploitation. It provided a foundation for solidarity, courage and action against oppressors whenever it was possible.¹⁹ It extended to Rwanda, Burundi, Tanganyika, Congo, Mpororo, Nkore, etc. With the colonialism period, peasants did not sit watching in desperation. From the time of invasion, peasants resisted. Their resistance took overt and covert forms. Some were militant, others were passive, some took individual courses, others communal forms. However, all of them ended in defeat by an organised, coercive force in alliance with local allies. Nyabingi religion mobilised peasants into armed resistance for over twenty years. Despite increased state repression, massacres, imprisonment and deportations, Nyabingi resistances continued flaring up between 1910 and mid 1930s. Colonialism accepted that "purely military measures have been proved useless".

By the time of colonial invasion, *Nyabingi* was the strongest. There were two major differences in this environment. The first category was of areas

¹⁸ From its doctrine of action, militancy and courage, Nyabingi came to be known as *Rutatiina Mireego* - one that can never fear bows and arrows. Its other names included *Omukama, Nyinekyaro* meaning ruler. With 1928, it took on another name: *Muzeire Kasente* - a parent that accepted money.

¹⁹ Refer to Philipps Report of 31 July, 1919. de Lacquer, Louis (1959) *Premiere Partie Le Rwanda Ancien; Kadgayi: Imprimatur. Turyahikayo - Ruygema* (1974) "A History of Rukiga in South Western Uganda and Northern Rwanda 1500-1930"; PH.D. Thesis, University of Michigan. Ngorogoza, P. (1969) *Kigezi and its People*; Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau.

which were highly differentiated, with classes living off the surplus labour of others. These were areas where states had formed or where chiefdoms existed. These included Rwanda and Bufumbira, Kayonza, Kinkizi and Mpororo. It became easy in such class societies for the exploited oppressed subjects to accept Nyabingi religion for their emancipation purposes as it promised. It should be noted that this class could not accept easily the teachings of Nyabingi due to the dominant religion of the ruling class and actual fear of reprisal by the ruling class. To concretise this, *Emandwa* was the religion of the ruling class in Rwanda. It is neither by accident that the king was the head of the *Emandwa* institution in Rwanda. In areas where states had not formed or where they were in their embryonic stages, it was the head of the household, who headed these institutions. As such, Nyabingi's Abagirwa had to use intimidation, coercion and threats to convince them to accept Nyabingi. What is clear is that in any social conflicts, Nyabingi religion became a religion of the oppressed, exploited majority.

In the rest of the region, where classes were in their nascent stage of formation or where they had not yet come into formation, the Abagirwa of Nyabingi were still able to identify some of privileged sections, groups and individuals there and the social grievances and identified with the majority. In such societies, the dominant lineages and family heads became the main targets. If the lineage accepted Nyabingi religion, then, new targets of its struggle would be found among other lineages etc. It is of interest to note that at one time, the Batwa used Nyabingi religion to raid peasants in these areas. However, the same peasants gradually adopted the same religion to defend themselves against the Batwa. Here, Nyabingi had began as an ideology of domination and then transformed itself into an ideology of resistance. To understand the acceptance of Nyabingi religion amidst all these competing religions requires going beyond its intimidating and coercive characteristics, to looking at the people's social grievances and problems that it addressed. Without this, it may be hard to understand the core issues, since after all, peasants had the capacity to resist this religion as they had done where need be, to others. It is clear that religions have an element of intimidation and instill fear, and that state religions more often than not, are backed by coercion.

Nyabingi was presented to its followers as having been created in the form of woman: a female spirit which lived under the earth but which often appeared to people, with rapid transformative powers into feminine personalities. It was assumed that it could transform into different forms of destitution, for example like that of a desperate, poor old woman, etc. It was interpreted that Nyabingi would do so to punish whoever mistreated her or

scorned her or refused to welcome her or denied her food, shelter etc. People feared that Nyabingi would punish them through diseases, failure for a woman to get a husband, death etc. It was assumed that she would reward those who treated it well. The moral lessons from this included discipline and reforms, enforced humanity, generosity and, humility among the oppressed. All these feminine imaginations about Nyabingi and its being created in a feminine form, and the dominance of selecting females into its service leads us to conclude that it was likely to have been created by the dominated, oppressed females.

The practical character of Nyabingi religion to people's problems and its spiritual aspirations increased its acceptance and popularity among the oppressed sections of society. Despite its intimidation and coercion, more women came into its service. This was partly because of its Abagirwa's ability to identify with the oppressed, suffering people. These in turn worked hard to spread its fame. This arose mainly from women's resistance to male domination and oppression. Nyabingi had developed though exploiting the grievances of the oppressed. Its common object of attack were the privileged groups and individuals. In so-doing, men, women and children were drawn into its fold. This was for their spiritual beliefs and partly in fear of its powers and malice. The Abagirwa were responsible for defending it theoretically and militarily. They promoted it, spread it and recruited new membership to its fold.

Its increasing dominance must also be traced in the fact that women were more united through production and polygamous, extended families. They co-operated in that peasant form of production and at home. As they worked together, met and chatted, they were able to learn about Nyabingi and its purported powers, its exploits and commands, and gave free expression of their desires. Being in direct shaping of children, youths, dependants, women were able to influence them. It became easier for the Abagirwa to create myths and ideologies and transmit them quickly through women. As households had their religions, it made it easy for them to interpret all these demands. The Abagirwa would command men to build its shrines, feed those in its service, offer it sacrifices and dedicate to it young daughters for its service. This was known as *okutweija*.

The situation was different with other religions like *Emandwa*. These were mild and were headed by Nyineka. He interceded for the rest of the household. Nyineka was the representative of the other religions. The various contradictions between him and the other members of the family made him more of a petty tyrant protected by supernatural powers other than the interceder. Worse still, men tended to exploit such a situation, enforcing

obedience through religious threats.²⁰ From this religious role, household heads derived more political powers which reinforced their exploitative and oppressive practices over the membership. He also derived more powers from threats of invoking the spirits *Okuhindiza* or ostracising them *kucwa* as punishment to any individual(s) who tended to challenge the status quo or even those who had dissent views. Thus, in these other religions, the position of women and other minorities was of subordination.

To side-step men's oppression, the oppressed minorities found refuge in Nyabingi. The Abagirwa would make it clear how Nyabingi did not approve of quarrels amongst its membership. Of course, this was another way of maintaining control over the membership. It was in Nyabingi where the Abagirwa were mostly their fellow women and daughters. It emphasised moral discipline, love, generosity etc and gave rewards to good people in form of children, livestock, etc., The other religions were silent on this material side while they commanded obedience and subordination from minorities in society.

As the privileged sections of society like Nyineka, elders and the ruling classes were the foundation of its expansion, and the object of its struggles, both its membership and leadership were dominated by minorities like women, youths etc. However, it should not be forgotten that Abagirwa lived off the surplus of labour of peasants and enjoyed privileges, and that the so-called liberation of these sections of society was a basis for the expansion of these privileges. Put differently, the exploitative section was fighting other exploiters in the name of peasants.

Furthermore, Nyabingi's demands on Nyineka undermined men's status and infallibility at home and in society. This was worsened by women's positions as Abagirwa, who would be ordering men to carry out Nyabingi's wishes. In this way, it recruited more women, youth etc. into its membership.

The Material Base for Nyabingi's Rise

When people fell sick, they would attribute such sickness(es) to Nyabingi or any other spirit. They would consult an *Omugirwa*, an *Omufumu* (traditional doctor) or *Abaraguza* (future seers) on what was to be done. These would apply their skills and cunning to guess what the problem was and what sacrifices were required. This was the basic method through which these professionals would also appropriate the surplus from the peasants for these

²⁰ This invoking of gods and spirits of the dead by old people to punish the big-headed or insolent was common practice to enforce obedience, exact labour etc. Whoever challenged the established order or refused to carry out their wishes became the target.

services. In other words, these did not offer free services. The clients had to pay something in form of *Omukyimbo*. The same applied to the rain makers or rain controllers *Abahaniki*. The Abagirwa were supposed to intercede for people in times of crises, and would treat some sicknesses. It should be noted that their initiation involved learning medicine and treatment of different diseases, how to expand imagination in case of new, unique crises. In the same vein, they were taught how to create fears, curse offenders, fight and, lead people. in defence of Nyabingi institution. People believed that Nyabingi cured both physiological and psychological diseases and those caused by supernatural forces.

There were two forms of surplus extraction through tribute in form of sacrifices to Nyabingi. These were *Okuterekyerera* and *Okutweija*. These included cattle, food, meat and *enturiire* (beer made of sorghum and honey) or young daughters. Whoever asked Nyabingi for a favour had to give some sacrifice or offering. Such requests included children, husband, cattle, good harvests, or life to the sick. Nyabingi was assumed to be the source of things. Such pledges included young girls or cows. Those who did not have the means would make pledges to bring it. People were taught that if Nyabingi asked for something and the concerned person failed to bring it, then, Nyabingi would take offence, leading to rejection of the requests and deaths. In other words, Nyabingi was not necessarily for the very poor, without the wherewithal. Its acceptance or rejection of their sacrifices or promises would be known by the fulfillment or unfulfilment of their requests. Whoever promised something would have to fulfill the promise. In other words, requests made to Nyabingi and sacrifices were mainly in material form and the latter was compulsory. This was the surplus value that maintained the Abagirwa and their source of wealth. Nyabingi gained its popularity from the interests it appeared to project and fight for. Its Abagirwa preached resistance by the down-trodden and articulated their interests. Peasants found this very acceptable and considered Nyabingi to be fearless. In fact, those in its service could not abandon the membership in times of hardships. Instead, new leadership came up when the old one got separated from membership. Similarly, peasants who believed in Nyabingi consulted Abagirwa for its consent before going to war. This was the time for those in its service to exercise their imagination and judge the situation before answering. If peasants learnt that it had sanctioned the war, then they would go to it knowing that Nyabingi was leading them. Its followers believed that Nyabingi would not lead them to war if it did not sanction it. It was assumed that Nyabingi would punish them if they fought badly and lost the war that it had sanctioned. This forced them to fight even harder. It preached action, courage and encouraged struggles against oppression and exploitation. In these

circumstances, where the enemy was an already established institution, secrecy was a 'sine qua non'. It was because of this that the Abagirwa stressed the importance of secrecy and revenged on all traitors under the cover of Nyabingi.

The question arises as to why it was Nyabingi which developed as people's religion amidst so many religions. In other words, the limitations of the other religions became a fertile ground for Nyabingi and its strengths. In the absence of any organised force to protect these people from internal and external threats, the oppressed found a vent in Nyabingi.

However, new developments led women to the fore in some of these military ventures. This was greatly achieved with the emergence of colonialism in this area. People prayed to this Nyabingi religion and dedicated their lives, relatives and property to its care. Colonial repression and witch-hunt forced the membership of Nyabingi to become very secretive and changed the methods and times of worship.

Selection of young females into the ranks of Nyabingi religion was highly secretive, mysterious and frightening. This process always took place at night. The sign for the selected girl was a metallic rod or spear which would be placed in-between the thighs of a chosen girl. From that morning, it would be clearly known and spread among the peasants how Nyabingi had selected so-and-so into its service. No one would object or contradict this choice. Peasants would begin to respect and fear such girls. However, we need to transcend these idealistic postulations and deceits in order to understand why this selection was made in the dark, at night, when people were asleep. This was because the Abagirwa, who carried out these secret missions of selection wanted to hoodwink the peasants and maintain the myth and sacredness in the exercise and institution. A breach of this practice would have undermined the process, the Nyabingi institution and would have forced peasants, especially men to resist such choices and the legitimacy of the Abagirwa. It was therefore imperative to have people believe that these were works of supernatural forces.

Before carrying out that mission, the *Omugirwa* would first carry out a secret survey of the house, how the residents slept, their sleeping time and habits, and the positions of sleeping of different individuals in the house. In the night of selection of the girl, the *Omugirwa* would sneak into the house in the dark, place the rod between the thighs of the girl that would have been singled out. This metallic rod symbolised her being chosen as Nyabingi's defender. Of course, this type of secrecy impressed it on the peasants that it was Nyabingi, which had made the selection. Even those who had some doubts and reservations about the whole process had to keep quiet so as to

avoid invoking the wrath of Nyabingi spirit or of its Abagirwa. This had the effect of imposing more discipline and fear on the peasants. In fact, that was one of the reasons why all actions in the name of Nyabingi demanded top secrecy. In this case, the chosen girl would then go into the service of Nyabingi under senior Abagirwa. The economic implication was that such girls would no longer engage in material production, nor would they get married in the traditional way to bring in wealth as livestock in form of bride price. Bride price was very important in wealth accumulation, livestock products, and in acquiring wives. In these societies, women felt some pride and enjoyed some prestige and material benefits if they brought in wealth in form of bride price. Women were critical in both production of wealth and reproduction. *Okutweija* divorced those girls from the honour of women, which was through marriage and reproduction of children. They could not live a married life that they might have been dreaming of and rear their own children. Furthermore, such females could marry by the high priest giving them freely to a man that Nyabingi wanted to reward. The chosen girl(s) would be initiated into its secrets and defence. This allowed them the chance to hold instruments of coercion: the spear, the matchete etc. Nyabingi institution ruled that everyone in its service had to use these weapons for its defence. While this seemed to alleviate these females from the direct oppression and exploitation of Nyineka, they had now come under the direct control of the High priests/priestesses and the strict discipline of Nyabingi institution. By then, the Abagirwa believed in Nyabingi, feared it, and had to obey its commands. As such, this choice deprived them of private life with personal wishes, actions and programmes.

These expensive economic sacrifices became a source of discontent and fear among men. However, they could not say anything in fear of Nyabingi's reprisals. This worsened when the Abagirwa began accumulating wealth in form of cattle, which they had acquired from them in the name of Nyabingi. Some men harboured some internal grudges but could not express it because of fear. The Abagirwa gradually accumulated some wealth in form of livestock under the cover of Nyabingi. This livestock was got from peasants. This was another reason why it was essential to initiate all those in the service of Nyabingi into defence of Nyabingi, themselves and their property. Abagirwa had therefore to be militant and were always armed.

In a context of continuous armed struggles between Nyabingi followers against the established order, privileged groups and persons, Nyabingi religion had to preach more vigorously for the application of instruments of violence by the oppressed. This was a point of departure from the past where weapons were the exclusive monopoly of men.

As Nyabingi was against armed established order, its fold had to be

militant for self-preservation. Its Abagirwa and followers had to be militant for defence purposes. They also had to broaden its social base among the population. This became easy as women would meet other women so easily in the gardens and fields, or as they worked or while going to dig and in the process they would transmit information about Nyabingi, and talk about her exploits. Women were also in a better position to pass on the teachings and influence of Nyabingi to the young, and the dependants. All these made Nyabingi get rooted into their lives. This explains why there were many female Abagirwa, who organised, led and sustained these anti-colonial resistances under Nyabingi for over two and half decades. It also explains partly why it was impossible to defeat Nyabingi militarily despite superior arms, technology and skills. In sum-total, Nyabingi religion tried to address social, political, economic and military issues of the people. Thus, these anti-colonial struggles were not a continuation of the Hobbesian situation where "human life has no value amongst them".²¹ They were a response to a social crisis and had specific objectives of self-emancipation and preservation. Nyabingi religion gave resistance ideological guidance, leadership and strength. The military option under Nyabingi, was the feasible option for them against the invading armed forces. In this contest, Nyabingi sided with peasant resisters, who represented popular interests against colonialism which represented oppressive, exploitative alien interests.

Being a new and dynamic religion, it developed a mechanism of providing new leadership and theories in times of crises, that led to separation of leadership from membership. What this shows is that in a desperate situation, with no organisation or forum, minorities in many cases resort to any organised platform like religion, which allows them a platform for articulating their interests. In such circumstances, it gives them a stage for realising or defending their rights. It gives them some form of promise, hope and a sense of direction. Religion, at this stage, increases in relating to these people's material existence. It is only in religion where they find some solution. However, it should also be understood that in oppressive and exploitatively harsh conditions, the victims still find some solace in religion. In this context, religion is at the service of the exploiters and oppressors. It is in here that one of the functions of religion is to obscure the existing relations between the various social groups within that social formation.

In Nyabingi's context, there was marked development in the role of women both in its service and defence, right from the pre-colonial to the colonial Kigezi. As society underwent changes, there were changes that

²¹ A.D.C. Sullivan to P.C.W.P. on 30/9/1913. Also see P.C.W.P. to C.S. 10/10/1913.

Nyabingi institution also underwent. We see it developing very fast at the advent of colonialism. Colonialism at this time gave Nyabingi a broader platform for mobilisation and action. The leadership fell mainly in the hands of Abagirwa. Anyone who mobilised peasants into armed struggles against colonialism had to use Nyabingi. As such, the first armed struggles were characterised by spontaneity and were short-lived. There was poor planning of peasant forces against well-armed, sophisticated enemy forces, who were professional. During the course of this paper, we shall evidence continuous victory of colonial forces over Nyabingi Movement arising mainly from poor planning and organisations, lack of unity, poor arms against a superior enemy, 'inter alia'. However, the objective factor stems from the different levels of development of these contending forces.

It is with the coming in of the war between the colonial powers that Nyabingi became very vibrant, and reached its climax. We see at this point serious, long and bloody resistances emerging under the leadership of various personalities, with different historical origins, training, experience and knowledge of struggle. Some of these were army deserters from colonial forces and colonial chiefs. Others had returned from deportation, where they acquired a lot of knowledge about the enemy, his weapons, how to acquire and use these weapons and his weaknesses. It was during their colonial service or detentions that they also created friends and allies in the enemy's forces. What was most important was the planning and timing of their struggle when the imperialist war was raging, their capacity to incorporate various sections of society into the movement, as well as their capacity to sustain their struggles for years without selling out and their willingness to die struggling.

When colonialism invaded the area, the charismatic Abagirwa took up initiative in studying the situation and mobilising people into militant resistance. It was this group which had a long history of resistance to draw from and outstanding guidelines to follow. Colonialism was not the first threat. It only increased the number of adversaries of Nyabingi. The Abagirwa had to defend their spiritual beliefs, inspiration, ideals and secular interests. Nyabingi was also the source of their social status. As already shown, Abagirwa were very important in this society for people's temporal and spiritual needs. Tied to their roles was the accumulation process taking place. Their position had become lucrative as they accumulated livestock and other forms of wealth. As Nyabingi was expanding to more lineages and areas, this meant broadening both their social and economic bases. The truth was that without Nyabingi, the Abagirwa institution would be no more and so would be the privileges that accrued to that position.

Confronted with this invincible external aggressor, the peasants became

paralysed. They had no immediate solution, Bakuru B'emiryango could not provide solutions to save them. It was in this situation that the Abagirwa understood correctly that the solution lay in mobilising peasants into armed resistance. These events forced peasants to develop more confidence and reverence into these Abagirwa, including even those men who had been harbouring some internal grudges against Abagirwa and Nyabingi. In this time of war, people saw the Abagirwa as charismatic. They gave solid leadership regardless of their historical origin or social position. Their charismatic leadership, mobilisation, recruitment drive, organisation and resistance inspired more courage into the peasant resisters even after defeat. This had the effect of inspiring into peasants more commitment to self-emancipation than perhaps ever.

Colonialism had come by force, imposed itself and had to survive by force. It cannot be forgotten that all states are armed institutions and must depend on coercion - whether they are organically developed from below or imposed from above. The presence and legitimacy of this colonial state were therefore contested bitterly. Peasants wanted it to go. That is why they attacked colonialism and its allies. As the former were hidden away, its allies and agents, who were the visible representatives of the system, became the immediate target. These lived nearest, were the men on the ground implementing the contested policies, imposing colonial demands, administering, judging cases, assessing and collecting taxes.

Nyabingi Movement underwent a transformation during this struggle. As struggles intensified, some Abagirwa took up its personification. This was mainly for political and military purposes. The need for this transformation sprang from the contradictions between the Abagirwa and some lineage heads who opposed the war or defied being led by women to war. The Abagirwa realised the importance of this transformation in asserting their authority over the membership. It would help them to dictate commands and orders over the membership and maintain control over them. This would have the effect of imposing discipline. Being a Nyabingi personification allowed them the right to deal with any individual(s) or group(s) with dissenting views in a way that they wished. It also had the effect of encouraging the peasant resisters into courageous struggle as they would feel that they were led by Nyabingi's personification. It had the effect of increasing peasants' fears of Nyabingi. This helped to consolidate their resistance, beliefs, unity and secrecy. Its weakness was that the resisters would be blinded by this illusion to attack this sophisticated enemy without retreat. This led to massacres.

The D.C. outlined in June 1919 how Nabingi cult had been a foreign element throughout RWANDA, opposed to the established native "religion",

revolutionary in method and anarchic in effect.

On the advent of the protecting powers the European element was included, equally with the two other privileged classes of Watussi and Watwa, within the scope of its virulence. By means of an unusually developed form of witchcraft, in which hypnotic suggestion plays a leading part, the country within the sphere of its operation is completely terrorised. (sic!)²²

He submitted that it was deeply rooted in the whole region; 'Thus ideal means and conditions are created for ... fomenting and organisation of rebellion, and (the most serious feature of all) absolute secrecy ensured'. They had learnt that the character of the society '... does not shrink from organising attacks in force on fortified positions held by troops'. It had become clear to colonialism that

"Nyabingi" is indestructible: thus the break up of the agitation and the arrest of the practicers would not convince anyone of the futility of the practicers' claims but would only point to the ill luck of the chosen media and to the fact that the "nyabingi" had left them to settle elsewhere. It does however have a salutary effect in causing others to be more modest before claiming to be possessed by nyabingi.²³

By 1930, colonialism had come to understand the complex character of Nyabingi, how it was deeply rooted in people's lives; '"Nyabingi" is a female spirit which is the god and religion of these people and therefore the difficulty in eradicating the beliefs is extreme and will take years until education gradually helps to stamp it out'.²⁴

While colonialism was using European religions for penetration, it could not tolerate Nyabingi religion. It therefore had to use all weapons and personnel against Nyabingi. Another important difference lay in personnel. While Abagirwa were from this area and spoke local languages, colonial personnel were different in colour, language, and culture. All these helped peasants to compare the two forces. Many of them understood the historical and social usefulness of Nyabingi. The first contest therefore had to be military.

Events that Precipitated Nyabingi Movement

As the Bakiga say, dogs browse on crops of a person with misfortunes.

²² D.C's report of 26/6/1919. U.N.A. Entebbe.

²³ Fidem.

²⁴ D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 29/5/1930.

Colonial invasion was following a series of crises that had hit these peasants and weakened them. The persistent disastrous drought had caused a great famine which caused untold deaths. This was followed by plague and other diseases. At their heels followed Batwa bands, who invaded them for food and killed many of the survivors. Those who survived and fled these crises lost their cattle, lives or wives in the process to people where they had run to. The survivors and returnees then confronted Belgian forces which came killing, looting, and raping. Then followed the Germans.²⁵ The colonial report of 6/9/1911 described the situation thus:

Apart from the recent change in European control which is in itself an unsettling factor in the native mind, two principle causes have continued to make the settlement of the district ... slow and difficult... the severe famine which devastated Rukiga and the adjacent countries some four years ago - Rukiga was almost depopulated and the few remaining inhabitants fell an easy prey to marauding bands of Batwa, a hill tribe from the south ... The majority of the Bakiga took refuge in the neighbouring countries of Ruanda and of the Chief Makaburri and have only in the last two years commenced returning ... in most cases the Bakiga lost the greater part of their stock, either from the famine, the Batwa or from the heavy toll levied by the inhabitants of the countries they took refuge in as the price of their temporary sojourn.²⁶

If we focus on the subjective factors, we find that while the conditions of oppression were widespread, peasant organisation against it was limited. The explanation lies in their low level of production, still at lineage level, where the household was a self-satisfying economic unit in terms of material resources, and organisation at community level was still on ad hoc basis, in response to crises. There was no organised armed force or an in-built systematic defence system to fight oppression or invasion.

This was a time of profound crisis. Everyone was forced to think about the whole situation. They were not only the men that got involved in the thinking about the crisis and of the means for survival, but every member of society got involved. They were these crises that gave women a broader chance of

²⁵ We learnt from our respondents how the Germans and Belgians came massacring peasants. The encounter between Belgian colonialists and peasants of Bugarama and Kitare. Concretises this. The besieged peasants hid in rocks. They used ropes to lift their cattle up the rocks. When the adversaries came, peasants rolled rocks at them. When the latter tried to shoot up at them, they hit the rock and finally left, defeated. Also refer to the Kavu Case in which Belgians killed 32 peasants and looted cattle on 21/3/1916. Le General Commandant en Chief admitted this crime on 22/10/1916 and paid 170 heads of cattle. File: War With Germany; Kavu Incident. U.N.A. Entebbe.

²⁶ Kigezi Monthly Report of 6/9/1911.

thinking and acting. As they confronted particular problems and solved them, especially during the famine. Women applied diplomacy in the new places that they shifted to and as they did things that men could not manage at that time, like taking charge of impossible situation when their husbands could not manage due to being feeble or to lack of capacity such as conning their hosts, stealing food, telling lies to get food or credit from people that they did not know. This pathetic situation led them to carry out men's roles like building shelter when men were too weak to do anything or, labouring for food to save their households from death, or taking these starving households to relations or families of their original parents or actually dead. This had the effect of promoting them to a higher level than ever before.

It was in these crises that women began to hold weapons for self defence in case of attack - when the husband was very weak, sick, away or dead. In other words, while the crises wiped out thousands of peasants, fragmented societies and forced many to flee, their positive contribution was to release women and youths from the former strong male domination. The role of defence now fell on everyone's shoulders. Women became tougher and resolute. This also gave them more time to worship and practise Nyabingi religion, put their lives under its care and make a lot of requests and promises to it. The Abagirwa increased in number and in their work of identifying with the suffering people, assisted them in these problems and sicknesses. This gave them chance to preach Nyabingi religion and broaden its base among the peasants.

The other religions and gods were superseded by Nyabingi. So, when colonialism invaded, all sections of society were forced to think and act. Members recalled the experience they had passed through, the role Nyabingi and its Abagirwa had played. In areas which had not been seriously hit by these crises, the same old social relations obtained. What we get is a situation of struggles at various levels. At one level is the struggle with Belgian, German and British imperialism. At another level is a struggle against men's domination at household level or against inefficient, useless chiefs by a cross section of society. At another level are struggles between minorities and other dominating sections of society. There is also a level of spiritual struggles. We find the various religious beliefs struggling for both supremacy and converts.

What is interesting is that this colonial invasion had been foretold by Nyakeirima Ka Muzoora. He had warned them of an imminent invasion by people with wings like butterflies, who travelled in 'grain stores'. These prophecies were proved by the eventual arrival of colonialists, who came in motor cars on roads (Nyakeirima's long ropes that tied the world) and aeroplanes. Though this prophecy had spread in the region, peasants did not take it seriously and make necessary military preparations. They realised it too

late. They were aware that any defeat was disastrous for them as individuals and as a people. They had no option other than defending themselves, their land and property. They knew that there were no other people to defend them other than themselves. When imperialism came in a violent form, elders, Abagirwa, peasants all searched for solutions. It was at this time that Abagirwa declared war against the invading force, and led the peasants to war. They promised to turn bullets and guns into water and chase away Europeans. On the other hand, British colonialism, claimed this area and gave itself the role of 'liberating' peasants from all these problems; and from 'the alien Nyabingi, its Abagirwa and their demands', Makobore and his Bahima, crises like famine, Batwa, paganism and above all, from anarchy and violence to organised administration, from Belgian and German terror. But, could colonialism determine correctly what the peasants needed without first knowing who these peasants were?

Peasants did not sit idle spectating. Absence of a state, an armed force or any other organised force to protect them and their rights did not mean inaction. They rose up in arms against the three colonial powers. These peasants had a long history of crises and struggles to draw from. As the colonial forces proved more sophisticated and threatened all the peasants, it became the basis for them to resolve their earlier differences and join forces to defend their rights. Nyabingi Resistance ensued against this invasion from 1910-1930s.

Developments in Nyabingi Movement

Nyabingi Movement can be divided into four sections. The first one was in pre-colonial period. In here, Nyabingi religion was developing at the expense of the other religions, mobilising peasants against internal enemies and external aggressors. In its early stages, various peoples used it. As an instance, the Batwa used it to raid the peasants.²⁷ These peasants gradually adopted the same Nyabingi religion to defend themselves against the Batwa, and other lineages. The oppressed peasants in Rwanda were informed and guided by Nyabingi to struggle against the ruling class in Rwanda. In other areas like Ndorwa, some lineages accepted Nyabingi religion. Their belief in it became instrumental for their defence against the wrath and potency of other religions and lineages. Nyabingi gradually permeated deep to household

²⁷ Colin, Turnbull (1961) *The Forest People*; London: Paladin. In his narrative, he illustrates how peasants were prisoners of the supernatural and witchcraft, and how the Pygmies took advantage of this backwardness of these peasants to frighten them and deprive them of their property.

levels. Most of the membership came from the oppressed sections of society. They saw solutions to most of their problems in Nyabingi. Nyabingi gradually became important in being invoked to seal and oversee certain sensitive agreements, social practices and promises like blood brotherhood and swearing.

The second phase of Nyabingi begins with colonial invasion: 1909-1914. Here, peasants are paralysed by the new invaders. Peasants realise the dangers of this invasion and the immediate solution is a call to action. Nyabingi religion is very dynamic; more Abagirwa spring up to replace the killed, or deported and broaden the struggle. Here, recruitment is mainly based on nationalities, lineages, and groups; the Abagirwa, lineage leaders, and elders play an important role in the recruitment of membership into the movement. At this time of the movement, voluntary joining of membership into the membership is still limited. It should be understood that a leader joined the movement with all those under him. Even lineages and peoples who had earlier refused to accept Nyabingi religion came to believe in it as all their other religions were silent about the solution to this crisis. These other religious beliefs and gods are at this time limited to a much more individual level, lack a united mass of worshippers, lack of a revolutionary programme and history. Their main weakness stems from absence of spiritual leaders who live off the surplus of peasants and whose duties are spiritual, or political like the Abagirwa. This would have made them more resistant to any force that threatens their positions. That is why peasants come to see more hope in Nyabingi's powers, judgment and actions. Different sections of society see the military option as vital, accept Nyabingi's leadership and join the struggle. They see the Abagirwa as very charismatic, which inspires even more peasants into this resistance. They fight for their beliefs. Here, *Okutweija* and rituals of initiations are undermined as the situation demands prompt action.

It is in this period that women come to the front and play an active role in leadership and combat. Seeing the various challenges and internal opposition from some lineage heads and fearing some problems likely to arise from leadership and membership of women in war, some of these Abagirwa transformed into Nyabingi personifications. This phase is marked by spontaneous, sporadic insurgencies. There is mobilisation with minimal organisation of peasants into a sustained, coherent struggle. The peasants are still rooted to the ground like their crops, the leadership has not developed the capacity, skills and focus to create and sustain a struggle for a long period. People still struggle within their environment, in a circumscribed area.

The two major differences between these struggles and the pre-colonial ones lies in the fact that women form the bulk in the leadership and that the principle enemy is now from without, visible, better armed. However, they do

not understand concretely the basis of this invading force, its military strength and the need to make a more comprehensive military planning, organisation; the need for broader unity among various enganda so as to resist at the same time. Another objective weakness arises from the divisions between Enganda. These pre-colonial divisions were based on past battles. This blocked any possibility for their unity. This resulted in the first struggles to be fragmented, spontaneous and short-lived.

The third phase begins with the world war of the years 1914 to 1919. This is a period when Nyabingi movement reaches its climax. Not only does its membership increase numerically but it also develops qualitatively. There is a marked change in the recruitment process. A new leadership emerges, which is versed with the enemy and its methods of war, knows the enemy's strengths and weaknesses. Most of this leadership arises from the colonial services or from deportations and detentions. Being in colonial service or in deportation outside Kigezi gives them chance to sever their roots from the environment. It also becomes an opportunity to expand their knowledge about the geography and environment, increasing friends, learning more languages etc; so as to understand their military weaknesses and the need to acquire, incorporate, master, and use the enemy's methods of war and weaponry. They also acquire fire arms and ammunition from the adversary.

It is also from the enemy that the leadership learns and appreciates the need of mass organisation, intensive preparations and involvement of the population into the struggle. This stay in the enemy's camp also enables them to appreciate the need for mobility, inflicting sharp, short injuries on the enemy and the importance of preserving the fighting forces from being annihilated. It is in here that they learn to change from the peasant method of direct charging by masses on the strong enemy to guerrilla warfare. They create and sustain armed struggle for years with mobile guerrilla forces. Recruitment of the membership also undergoes some qualitative change. It changes from massive, spontaneous forms. The new leadership recruits the membership basing on its programme. We find that in some cases, recruitment is based on willingness, ability and military skills. There is intensive conscientisation and preparation. The leadership adopts more secretive methods, introduces blood-brotherhoods, oaths and other important cultural practices that could help to unite the movement. It trains the membership into the techniques of attack and self-defence, the need for mobility and concealment in the rear-bases, and among the peasants. This is re-emphasized by colonial attacks, joint-military expeditions and screening. These help to sever the resisters' roots from the agricultural rhythm.

The fourth phase begins with the 1920s up to the 1930s. Here, Nyabingi

movement is undermined by various factors. These include constant defeats, the deaths of the strong leadership -Ndochibiri, Ruhemba etc., whom resisters and peasants took to be immortal. This is worsened by the adversary's permanent presence, counter-insurgency, reprisals and raids. The various reforms and programmes that colonialism initiates to undermine Nyabingi and defeat this movement, the continued repression and witch-hunt for Nyabingi-ites have a great impact on the resisters. Coupled with this is the availability of other alternatives to Nyabingi religion - namely Christianity and Islam. Peasants begin to appeal to the state, and to use the colonial legal machinery against state policies and its related institutions and against fellow peasants etc.

By late 1930s, Nyabingi Movement had been undermined. Through public addresses, lies, threats and peasant rationality, and opportunism. Many peasants joined the new religions. The peasants participated in these new religions and by 1939, women led a threatening movement: Revivalism *Ruvaivuro*. However, Christianity fails to provide solutions to the key social, economic, health and political issues. As such, a religious movement known as *Mukaaka* in 1970s attracts a cross section of society. Its origins and development have to be traced in the economic, social and political crises of the time and the mounting dictatorship in 1970s. It attends to people's social, economic and psychological problems. In response to the mounting social, political and economic crises, this movement has given way to *Abarangi*. The leadership of this movement is predominantly composed of females.

This new institution has incorporated some aspects of Christianity with Nyabingi aspects. However, they are paid money. After pretences to commune with the supernatural force, they offer medicine and advice to the clients. The Abarangi attend to all types of social, economic, psychological and supernatural issues.

The Abarangi Movement is increasing in number in leadership and membership. The established Churches are threatened by Abarangi and preach vehemently against them. Their appeals to the State to stop Abarangi's activities failed. We find that the Abarangi are attracting more people from the other religions. This facilitates the Abarangi to accumulate wealth much more easily and quickly than the pre-colonial Abagirwa. The explanation to why they are increasing in number and popularity has to be sought in the type of issues that they are addressing, how they are addressing them, etc.

Although the two institutions are not linked in any way, there are some similarities between them. This is evident in the problems they address, their composition in terms of gender, their extraction of the surplus value from the peasants and the accumulation process. The explanation for the rise of this new religious movement and its popularity lies in the economic hardships arising partly

from exploitation, corruption, the impact of anti-people programmes and advice of IMF and World Bank especially SAPs. There is deepening misery. There is no medicine in hospitals, they have no wherewithal to pay school fees, thousands are faced with the problem of landlessness, others are faced with diminishing agricultural yields due to perennial tilling of the same plots of land, without resting or fertilising them. Others are faced with lack of market for their meagre crops, etc. Peasants do not understand scientifically what has gone wrong, and have therefore resorted to these new, exploitative religious movement. The Abarangi institution thrives on people's misery and destitution. As one of our respondents put it, people would not be rushing to consult them if they were useless.²⁸

²⁸ Response by Mbaguta. One of his sisters is in leadership in this new institution.

Section Three

Colonial Invasion and the Creation of Kigezi

The question why Africa became the target and victim of European capitalism in the last centuries has been addressed by a lot of scholars. The reasons lie in the desperate need for cheap permanent sources of raw materials produced by cheap labour for the ever expanding European industries, markets for the European industrial products, places for reinvestment and re-exportation, and places for resettling her ever-increasing population. See Mamdani (1976, 1983), Mukherjee (1984), Lenin (1986) Rodney (1976). As full control of any market entails political control, imperialism had to take political control of Africa - hence the inevitability of colonialism. The explanation why the three colonial powers struggled viciously amongst each other and against peasants for Kigezi lies in the Political Officer's communication to the C.S. in January 1910 on his scramble for territory;

I would like to remind His Majesty's Government that if our object in acquiring the Mfumbiro District is to obtain a route for the Cape to Cairo railway, it will be necessary to include within a strip of the Rutshuru Valley, since the hills to the S.E. present an impassable barrier to the passage of a railway.

The Belgian Post at Rutshuru will be untenable once the Mfumbiro District comes under us since all food supplies for their troops and employees is drawn from here.²⁹

But as this region was not empty and the inhabitants were not objects of history, what were their reactions to this invasion and the consequent imposition of political control over them from outside? How did this area come under colonial rule? While European missionaries were an important forward force in the colonisation of Africa, this was not the case in the present Kigezi. The first European parties to settle in the Kivu-Mulera region were Catholic Missionaries.³⁰ These White Fathers had penetrated the region, opened it up, set up mission stations and carried out their mission of preaching. However, they were resisted in various ways. Mulera peasants murdered Loupias, the Father Superior of the French Catholic Mission on

²⁹ Coote's letter of 21/1/1910 to Ag C.S. in File on Border Demarcation U.N.A. Entebbe.>

³⁰Mukasa, S. (1912) "Olugendo Olw'Abakulu Abe Mbalala mu Kigezi ne mu Rwanda". Kampala: Munno, Dec. 1912. He shows how Catholic Missionaries had set up mission stations, with many Catholic Priests and Brothers, and Catholic Converts, very good churches of fired bricks and tiles.

1/4/1910 and were not apprehended.^{31*} This new church was already sowing seeds of hatred and enmity among the peasants. Mukasa showed that there was great hostility between the Catholic converts and the "Pagans", that the latter hated the Catholic priests right from the beginning and wanted to kill them. In his account, the neighbourhood was full of enemies, who had killed two Catholic priests, one boy, three catholic converts and two pagans in one hour.³² In the scramble for this region, the British on their arrival found the Belgians and Germans in the region. Its arrival sparked off serious protests. Monsieur Davignon protested against British encroachment on Belgian colony in September 1909.^{33*} These peasants at Kibimba resisted forced food contributions to the British forces under Campbell despite Coote's threats. Coote imprisoned their leadership and force them to contribute food. The Belgians based on these atrocities against the peasants to accuse them.

This inter-imperialist struggle reached a peak when the Belgian soldiers arrested the British forces at Rubona, and detained them for about a month before they escaped to Mbarara. We find that they were the peasants who had to pay the price for British invasion. Granville complained of the invasion by Congolese forces, looting peasants' property, killing a woman, wounding, raping and abducting some peasants.³⁴ The defence for British colonialism was that this area was not civilly administered until 1912. The implication of this statement is that this area was pre-political, with a vacuum for leadership.

³¹ Letter of The Political Officer, Kivu Mission to the Ag C.S. dated 9/4/1910. File No.147/09 U.N.A. Entebbe.

³²: K.D. Report of 3/5/1912 reported the capture of Chief LUKARRA, for the murder of the French Father LOUPIAS. He had been captured by the Imperial Resident of Rwanda. Chief BIRAHIRA had been giving him sanctuary. Other resisters: Mujaruhara and Manuka were in hiding in British territory near Mt. Muhabura. U.N.A. Entebbe.

³³ Idem. Mukasa recounted how they crossed Bukamba from Rwaza with loaded guns.

³⁴ Davignon maintained his protest against the entry of British forces under Coote in Belgian Territory. He condemned their establishing a camp on River Kigezi, in violation of the Clause of the General Berlin Act, which prescribed the use of mediation before arms. He showed how the Anglo-German arrangements of first July, 1890 and 19th May, 1909 did not attribute this territory to Britain. He reiterated this in his letter to the Baron Greindl on 19/7/1909.

³⁵: Refer to Communication of Von Schoen to Baron Greindl of 30/7/1909; communication of British Foreign Office of 17/8/1909; and "Agreement Respecting the Boundary Between the North-Western Portion of German East Africa and Uganda" of 19/5/1909 which in referring to the rights derived from the Agreements of 8/11/1884 and 1/7/1890 in which Germany ceded to Britain parts of Mfumbiro region that she held and Britain promised to make no further claims on Germany. Document: "Boundaries: Uganda - Congo"; Olsen's letter to D.C. Kigezi of 12/7/1909; No. 405 and Political Officer to the Ag C.S. of 3/9/1909. File: No. 147/09 U.N.A. Entebbe.

³⁶ Granville to Davignon on 8/11/1909 op. cit.

This legitimised British invasion to save the situation. It does not take into account the form of politics that was in existence at that particular time. It negates existence of the inhabitants' history, deprives them of any form of politics.

The inter-imperialist and anti-imperialist rivalries intensified. While at Ihunga, Cap. Ireland, had communicated to the O.C. Uganda Protectorate Troops, in 1909 about this rivalry, on the contradictions between Belgians and Germans. Fifteen Belgian askaris had deserted with arms and ammunition on 21/11/1909 unpursued. This continued in the subsequent period. Captain Ireland reported in March 1910 low morale and massive desertions among Belgian troops due to heavy death toll. 37 Belgian troops had died of dysentery since August 1909. 23 troops had deserted with arms and ammunition previously.³⁵ He urged British colonialism to take advantage of the impending peasants' armed resistance against Belgian colonial force.

The British knew how Belgians were weak militarily, and discredited in these areas by the untold atrocities. Belgian troops had lost morale due to horrible working conditions, neglect, diseases and death. The British Consulate in Congo communicated all these and the need for British colonial government to take advantage of the situation as;

a conflict with British troops would be the signal for a general uprising in the Congo amongst the natives. They would be quite unable to rely on the fidelity of their troops The native troops are nothing less than savages, looking, as they do, upon the British as the only hope of salvation from the state of oppression in which they have lived for so many years. (Sic!) Should hostilities commence the European population would be in imminent danger of being massacred.... Government would be utterly powerless to resist such a rising...³⁶

These mistakes created a fertile ground for the experienced British Imperialism to occupy the region using the rhetoric of liberation. Drawing from its past colonial experience and mistakes elsewhere, it adopted cunning tactics. This was in contrast to the crude, naked brutality and exploitative practices by Belgian and German colonialists. To this end, the Political Officer urged the British state to compensate the peasants; `...since all the above mentioned crimes were perpetrated as a direct result of our withdrawal from the country and were intended as petty acts of revenge on the part of the Belgian authorities...'³⁷ He underlined the urgency to appease peasants by

³⁵ Report of Cap. Ireland on 3/3/1910, 4th K.A.R. commanding Kivu Mission. U.N.A. Entebbe.

³⁶ The British Consulate in Congo on 22/11/1909 reported the discontent of Belgian askaris which led to an abortive plot.

³⁷ Cap.Ireland at Ihunga to the Officer Commanding Troops, Uganda Protectorate, on

compensating them 'would not only have a most excellent effect in the district but would be a retributive act calculated to clear us of the moral responsibility which at present rests on us'.³⁸ Though these did not affect its imperialist objectives, this approach made the British colonialists appear less dangerous than the others. This inter-imperialist rivalry had to be resolved diplomatically or militarily. Events seemed to be leading to the latter option. British imperialism had deliberately created this situation. The question is why they did not resort to military option. As reported in the 1941, 'The 1911 boundary dispute with Belgians had been likely to lead to local fighting, led to the International Commission with Belgium, Germany to mark out the frontier.'³⁹ The Boundary Agreement of 19/5/1909 was nullified, a new Team was constituted to demarcate a new International Boundary, which would accommodate the new changes. Britain and Belgium concluded yet another agreement in Brussels on 14/5/1910.⁴⁰ Another Agreement was concluded on August 26th 1910 in Berlin between Britain and Germany. These culminated into the Anglo-German-Belgian Boundary Commission of 1911.^{41*} As this boundary process did not take into consideration the interests and rights of the indigenous peasants, it had far-reaching consequences on peasants. However, this is beyond the scope of this study.

Establishment of British Colonial Rule

There was no broad visible, organised political structure in the area, which British colonialism could manipulate to introduce, promote and protect British interests through its demagogic of Protectionism called "Indirect Rule". As such, it was forced to import wholesale a state apparatus and a train of

26/11/1909. Also see The Anglo-German Agreements of 1/7/1890 and of 19/5/1909. File: Boundaries: Uganda - Congo.

³⁸ Political Officer, Kigezi to Ag colonial Secretary on 3/9/1909.

³⁹ Article: "Notes On Kigezi District" File: Historical and Political Notes (West), 1941. U.N.A. Entebbe.

⁴⁰ Refer to "Uganda Congo Boundary Agreement. Convention Between Belgium and Britain" of 14/5/1910 signed in Brussels. File: Boundaries: Uganda-Congo. U.N.A. Entebbe.

⁴¹ File: Boundaries: Uganda - Congo. "Instructions for the Fixed German - British - Boundary Commission", Agreed to in Berlin on 26/8/1910.

*: Also see Kigezi Monthly Reports of 30/4/1911 and 9/6/1911 on the Border Settlement and the signing between the British and the Belgians. Also "Anglo-German-Belgian Boundary Commission. Anglo-German Boundary Sabinio to S.W. Source of Chizinga" - "The Protocol in English" signed on 30/10/1911 & "Anglo - German Boundary, Protocol" signed on 11/12/1911. Kigezi Monthly Report of 30/1/1912. D.C. Mbarara dated 9/1/1912 on "German - Boundary: New Territory, Ceremonial Transfers". File 3226 Part II show how Kigezi Border was demarcated.

administrators, soldiers, and traders from Britain, Buganda, Ankole, Tanganyika

The Counties of Kigezi District 1927

Tanganyika and India to man it. Dominance of Agents from Buganda in the administration led to the establishment of a hybrid of Kiganda - British form of administration, articulating British interests. The key sensitive jobs were combined and controlled by British personnel. This was due to lack of trained manpower, fear of administrative costs and mistrust of the colonised. To concretise this, the Ag. Crown advocate notified the Political Officer, on 7/7/1911 that as the latter had been appointed A.D.C. Kigezi from 1/11/1910, 'by a notice under the subordinate Courts Ordinance, 1902, dated 4/6/1909, you have been appointed a magistrate of the second class to exercise your powers within the local area counterminous with the administrative District to which you may be from time to time appointed.'⁴² A situation was created where duties of conviction were fused with those of prosecution and execution under same officers. This complicated the question of impartiality, justice, and mercy in the colonial system as will be seen later.

British colonialism used agents mainly from Buganda to invade, conquer, reorganize and administer this region. Buganda region had reached a higher level of state formation with a complex administrative system. Baganda had accepted to co-operate with British colonialism. This was in harmony with colonial interests to preserve resources. As an old imperial power - both in America and Asia, Britain was not blind to the pros and cons of using agents. It had gained a rich experience in India to draw from. Although it did not commit all this on paper, it is clear that at that time, the choice of alien agents was the appropriate choice. In addition to being of the same colour with the peasants in the region, Luganda language was nearer to the local ones and so was culture. This made it easy for them to communicate the colonialists' wishes to these people. Baganda agents would be used to implement unpopular, anti-people colonial policies. This would help to hide the real enemy. The oppressed would see the Baganda agents, not British colonialism as the enemy.⁴³ It depended on these agents for local administration, judging local cases. which led them to dominate the political, economic and social life of the peasants. The first people to resist them were peasants under Makobore. Colonialism saw these resisters as 'a mere curb on the advancement and progress of the district'. Colonialism resorted to its ploy of sympathising with one section of the peasants. It was isolating the other section so as to lay ground for attack. It therefore took a pro-peasants' supposedly stance, 'The

⁴² Ag Crown Advocate to the Political Officer, Kigezi on 7/7/1911. File: Kigezi: *Fighting by Natives "Sentences Passed on Natives of Makuburri's Country."* N.A.

⁴³ Captain Brooks in his report: Mahagi Military Garrison, Feb. 1912 drew lessons from the military recruitment of Belgian troops from all sorts of tribes as the best method of obtaining efficiency and avoiding resistance. However, this was no sure guarantee against mutinies and desertions as already seen although it had the effect of minimising them.

peasants in this district appear to be greatly oppressed by the Bahima'. It is no wonder, therefore that the A.D.C. Mbarara led 30 police and crashed this resistance the following year.⁴⁴ One of the administrative solutions of 1913 was to divide the thickly populated area into Sazas and Gombololas with Baganda agents in charge and sub-gombololas with Bakiga in charge. It would divide the people and also train local people into manning the system. To colonialism, the crisis was that these people were `... addicted to excessive beer drinking and while under its influence, ... were very liable to be quarrelsome and use their spears instead of their fists'. It was confronted with Makobore whom it described as `the most shifty and unreliable chief in Kigezi' because of his outright resistance to colonialism.

As such, British colonialism depended on the skills, loyalty and initiative of Baganda agents. However, this led to abuse of office. The colonial state was forced to step in;

The powers of the agents have been defined, and restricted, and only one case of anything in the shape of persistent extortion has been brought to my notice as this was met by instant dismissal, there is an unlikelihood of any recrudescence.⁴⁵

The colonial state had acknowledged the role of Baganda agents in the colony the previous year how;

The undoubtedly administrative gifts of the Baganda have been utilised in these districts by their employment as Government agents to educate and supervise the local chiefs, a system which is open to obvious objections, but which in its ultimate results has been incontrovertibly successful. This method of administration is... only tolerable under the closest supervision by District Officers.⁴⁶

However, when the contradictions between the colonised and colonialism became antagonistic, the British colonialists came in as arbiters between the colonised and Baganda agents, laid the blame on Baganda agents and replaced them unceremoniously with local agents. The latter had learned from Baganda agents how to man this state machinery. On their part, Baganda agents had been under the illusion that they were expanding Kiganda Political system

⁴⁴ W.P.A.R. 1913-14 & 1914-15. The W.P.A.R. 1915-16. reported female witch doctors had re-opened operations which were purely anti-European; were dealt with promptly and firmly militarily.

⁴⁵ K.D.A.R. 1913-14; N. A.

⁴⁶ U.P. Annual Report 1912-13 noted how Kigezi had been ceded to the British under the Anglo-Belgian-German Boundary Convention of 1910.

and culture. This was subsequently shattered by the colonialists in response to armed struggles in the region. Others like Sebalijja also believed that they were spreading the new word of God to the pagans.⁴⁷

Background to Military Option

Being still stateless, peasants had developed a complex defence system and codes. This was necessary for their defence against their surrounding enemies who included other Enganda, the organised Batwa bands and states like Rwanda and Mpororo.

In his report of March, 1912, Cap. Reid had identified two military problem of this area. One was of peasant rising and the other was of European hostilities. He argued that in dealing with the native problem, the population was "practically entirely pagan and would therefore be unmoved by any wave of religious feeling which might affect Baganda or Ankole". He showed the objective weakness of these peasants as lack of unity between Makobore's land, Rukiga and British Ruanda which formed "three entirely separate and distinct districts and it is difficult to conceive any cause which could unite the three". Furthermore, they were unwarlike, with no military organisation. In Reid's account, the only anti-European tendencies had been due to the preaching of local witch-doctors and witches who practise the NYABINGI cult. To him, prompt police measures would suffice to nip these in the bud. He devised two major strategies in case of any insurgency. The first was to localise the disturbance and if it was necessary to employ local levies, to use Makaburre's people against the Bakiga, the Bakiga against the Banyaruanda and so on. The second one was to seize all cattle and stock.⁴⁸ Resistance was imminent right from the start. Thus, the District Report of February 1911 stressed the need for a strong military force to suppress peasant resisters, who had made their country unsafe for unarmed persons.⁴⁹ It was already clear to colonialism that

Military operations in this district would be extremely difficult owing to the nature of the country and the natives could lay ambushes and escape to the hills where pursuit is useless. The seizure of the cattle and the occupation of the cultivated valleys would probably bring any particular clan to reason. Night operations, though attended by great difficulties, would be the only means of attaining the capture of any considerable body, as during the day

⁴⁷ Sebalijja, Yoana (1911) "Olutalo Olwari Mu Lukiga e Rwanda", Munno Of Dec. 1911. Kampala.

⁴⁸ Cap. Reid's Report of 14/3/1912.

⁴⁹ Kigezi Monthly Report of 4/2/1911.

time sentries are posted on all the hills and outflanking movements are doomed to failure".⁵⁰

This became the modus operandi of colonialism throughout the struggles that followed.⁵¹ The initial causes of this resistance revolved around this occupation by this foreign force, its territorial claims, demarcating and fixing of borders in their region. This was worsened by its militaristic approach, and atrocities, which included massacres, looting and property destruction, imprisonment, forced contributions of food, labour etc. As the imperialist powers were busy struggling amongst themselves for this land, the peasants mobilised under Nyabingi Movement and waged armed resistance for over two and half decades. Despite their antagonistic inter-imperialist contradictions, the three imperial powers were forced to co-operate over this anti-imperialist Nyabingi Movement.

⁵⁰ op. cit.

⁵¹ op. cit. One of the first cases in which they implemented this plan was with Lwantali and Bukola's cattle. The Political Officer led surprise attacks at dawn on two successive days; 'In both cases the natives endeavoured to drive the stock into the main Rukiga swamp on the edge of which the kraals were situated... some spears were thrown and it was necessary to fire a few rounds before natives retired... the swamp was entered and the cattle and goats collected...'.

Section Four

Peasant Resistance to Colonialism

With colonial invasion, all members of society began thinking about this crisis and the appropriate solutions. Various solutions emerged, which guided people's various courses of action. Peasant grievances revolved around material issues although resistance took on a religious tone - political and religious. The concrete issues that peasants raised revolved around the division of their geographical environment and the imposition of borders by the colonial forces and then their claim over territorial ownership. This resulted into restriction of movement of peasants, and limited their operations and chances of expansion of their production and trade activities. Other grievances rose from land, politics, forced labour in form of Ruharo, Kashanju, head portage and conscription from military purposes. Other grievances revolved around the newly imposed institutions, rules and laws, oppressive alien judgment, persistent demands or forced contributions in form of food, milk, livestock, etc., forced sales and forced production for sale under the label of "Market gardens".

Colonialism had invaded and occupied this area militarily. As such, its appearance largely determined the peasants' response. Its militaristic character contributed greatly to the continuation of the resistance. The various atrocities committed onto peasants by colonial personnel increased social grievances. These included looting of peasants' property, collective fines and the state's imposition of the "Collective Fine Ordinance", which were aimed at punishing peasants and impoverishing them, and other indisciplined crimes by colonial personnel like raping, massacres, and murders. The continued occupation by foreigners was resented by peasants. This had the effect of raising nationalism in the peasants. What compounded the problem was the imposition of Baganda agents and their superiority complexes, languages like Luganda, corruption and bribery, crude and strange punishments. disruption of the peasants' social set-up, deliberate attempts to destroy peasant religious institutions like Nyabingi. This led to colonial legislation against free worship by peasants which it termed "witchcraft". In this regard, the colonial state instituted the 1912 witchcraft Ordinance. This was aimed to prosecute anybody caught worshipping these religions. It also designed and instituted a Deportation Ordinance in 1912. These were some of the issues that informed peasants' resistance in the first phase of the struggle.

On their part, the Abagirwa had to try and retain their economic base. As they lived off the surplus from peasants, and some had began to accumulate property under the name of Nyabingi, they had to try and defend it. As such,

they were able to combine politics and religion around all these concrete issues. Peasants realised sense in the Abagirwa's teaching and were moved into resistance. As heads of households were to complain later, they were also opposed to the modus operandi of colonialism and the new religions which undermined their political power and social status, set the young against their elders etc.

After invading this area, colonialism introduced forced labour for public projects, and political fines. However, it avoided introducing direct taxation 'until the natives have some means of earning money; which at present they have not.... Premature taxation without opportunities for earning the wherewithal to pay it would cause discontent and might result in migration to the Congo or German East Africa'. This was imposed in 1915.

Subsequent events to colonial invasion prove that colonialism was not welcome in the area. What we witness goes beyond Bakiga proverb that he who is stronger than you kills your father and then takes over your mother. Despite the absence of a centralised leadership in the area to defend peasants' interests, peasants did not sit idle as these three imperial powers were scrambling for this area, dividing and sub-dividing it amongst themselves. They were not ready to surrender their land and autonomy.

The population factor needs to be contextualised. Though this area had not reached a high level of social differentiation, which was worsened by the crises that faced these peasants prior to 1910, it had reached a high population level. The population of this new Kigezi District was estimated at 206,090 people in 1921 and land per head was 5.4 acres.⁵² This high population vis-a-vis the available resources, and the rudimentary state of technological advance contributed to peasants' mistrust of the colonialists and intensified their militancy. This was one of the reasons why colonialism was very careful not to encourage raw material production in Kigezi. Introduction of raw material production in Kigezi required first the upgrading of the technical level of labour due to this land shortage. Yet, Britain was not willing to plough back the resources that it was siphoning out. Secondly, the colonial option was shaped in this respect by the peasants through resistance for two and half decades. Colonialism therefore opted for labour migration. The creation of Kigezi into a labour reservoir has its origins in colonialism. However, it should also be noted that colonialism was not hard-pressed by land for these raw materials. It had nearer places like Buganda and Busoga where it was already growing them very cheaply. As such, it found it economically rational to transport labour from this highly populated area than taking risks to invest

⁵² Figures from Kigezi District Resettlement Office, Kabale.

its resources there.

Let us first have a general picture of the trend of these struggles.

Course of Nyabingi Movement up to World War I

At the time of colonial invasion, a Nyabingi Mugirwa had organised peasants into resistance and overthrown Chief Ruhayana of Kinkizi. Interestingly, it was in this Ruhayana that colonialism saw an ally. It took advantage of this situation and reinstated him.

The Chief Nduraiana is very old and infirm. I found a section of his people in revolt against his authority under the leadership of a local witch doctor, whom, I arrested. These witch doctors are rather a feature of Rukiga and the neighbouring countries. Their influence is great and the mischief they cause considerable, as the doctrine they preach is entirely subversive of all authority whether local or European.

At the same time, chief Musinga in the neighbouring Kayonza, refused persistently to subordinate his authority and peoples to British colonial government. Instead, he organised them into resistance. Being a danger to colonialism, Cap. Reid deposed him, and replaced him with his collaborating brother, Duybumba.⁵³ However, Sullivan reinstated him after the C.S. had warned against it as `...not desirable to interfere with the native regime until we are firmly established in this country'.⁵⁴

Musinga did not conform to collaboration as colonialism had wanted. McDougall accused Musinga that he had persistently refused to heed Cap. Reid's summons. Instead, he had mobilised the majority of peasants into resistance; and they fled Kayonza villages when Cap. Reid went there in August 1911. He led a peasant force to Izomba, at the beginning of the war, 1914. He stayed there till his arrest in February 1917. Accusations against him included banding with Ndochibiri against colonialism, irresponsibility, consorting with the enemy and fighting against the British. He was also accused of possessing the charismatic characteristics of exercising considerable influence in the District and fuelling resistance even while he was away. It was in the interest of peace and good government that he was deported to Bunyoro, where he

⁵³ K.D. Report of 6/9/1911.

⁵⁴ Ag C.S. to Political Officer, on 2/10/1911 promised that "the new Ordinance on the subject of witch craft will have to be enforced (when finally approved) as soon as the country is added to the Protectorate". His memo of 3/x/1911 and letter of 6/10/1911 of C.S. ordered the Political Officer to transfer Musinga to Mbarara or Masaka pending the Secretary of State's approval of this Ordinance, "a witch doctor should be temporarily transferred to another place".

could have no intercourse with any of the other natives, who had from time to time been deported from Kigezi.⁵⁵ Mginga's deportation order to Bunyoro, in accordance with "The Uganda Deportation Ordinance, 1906", spelled out that this was aimed to prevent continuance of his misconduct and intrigue against the British rule.⁵⁶ The Governor informed the Secretary of State for Colonies that;

Mginga displayed an antagonistic attitude to the Government on the advent of British Administration to his District in 1911, and that the subsequent rectitution of his chieftainship failed to affect his disloyal tendencies on the outbreak of the present war... the unsettled condition of the Kigezi District renders it imperative to remove all suspicious influences, and, although no proof exists as to Mginga's actual complicity in the recent disturbances, his continued presence undoubtedly would be a source of danger to the peace and good order of the area in question.⁵⁷ *

To break him further and consolidate his alienation from his people, which also emphasised the lesson that he had to conform when he went back to his land, he was detained internally in Mparo after his term of deportation.

Ndungusi gives an interesting leadership in this movement. There were various Nyabingi insurgencies, whose leadership claimed to be Ndungusi, son of Rwabugiri (king of Rwanda) and his wife, Muhumusa. Such leadership made such claim to this name because of the social, political, military, religious and organisational capacity of both his mother Muhamusa and Ndungusi himself. The history of Ndungusi and his mother becomes relevant to this study as soon as they are forced to flee Rwanda due to power struggle. Ndungusi failed to replace his father as King of Rwanda. It was during this anti-colonial Nyabingi Movement that Ndungusi became a Nyabingi Omugirwa, like his mother. He learnt the tricks and importance of personification of Nyabingi. He developed military and leadership skills from other Abagirwa and lineage leaders in the struggle. He participated in the battle at Ihanga in 1911, managed to escape capture and death. He then

⁵⁵ D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 9/4/1917. Also see Comments of P.C.W.P. on Mginga on 18/4/1917. See Affidavits of 8/6/1917 & of 8/6/1917. File Op. cit. File: Natives Affairs. Mginga: Deportation of. U.N.A. Entebbe.

⁵⁶ Mginga's Deportation Order of 29/6/1917 signed by the Ag Governor. File: Native Affairs. Mginga: Deportation of.

⁵⁷ The Governor's Communication on 10/7/1917 to the Secretary of State on Mginga's Deportation. Also see the Attorney General's letter to Ag C.S. of 28/7/1917 and the Governor's Communication 517 Minute 1 of 2/8/1917.

*: K.D.A.R. 1922 reported Mginga's return from exile at Masindi. K.D.A.R. 1923 noted that Mginga had taken over Kayonza Gombolola.

retreated into the peasantry, where he began mobilising peasants into further armed resistance. From then onwards, various personalities made claims to this name for political purposes, to gain legitimacy and acceptance among the peasants.

We find one of the claimants to this personality joining forces with Katuregye, being killed in the forest.⁵⁸ Another one, a Ndungusi, was caught mobilising peasants into resistance in 1913 and deported to Jinja, where he finally died in 1918. Another claimant to this name organised the broad-based regional resistance of 1928. He escaped capture and disappeared among the peasantry. Yet another claimant was to be captured mobilising peasants into resistance and collecting tributes in 1930. He was convicted and imprisoned. There were other young men who made similar claims to this name. Ndungusi had become charismatic, an inspiration to resistance. Gradually, the name Ndungusi declined and was rescinded into legendary. However, what is evident is that whoever made claims to this name raised a large following. It was because of the charismatic character of Ndungusi and his role in leadership that the colonial state charged one of the claimants to this name with responsibility for 'riot, rebellion, sedition and bloodshed in Kigezi'. He was deported for being a 'dangerous and undesirable person to be at large in this district'. The A.D.C. argued that Ndungusi had incited numerous chiefs into open revolt against the government and attacking collaborators.

Rwagara, a local collaborator accused Muhumuza and Ndungutzi two years later that they were

... bad people and disturbed the Rukiga county. They came to this country about two years ago... went from place to place and took the people's cattle they preached against the English. If a chief refused to obey them they warred on him, they did this to Chief Mutambuko. They killed his people and burnt his houses and took his cattle. Everyone was in fear of them. Cap. Reid with the soldiers arrested Mamusa and killed many of his people but Ndungutzi escaped. Mamusa and Ndungutzi had three stakes. They said they would place me on one. Agt. Sebalija on the other - and Agt Yonozani on the third one... Ndungutzi went into German territory and did many bad things there but the German drove him into English country again and he stopped at Lubungo. He told Lwantali and all the chiefs around there not to obey the English but to follow him they did so. The people all refused to obey the Government owing to his words. He moved from one place to place inciting the people to rebellion. He accused me of bringing the English into the

⁵⁸ K.D. Report of 3/5/1913 noted that the Imperial Resident of Rwanda had been engaged in operations against Ndungutse and Bassebya, that Ndungutse had been killed and that Bassebya had escaped across lake Bunyonyi. More information was given by our respondents including Rukara and Byandageire.

country and wanted to fight with me.^{59*}

Attributing all these peasant resistances to individuals as colonialism was trying to do would be negating people's history. Peasants resisted in various areas of the district at different times without Ndungutzi's knowledge or influence. However, he was convicted of being dangerous to peace and good order in the W.P., `endeavouring to excite enmity between the people of the Protectorate and His Majesty and is intriguing against His Majesty's power and authority and the Protectorate'.

It would be a great mistake to allow Ndunungutzi to return to Kigezi for some considerable time to come as he would be certain to cause trouble again. Experience has taught me that too hasty forgiveness or lenience with natives who have misbehaved themselves (especially with fanatical ones) is misplaced kindness and instead of being appreciated is invariably abused.⁶⁰

Thus it was further reiterated in July 1914 that his return would be most injurious and would lead to a recrudescence of the disturbances, which had led to his deportation.⁶¹ This objection was reiterated the following year by the Governor to the Secretary of State for Colonies.⁶² This Ndungusi died in exile in April 1918.⁶³

Batwa Resistance

The Batwa nationality lived in forests stretching to Zaire in the West and Rwanda in the South. Their mode of existence was principally hunting and gathering which they supplemented by primitive plunder of wealth characterised by massacres, arson, property destruction and looting. They constituted a military and political threat to the local peasants. It is no wonder

⁵⁹ Ruagalla's testimony of 25/3/1913. File: Kigezi: Ndungutzi - Native Chief: Deportation of; Death: Settlement of Estate.

*: Our respondents accused collaborators like Rwagara and Baganda in fighting for Europeans for loot and posts *Eminyago hamwe n'emirimo*.

⁶⁰ P.C.W.P. to C.S. on 23/12/1913.

⁶¹ See Communications of 10/7/1914 and 21/1/1915 barring him from returning. Also Governor's communication to P.C.W.P. of 3/10/1916; the D.C's communication to P.C.W.P. of 27/9/1917 and P.C.W.P's communication to the C.S. of 4/10/1917 all barring Ndungutzi from returning.

⁶² Governor of Uganda to Secretary of State for Colonies on 21/1/1915 responding to the latter's letter of 13/6/1913 No. 284. File op. cit. The A.C.S. wrote to the P.C.W.P. on 6/4/1915 on the same decision and on 3/10/1916, the Governor informed the Secretary of State for Colonies that the question of the return of Ndungutzi to Kigezi would have to be deferred until normal conditions had been restored and the district brought under closer administration.

⁶³ P.C.W.P. to C.S. on 2/5/1918. Also see D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 30/12/1918.

therefore, that the Abagirwa mobilised peasants against this nationality

... of a treacherous and thieving disposition, and at certain times of the year band together for the purpose of raiding their more peaceful neighbours... peasants near Mabaremere and other parts, lived in the most lively dread of the Batwa who always attacked by night, killed all their people and stole their food.⁶⁴

The Batwa could not accumulate wealth through this process of hunting and gathering, leading a nomadic life. They were not engaged in settled production of either animal husbandry or crop husbandry. They could not accumulate and concentrate the looted property to make it reproduce itself. Neither did they engage this wealth in production for it to reproduce itself. As there was no form of accumulation of wealth, no classes existed among them. This made them very vulnerable. Colonialism capitalised on these weaknesses to isolate and defeat them politically and militarily. We learnt from our informers that in their primitive plunder, Batwa would burn whatever remained after acquiring whatever they wanted. They killed all livestock as they could not look after them. Our informers argued that the Batwa were so wasteful because they did not participate in production of that wealth.

The 1911 Border Commission presented the Batwa as a race of fierce, savage and undersized people, looked upon with suspicion and dislike by the other natives, whose land they constantly raid, always independent and truculent, acknowledging none but their own chiefs.⁶⁵ Contrary to this colonial view, it has to be understood that the Batwa were also inhabitants of this area, regardless of the sentiments of other nationalities. After all, there were contradictions at different levels in other nationalities, too.

Because of their military expertise, skills and lack of a settled mode of production, it became easy for them to hire themselves out to fight for organised states and peoples, nationalities and classes, like Rwanda to hire them for military purposes. Colonialism anticipated that they were not likely to give any trouble but that if it was found necessary to deal with, then native levies could be raised without difficulty to assist in driving them from their bamboo forests.⁶⁶ One of the colonial tactics was to exploit pre-colonial conflicts between the local peoples. In the case of the Batwa, the plan was to ally with other nationalities against them. Though they were still dependent

⁶⁴ op. cit. Jack exaggerated that they were "cannibals." It is Colin Turnbull, op. cit., who gives another picture of the bigger section of the Pygmies in the Ituri Forest, their mode of production, organisation, character, bravery and skillfullness.

⁶⁵ op. cit.

⁶⁶ op. cit. A lot of valuable information about the Batwa was provided by our respondents.

on nature, they were militarily superior to the rest of the inhabitants. They were more organised into a military force, under militant chiefs, more advanced in weaponry etc.⁶⁷ It was because of this level of organisation that they could invade, terrorise, loot and pillage the populous peasantry who were disunited, politically disorganised, and militarily weak. Colonialism had to deal with them immediately.⁶⁸ However, the Batwa soon realised the dangers of this new enemy and started attacking it and its allies, disrupted its communication system etc.

The three colonial powers combined forces, intelligence and military information to fight them. They found it easy to mobilise peasants against Batwa, due to past hatred between them. So, while wars were raging on Lake Bunyonyi by the British against Katuleggi, the Germans and Belgians were also fighting against the same nationality in their colonies. The question arises as to why their resistance was defeated. While colonial powers were ready to smash any local resistance, the Batwa received no sympathies, material or military assistance or alliances from the peasants in the neighbourhood due to their past history. Worse still, they had no continuous food supply. At the same time, the area where they could go to for supplies had come under different colonial powers. As a result, they faced shortages without replenishments.⁶⁹

The Batwa resistance under chief Katuleggi gave colonialism and its local allies considerable trouble. His forces attacked and killed 'friendly natives on two occasions', and interrupted communications by seizing the canoes on Lake Bunyonyi. They attacked and fired at runners, messengers and natives sent to fetch wood for the troops. British colonialism sent a strong force to dislodge and defeat them.^{70*} Bassebia, Chief of Batwa combined forces with Ndungutse, and led a cross-section of peasants against the German colonialists in Ruanda in 1912. While Ndungutse was reportedly killed, Bassebia escaped to Rwanda. He was caught, arrested, prosecuted, convicted by the German Court Martial and executed on the same day.

⁶⁷ op. cit.

⁶⁸ Interview with Karamagi, Mucoori, Ndyabura inter alia. They described the massacres and plunders by the Batwa and how people fled in terror.

⁶⁹ Our respondents informed this study on this alliance and the consequences. Byandagaire et. al. showed how Rukara and Muramira led collaborators with Europeans against Katuregye et al.

⁷⁰ Report of 3/5/1912 & communication of 4/5/1912. U.N.A. Entebbe.

*: A force led by Lieuts Turpin, Moore, Sullivan, Wagstaff and Major Lawrence had failed to defeat and dislodge them. This was because of their knowledge of the terrain and military skills

I succeeded on 13/5/1912 to arrest the Batwa chief, Bassebjja. Bassebjja was condemned to death by the military tribunal on 15th May and the sentence was executed on that very day. Bassebjja's raid on English territory has thus been avenged.⁷¹

These anti-colonial struggles by the Batwa were nationalistic. They were attacking colonialism and its collaborators. However, they got dispersed through these defeats and death of their leadership.⁷² The fault with colonial reports is that they attributed these raids to have been influenced by the Germans. That view presents these resisters as being prompted from without.^{73*}

Nyabingi Movement with the 1914 War

We witness a great advancement in the anti-colonial struggle with the advent of the year 1914. The peasant resisters in the three colonies amalgamated their grievances and articulated them together. They organised peasants around these issues. This enabled them to reach deep inside the three colonies in terms of mobilization, recruitment and struggle. It was this guerrilla force that took maximum advantage of the defeat of imperial Germany and the colonial borders. The ideology of the movement was still around this colonial occupation, colonial borders, land for the state and the incoming missions, forced labour and contributions, the imposition of alien administration and administrators, laws, cultures, and new religions. Colonialism had also marginalised local chiefs like Nyindo and Musinga, deprived them of the opportunity to extract surplus labour from their subjects as prior to colonialism. What worsened the situation were the new impositions of other colonial demands onto the peasants to support the war. Sebalijja and Abdulla were instrumental in resource mobilisation. The world war had forced the colonial state to intensify its methods of extracting resources from peasants. This had forced it to increase labour demands, food

⁷¹ The Imperial Resident, Kigali on 22/5/1912: "Betr. Einfall Bassebjja's in Sud - Rukiga" No. 1/433 replying to The Political officer's letter of 21/5/1912 No. 48/12 on a joint military co-operation against Batwa. This study acknowledges Dr. Muranga's assistance in translating these documents from German into English.

⁷² Idem.

⁷³ K.D.A.R. 1915-16 and K.D.A.R. 1916-17. Katuleggi was reported to have died of wounds sustained in a fight with colonial forces under Abdulla.

*: Report of Lieut. Kigezi of 11/10/1915 to the Political Officer No. Pol. 3/15 on "Fighting Among German Natives" advanced the need to take advantage of local contradictions; 'With regard to our people, there are certain clans such as Musakamba at Kigezi who are bitterly opposed to Bukamba of Mulera, and reprisals for recent raids would cause no surprise... the Batwa and the unruly natives to the South of lake Bunyonyi be punished for their raid on British territory in November last, as soon as the opportunity presents itself. Mugengi Katuleggi's brother G.E.A. ... wants bringing to his senses in a prompt and effective manner'.

and livestock to feed the troops. The A.D.C. had underlined that the colonial state needed 12,000 goats and sheep to feed the troops in this district a year.⁷⁴ The latest imposition for resource extraction was taxation. The P.C. had warned in 1913 against abrupt taxation in cash until the natives had some means of earning money, which they still lacked. He warned how 'Premature taxation without opportunities for earning the wherewithal to pay it would cause discontent and might result in migration to the Congo or G.E.A.'⁷⁵ However, colonialism was forced to introduce it due to pressure for resources to meet the administration costs of the district, support the British economy in the war and meet other expenses. This increased peasants' discontent. The state used chiefs to collect it, gave them tax rebates. In the process, some money paid for tax got embezzled.

Other issues revolved around the new religions and their demands, and the privileges that colonialism was according them. Yet, these privileges were on exploiting peasants property; religious persecution of Nyabingi by the colonial state. Worse still, a new contradiction emerged between peasants and colonial personnel over promiscuity. This arose partly from the fact that those in colonial service did not bring their wives with them, while others were still bachelors. Colonial service had subjected all of them to a bachelor life. This led to new developments. They began chasing after women and girls in the peasantry. Yet, this was an area where virginity was expected to be preserved until marriage. As such, this new development led to adverse consequences. Girls became pregnant and ran away, others got harassed by members of society for flattering with colonial personnel. All these were forced to flee to Kabale Station. A new institution of prostitution began to emerge around administration centres. This was reinforced by other women from other areas, who came from other areas of the country, not in search of men but to work for money. Even colonial personnel used their state positions to force some women into carnal affairs with them. All this was detested vehemently by peasants. Worse still, this new development introduced and helped in the spread of venereal diseases not only among prostitutes and government personnel but also among the peasants. This led to adverse results in the area.

The persistent armed resistance of peasants in Kyogo and its environs to British colonialism evidenced peasants' determination to regain their lost independence. Their resistance began with colonial invasion. This led to the bloody war of March 1915. As early as January 1914, the P.C. reported that some Bakiga in Kyogo had indulged in some outbreak with spears. He was

⁷⁴ op. cit.

⁷⁵ W.P.A.R. 1913/14.

optimistic that 'As soon as the rains commence, these people will devote themselves to cultivation instead of beer drinking and fighting'.⁷⁶ Not long after, A.D.C. accused them of armed resistance. They had murdered a government agent in December, who had gone to ask them to supply their quota of forced labour, they attacked and chased away messengers between the A.D.C. and the agent persistently, denied passage to anyone in colonial service regardless of colour or origin. They attacked the agent's Boma twice and the colonial forces fought back. This led to heavy casualties on the side of resisters.^{77*}

They have persistently refused to do any work or to bring food for the feeding of the troops, and have endeavoured to get other natives to follow their example. This was followed by the murder of one of the agent's followers, and two attacks in force were made on the agents Boma... I requested Mr. Turpin ASP ... to seize the cattle of these rebels, and thereby bring them to reason as half measures are worse than useless when dealing with savages of this type.⁷⁸

Attributing peasant struggles to German influence obscures both reality and the very basis of these struggles. They did not resist and later cross the border on the ground that they had allied with the Germans but because they considered the whole region as part of their land and were running away from their enemies. This conforms to the Bakiga saying that the one chasing you shows you the way.

This military encounter was characterised by courageous resistance despite the peasants' weaknesses in planning, arms, military skills and technology, organisation, and leadership. Turpin argued that Kyogo peasants had attacked the Government forces with spears and arrows, had declined to listen to the Agent, challenging them for a fight if they were men. This portrayed the peasants' weaknesses as they had failed to know that this force had come for war. He had therefore considered the position so dangerous and opened fire on them. Although the peasants fought bravely, they lost this battle. Even Kahondo peasants who rushed to their aid were repelled by

⁷⁶ FW.P. Monthly Report of January 1914.

⁷⁷ F.A.D.C. Sullivan's Communication of 11/4/1915 to P.C.W.P. & P.C.W.P. to the C.S. on 3/2/1915 & on 12/7/1915.

*: See Appendix II C.A. Turpin's report. Also see A.D.C's report of 5/7/1915 and June 1916 & P.C.W.P (vide Min. 16 in S.M.P. 2471 D) Ag. P.C. to C.S. of 12/7/1915 on measures taken towards the end of March against certain Natives of Kyogo. The D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 11/4/1915 "Ref. MP. 3/2/15. File: Raids and Punitive Expeditions in the Kigezi District. U.N.A. Entebbe.

⁷⁸ Idem.

colonial forces before they joined them. In this battle, over seventy-one resisters were killed, also captured were 180 cattle, 650 sheep and goats and 500 loads of grain millet. These were treated as a Collective Political fine on the ground that `the conduct of these people requires exemplary punishment... must be taught that they cannot treat the Government with contempt... 1000 goats and sheep are required monthly as food for troops in this district, at the cost of Rs. 1500/= per month'.⁷⁹ This was a time when Nyindo, Semana et. al., mobilised peasants into resistance in the south-western part of the district. It should be recalled that Nyindo was chief of Bufumbira by the time of colonial invasion. Bufumbira was highly differentiated. Chiefs extracted surplus through tributes presents and other contributions. Colonialism feared that he could raise five thousand spearmen in the field on short notice. Colonialism took careful steps not to confront him directly. There is evidence showing that Nyindo was related to Musinga, king of Rwanda and that it was Musinga who had appointed him chief. Despite all the precautions by the colonial state not to draw Nyindo into armed struggles, Nyindo saw the dangers of colonialism and began to organise people into resistance. By then, it had transformed him and other chiefs like Makobore into nominal figureheads. His first move against colonialism was in 1912/13. This was when he led a group of peasants to Rwanda, kidnapped Kalemarima, a C.M.S. teacher and killed him. The colonial State arrested them and convicted them.⁸⁰ Some of this fine was given to the widow, some was paid to eleven small chiefs, who `rendered valuable assistance but who had not been rewarded for their assistance in dealings with the natives'. The rest was sold and credited to the state.

This was a source of resources for it to run the state. It also wanted to encourage more people in its service and wanted to inflict pain by impoverishing the culprits. This aimed to discourage more resistances. Capturing livestock of resisters aimed to deprive them of material resources essential for supporting the resistance. Heavy punishment onto Nyindo was meant to pre-empt any further rebellious activities by him. It also wanted to placate the C.M.S. and encourage them to come to the District to carry out the ideological and educational work. Implicitly, it aimed to show the colonial state's capacity to protect all in its service.

⁷⁹ Idem.

⁸⁰ File: Murder of a Native Captured in German Territory. See P.C.W.P's to C.S. of 26/3/1913 on "fines imposed". Nyindo was fined fifty heads of cattle, Minyana and Badutwarumu were charged twenty five heads of cattle each and Biteraboga was fined five head of cattle. W.P.A.R. 1912/13 commended it "This I believe has had a good effect, and is expected to result in applications for redress being made to the District Officer, instead of reprisals, when an offence has been committed".

The leadership timed when the colonialists began war against each other and commenced their resistance. They had also realised that the colonial state was still weak as the P.C.W.P. admitted that they 'were not strong enough to take rigorous action on the frontier at the commencement of the war...' Nyindo and the others had been aware of their objective weaknesses vis-a-vis the joint British and Belgian forces. They were also aware of the racial differences between Europeans and Africans. Their search for allies went beyond the borders down south to the Germans, whom they had some link through King Musinga, of Rwanda. It was clear that he had no interest in the Germans and neither did the Germans have any personal interest in him and his group. Neither could they trust any Belgian or English, who formed the object of the struggle. He had faced it earlier on and witnessed other atrocities meted on other peasants, the witch-hunt, collective fines and imprisonment. He knew the risks involved in trying to do it. The only option remain was peasants, and the Germans. The first option existed despite the colonial trials to win some of them. It was under those conditions that he and his group struck some agreement with the Germans. Colonial Intelligence Reports show that after two German officers visited Nyindo under the disguise of being White Fathers; they had sealed an agreement for cooperation in which Nyindo and the others would ally with Germans against British and Belgians in return for more cattle and expansion of territory.⁸¹

These resisters allied with the Germans to take advantage of the inter-imperialist contradictions. They aimed at using them to drive out the British and then break loose from the Germans. In this arrangement, the Germans wanted to use in their inter-imperialist contradictions to defeat both the British and the Belgians and then occupy that area as the new colonial power. This was a situation of maneuverability. What is evident is that these peasants neither wanted the presence of any of these colonial powers, nor their new rule.⁸² The reasons for this resistance go beyond the colonial view that it aimed to reinstate Nyindo.

With the beginning of the First World War in 1914, some peasants crossed with their cattle to Belgian territory and others under Nyindo crossed to G.E.A. They then began raiding loyal peasants.⁸³ Although the peasants were busy cultivating in October, the P.C.W.P. underlined how 'The condition of this part of the district must remain unsettled as long as Nyindo is at large across the frontier and from under the wing, of the "black eagle sending

⁸¹ W.P.A.R. 1915/16.

⁸² Idem.

⁸³ W.P. Monthly Report of August 1914.

threats to our people...'⁸⁴ It is not surprising that there were attacks on British forces and their allies near Mulera the following month. There were also other attacks by Katulegge which continued for months. By then, British colonialism had mistaken Katulegge's retreat and change of tactics for surrender or abandonment after his mother's arrest. This type of mistaking tactics for surrender was persistent in misjudging peasant resistances in this region.⁸⁵

They mobilised peasants into continuous resistance to colonialism. These resistances blocked resource mobilisation by colonialism in form of taxes, labour and forced contributions. To concretise this, they attacked colonial forces under agent Abdulla near Miserero's, when he had gone to collect forced labour. They reorganised and attacked again within a month. They attacked, killed or wounded "loyal natives". A section of resisters under Semana "burnt nearly all Mushakamba's villages" and about twenty other villages of loyal chief Mutesi and Abdulla's Boma in October 1914, and looted their livestock. Colonialists lamented how 'The natives of these villages were loyal and were attacked without provocation or excuse' (sic!).⁸⁶ Nyindo and his followers. led new attacks against colonial forces at Kisoro, defeated the colonial forces and the latter fled towards Ikumba Headquarters with losses, bruises and humiliation. The resisters then burnt the administration quarters and looted cattle of allies. More bloody battles followed with the war-cry that they were going to drive the Europeans out of the country.⁸⁷

The Political Officer accused them of `circling round to cut me off from Kigezi Hill, and I was lucky to extricate myself...' He and his forces fired and shot several resisters. Nyindo commanded over 1200 peasant resisters the following day against the colonial forces and the local collaborators. Their major weapons were the people, arson, arms, belief in Nyabingi, courage, and unity. Their rear base was across the borders. This battle lasted four hours. The resisters killed many loyal natives and looted most of their livestock.

What is evident in these struggles is that the allies of colonialism were the immediate targets as they were the nearest as the real enemy was distant and sometimes not clear. These allies were poised as an obstacle, which had to be removed first before resistance could reach the principle enemy. Colonialism retaliated viciously. It arrested some of them and confiscated their cattle. Kilongole, Kalafa, Mutago and Biunyira were sentenced to one year R.I. in Kampala goal with a fine of cattle and goats. Taking them to Kampala aimed

⁸⁴ W.P. Monthly Report of October, 1914.

⁸⁵ W.P. Reports of November and December, 1914.

⁸⁶ Report of Political Officer, Kigezi to C.S. on Nyindo of 9/11/1916. File: Kigezi: Nyindo - Deportation of.

⁸⁷ Affidavit by C.E.E. Sullivan on 6/12/1916.

at widening their narrow outlook: 'Besides the possibilities of escape from Kabale goal, detention here would not make them realise that Kigezi is not the only district under British rule'.⁸⁸ He explained how their short term imprisonment was determined by their low level of consciousness, organisation and mobilisation, 'These men are ignorant and superstitious semi-savages and not on the same plane as intelligent chiefs such as Nyindo'.⁸⁹

The Attorney General advised the D.C./D.M. not to imprison them under Martial law in the existing circumstances of the war but to deport them on an affidavit. This was because he feared that such imprisonment would require British colonialism to accord them some rights as prisoners of war. Secondly, it would show internationally British acceptance as an army of occupation and its recognition of existence of people's struggle for self-determination. As such, they were convicted under sections 148 and 149 of arson, attempted murder, theft, causing hurt, etc., and then to have them deported them after imprisonment. The Attorney General had advised the D.C./D.M. that in the existing colonial law, mere participation in the unlawful assembly made a person liable for all offences committed by the others in prosecution of the common object of the assembly.^{90 *}

We find that when Nyindo finally surrendered, his property was confiscated as punishment for resistance. He was accused of fanning anarchy, attempting to murder the civil officer in charge of the District, inciting people to murder Agent Abdulla while collecting porters at Mizerero's in 1914 and on many other occasions, burning the agent's house at Kisoro, mobilising peasants to loot the Indians' shop and to attack the Boer family. He was also accused of constantly attacking the civil officers and their escorts between Kumba and Rutchuru, mobilising other Batusi gangs into resistance operations on the Congo border and looting the post of Goma, inciting his forces to attack, kill and rob many loyal peasants and chiefs who refused to join him, killing a missionary teacher, allying with Germans and participating in the German attack of Chahafi of 1/1/1915 with Ndochibiri. Other charges included aiding Chief Katulegye in raiding and looting loyal natives, instigating numerous petty raids at various times and places, rioting,

⁸⁸FA.D.C's letter of 19/4/1917 to P.C.W.P. These four resisters lived at Namakumba. I argued that Ndochibiri had just been residing there. Refer to Map 3.

⁸⁹ Idem.

⁹⁰Ag Attorney general to C.S. of 16/5/1917.

*: Also see Communication from P.C.W.P. to the C.S. of 4/5/1917 on the lawless acts and judgment, Ag Governor's letter of 16/5/1917. Ag D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 11/8/1917. Mitobo was sentenced to 21/2 years R.I. and Karafa, Mutago, Kilongole, and Biunyira to 1 year's R.I. each. D.C. informed P.C.W.P. on 23/8/1917 that rebel Semana had been sentenced to 5 years R.I.>

encouraging and commanding peasant resisters to kill Europeans.⁹¹

He was convicted and deported to Masindi. To silence the membership under Nyindo, colonialism replaced Nyindo with his child as their chief. 'The son is a small boy of about 6 or perhaps 7 years of age, who can do no harm for some time to come'.⁹² Colonialism deported him for '...peace and good order in the Kigezi District ... would be dangerous to peace and good order... if he were ever allowed to return there to; and to prevent effectually his having any evil influence in this said district...'⁹³

Resistance under Ndochibiri

Available evidence shows that Ndochibiri and his comrades got initial military training in scientific warfare, skills and military tactics from colonialism. They had been employed in colonial forces as askaris and then deserted with arms. It shows that Ndochibiri and some others were recruited by Belgians and participated in the war against Germans. This was important for his career as a guerrilla leader. That is where he gained military skills, training, commanding and knowledge of geography. It also assisted him to learn the weaknesses of the Europeans and their weapons. These were important as he was to capitalise on them in the struggles that followed. This involvement in this war also facilitated him to make more friends, create more comrades and allies in these forces. He was able to recruit more combatants and seal comradeship and brotherhood under the practice of blood brotherhood and other cultural practices. It also gave him opportunity to popularise people's cause and the need for self-emancipation from colonialism in the whole region.

Their other important achievement was their acquiring weapons and ammunition from colonialism, the dead soldiers, from the reckless ones; from stores and captured others from the enemy. Others were got from the defeated Germans on their hurried evacuation. These activities led to his being suspected of his designs. The colonialists tried to burn him in his house but he managed to escape with serious burns. It is alleged that his three fingers were lost in this tragedy. Ndochibiri in the local language means two fingers. It was

⁹¹ See Police Statements by Abdulla Namunye and Sulimani Ntangamalala of 7/1/1918 and 10/1/1918 confirming these. Other Statements include those by Mushakamba's son, Kanyamanza, Luwanya, Police Constable Saidi Bitensi on 8/1/1918 who showed how peasant resisters overwhelmed them, defeated them, forcing them to flee to Ikumba, and how the resisters burnt their homes and captured all their cattle.

⁹² op. cit.

⁹³ op. cit

this event which forced his resistance into the open. He began actual organisation, politicization and recruitment of peasants into struggle. Another important method he employed in preparation for the struggle was of creating blood brotherhood wherever he passed. By 1916, the colonial State confessed how `witch doctor Ndochimbiri has been the cause of considerable trouble, in April he ravaged the country within a few miles of posts garrisoned by the U.P.S.B.' It was, therefore, forced to station a post of 10 special constables near the border to prevent his rebel activities.

It was the new leadership which had no illusion of returning this society to the pre-colonial one. After all, their wide travels in the whole region and beyond, and their experience with the colonialists had given them enough chance to appreciate the importance of organised administration, with a standing armed force. They aimed to rid the area of this force of occupation, establish a strong administration aimed at defending people's interests. It was this leadership which was divided over Nyabingi. Some of them believed strongly in Nyabingi and had some backward looking and idealist in terms of society's movement, to return it to the period where there would be not taxes, no chiefs, and no any other ruler other than Nyabingi. Other members, who had been in colonial service appreciated the inevitability and usefulness of some of the colonial institutions and weapons.

The resistance under Ndochibiri was forward looking. During his military service in colonial forces and his consequent leadership role in anti-colonial struggles, he had realised the importance of an organised, a strong administration necessary for protecting the inhabitants and their resources. This was reflected in his strong, broad-based leadership which included men and women. Furthermore, this leadership came from various nationalities in the whole area. The same was reflected in the membership of the peasant forces. We find the membership comprising of different nationalities, with a strict discipline.

Anti-colonial struggles under Ndochibiri came into the open in January 1915 in the Kivu-Mulera-Kigezi region. He timed when colonialists were fighting amongst themselves and organised peasants into armed resistance. He, too used Nyabingi religion for military, political and ideological purposes. By 1916, the colonial state was highly paralysed by the peasant force under his command operating in the Kivu-Mulera-Kigezi region: Rwanda, Congo and Uganda. He began by organising peasants into a powerful resistance. Ndochibiri understood clearly the importance of Nyabingi religion in enforcing unity, discipline, determination, secrecy, and cultural bindings, among the fighters and their see. His maiden attack was a great blow to colonialism, `a crowd of fanatical natives, with a "Sacred" sheep as an emblem, were with difficulty driven back, with the aid of two mitrailleuses, after some

hours fighting'.⁹⁴

The two main objectives of this attack were to defeat and dislodge the Belgians and English forces from that fort and to capture arms. This Sacred White Sheep was believed to have powers to send away Europeans. Ndochibiri encouraged peasant resisters that he would turn bullets into water. In January 1916, colonialism reported that peasants in Ruanda behaved in `a

⁹⁴ Ag D.C. Kigezi to Monseur Le Commissaire de District Ruzizi - Kivu of 7/6/1919. We are grateful to our respondents for their valuable information on this resistance. Among these are Bayanguha, Rwakisheya Bafwokuheeka and Mucori who informed this study on the contributions of Ndochibiri, Komunda, Muhire, Baguma, Rwamutwe et al.

G.E.A Series Lake Kivu A1, Showing British Ruanda

disloyal and defiant manner and under the leadership of Ndochikembiri with his sacred sheep' attacked Chahafi and that the prophet was severely wounded.⁹⁵ The wounding was later disapproved as wishful thinking of the colonialists. In April that year, Ndochibiri led an attack on colonial forces, looted the collaborators' property and livestock and disappeared in Kayonsa forest.⁹⁶ These peasant resisters waged a series of short, quick attacks on the colonial forces. They would then retreat into the forests across the border. What increased the colonial fears was that these "rebels" were well-armed with lethal weapons and were also capturing both colonial troops and their arms. Worse still, there was a major shift in methods of struggle from those prior to the war. These resisters employed guerrilla tactics and did not want to commit the enemy into direct combat.⁹⁷

The colonial state was compelled to deploy a strong, well-equipped force against this movement.⁹⁸

Rebel Chief Ndochibiri causing great trouble around Kabale in Kigezi District
a Governor considers it advisable he should be dealt with at once... release
one company of the police service battalion with maxims for this purpose a
Lawrence suggests Mwanza Company as any Punitive measure...⁹⁹

The persistent sharp attacks that this peasant armed resistance under Ndochibiri continued to inflict on colonial forces compelled the latter to wishful thinking that Ndochibiri had died of wounds.¹⁰⁰ This was dispelled that `no reason believe ndochibiri dead or wounded he sent insulting message to Agent Chinchizi and is leaving Kayonsa forest stop A.D.C. asks if police are

⁹⁵ P.C.W.P. Monthly Report of January 1916. File: Raids and Punitive Expedition.

⁹⁶ FP.C.W.P. Monthly Report of April, 1916. Op. cit. Also see C. 228 II. Intelligence Reports, Lake Detachment. U.N.A. Entebbe. Also see Excerpt from Intelligence Reports, Lake Detachment. Kigezi, Punitive Expedition Against Ndochibiri. Also see Report of P.C.W.P. of May, 1916.

⁹⁷ P.C.W.P. Report of June 1916 (vide Min. 16 S.M.P. 2471D). P.C.W.P. Monthly report of July. 1916 reported that before retreat, they had lost 13 combatants, ten killed and three captured. Also see A.D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 21/12/1916.

⁹⁸ The September Report noted that "inhabitants of Ruanda are still out of control and likely to remain so until Ndochibiri and his followers are finally dealt with, and until such time as the Belgians over the border manage to exercise control over their natives". Telegraph of 4/11/1916 from O.S.

⁹⁹ Telegraph of C.S. to O.C. Lake Detachment Ndala of 11/11/16, same file. Kigezi Punitive Expedition Against Ndochibiri. Also refer to telegraphs of 6/11/16 of C.S. to Major Lawrence and Governor's telegraph of 8/11/16.

¹⁰⁰ Telegraph of C.S. to P.C.W.P. of 8/12/1916.

going to Kigezi to co-operate with Belgians'.¹⁰¹

The colonial state arranged a combined military venture with Belgian forces from Rutchuru and Kigali on Congo and Rwanda frontiers.¹⁰² The Commissioner of Police, Kampala was awaiting 'final instructions for dealing with Knochibililli's people... I hear they are well armed and this seems a good opportunity to bring them to reason - and disarm them'.¹⁰³ The Belgian authorities were enthusiastic to punish the rebels who had murdered their mail runners and two of their soldiers. Another strong force came from Mwanza under Major Lawrence.¹⁰⁴ *

However, the resisters learnt of this expedition and foiled their plan by dispersal method before the enemy's attack. In retaliation, colonial forces arrested peasants and their leaders for assisting Ndochibiri.¹⁰⁵ * There followed series of attacks in this expedition, leading to heavy casualties on both sides, arrests and capture of colonial troops. This expedition increased strife to peasants and hostilities between them and colonialism.

The answer to why they failed to achieve their objective despite all these preparations and superior arms, why they didn't wipe out this resistance and convince peasants to desist from resistance¹⁰⁶ lies in the objectives of this struggle, the leadership's level of organisation, intelligence net work, knowledge of the terrain, the methods of struggle, the integration and identification of the population into this struggle and the peasants participatory role in the struggle. Whatever victory was the peasants' victory. It was impossible to separate them from it. Even those who would have informed the colonial forces of the resisters' movements were denied access to such vital information.

The strength of this peasant resistance can be assessed from the colonial force and weaponry that came to fight it under Major Lawrence who 'left

¹⁰¹ Telegraph of P.C.W.P. to the C.S. of 18/12/1916.

¹⁰² Telegraph from Major Lawrence, commanding U.P.S.B. to Commissioner of Police, Kampala on 16/12/16. Tabora.

¹⁰³ Telegraph of Commissioner of Police, Police Headquarters Office, Kampala of 16/12/1916. Also refer to telegraph of C.S. to Col. Riddick of 20/12/1916 and to Political Officer, Kabale; and another to the P.C.W.P. on 22/12/1916.

¹⁰⁴ Commissioner of Police, Mwanza to C.S. on 21/12/16. Also see Telegraph from Maj. Lawrence, to Commissioner of Police, Kampala on 16/12/16.

*: Le Commandant le C.O. Kigali Stereng G. to D.C. on 28/11/1916: Coups d'occupation Commandement participation eventuelle des troupes belges a Capture de N'DOKI-BILI.

¹⁰⁵ Maj. Lawrence to the C.S. on 21/2/1917. Op. cit. and O.C's report to C.S. on Expedition dated 17/2/1917.

*: See Appendix VI: Report on the Expedition Against Ndochibiri and Kanyaruanda on 29/3/1917.

¹⁰⁶ Telegraphs of 26/2/1917 and 8/3/1917.

Kabale on 3rd instant as follows: - Lt. Col. C. Riddick, Inspector Dryden, Assistant Inspector Wagstaff, Dr. Doble, Mr. Mc Dougall, A.D.C., and 80 Rank and File, Uganda Police, with one Machine gun and 200 odd porters...¹⁰⁷

This state repression and scorched earth policy of `destroying shambas and property as reprisals for supporting the rebels' increased insecurity.¹⁰⁸ This had disastrous consequences among which was famine as peasants were withdrawn from production. Colonialism blamed it on the resisters; `Owing to the former raids of Ndochibiri during the time Ruanda was supposed to be under the protection of the Belgians the people were prevented from planting adequate crops. There is now a considerable scarcity of food, and there is some fear of a famine'.^{109*} Lt. Col. Riddick accepted both the leadership's superiority in organisation and execution of armed struggles, using the masses as the see, despite the colonialists' brutality, cruelty and illusions because of this paralysis. He confessed how both Ndochibiri and Kanyaruanda were seasoned guerrilla fighters, who were outsmarting the colonial forces in the forest, in the caves, among the people who knew when and how to engage the enemy and when to retreat, who had learnt about their enemies' military capacity, weapons, tactics, allies and movements and above all won the confidence, support and love of the people. He concluded by confessing

without the power to punish the people who were aiding and abetting his escape, Ndochibiri was master of the situation, there were no roads, very hilly country, lookout huts and signal fires on every hill and every native as far as lay in his power apparently under Ndochibiri's control - none of whom we could touch.¹¹⁰

In despair, British forces under Lt. Col. Riddick embarked on a massive arrest of peasants; accusing them of being relatives of Ndochibiri, two wives and their children being of Ndochibiri, and four leaders for conniving with him.¹¹¹ However, commitment to the struggle had made Ndochibiri resilient

¹⁰⁷ Commissioner of Police, Major Commissioner Lawrence to the C.S. on 21/2/1917.

¹⁰⁸ O.C. Expedition to C.S. on 17/2/1917.

¹⁰⁹ W.P. Report of November, 1916.

*: Also see telegraph from Commissioner of Police, Mwanza to the C.S., of 3/1/1917 and of 13/1/1917 and reply of 21/1/1917. Also see Telegraph of Commissioner of Police of 31/1/1917.

¹¹⁰ Report of the Commissioner of Police Lt. Col. Riddick to the C.S. dated 29/3/1917 on Expedition Against Ndochibiri and Kanyarwanda.

¹¹¹ He had arrested 37 peasants, of whom some were claimed to be Ndochibiri's wives and children.

even during such trying moments. The Belgian Lieutenant rejected Riddick's proposal 'to capture and keep in custody his (Ndochibiri's) women etc. and to punish those who helped him with food etc'.¹¹²

It was Kanyarwanda, who was forced to surrender after colonial forces captured his son and held him as a bait. He was charged with being a member of unlawful assemblies which committed murder, arson, hurt with dangerous weapons, theft and other crimes, was convicted and sentenced to four years R.I. in Kampala. His fate for deportation would be decided thereafter. As a rebel, all his cattle were confiscated.¹¹³ That way, colonialism was able to separate the leadership from the membership, deprive them of resources and ability to make war, inflict psychological pain and a sense of separation and loss. It was also meant to threaten others from struggles against this colonial power and for politicisation purposes. The politics underlying imprisonment of the culprits to Kampala was to open their eyes to the fact that the regime of the British Government was not confined merely to this district, and give them some idea of the British power.¹¹⁴

The Tragedy that Befell the Movement

British colonialism invited Belgian participation in a joint military venture in 1919. The D.C. notified them that the rebel Ndochibiri had appeared from BUITWA on frontier of Kigezi at NAMIKUMBWE, KWA KABANGO, slightly south of Chief ITEMPERO and reminded him of 'the double danger of the movements headed by this man in that they are essentially anti-European, and supported by fanaticism inculcated by NABINGI worship, which, by terrorism, renders every native his spy and a willing host... was recently joined in BUITWA by Wakiga LUMULI and LUHEMBA and the latter's wife KAIGIRIRWA, a Nyabingi...are organisers of dangerous and fanatical anti-European movements in the KIVU-MLERA-KIGEZI area'.

Colonialism had resolved that 'even should no disturbances occur, these rebels should be hunted mercilessly in our respective districts. Their death or capture will alone ensure peace'.^{115*} This course of action was agreed to

¹¹² K.D.A.R. 1916-1917. He released them. There were four arrests of Ndochibiri's confederates.

¹¹³ See P.C.W.P. communication to C.S. of 5/7/1919. The Ag D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 11/8/1917 on "Lawless Natives in Kigezi District". The Ag D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 28/7/1917 & P.C.W.P. to C.S. on 9/8/1917 on Kanyaruanda's conviction. Also refer to File Native Affairs: Kanyaruanda. U.N.A. Entebbe.

¹¹⁴ Idem.

¹¹⁵ Ag D.C. to Mon. le Commissaire de District Ruzizi - Kivu of 7/6/1919. He outlined his military plans against these peasant resisters. He had set up a military post on BIRAHIRA's in British Ruanda, another at KINKIZI-KAYONZA opposite ITEMPERO's (Kisalu). Le Resident

although Belgian authorities remained skeptical;

du Ruanda to D.C. on 14/6/1919 on "Rebel force under Ndochibiri".
*: See Map on British and Belgian patrols.

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we shall find it extremely difficult to effect his capture since he is always informed of our slightest movements. He is held in terror by the native population by reason of his supernatural associations, and no one dares to denounce his gatherings from the additional fear of reprisals ... he seldom risks remaining in villages and takes the precaution of establishing his camps in places which are far from population and kept secret, these rendezvous even he changes frequently.¹¹⁶

The P.C.W.P. confirmed in November that the peculiar geographical features and power of blood brotherhood among these wild and backward people's make it impossible to rely on the local natives at all.¹¹⁷ Van de Ghinste informed the D.C. Kigezi on 23rd June a Belgian force of 25/30 rifles under a European was going to patrol frontier so as to cut off retreat of the NDOCHIBIRI rebels.¹¹⁸ He communicated to the D.C. Kigezi how chiefs KABANGO and ITEMBERO had feigned ignorance of the movements of NDOCHIBIRI that morning.¹¹⁹ It was that night that the colonial forces caught up with the top leadership of this resistance and wiped it out.

... strong force rebels crossed frontier into KAYONSA nineteenth ... enticed from forest and attacked KUMBA three hours north KABALE ... their retreat cut off and gang entirely dispersed leaving leaders NDOCHIMBIRI and LUHEMBA instigator NAKISHENYI rebellion, with two other rebels dead in our hands ... "Sacred" Nabingi sheep captured together with two rifles, bayonets, bows, arrows and British and German ammunition ... our casualties one wounded.¹²⁰

Their death was of great significance. It was a great success for colonialism. In the P.C.W.P's words, hadn't they been so promptly and successfully dealt with, 'within a month, we should ... have had very serious native trouble in Rukiga and perhaps in Ruanda also'.¹²¹ That is why it was celebrated in Kabale where they exposed Ndochimbiri and Luhemba's bodies. Ndochibiri's two - fingered hand was cut off and circulated in public 'to assure publicity for the death'. They also burnt to ashes the captured "Sacred" white sheep publicly at Kabale.¹²² These were aimed to prove their death to

¹¹⁶ Communication from D.C. Ruzizi - Kivu to D.C. Kigezi, on 18/6/1919.

¹¹⁷ W.P. November 1919 Report.

¹¹⁸ Communication of D.C. Van de Ghinste to D.C. Kigezi of 23/6/1919 in reply to D.C. Kigezi of the previous day 22/6/1919. They were going to patrol the frontier between RUTEZO and Mt. NKABWE.

¹¹⁹ Van de Ghinste, D.C. Ruzizi - Kivu, Rutchuru on 23/6/1919.

¹²⁰ D.C's telegraph of 24/6/1919 and his letter of 25/6/1919.

¹²¹ P.C.W.P. to C.S. on 5/7/1919.

¹²² op. cit. It was burnt on 3rd. "a very serious General rising organised by a powerful anti

the public, demystify and discredit Nyabingi, and threaten peasants from Nyabingi resistances.¹²³

...it is difficult to realise the immense importance locally of the death of this rebel who has defied two Governments for five years and was a leader of an anti-European Secret society which has terrorised the RUANDA - RUKIGA county for four generations. (Sic!)¹²⁴

It is important to understand some of the factors that contributed to the sustainence of this guerrilla movement for that long. Firstly, the resisters used forests in the district and at the border with Congo as one of their bases. They showed mastery of the terrain, weaponry and developed sophisticated, mobile guerrilla tactics. As D.C. argued, to defeat them demanded luring them from the forest. Secondly, they attacked all in colonial service. This way, they defeated joint Anglo - Belgian forces. Colonialism was compelled to admit that 'Anything therefore in the nature of purely military force appeared futile'. That is why the colonialists formed a joint Anglo-Belgian Patrol along the impenetrable forest.¹²⁵ British colonialism was compelled to broaden its social base among the peasants and to deploy many of them to spy for it and to monitor all activities of Nyabingi movement.

Thirdly, the resisters used the peasants in the three colonies as their sea. Whenever pursued, they would apply guerrilla tactics of dispersal, leading the enemy to confusion. That was why this resistance created real fears to the colonialists. In addition to their joint military expeditions, patrols, intelligence and communication, the death of Ndochibiri was celebrated not only by the colonialists and their local allies in the whole region but also in England. The resisters exploited all existing social and cultural practices such as blood-brotherhood, Nyabingi religion and its rites for making and sealing new alliances, recruiting new fighting forces and other active and supportive purposes, punished waverers, sell-outs and betrayers. This is best exemplified by one of those in its top leadership RUHUNGO. He had killed a chief's askari in RUANDA in 1916.¹²⁶ Another interesting example is of two domestic boys who killed their master for betraying Nyabingi Movement, burnt his house and fled across the border.¹²⁷

European "religious" society has been most narrowly averted".

¹²³ op. cit. The death was celebrated in Entebbe, Kampala, Kigali, Rutchuru and England. His head was hurried to the British Museum for public display. Refer to nationalistic songs on these struggles under Ndochimbiri.

¹²⁴ op. cit.

¹²⁵ D.C's letter of 25/6/1919. No. 55. Also See Map.

¹²⁶ op. cit.

¹²⁷ op. cit.

Fourthly, there was increased cooperation in both membership and leadership. The best instance is of Kaigirirwa, a priestess, who was in high command with men, was the one who commanded a strong peasant armed force of about 600 fighters from Congo into Uganda and stayed with them in the forest awaiting instructions from Ndochibiri et al. in Kabale. She took over the movement's leadership immediately after their death.

Fifthly, Ndochibiri derived his strength mainly from large numbers of peasants joining the movement. In fact, he was able to convince many people in colonial service to join the struggle. The best examples were peasants of Rwagara hill, former allies of colonialism. He formed a bond with them through blood brotherhood and other cultural bindings, mobilised them into resistance twice early 1919 against forced labour, taxation, inter alia. He was able to recruit them into the struggle as both supporters and active participants drawing on their social grievances. It was among these where the top leadership was making blood brotherhoods, carrying out Nyabingi rites and "fomenting a general resistance on a large scale in Rukiga and Rwanda, bigger than the August 1917 Nyakishenyi resistance" according to the colonial assessment.¹²⁸

The leadership's capacity of organisation and military strategies were exemplified even in the last encounter. By the time their forces under Kaigirirwa crossed into Uganda, Ndochibiri and fourteen other leaders were busy doing political work around Kabale. They were making military plans and preparations for the next offensive, preparing arms, carrying out initiations and broadening their cause, carrying out cultural and Nyabingi rites, mobilising and encouraging peasants while cementing their faith and courage, using Nyabingi, patriotism and blood-brotherhood and all other relation that could be exploited. "Not a whisper of their presence reached any alien native, much less any political agents connected with the Government". In terms of modern weaponry, they had 25 rifles during that night. With the object of liberating their country of Europeans, they never surrendered but portrayed great heroism and bitter hatred for colonialism as they resisted it even in death. The D.C. acknowledged;

Their rifles they deliberately broke, shouting as they died 'we will not look upon a white man, he shall not have our "iron" but a curse'.¹²⁹

One of their main military weapons was arson. Arson as a weapon was

¹²⁸ P.C.W.P. to C.S. on 5/7/1919.

¹²⁹ op. cit.

easy to apply. One method of applying it was to tie a bundle of live fire on the arrow and then shoot it at the place to burn. Arson struck great fear among the colonialists. `... native tactics locally are massed attack just before dawn. As at Nakishenyi, houses are burnt to "bolt" the occupants. All station buildings are mud and thatch. No approach to water can be commanded by rifle fire from any of these, least of all the office ... no "boma". Water is a mile away. Any force fighting its way to water would find itself in a swamp with mountains on either side...' Resisters applied it very often either individually or collectively. The enemy also resorted to it. They also feared that a section of resisters would burn the headquarters and claim that it was Nyabingi which had burnt them and chased away the government.¹³⁰ This would lead to loss of property and credibility among the area, which would fuel resistance.¹³¹ D.C. had noted the guerrilla tactics of these resisters:

Speaking generally the rebels expressly avoid fighting and retire into the forest or across international frontiers whence they dart out to raid and retire before any news can even reach the station.¹³²

Some sought individual solutions to colonialism; they fought on individual bases, committed murders, or suicides in despair or in utter anger, others refused to pay tax or to provide free labour as groups or as individuals. A good example was Kayonsa and Kinkizi resistance. "Several villages of criminal fugitives and malcontents are situated just across the Belgian frontier...At the first sign of tax collection or labour demands the greater portion of the people prepare to move across the frontier".¹³³ Others migrated across the borders while others opted for an opportunistic alternative - collaborating with colonialism for material rewards and other benefits.

The paralysis of colonialism came from continuous and persistent attacks by all sections of peasant society. Birahira gives another good example. He led a force of over 300 peasant resisters against the British, who were exploiting forced labour *Ruharo* on road construction. This disrupted road construction.

¹³⁰ Ag D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 26/6/1919. Also refer to report of P.C.W.P. of 28/10/1920 on the Safety of Kabale Station. The Commissioner of Police, Kampala on 17/vii/1919 suggested construction of a cemented underground Water tank by P.W.D. and the roofing with corrugated galvanized iron. Ag C.S. to Director of P.W.D., Kigezi Station. Ag C.S. to the Director of P.W.D. of 24/7/1919: Kigezi Station. File: W.P. Kabale Station, Defence Precautions.

¹³¹ op. cit. P.C.W.P. to Commissioner of Police on 7/7/1919.

¹³² op. cit. He recommended alterations of Kabale Station and to increase Police establishment to 70.

¹³³ W.P. April 1919 Report. Colonialism instituted an Anglo-Belgian Patrol in 1921 to help collect tax on both sides of the border. K.D.A.R. 1921.

The colonial forces under Namunye arrested him and some of his forces.¹³⁴ Birahira had earlier on led another anti-colonial resistance.¹³⁵

The peasants' overt methods included refusal to offer information. The best example was their refusal to explain to the A.D.C. in a large Baraza at Kabale the reasons for their resistance. They were determined not to betray their cause. It is false to argue that this peasant movement was caused by "nabingi" as the A.D.C. did. The cause was imperialism. Nyabingi united and inspired them to fight their enemies.¹³⁶

Developments Consequent to these Deaths

These resisters understood the critical demands of the struggle and the need to promote it. As such, they intensified it. To concretise this, seven "compatriots of the late Ndochibiri", who had tried to conscientise the peasants had been beaten off at once by British forces. On the same day, 'there was a simultaneous gathering at Itembero's (Congo-Belge frontier) of Nabingi malcontents with 28 rifles'. Both the Belgian and British authorities responded with scorched earth policy. They burnt villages of Kisalu, Kayonza and Kinkizi, and evacuating peasants from the border areas. They knew that 'While one cannot hope for any permanent result from this section, it has nevertheless had a salutary effect'.¹³⁷

The murder of Biramba and then the burning of his body by his domestic boys illustrates some of the ways how resisters dealt with those who betrayed the struggle - the so-called "pragmatists" or in colonial language "progressives". The P.C.W.P. recounted:

On the night of July 31/1 August the Ruanda Chief BIRAMBA of Bunagana was murdered by two servants who were sleeping in the same house adjoining that of Agent Abdulla. They burnt the house over his body and fled to the Congo. BIRAMBA was a useful progressive chief who had accompanied me twice on tour and given under secrecy much valuable information by the Nabingi movement. The latter have announced the act as one of vengeance on an "informer".¹³⁸

There was continuous resistance in various forms. The main contention in

¹³⁴ Idem. Bilahira was doing 12 months R.I. at Kabale.

¹³⁵ op. cit. Excerpt from Intelligence Reports, Lake Detachment. Kigezi, Punitive Expedition Against Ndochimbiri & W.P. Report of May, 1916.

¹³⁶ op. cit.

¹³⁷ op. cit.

¹³⁸ op. cit.

many parts remained taxation, forced labour and other demands by the state and religious missions. Colonialism was forced to exempt certain areas like Butare, Bufundi and parts of Bufumbira from taxation for fear of resistance.¹³⁹ It was clear to colonialism that "the basis of all negative politics is that alien Government is only temporary... is also a basis of NABINGI "religion".(Sic!)¹⁴⁰ It therefore, intensified political work and organisation of the District.¹⁴¹ *

The P.C. warned against strong punitive measures against resisters as this "would bring temporary success". The D.C's defence was that Punitive measures were necessary to quell all international disorders.¹⁴² * This was the same time when peasants attempted to burn the residence of the agent of Rukiga.¹⁴³

Peasant resisters used the weapon of propaganda to explain phenomena. An instance is how new diseases like dysentery, influenza were lumped together with poll tax and other colonial impositions to wipe out people.

The disease is classed with influenza and Poll tax as plague maliciously introduced by the European, and is first class Nyabingi propaganda.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ W.P. Nov. 1919 Report.

¹⁴⁰ D.C. to P.C.W.P. of 17/9/1920. The P.C.W.P. on tour on 27/10/1920: "Operations connected with Nyabingi Kigezi District 1920" showed that he had gone to check on Passive Rebellion "in Kumba area attributed its causes to the drinking season and to Nabingi movement. Also see his communication to the C.S. on 1/10/1920. File: Nyabingi (1920). U.N.A. Entebbe.

¹⁴¹ Telegraph of D.C. to C.S. of 26/9/1920 on passive resistance. He had sent reinforcements to an ex sergeant major, had "captured two rifles, other weapons". Also see telegraph of C.S. to P.C.W.P. of 27/9/1920. File: Nyabingi and its Defence (1919-1923). P.C.W.P. telegraphed D.C. on 24/9/1920 instructing him to deal with that Nabingi organisation "quietly and efficiently on lines similar to previous occasions obtaining co-operation Belgians their side aaa". *: The P.C.W.P. to D.C. on 29/10/1920 blamed D.C. for not using all available means to suppress the disturbances. He taught him to plan repression by listing "all chiefs, headmen and people known to have been implicated and from time to time...effect arrests and mete out punishment on individuals, such action would have a very good effect on untutored people as they would understand that the Government's arm though slow is long...These disturbances are the normal work of your district, as time goes on and our influence extends they will decrease but must be expected for some time." File: Congo: International Border: Administrative Proposals. U.N.A. Entebbe.

¹⁴² D.C's telegraphs to P.C.W.P. of 6/10/1920; 9/10/1920 and of 12/10/1920. Also refer to D.C's report of 17/9/1920 about the same issue.

*: P.C.W.P. to C.S. on 8.X.1920 requested for closure of British Ruanda until Mid-December on the grounds that it was more than likely that this trouble was due partly to the drinking season and partly to the Nyabingi movement. The P.C.W.P. warned against further arrests in the existing quiet condition in the country.

¹⁴³ P.C.W.P reported on 28/10/1920 their failure to trace the culprits.

¹⁴⁴ K.D. September Report. Also see Communication of the C.S. to the Principal Medical Officer on 7/11/1919.

Peasants were extremely cautious of the colonialist's motives. They understood the colonial thirst for people's land and other resources. As such, Nyabingi Abagirwa and resisters resisted protected spring water in 1929 and warned peasants against `a sinister scheme to poison the water and the people, so that the "Whites in Kenya" could seize the land!'¹⁴⁵

Philipp's allegation that Nyabingi was non-indigenous because of being anti-European was aimed at discrediting it at a theoretical level. It also aimed to deprive Nyabingi Movement of any legitimacy to mobilise peasants and articulate their interests. Hidden in this argument is the defence mechanism that Nyabingi religion was as foreign as European colonialism in the region and that as such, neither of them had the right and legitimacy to articulate peasant interests. Even if their argument was true that Nyabingi was also new, the major issue would be its relevancy to the lives of the peasants and how it addressed their interests. Whose interests it served and how it had arisen; either it was imposed from above or it has risen from below. Furthermore, the peasants' choice of Nyabingi and their involvement in Nyabingi Movement dispels colonial defences. In other words, peasants had the capacity to think, judge, decide and act. They were not sacks of potatoes.

Without understanding the social, political and economic conditions that had given rise to Nyabingi movement, and the grievances that fuelled this resistance, colonialism simplified it as `dangerous as containing a fanatic religious element'. However, colonialism understood why Nyabingi paralysed it most was its `working in the African territories of three European powers and gradually extending the sphere and malignity of its influence'.^{146 *}

Colonial Methods to Defeat this Movement

It applied various methods to defeat this movement. These included force, rewards and it put a price on Ndochibiri's head, persuasion, deportation, plunder and destruction of resources to handicap peasants from making war.

Its major method was of intensifying military expeditions under European commanders, using local allies and Agents from different nationalities. The latter were normally rewarded with resources captured from peasants, power as small chiefs, with or promises. They employed some religious converts, and informers. To this end, it deemed it `desirous of adequately rewarding those who have done so well on this occasion' in

¹⁴⁵ K.D.A.R. 1929.

¹⁴⁶ Report of D.C. on 31/7/1919.

*: In August, 1922, the D.C. abandoned his house in fear of peasant resisters.

nipping the incipient rising in the bud... `desire to offer encouragement to others to emulate their good example, if we should have occasion to call for volunteers again, in the event of Kaigirirwa attempting reprisals for the loss of her husband and brother-in-law'. It expected her to attack soon `in the hope of driving from her native country the hated European'.¹⁴⁷ It awarded substantial rewards for Nziraba Muzale, Alibatusede and Bigirwenda and booked Sebalijja for `some non-pecuniary recognition'.¹⁴⁸

Colonialism wanted to smash the resistance before it spread to the whole area. It had everything to lose and had duty to restore order. It also bought to `teach them a lesson' never to resist again. It had to prove its capacity to smash any resistance, contain the situation and protect them. It employed brutal force and repression on both membership and leadership, mounted military expeditions either individually or in co-operation with other colonial forces, massacred peasants, and witch-hunted resisters and Nyabingi worshippers. It had no mercy, it carried out operations, arrested *en masse*, carried out public executions both in Kabale and Kampala, imposed heavy fines with long-term rigorous imprisonment, deported without trial. It destroyed property and created utmost insecurity. It extradited resisters and suspects and intensified retribution. Another major method was the joint Anglo-Belgian co-operation in Intelligence, military and patrols. The Ag C.S. wrote to Les Resident du Ruanda et Rutchuru thanking them for their co-operation against Ndochibiri and his Nyabingi followers.¹⁴⁹

It improved its military capacity by increasing military personnel and arms in the District.¹⁵⁰

Early in 1919 we were constantly threatened by the armed raids of Ndoki-mbiri and his murderous bands. Their headquarters were, near the frontiers, in the mountains north-west and south-west of Lake Bunyonyi. So soon as one ordered porters or moved out from Kabale, they were informed beforehand of one's movements. I therefore conceived of the idea of establishing myself on a small centrally situated island in lake Bunyonyi whence, under cover of night and the usual dense mists, one might be able, unostentatiously and by canoe, to strike at either extremity of the lake. The

¹⁴⁷ *op. cit.*

¹⁴⁸ D.C. Kigezi Philipps to P.C.W.P. of 25/6/1919. No. 55. Ag C.S. to Deputy Governor on 16/7/1919, 18/7/1919. Governors' Authority on 22/7/1919. The Governor sanctioned rewards of sixty pounds to them in recognition of their services for saving the the protectorate of the loss of many lives and heavy expenditure by their action

¹⁴⁹ The Resident, Kigali to the C.S. of 14/10/1919 on Joint Cooperation Against Ndochibiri. Reply from le Commissaire de Rutchuru to C.S. of 22/8/1919 replying to his letter thanking them for their cooperation in the joint venture against Ndochibiri. Also see communication of Resident, Kigali, to the C.S. Entebbe on 14/10/1919.

¹⁵⁰ *op. cit.* Telegraph of D.C. to P.C.W.P. of 26/6/1919.

secrecy and mobility thus attained was in fact a principal factor in the final cutting off and wiping out of Ntochi-mbili.

In order that the island could not be regarded as a Public Rest Camp and its Chief Value (namely secrecy of movement) thereby destroyed, I paid (and gladly) from my own pocket both the compensation to occupiers and for the clearing, planting and building which I undertook. It was thus regarded by everyone merely as a not very serious hobby...¹⁵¹

The colonial state broadened a section of allies and collaborators and spies among the peasants, with attractive remuneration, promises, favours and exemptions from certain obligations and demands. On its invasion, agents from outside Kigezi formed the social base of colonialism. However, due to increased Nyabingi attacks, colonialism realised the need to dispense with these alien agents by creating and broadening a local social base. Consequently, it gradually created a social base, first with peasants under lineage leaders and chiefs like Mutambuka, Rwagara, Mushakamba, Mizerero, Ruhayana, Duybumba, and Ruzindana. These were remunerated with political posts, livestock etc.

Gradually, it began recruiting individuals in its service from all sections of society. Among the new category were spies like Sebisorora Sowedi and Mutasa who were instrumental in gathering intelligence information on Nirimbirima, Ruzirakuhunga and Kabango. Sebisorora's incrimination of the three in the complicity with Nyabingi and his conclusion that 'this movement of Ruzirakuhunga's is semi-anti-European' testifies to the success of this scheme. This new social base was recruited mainly by Baganda agents or under their recommendations or under the recommendations of the missionaries.

These informers and those who remained neutral in these struggles were opposed to Nyabingi Movement. Many sold out for opportunistic reasons. Some wanted immediate wealth in form of livestock, and posts. It is this group that claimed to be pragmatic and argued that they saw nothing wrong with the British forces who were better than Belgians and Germans. However, they were these individuals and groups who undermined Nyabingi movement as they sold out, and gave away most important secrets about Nyabingi to the enemy. This facilitated the enemy to understand its adversaries' strengths and weaknesses and how to defeat it. On the other hand, resisters could not get access to any vital information about the British as the latter from these pragmatists. The best case is of Chief Biramba already

¹⁵¹ op. cit.

cited.

Our respondents castigated collaborators for selling out for spoils and loot, European things, favours, political gains, posts etc. They brought to light the role of collaborators in defeating the resisters, how resisters fled and hid in caves, rocks, on islands, of swamps.¹⁵² Others argued that Rwagara and others allied with Europeans, following the example of Baganda. Others advanced the view that some had allied with colonialism because of fearing them, and ignorance of what they were doing. Others advanced that some lineage heads allied with Europeans for fear of their people's death.¹⁵³ Colonialism was receptive to any individual, group or lineage that collaborated or showed positive signs to cooperate. We find collaborators from different lineages even from Batutsi and Bahutu who had deep-rooted contradictions between each other now serving the same colonial master. Another important thing to note is the role of religious converts. We find Muslims playing a dominant role among its first cadreship. This was mainly because the first foreign religion in Buganda was Islam. Islam had been introduced hand in hand with trade. When colonialism came, it found there these converts who had a broader knowledge and experience of the world than others. This was a windfall for colonialism. On the other hand, the Catholic and Protestant missionaries that came just before colonialism spent much time in wrangles with each other and also wasted much time at the palace instead of carrying out their work. On its arrival in Kigezi, they found it compromising to deploy them in areas where Catholics missionaries had began their work. Protestant converts like Sebalijja would cause more crises by fuelling enmity there. This had been confirmed by the murder of a C.M.S. teacher in Ruanda.¹⁵⁴ These remained very useful in the running of the state machinery until the colonial state and the new European Religions had created a new cadreship from the peasantry and sons of chiefs. The colonial state had to force these new religions to carry out their ideological role.

On top of that, it intensified the witch-hunt for resisters, sympathisers and helpers of Nyabingi resisters. This was religious persecution. In this regard, the P.C.W.P. rushed to Kabale and gave them a lengthy anti-Nyabingi lecture, and commended those who had assisted in the capture of Ndochibiri and Luhemba and extorted them to remain faithful to the Government which (I told them) is not only their master but their friend... begged them not to listen to Kaigirirwa who will only lead them into trouble... Ndochibiri's

¹⁵² Responses by Newire Y., Rukara, Karangizi, Muyaga, Mazireyo, Kashangaki et al.

¹⁵³ Responses by Rwamafwa, Byandageire, Twongeirwe, Mazireyo, Beinamaryo, Ndunguye, Keinywanisa et al.

¹⁵⁴ These included Sulaimani Ntangamalala, Abdulla Namunye, Saidi Bitensi, Sowedi Sabada, Zambatisi Jute, Luvayagwe etc.

"Sacred" sheep was publicly cremated as a precautionary measure'.¹⁵⁵

But could such politicisation bear fruit? Was colonialism able to reach the resisters - both the leadership and membership to discuss with them and convince them to lay down their arms? Did this movement depend on this leadership and therefore incapable of bringing up new leadership? Did that death wipe out the movement therefore?

The colonial officers, who were far-sighted, war-hardened practitioners did not entertain illusions. They expected that `a further religious war of revenge will be undertaken by this cult at not very distant date'. The P.C.W.P. suggested a new site for Kigezi Head Quarters with a "Boma" in July as he was `fully alive to the fact that incendiarism on the part of fanatical followers of the late Ndochibiri, the late Luhemba and the still existing witch doctoress Kaigirwa is a real danger and not to be scoffed at'.¹⁵⁶ They were certain that the leadership under Kaigirwa would be able to explain the causes of this death in light of religion as the will of Nyabingi for delinquencies in religious duties and would call on all the membership for revenge. `It is the same dangerous and illogical problem of religious fanaticism world - over'. They anticipated an attack. The crucial problem was that `Kabale Station, as it stands is wholly indefensible against the kind of attack which might be expected ... a sudden and fanatical night attack in force as the Nabingi Organisation was comparatively well supplied with arms retained by deserters and discarded by the Germans themselves in Ruanda during their hurried evacuation'.¹⁵⁷

Intensification of Witch-Hunt for "Nyabingi-ites"

In response to the D.C's public appeal of 1922-1923 `that all indications of Nyabingi, witchcraft or incantations be reported immediately to the D.C. in person', certain developments occurred in Bufumbira.¹⁵⁸ Lwakazina, from Chahi accused Nirimbirima, Luzirakuhunga and Kabango of witchcraft on 15th March. Sekitaka accused Luzirakuhunga on April 11th of possessing NABINGI appliances such as horns, beads and medicines and Nirimbirima for harbouring him. Mizerero, Chief of Nyarusiza accused Kabango of Nyabingi and of allying with Ndochibiri against colonialism.¹⁵⁹ The two spies that

¹⁵⁵ Idem.

¹⁵⁶ P.C.W.P. to C.S. on 7/7/1919.

¹⁵⁷ op. cit.

¹⁵⁸ Document entitled "Detail of Events leading to implication of NIRIMBIRIMA WITH NABINGI CONJURATION by D.C. including evidence".

¹⁵⁹ Idem. See evidence of the three signed by E.E. Filleul as D.M. on 24/4/1923. The Belgian

Kagubala had dispatched to spy on them gave similar evidence.¹⁶⁰ Sebosorora incriminated Luzirakuhunga for heading a "semi-anti-European" Movement.¹⁶¹

Luzirakuhunga was then arrested. This arrest caused some resistance. They were attacked by eight peasant resisters while bringing him.¹⁶² Colonialism was resolved that Nabingi, witchcraft or "Kubandwa" activities should be nipped in the bud and not be permitted to pass without the most exacting secret enquiries being made.¹⁶³ Luzirakuhunga was convicted and sentenced to three years R.I. at a Kampala goal with a fine of Shs. 100/=. On his release, he was to be deported for at least another year in a distance not less than 250 miles from Kigezi. On his return, he would remain under surveillance of the D.C. Luzirakuhunga maintained his struggles while in prison. He attacked a warder with a hoe, hit him in the head and neck and split his skull. He was then sentenced to death. This was later commuted to twenty years R.I.¹⁶⁴ Kabango was considered to be `a pawn in the Nabingi game, but at the same time a deterrent influence to the rapid advancement of this part of the district...' He and Luzirakuhunga were accused of leading Nirimbirima to resistance, `laziness, and bred the distrust of his District officers'. He was therefore repatriated to Belgian territory. The D.C. concluded: `And thus ends the reign of another "Nabingi" authority whose evil influence is so retrograde to the natives of the district'.

The P.C.W.P. discovered too late how deep Nirimbirima had penetrated the colonial system and the political implications of deposing him and charging him in court. Colonialism wanted to avoid unnecessary grievances which would form bases for Nyabingi resistance. After all, Nirimbirima was a

Authorities letter No. 1178 of 16/4/1923 attested that they had discharged Kabango from chieftainship at KITAGOMA for political reasons, that they had always had apprehensions as to his connections with the Nabingi Sect without obtaining proof positive. Lulebuka and Lwakazina gave similar evidence on 21/4/1923. File op. cit.

¹⁶⁰ D.C./D.M. to P.C.W.P. of 23/4/1923. The two spies he sent to spy on the above case, Sowedi and Mataza gave a lot of incriminating evidence. Also see D.C's letter of 23/4/1923 to le Resident du Ruanda Kigali.

¹⁶¹ Idem.

¹⁶² Idem. Also see communication of D.M. to P.C.W.P. of 27th April. U.N.A. Entebbe.

¹⁶³ D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 23/4/1923 about Luzirakuhunga's practice of Nyabingi. D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 28/4/1923. Luzirakuhunga's conviction under The Criminal Law (Witchcraft) Ordinance 1912 was certain, only awaiting evidence from Kigali and Bufumbira `to prove anti-European inclinations against him'. He argued that `such beliefs against Nirimbirima that have been proved to exist amongst the Bahutu can have nothing but a retrograde effect on the general native administration in Ruanda. The native government here is only in the embryo stage and is very fragile and easily disturbed, and the fact that they do not trust their chief can have nothing but a deterrent effect on the advancement of these people'.

¹⁶⁴ K.D.A.R. 1924.

colonial creation. He decided to drop all charges against Nirimbirima. In his explanation, Nirimbirima had been in office for only 21/2 years and;

The history of Kigezi does not go back very far and... action in a similar case essential in another District might be unwise in the present state of development that yours is in ... no great harm if we leave this matter for another two months ... it might be advisable to issue propaganda to all chiefs in Bufumbira that as a result of Luzirakuhunga's case the Government believe that other chiefs and people in Bufumbira were partly implicated and warning them that the government are determined to put down nabingi and severely punish anyone practising it whether chief or peasant.

We want to teach these chiefs rather than turn them out and that it would not be easy to find others and if we did they might not be any better. Dismissal as rule makes a native hopeless punishment and maintenance in his position sometimes makes him strongly...

The P.C.W.P. cautioned D.C. against use of force. He disclosed how he had learnt through `experience how difficult they are ... although a prosecution is justifiable and a conviction probable we have made any great progress in the District and might we not be at rather a dead end?¹⁶⁵

There were some important developments. The first one was that despite the missionary education and his friendship with Dr. Sharp of C.M.S., Nirimbirima still worshipped Nyabingi religion. He communed with its Abagirwa. Secondly, he managed to penetrate the colonial system through the D.C's Clerk, Yoasi. He accessed all important information about himself and colonial plans about him. This gave him opportunity to prepare himself and hide all traces of Nyabingi practices. Colonialism realised this too late.¹⁶⁶

It needs to be stressed that colonialism was incapable of addressing correctly the causes of the struggle as it was the problem. Peasant resisters were challenging its existence. To solve such a problem would have required it to dissolve itself, which it was incapable of doing. Secondly, it was dictatorial by nature and could never engage in democratic discussions. It remained confronted by resistances under Nyabingi, `Every local grievance, whether real or imaginary, and every apprehension or misapprehension, is greedily exploited, hence the need of going slow, constant personal contact with the peasantry, and seeing under the surface, in Kigezi. Nyabingi and all its works are unlikely to die out except with the present generation'.¹⁶⁷ The

¹⁶⁵ P.C.W.P. to D.C. of 24/8/1923.

¹⁶⁶ Idem. It was Yoasi who got dismissed.

¹⁶⁷ *op. cit.*

colonial state took steps to revert from forced food contribution to forced food production for sales. The former had been collected by the chiefs under the supervision of Agents. Gradually, this took root as peasants began to bring things voluntarily for sale. The state also took steps to ensure food security for the peasants. Among its measures was the introduction of famine crops and communal granaries as food reserves. It intensified communal food reserves and granaries on its administration centres. This increased peasants' resistance. They did not understand the rationale of these communal granaries while households had their own granaries at household level. Secondly, they did not trust the colonial state in this. They suspected that it wanted this food for its troops, porters and for selling. This was not without ground as was to be witnessed when it sold some food without consulting the owners and Agents embezzled some of it.

The peasants knew that these famines were neither caused by Nyabingi, nor by devils but by the colonial state, which was now forcing them to pool together food. To peasants, colonialism was evil. Thirdly, this pooling together of food was resisted as it had the effect of undermining men's position in society. While men were the political heads of their households, colonialism reduced them tremendously. In default of any state demand, these family heads and other men were harassed or punished. This undermined their political and social status in society; and as the main generators of ideas, ideology, teachings and as the initiators of moral standards. Colonialism made men become more or less fugitives in their area. All this had the effect of recruiting more of them into active anti-colonial struggles.

The colonial State was forced to abolish *Kashanju* due to peasant resistance to it. Its abolition was followed by peasants withdrawing their labour as there was no legal basis to force them. Sullivan reported peasants' response thus;

Under the 1920 Ordinance, offenders render themselves liable to imprisonment or to work in custody. Previous experiments have shown the futility of such people to work on plantations, as they merely vanish.

The abolition of Kasanvu has removed any form of compulsory labour, with the result, that these people who have no wants, (Sic!) and who can grow their food without any effort, do not undertake voluntary labour.

There is apparently a passive movement against tax paying, the natives saying "Kasanvu is now abolished, the Government will not kill us, and the jail cannot hold us all".¹⁶⁸

Colonialism was forced to revisit taxes and their methods of collection in

¹⁶⁸ File: Native Affairs. Poll Tax in W.P. U.N.A. Entebbe.

the area. The first thing to note on tax was that it had desisted from taxing women. It relaxed patrol *Potoro* aimed at netting tax defaulters. It also began to alleviate the tax burden both on the young men and on the aged. The first one was to fix the minimum and maximum age for tax-payment, and the category for those to pay partial taxes. The P.C. pleaded for tax exemption for `elderly men whose earning capacity is exhausted to contribute tax even at a partial rate, actually the sum due has generally to be earned by a younger member of the family'.¹⁶⁹ In fact, it ensured a continued tax-assessment annually, basing on individual's capacity to pay, age, amount of resources one owned.

The colonial state went ahead and made reforms in forced labour. It allowed peasants to commute Ruharo. Gradually, it phased out Ruharo by consolidating it with poll tax.

This section has shown how there were many changes with the world war. These were in reaction to colonial demands, impositions, punishments etc. These demands and brutal coercion, massacres, tortures etc. had forced peasant resisters to adopt new forms of recruitment, conscientisation and struggle. They adopted new methods and raised more or less standing forces. This was also the time when this Nyabingi Movement took a broader internationalist line. They began attacking all the imperialist powers in the whole region. Another qualitative transformation into the movement arose from the new membership. Some of these had been in colonial service as askaris, cadres and chiefs while others had learnt a lot from their term in detention. These incorporated the enemy's technology and weaponry into the resistance, trained peasant resisters into new military warfare and gave them access to use of these new weapons. It is not surprising that colonial forces got defeated in some skirmishes and were forced flee. This was also the time when many grand military plans were foiled and intelligence were rendered useless by resisters.

Faced with the imperialist war on a broader scale and this Nyabingi movement domestically, colonialism was forced to seek other solutions in addition to militarism. It was forced to make a series of reforms, based on the prevailing social grievances so as to undermine Nyabingi movement. These revolved around taxation, forced labour, forced production and contribution, land, religions, and change of agents. At the same time, it began to increase its social base among the peasants. It accomplished this through material rewards and posts, promises, and promotions. Another method was direct decampaigning of Nyabingi citing malpractices of the Abagirwa. Though this

¹⁶⁹ P.C.W.P. to C.S. on 6/5/1937. File: Luwalo: Abolition of.

phase evidenced the climax of Nyabingi Movement, it also witnessed the beginnings of its demise.

Section Five

The Role of Women in Anti-colonial Struggles

While women were marginalised in this area, they played a dominant role in Nyabingi institution both in the leadership and membership. This section examines some of the contributions of some women in this anti-colonial resistance.

The prohibition of women from owning weapons and active participation in war was premised on the argument that women were weak, lacked experience in wars, and had their specified roles to play. Another more plausible explanation seems to lie in the question of whether men were ready to allow ownership of weapons to all sections of society. Could such a process not have facilitated these other sections of society to resist men's domination and oppression or the whole arrangement? or was it symbolic - as a symbol for men as heads of homes? This calls for a revisiting of the restrictions of women and children to go to forges, let alone touching the raw materials like charcoal. Could it be accepted that this was aimed to ward off ill-luck which could fail the success of the smelting process or it had to do with hiding the smithing skills from these sections of society for self-preservation? This, therefore create a practical situation which the oppressed sections of society had to be protected from any external aggression. Monopolising the protective role had the effect of legitimising the oppressive position of men, their magnanimity, infallibility and indispensability in society.

However, this did not mean that these other sections of society did not contribute in defence of their society. We learnt from field research how women and children equipped men with stones during these fights, threw stones at the enemy while shielding themselves with winnowing trays *entaara*. They showed how women used their staves *emihunda* to stab their enemies. In case of attacks, women and children could use men's weapons for self-defence. This was not directly condemned by the lineage elders as they would be defending themselves and their enganda from external aggression. In such instances, there would be no condemnation and no purification rites would be carried out. Any defeat or victory affected all people, their economy and social set-up. In other cases, they would poison the enemy or make them drunk and then kill them with daggers *endiga* or other weapons etc. However, they were not allowed to own weapons. These do not apply to the Batwa nationality, where all sections of society had their instruments of production which were at the same time usable as weapons.

It was through Nyabingi Movement and such charismatic leadership that a spirit of comradeship developed. This had the effect of sealing together various peoples in the struggle. All other practices and cultural initiations contributed to this. Another development was that women in leadership discussed with men on equal basis and commanded all membership in the fight. Combatants had realised that the issue at stake was to combine efforts of all members of society to defeat the invaders. As such, every contribution was welcomed. The role of the Abagirwa was also critical in dressing wounds and injuries sustained in the struggle. They were the Abagirwa who also had the monopoly of calling upon Nyabingi to threaten with curses and death penalty or actually arranging deaths of the saboteurs.

We find that peasants, who did not take up arms to resist gave logistical support in food and arms supplies, transport, intelligence, keeping secrets, making arrangements, guiding and directing resisters in movement, transmitting information, hiding the resisters and confusing the enemy, in recruitment, morale and encouragement, harassment of collaborators etc. All these contributions were critical in sustaining and promoting the struggle. We shall look briefly at the leadership and fighting roles of some of these Abagirwa.

Inauguration of Nyabingi Movement by Muhumuza

The Kivu Mission and the Boundary Commission were confronted militarily by peasant resisters, under the leadership of Abagirwa. Most of these were females. The first two main anti-colonial resistances that colonialism confronted from 1909 were led by Muhumuza and Kaigirirwa. Muhumuza, mother of Ndungusi, originated from Rwanda. She was widow to the former king Rwabugiri, of Rwanda. With her husband's death, both Muhumuza and Ndungusi got involved in power struggles against Musinga. Musinga got the backing of colonialists and took the reigns of power. These events, and the subsequent ones forced Muhumuza and her son to flee to Rutobo, which was soon to be made the border between the new Ankole and Kigezi Districts. That is how they joined a peasant life and developed new relations with these peasants after falling from the ruling class in Rwanda. On the other hand, Kaigirirwa originated from the peasantry and was an omugirwa of Nyabingi.

What is worth noting here is that while female Abagirwa like Kaigirirwa were selected into the service of Nyabingi in their girlhood, got initiated into Nyabingi secrets and rites, etc. and had more religious faith in Nyabingi religion, Muhumuza and her son adopted this religion, after falling from the palace. This showed the transformative and dynamic character of mother and

son - from being objects of Nyabingi to embracing it for their political, economic and military purposes. Their choice of Nyabingi religion was a conscious one unlike other Abagirwa. Nyabingi religion became a powerful ideology for mother and son to gain legitimacy and credibility among peasants. Like other Abagirwa, Nyabingi religion was important for them to extract surplus from the peasants under the guise of Nyabingi and to declare war etc.

It should be noted that owing to their historical origin, Muhumuza and her son were more conscious politically, ideologically and militarily than the peasants in Kigezi. Furthermore, they had encountered Germany colonialists and European Missionaries in Rwanda. Thus, both son and mother had no illusions about colonialism. In addition to that, they had been beneficiaries of the Rwanda state and understood the need to defend land and independence. It is no wonder therefore that her struggles against Germans led to her capture and deportation to G.E.A. However, she struggled and managed to return soon after. This was also the time when other Abagirwa were mobilising peasants into resistance against colonial invasion in the whole region. These resistances led to massacres and Kaigirirwa's deportation to Mbarara. The absurd encounters of Abagirwa like Muhumuza with colonial forces in Rwanda and G.E.A. and Kaigirirwa with British forces while in detention at Mbarara were very important for their future military and organisational purposes. These provided them with insight into the mechanics of the enemy, the need to resist and methods to accomplish it. Colonialism had set the terms.

The capture and deportation of the leadership did not act as a reformatory or lead them to a 'cul de sac'. Instead, it was while they were in this absurd contact with their adversaries that they developed more determination to emancipate their society. They learnt more about their adversaries, their ways of life, their motives, methods of struggle and strengths, weaponry , military tactics, and how to protect oneself from these weapons. They learnt the importance of mobility, retreat, broader unity, the role of masses in self-emancipation, the need to study both the enemy and the membership and to choose capable and dependable ones into the leadership for the struggle and the need for conscientising the membership. In fact, this separation was very important to the leadership. As an instance, Muhumuza's separation from the ruling class in Rwanda and then from the peasants to G.E.A. helped to cut her ties with the aristocracy.

In a similar manner, Kaigirirwa's deportation to Mbarara was a time of reflection. It helped to cut her roots from the geographical and social environment. It was this weakness which had led to heavy losses and massacres as peasants would hide in swamps, bushes, caves and rocks in their

geographical environment and got besieged by the colonial forces for weeks. Faced by hunger or misjudging that the enemy had left, they would fall easy prey to the enemy while trying to return. They had not known that the new adversaries were skilled professional fighters. This was witnessed with the Nyakishenyi resistance. The colonial officer reported how a large number of rebels had become tired of hiding in the swamps and had tendered their submission, while others were following suit daily.¹⁷⁰ This time of separation was thus a time for gaining a rich experience for the forthcoming struggles, in which they were to apply most of this knowledge and skills. It also helped them to meet many other oppressed people from other areas. This gave them opportunity to share experiences about their new enemy and the need to fight him to final victory. They were all these developments that became the bases for their charismatic and forward-looking leadership in the struggles that they led thereafter. It was their religious and political roles that made them the conscience of society.

We see Muhumuza taking the first initiative to mobilise peasants in the region against the invading forces. It was her past experience that enabled her to take the first initiative and mobilize peasants in the region against into resistance. She is the first known woman resister who mobilized a cross section of peasants into armed resistance in Kigezi. She took initiative to conscientise peasants about colonialism and its dangers. This was proved practically at Rutobo where she intercepted a convoy of White Fathers Missionaries destined for Mulera. After interrogating their porters, she denied them food and passage. In the same area, these peasants resisted the Boundary Commission from carrying out demarcations. They disrupted the border demarcations, uprooted border pillars, attacked the commissioners, occupied some of their camps. The Commissioners were compelled to move under tight security. These peasant resisters attacked all those in colonial service. These included mail runners and messengers. To concretise this, they in separate incidents, killed a colonial Agent, an askari and a porter. Though the colonial forces hit back, leading to massacres and injuries, the peasant resisters maintained their resistance. Colonialism attributed all these to Muhumuza's political work.¹⁷¹ As already noted, the major problems for these peasant resisters arose from the low level of productive forces, absence of an organised armed force to engage and repel the invaders. There was no established

¹⁷⁰ *op. cit.* The D.C./D.M. on 8/9/1917 reported continued surrendering of the rebels after becoming tired of hiding in swamps, though a number of rebels' chiefs were still in hiding and the witchdoctor had disappeared.

¹⁷¹ Report on the Work of the British Section of the Anglo-German-Belgian Boundary Commission, 1911.

institution to mobilise peasants for self-defence. The only way was through Collective armed resistance. It was in these circumstances that Muhumuza took up initiative, assumed leadership and mobilised peasants into armed resistance against colonialism. Knowing the weaknesses of peasants in relation to religions and witchcraft, she exploited the situation by promising them protection of Nyabingi. She used Nyabingi religion for ideological purposes to unite and encourage them. She applied a militaristic approach to whoever refused to join the resistance. This way, she was able to raise a big peasant force composed of various nationalities and lineages. Some of these were formerly hostile to one another. Through her politics and invocations to Nyabingi, she was able to convince them into unity against this common enemy. She showed them that the only way to defend their land and interests was through collective armed struggle. Aware of the dangers of guns, she encouraged the resisters that she would render the European guns harmless by turning them into water. In fact, these were some of the promises that the subsequent leadership was to uphold. Muhumuza was also able to incorporate lineage leaders and other influential personalities into the leadership. This had the advantage of bringing in various peoples under such lineage leaders into the movement, even if they had not accepted Nyabingi religion.

Though she was able to mobilise a large peasant force, her militaristic approach to individuals, lineages and peoples that refused or hesitated to join the movement led to negative consequences. By attacking them and looting their livestock, they alienated many of them and forced them to join the enemy's forces. This was detrimental to the movement as it swelled the enemy's forces. In isolating and attacking them before attacking the principle enemy - colonialism, this peasant movement lost a credible force. This force could have been neutralized through dialogue, diplomacy, conscientisation or other methods. This would have led to isolated fewer enemies. Yet, we find that thousands of armed peasants under Rwagara and Mutambuka joined colonial forces after being beaten by forces under Muhumuza. Cap. Reid informed Maj. Jack in August, 1911, how Ikumba was full of wounded and starving refugees and how the situation was getting worse. He showed how "Mumusa was preaching an anti-European Crusade and collecting a considerable following in Rukiga, Mumusa or Muhumusa is a well-known personage in Ruanda, and has formerly given a great deal of trouble to the Germans. She is one of the "witch-doctors" who are found in this part of Africa, and who are regarded with superstitious reverence by the native.

Mumusa at one time had enormous power and still has".¹⁷² Germany colonialism in the South also promised military cooperation.

On the other hand, other later leadership that followed thereafter tried to overcome this limitation. These included Kaigirirwa, Ruhemba and Ndochibiri. The leadership that emerged later tried to involve more people into the movement. We find that both the leadership and membership of the Nyakishenyi resistance were composed of both peasants and local people, who had been in colonial service as chiefs, askaris, messengers and porters. This new approach had advantages. It weakened colonial forces at the time of this armed struggle as many of its local chiefs defected to Nyabingi Movement. It also increased the resisters' morale, courage and inspiration in this resistance. They were able to introduce and use the experience of leadership and struggle gained through their colonial service in this resistance. This was a great leap forward from most of the past peasant resistances, which suffered from lack of such skills and capable leadership. These chiefs came with their followers. This reduced the colonial numbers while augmenting the ranks of the resisters with experienced, hardened fighters who knew how to fight colonial forces. These chiefs and their followers knew much more of the geographical location of the enemy and the enemy's weaknesses which they would capitalise on. These were instrumental in the struggle.

Realising that some members were likely to lose faith in the leadership and desert the struggle or defect to the enemy or even turn against the leadership, Muhumuza drew lessons from the characteristics that people attributed to Nyabingi. One of these was to transform herself into a Nyabingi personification. She understood clearly the role of religion as an ideology. She was leading a big peasant force of various nationalities and lineages. She was not blind to the fact that some of them were likely to challenge her military plans and legitimacy to lead men to war. Even some of her membership had been allies or friends of Mutambuka and Rwagara. This, then called for creating a solid ideology, which would unite them, and keep them under indirect fear. This would threaten them from rebelling or questioning her legitimacy or refusing to carry out orders. People needed to be convinced that her line of action was the correct one as it was the Nyabingi line. She was able to marshal all these by combining her knowledge from the palace and that from the peasantry. Other Abagirwa were to follow this line of Nyabingi personification in the subsequent resistances. This was still prevalent by 1928 as the colonial officer reported Nyabingi's subversion to state and church with

¹⁷² Idem.

the local personification, heavily concentrated in Ndorwa.¹⁷³ Unlike the pre-colonial personification, the new form was precipitated by the needs of war.

This transformation from an Omugirwa into a Nyabingi personification scared those who would have been tempted to betray the struggle. Here was Nyabingi, in the human form defending their interests. This transformation elevated her above other members of society. This gave her more powers and legitimacy to act decisively and gave her room for manipulation and command. It also bestowed on her more powers to dictate and deal with individuals and situations promptly as she deemed fit, especially those with dissenting views, wavering behaviour, traitors etc. It also legitimised her position in compelling all people to resist colonialism and to wage war against anyone who refused to heed the call of Nyabingi. Her decisions were claimed to be the decisions of Nyabingi. It also became a basis for increased encouragement, bravery, unity and comradeship among the peasant resisters. It also had the effect of restraining more people from withdrawing from the struggle. It increased confidence of the membership in the leadership for both temporal and spiritual interests. The membership became more determined to resist when they saw her more resolute in her promises, actions, and her spiritual powers to turn bullets into water.

Her fears were unfounded. Some of these elders despised and feared this initiative and leadership by a woman. While some felt that it was despicable to be led by women to war, others felt that their position as men or as leaders would be undermined if women led them to war.¹⁷⁴ Others feared the consequences of such leadership and the possible resistance after the battle. They envisaged a situation of turmoil - where disobedience of women and children would emerge. These would challenge the existing social relations. At the same time, there were others who did not understand the gravity of the situation. Others resorted to outright collaboration with the enemy for wealth and power, while others decided to sit back and wait rather than joining forces led by women. Others even refused to join hands with them because their former enemies had joined them.

These were the reasons why the leadership and other peasant resisters had decided to attack such people before attacking the principal enemy. This also forced the leadership to increase their propaganda, ideology, thinking, planning, secrecy and ruthlessness with the weak, the wavering, the traitors and informers. Another development which united the peasant resisters under her leadership was her broadening the leadership of this struggle, her trials to

¹⁷³ K.D.A.R. 1928.

¹⁷⁴ Our respondents like Kamurasi and Ndunguye stressed this.

unite the former hostile lineages and incorporate them into one strong peasant force. Lineage leaders were part of the leadership. Her program of liberating the area also shows her capacity to understand and interpret phenomena. Firstly, she tried to rid the area of all those who formed the internal enemies of the struggle. These included the waverers, traitors and collaborators, cowards, fence-seaters etc. She did this by persuading them to join, threatening and the last option was to fight them before attacking the colonial forces themselves. She had no patience with this category of people. To this cause, she sharpened and carried three stakes for staking alive Mutambuka, Rwagara and Basajjabalaba 'who had brought the British into the region'.

However, she was defeated in a surprise attack by the British forces under Cap. Reid and Sebalijja jointly with peasant forces of Mutambuka and Rwagara on 28/9/1911. In this surprise attack, masses of armed peasants were massacred. Some of the reasons underlying their defeat lay in the poor weaponry, lack of unity, ill-planning, and the surprise attacks. All these arose from backward forces of production. The colonial forces had used 66 guns, 1680 bullets and one canon. Sebalijja put it melodramatically thus;

I opened fire on them and they fled towards Effendi Marijani. He opened fire and they fled towards Captain Reid... the battle was won and Muhamuza was captured Many unknown Bakiga were killed in the battle.... We set fire to all the houses. We buried about forty corpses in one deep grave.... On our side, one man was mortally wounded, while trying to plunder a house.... The Bakiga on our side doubted the utility of carrying enemy wounded on their heads. They killed them and threw them down and moved on.¹⁷⁵

His account is inaccurate and full of self praise. This can be shown by the length of this battle. It lasted for six and half hours, with losses on both sides. As the report showed, Dr. Marshall, of the Commission, had led a force to Kumba. Though he found the war over, there were a good many wounded and he did most useful work in attending to the wounded colonial troops. He transferred the acute cases to Kamwezi.¹⁷⁶ Although he did not explain the causes of this war, Sebalijja recounted how the peasants, who had been shouting that they were going to turn guns into water had been wiped out through a surprise attack.¹⁷⁷ In his account, the peasant resisters had burnt Sebalijja's camp on 10th September, then fought Mutambuka who had allied with the British. After this battle, Reid gathered peasants and threatened them

¹⁷⁵ Sebalijja, Yoana "A History of Rukiga and other Places", 1912.

¹⁷⁶ op. cit

¹⁷⁷ Sebalijja, Yoana, op. cit. recounted how Bakiga collaborators killed many unknown peasants. Ngorogoza op. cit. records a mass grave of 40 people while others were devoured by vultures.

with the might of the gun that what Muhumuza meant by turning bullets into water was her men's blood.¹⁷⁸ The significance of this battle was that it was an inaugural battle for peasant armed resistance under Nyabingi.¹⁷⁹

While Ndungusi and others managed to escape, she was wounded, captured by the colonial forces, dispatched to Mbarara and then deported to Mengo. There followed a hot pursuit of other members in the leadership. However, they failed to catch them as they escaped into the hills and peasants resisted Cap. Reid's investigations about the resistance.¹⁸⁰

Her return was blocked as she was a military and political threat 'high priestess of revolutionary religious-political cult "Nabingi"' aimed against them. The agents feared her political - religious powers and military attacks. Her return would mean loss of their newly acquired lucrative jobs with tributes, incomes, bribes and prestige. On her part, Muhamuza continued sending promises and encouraging messages that she would soon return and chase away the Europeans.¹⁸¹ Fearing that she would organise resistance through messengers, colonialism denied her visitors from Kigezi. It also stopped Nyindo's herdsboys from passing near her while taking Nyindo's cattle to Gulu.¹⁸² The district administration and P.C. remained emphatic against her return until her death in 1944.

The colonial strategy of separating the leadership from the membership had some basis. Colonialism had learnt how a return of such a deportee would be taken as testimony of Nyabingi's triumph over the state; Nyabingi having taken such time as it desired. The 1926 incident confirmed the colonial

¹⁷⁸ Idem. This study acknowledges the valuable information on this resistance by Beinamaryo and Karangizi, who lost grandfathers in this resistance; Byamukama, Mucori, Kamurasi, Tindyebwa, Kandeku et al. the effect of collaborators and the aftermath. They brought to light Muhamuza's leadership and military capacity, her powers as an Omugirwa to mobilise peasants into resistance.

¹⁷⁹ Sebalijja, Yoana "Olutalo Olwali Mu Lukiga e Rwanda", *Munno*, Kampala Dec. 1911. He commanded one of the three fronts against peasant forces under Muhamuza. Sebalijja recorded mass graves of peasant resisters and massacres of prisoners of war by British forces. The first recorded resistance was in Mpororo under Makobore in 1899. The 1904 W.P. General report noted Makobore's arrest and fining in 1899 for allowing two trading caravans from G.E.A. to be cut up. File: A6/17/1904: Annual Reports. General Report on W.P. 1904". U.N.A. Entebbe.

¹⁸⁰ Cap. Reid's Report of 5/3/1912. op. cit.

¹⁸¹ P.C.W.P. to C.S. on 4/10/1917.

¹⁸² P.C.W.P. to C.S. on 16/7/1917. In the P.C.W.P's memorandum of 1/5/1922, vide minute 28 in S.M.P. 5409 asked about Muhamuza's repatriation so as to relieve government of maintenance costs. The P.C.W.P. communicated to the C.S. on 25/5/1922 that the District Administration was opposed to the return of both Muhamuza and Nyinabatwa. The K.D.A.R. 1932 noted that Muhamuza was receiving presents from her people. Also refer to File: Historical and Political Notes (West) 1941. U.N.A. Entebbe.

fears. When Abagirwa mobilised peasants on the theme that Muhumuza was returning, hundreds of 'People came from all parts voluntarily to build a large fenced in area 200 yards by 200 yards ... to welcome her back as queen of Nyabingi since her "nyabingi" had obviously overcome everything causing her return to the district - even though she had been exiled for the last fifteen years!'¹⁸³ What threatened colonialism was that no chief reported it until a Roman Catholic Father did so. Such a failure to report this could be explained by these colonial agents' fears of Nyabingi, fears of peasants' wrath and vengeance or their approval and support of these peasants' actions, or their personal beliefs in Nyabingi.

Her charisma and influence even when she was away disturbed colonialism. Despite colonial objections to her request for visitors, peasants devised methods of visiting her secretly in Kampala for initiation into Nyabingi institution and its secrets and took her presents and tributes.¹⁸⁴ This made colonialism more vigilant against Nyabingi Movement. The Buganda Resident, who went to Rwanda on this mission in 1939, discovered that Nyabingi Movement was still active. The colonialists were shocked to learn that many people from Kigezi, Rwanda, Congo and Ankore came regularly to Muhumuza for initiation.¹⁸⁵ They therefore took strict steps to stop these missions.

All these prove the effectiveness of the weapon of separating the leadership from the membership. Had she been in Kigezi, then, it would have been easier for her to effect a better organised resistance as Kaigirirwa was later to do.

This short account helps us to dismiss the narrow view presented by colonialists for public consumption that Muhumuza was just fighting to establish herself as a ruler. Even this official view had changed by 1941 to the view that her special aim was to form a Kingdom for her son Ndungutse.¹⁸⁶ The problem with such presentation is that the resister is projected as using peasants to fight and die for her personal interests. This fails to show what popular interests were being advanced, the progressive nature of such a struggle and its achievements. Furthermore, such a presentation aims to show that neither such a resister, nor colonialism had legitimate claim of the area as both were foreigners fighting for imperial ends. As such, the victor in that case would have the legitimacy to rule, hence justification for British colonialism. Such an approach, which speculates about individuals has the

¹⁸³ *op. cit.*

¹⁸⁴ *op. cit.*

¹⁸⁵ Buganda Resident's Memo. to C.S. on 14/4/1939 and his report on Ruanda of 13/4/1939 No. A 102/14. Another Ndungusi was arrested in Ankole and convicted.

¹⁸⁶ *op. cit.*

problem of ignoring the popular forces' history and obscuring issues. If Muhumuza was aiming only at personal interests, how come that she had not concentrated on promoting them until this invasion? How come that she managed to mobilise a cross section of peasants of different lineages, gender and other minorities? Did peasant struggles end with this defeat?

Women in Leadership Post Muhumuza

There were many Abagirwa, whose role in leadership and struggles led them to death, capture and/or deportation. Others had to disappear among the peasants. This leadership proved a military and political challenge to colonialism. This raised its expenditure on defence in this new district, increased its fears and instability. Direct military confrontation had the effect of increasing colonial oppression. Muhumuza's deportation was not the end of the movement. In fact, that resistance was the launching of the Nyabingi movement. Colonial authorities were soon to lament how 'the female witches of the Mamusa type' were at work in the whole district, mobilising people with 'anti-European ideas'. It had not taken long before colonialism had learnt the charismatic and effective character of these women Abagirwa, their political and mobilisation capacity, their capacity to provide leadership, ideology, interpretation of phenomena for people's cause etc. It was compelled to intensify repression. It applied all ruthlessness it could marshal to hunt them down. Among those killed was one Wahire. Another one Chandungusi was captured, deported to Mbarara and died on her way back.¹⁸⁷ Mukeiganira was arrested, deported and her twenty cattle looted. Among the arrests and deportation were also Nyinabatwa and Kanzanyira.

Both Nyinabatwa and Kanzanyira were arrested and charged like the rest under Section 2 W.C. Ord. 1912.¹⁸⁸ Judgment was based on D.C's oaths and evidence. The colonial court deemed it imperative to deport each of them to a place more than 250 miles away as

Witchdoctors (females) have been a source of great trouble to the native administration of the Kigezi District for years by inciting the natives to disobey the chiefs and leading armed forces against authority ... If Kanzanyira returns to Kigezi District for the next three years, her influence is likely to cause a recrudescence of such armed revolt.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ K.D.A.R. 1914-15. Also see Reports of W.P. of August and September, 1914. Chandungusi was Katuregye's mother.

¹⁸⁸ Nyinabatwa's was Criminal Case No. 56 of 1917 and Kanzanyira's was Criminal Case No. 6 of 1918. See Files: Native Affairs: Ninabatwa (Witch doctor) Die 23/3/1923; & Native Affairs. Kanzanyira d/o MAESI (Witch doctor) Deportation of U.N.A. Entebbe.

¹⁸⁹ Idem. D.C. Gervoise swore to this Affidavit at Jinja on 31/3/1919. Nyinabatwa was

Colonial administration applied its modus operandi of setting up administrative and legal barriers to block their return to the membership. In colonial words, they were not to return until conditions became more settled and authority of the chiefs less likely to be undermined by such perverse persons.¹⁹⁰ Not surprisingly this separation also became their tragedy. Kanzanyira died on 28/7/1919 at Entebbe, a few days after arriving in deportation. Nyinabatwa died on 23/3/1923 at Mengo. Available records and correspondences reveal that both died of neglect, hardship and cruelty by colonialism.¹⁹¹

Generally, the separation of the leadership from the membership had far-reaching consequences on the Nyabingi movement and on the leadership. It disorganised the movement due to lack of experienced leadership and of continuity. Even when the new leadership came up, the resisters would not be accustomed to them immediately. This wide divide with the membership also ruled out possibilities of contact between them and the rest of the membership, to give them guidelines of what to do, who to contact, where the arms were concealed, how to go about with Nyabingi secrets, invocations and pretences. On the side of the leadership, movement to these far away hot areas, infested with unfamiliar environments and diseases like malaria killed or affected the deportees. While the membership was kept in the dark of what had become of the separated leadership, leadership suffered under the hands of the captors.

Through this separation of leadership from membership, colonialism succeeded in depriving the membership of the strong, far-sighted leadership. Similarly, it denied the leadership their vanguard role. Collaborators in the meantime became overzealous to protect and strengthen their newly acquired positions by blocking this leadership out. Their return was blocked on the argument that

Witch doctors have been the curse of Kigezi District. They have an immense influence among the superstitious semi-savages of this region and their activities have before now led to the temporary reign of terror as in the case of Mumusa. A mere term in goal does not appear to diminish their power for evil and the return of any convicted witch doctor to her home is likely to be fraught with danger until such time as the Bakiga and other inhabitants of

convicted on 6/12/1917. See D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 9/1/1919 and P.C's reply on 27/1/1919. Also see their Deportation Orders in the same files.

¹⁹⁰ Governor to Secretary of State for Colonies on 2/9/1919. Also see excerpt from P.C.W.P's memorandum of 1/5/1922 Vide Minute 28 in S.M.P. 5409. Also see his communication to the C.S. of 25/5/1922..

¹⁹¹ *op. cit.*

Kigezi District cease to be the slaves of superstition.¹⁹²

The intensity of colonial repression on the resisters forced the leadership to change tactics and operate among the people with utmost secrecy. However, the former was always shocked to find that its repression fuelled resistance and militancy. For some time, it retained maximum repression to suppress these 'Fanatical witch movements... who are essentially anti-European and need to be put down with a firm hand'.¹⁹³ It was forced to post a warderer at Kabale because of 'increased number of female prisoners, chiefly Nabingi offenders'.¹⁹⁴ State repression forced the leadership to change their methods of mobilisation and struggle. They increased secrecy of movement, plans and operation; they broadened their work to Masaka, Karagwe, Bukoba and beyond. More Abagirwa sprung up, intensified their work with zeal, travelled to other places to conscientise the oppressed peoples into resistance despite the intensifying repression. This needs concretising.

This repression also forced the resisters to develop complex methods of recruitment, mobilisation and organisation. New coded forms of language were developed in form of parables and allegories. They also utilised the pre-colonial art of speech of word twisting and breaking and mixing up normal verbal communication patterns to communicate certain secrets without them being understood by the enemy. It was because of this that colonialists concluded that this was a Nyabingi language. They were also forced to expand their geographical terrain to Masaka and Karagwe. The colonial state arrested an Omugirwa in Masaka, charged her with 'her disturbing and pernicious influence over the more ignorant natives'. It deported her. Another was 'deported from Bgugi to Usumbura for dangerous propaganda'. It captured another one in Karagwe, with all her appliances and burnt them with the exception of her spears. It then convicted her on a number of charges.¹⁹⁵

One of the limitations of these Abagirwa was their failure to delineate clearly the objective and subjective conditions within these new areas. Although they raised pertinent issues of foreign occupation, impositions, demands and restrictions, the peasants in these areas responded differently to their call. Nyabingi as a religion lacked a history and social base in these new

¹⁹² Sworn on 21/4/1919; File *op. cit.*

¹⁹³ K.D.A.R. 1915-16.

¹⁹⁴ K.D.A.R. 1921.

¹⁹⁵ Uganda Intelligence Report No. 12 of May, 1922 (13) No. C 515. W.P. on Tanganyika - Native Affairs. by R.C. Stuttaford, Lieut I.O. Uganda.

areas. Yet, the subjective factor was very critical. As such, peasants' response to the Abagirwa in these new places tended to be slow and lukewarm to the Abagirwa's gospel of resistance. It should also be mentioned that some peasants had lived a relatively peaceful life, and were not ready to accept anything that could create more trouble for them. In places like Masaka, Nyabingi religion and its Abagirwa were newer than colonialism that they wanted to fight. It required time to gain legitimacy and social acceptance in these societies. Colonialism was vigilant and denied them this chance. However, it was clear that these peasants had great fear of both Nyabingi and its Abagirwa as the colonial officer recounted the impact of an Omugirwa on the peasant public in Bukoba;

During the course of the Baraza at Bagene it was interesting to note the effect she produced on the assembled natives. The chiefs, with scarcely any exception, trembled whenever her look was directed towards them. She also made most noticeable efforts to exercise some form of hypnotism over me.¹⁹⁶

Kaigirirwa's Contributions in the Movement

On their part, both Kaigirirwa and her husband Ruhemba underwent serious transformation during their separate deportations. Ruhemba had been deported in 1912 for his role in the movement. On his return, he was put under supervision of the Nyakishenyi agent. This gave him advantage to monitor their activities and spy on them. It enabled him to learn their weak points and then choose appropriate methods for the attack, the timing etc. Worse still, his resolve was concretised by the murder of his brother by an askari. It must be understood that neither of the two Abagirwa compelled the other to join the movement. It was due to their religious and political roles that led them to this leadership.

While Kaigirirwa's initial methods of struggle were not very much different from those of other the members like Muhumuza, she underwent a major transformation during her deportation. She was able to learn the importance of training, preparation, and sophistication, the necessity to keep away from the enemy so as to preserve one's forces while tiring the enemy, the importance of avoiding fighting on the enemy's terms and the importance of hitting the enemy by surprise and at its weakest point. It should be noted that the conditions and methods of struggle had changed from those prior to the 1914 war. Before that war, the leadership had been predominantly from the peasantry, with little or no wide experience. Peasant resisters were still rooted

¹⁹⁶ *op. cit.*

in the habitat like their crops. However, this excepts Muhumuza. Even the objectives of the struggle had changed. It should be recalled that P.C. had reported in 1912-13 that the natives, who had been recently in a state of semi-rebellion had become peaceful and were cultivating their crops and that `the clans who a month or two ago were defying the Government have submitted and are similarly employed'.¹⁹⁷ The first struggle that she headed after her return was the Nyakishenyi resistance in 1917. The leadership for this resistance was broadened and included four women Abagirwa, Ruhemba, seventeen chiefs and other influential personalities. Colonial reports show that this plan was made three months before the actual day and was kept a top secret. It is important to note that she, with others in leadership, studied correctly the whole colonial situation in the area, understood the weaknesses of colonialism and some of its local allies. She understood the need for broader alliances of peasants and those in colonial service. This was done by first identifying the contradictions between the colonial state, its Baganda agents and the local chiefs and then exploited them. They based on these contradictions to isolate and conscientise these local chiefs on the need to struggle with the people and liberate their area. These chiefs had grievances with colonialism. They were marginalised in their own country by both the British and the Baganda agents. This included discrimination from ranks, status, income, etc. They could not benefit like their Baganda counterparts through accumulation of wealth from tax rebates, court dues or corrupt practices. They were excluded from all these. She was able to exploit this situation and base on these grievances to mobilise these chiefs.

The strength of this leadership was their capacity to understand the social grievances of different sections of society and then incorporate them into their programme. Among these was the hated colonial taxation on men, forced labour, in form of Ruharo, Kashanju, head portage etc. Others included abuse of office and direct abuses, corporal punishments and other arbitrary decisions and punishments, land alienation, and forced food contribution. The female Abagirwa identified with men on these social grievances. Other social grievances arose from the rampant corruption, oppression, unfair court judgment, witch-hunting of Nyabingi followers and imposition of both British demands and Baganda language and norms onto the peasants. This was worsened by unfair court proceedings and heavy fines denying peasants services and court judgment because peasants were incapable of speaking Luganda, which were taken by the Baganda agents, unfair land cases. These

¹⁹⁷ W.P.A.R. 1912-13.

grievances had the effect of raising peasants' sentiments for nationalism.

Even chiefs like Kisayagali and Ruzindana who later betrayed the resistance at the critical time could not leak out the secret before that time. This was because they initially believed in the explanations and plans given by the Abagirwa. They, too, had suffered the naked oppression and discrimination in the system for political and economic resources. Furthermore, they feared the wrath of Nyabingi and its Abagirwa and of the people if they ever tried to double-cross them. They also realised that even if they had succeeded in betraying them and the colonialists pre-empted this resistance, the betrayers would be wiped out through revenge. However, it was in the actual practice that they failed to marry theory and practice. As such, they betrayed the resistance at the last hour.

The Abagirwa bound together all these resisters with oath of secrecy and commitment under Nyabingi, and offered a solid ideology for the struggle. All this was accomplished secretly and selectively. 'No suspicion however of even disaffection or unrest leaked out until one daybreak when the massacre began' though the victims had connections in peasantry through birth, marriages, blood-brotherhood, etc. Nyabingi enforced among them discipline, unity, courage, determination, confidence and comradeship. The leadership carried out secret organisation among Nyakishenyi peasants for self-emancipation under Nyabingi's guidance and protection. It was through this capable leadership and high level of organisation, with a correct programme that they mobilised over 1400 armed peasants into this armed struggle. This occurred on 12th. August at 6.30 a.m. when they attacked all in the service of colonialism, destroyed all the symbols of colonial oppression and exploitation.

This was horrendous to colonialism,

hordes of Bakiga and Bahororo from the adjacent country ... attacked the residence of Abdulla Mwanika... all his enclosures and houses totally destroyed by fire, 64 dwelling houses of Baganda, Banyankole and loyal Bakiga were also burnt. The C.M.S. and Moslem Mosque suffered similarly.

The agent's life was saved by 'Loyal Mukiga Chief Kisiagali and others with their people... Sixty three men, women and children were massacred by the insurgents, 15 men, women and children were wounded, some severely. ... All lived near the Agent and some of them were assisting him in his duties', 64 cattle and 330 goats of the agent and others were seized by the insurgents. Much property was looted or destroyed, including five Poll Tax Registers, Case Books of the Native court and Five Books of Poll Tax Tickets - Nos. 11601-11850 for that year.¹⁹⁸ To colonialism, this resistance 'was directly due to

¹⁹⁸ Communication from the Ag D.C. of 31/8/1917 on "Native Rising in Nyakishenyi". The

the machinations of witch doctor Kaigirirwa and possibly others with her due to superstitious influence of a native witch doctor who unfortunately succeeded in escaping. The Nabingi cult has never yet failed to find a following in this district'. Colonial Intelligence reports argued that 'Certain of the disloyal chiefs some months ago paid a visit to Ndochibiri, who is believed to have entrusted Kaigirwa with the task of fomenting mischief in Nyakishenyi'.¹⁹⁹

It became clear to colonialism how the rebellion was an attempt by a section of the residents in Nyakishenyi to free themselves from European rule, and to restore former conditions of independence; and absence of obligations, - in the shape of Poll Tax and Labour. Rebel opinion supported the belief that the overthrow of authority and the removal of the chiefs appointed by Government and the European officers was a task within their powers'.²⁰⁰

Abdulla testified how five hordes of Bakiga shot at him and said 'We do not want you here. The Nyabingi has ordered us to kill you or drive you away'. The court evidence by Kasenene, a Nyakishenyi peasant resister shows some of the issues around which the peasants were mobilised, how they were mobilised, the theme of the struggle, and Nyabingi's context.

Our Chiefs told us 'We see you are tired of work we have made a plan to kill the Baganda and the Europeans, so that they may leave the country and we shall be independent as we were before. You will pay no more tax and we will serve Nyabingi who used to rule over us before'. When we heard what the chiefs said, we agreed, as we did not want to do any work, so we attacked Abdulla.²⁰¹

Colonial Reactions to Nyakishenyi Resistance

It should be understood that by 1917, the whole district was characterised by resistance through covert and overt methods. It is important to review briefly the peasant resistance that took place at Butare, four days before the Nyakishenyi resistance. Lwampomo, of Mukaranga, organised peasants into armed resistance. The actual resistance took place on 8th August. They blocked passage to the agent Butale who was touring Mukaranga, attacked

P.C.W.P's telegraph to C.S. of 20/8/1917 D.C. Kigezi to the P.C.W.P. on 26/6/1919. Also see P.C.W.P. to the C.S. on 24/9/1917 & C.S' telegraph to P.C.W.P. of 12/10/1917 on the same issue. Report of the D.M./D.C. to the Chief Justice on 8/9/1917. Report of the D.M./D.C. to the Chief Magistrate of 8/9/1917.

¹⁹⁹ K.D.A.R. 1917-18.

²⁰⁰ Idem.

²⁰¹ Court evidence by Kasenene, rebel peasant forwarded by D.M./D.C. on 21/9/1917. Wavamuno, one of the Agents testified how Bakiga who cried that; "We have come to pay tax!" carried spears and other weapons in their hands instead of money.

him and short at of his followers. They forced him to retreat and chased him and his entourage. The D.C. had noted in April how Butare peasants were among the most truculent, who were averse to forced labour and any taxation.²⁰²

Faced with the Nyakishenyi resistance, the state was forced to shelve counter-insurgency for Butare till after resolving the major resistance in Nyakishenyi. This finally took place on 24th August, when the D.C. and his team led a force of 20 police men and other followers to Butare to crush it. The peasants 'whereof fled at the first signs of approach, and hiding themselves in the swamps'. They captured peasants' livestock which were treated as a Collective Political Fine. After two days, they were forced to retire after burning down all the peasants' houses.²⁰³

In response to Nyakishenyi resistance, colonial forces from all over the district headed for Nyakishenyi. The forces from Kinkizi and Ikumba arrived early and saved Kisayagali's villages from destruction. Peasant resisters had attacked it as reprisal for his betrayal. Colonialism came with all force to smash the resistance, restore colonial law and order. It unleashed state terror, used 729 rounds, and fired M.H. 468 rounds against the resisters. 'Energetic action was at once taken and the natives dispersed ... a number of Bakiga were shot in action with the police and a considerable amount of stock captured'.²⁰⁴ In five days of repression, over 100 peasants were killed, including three chiefs. It captured 479 cattle and 764 goats and sheep, recovered one Poll Tax Ticket book of the previous year and 2 Poll Tax Registers.²⁰⁵ However, resisters fought back in this exercise and colonialism found it 'impossible to arrest persons wanted owing to the armed resistance'.²⁰⁶ Peasant resistance intensified. Casualties in colonial forces included Dr. Webb who was speared by a peasant resister.²⁰⁷ The D.C. commended the vital role of Agents and local allies in this counter-insurgency.²⁰⁸ The P.C.W.P. telegraphed on 20th August on this counter-insurgency; 'rounding up of rebels and recovery of the lost proceeding satisfactorily rebel movement not spreading'.²⁰⁹ Seven chiefs were

²⁰² FD.C's report on Kanyarwanda on 22/4/1917.

²⁰³ Telegraph of Ag. D.C. to P.C.W.P. No. 73/16/1 of 20/8/1917 & letter of 31/8/1917 entitled "Attack on Agent, Butale". They left behind four police men to guard the Agent.

²⁰⁴ K.D.A.R. 1917-1918.

²⁰⁵ *op. cit.*

²⁰⁶ D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 21/9/1917.

²⁰⁷ D.C. to P.C.W.P. of 21/9/1917 on Native Rising in Nyakishenyi. File Op. cit. U.N.A. Entebbe.

²⁰⁸ Idem. During this exercise, D.C. Ankole sealed off the border and patrolled it to net any rebels running into Ankole. It should be noted that peasants resisted by crossing these borders, fleeing from state repression demands. D.C's Report of 8/4/1912.

²⁰⁹ *op. cit.*

still at large while seven chiefs had refused to join the peasant forces to emancipate their land. Colonial Intelligence reports indicated that Kaigirirwa and her forces were operating near the Belgian frontier. The D.C. concluded his report that they 'left Nakishenyi for Kabale 19th. the country having been restored to a peaceful condition'.²¹⁰

In inviting the Chief Justice to the court trial in Kabale of the rebels, the Ag D.C./D.M. underlined the need to create a frightening impression onto the peasants.

This rebellion is a serious affair, and in its results the most deadly I have known, or heard of in this district. It seems to me to be an affair in which the trial of the principal prisoners by the High Court would be eminently desirable feature; such a course would have a decided impression in the district.²¹¹

This resistance evidences that these peasant struggles were not caused by emotions or superstitions or the love or fear of Nyabingi or irrationality. They were determined to emancipate themselves and their land using whatever weapon at their disposal, powerful organisation, Nyabingi religion, secrecy and purpose of action, unity and courage and above all, organised violence against the well-equipped, well-trained colonial forces in alliance with some local people. The presence of so many alien Agents had the effect of evoking petty nationalism which fuelled peasants' anger.

With British colonialism's ploy of using agents, the immediate target became the Agents. In this struggle, these peasant resisters did not discriminate. They never spared whoever was in the service of colonialism, even their kins and relatives. It would be erroneous to argue that they were only against Baganda agents for imposing their language and demands on them. They wanted the alien, oppressive, exploitative system to go. That is why they took away the Poll Tax Tickets, Tax Register records and case books, which symbolised oppression and exploitation of this new system. The looting of the livestock of the allies of colonialism was another testimony. In a region where livestock was sparsely distributed, on an average of 3-5 head of cattle per household, the 64 cattle and 330 goats that agent Abdulla had accumulated in five years is concrete testimony of the primitive accumulation of

²¹⁰ Ag D.C. Kigezi to P.C.W.P. on 31/8/1917 on Native Rising in Nakishenyi and the K.D.A.R. of 1917-1918 noted re-establishment of colonial order in Nakishenyi.

²¹¹ D.M. to the Chief Justice of 8/9/1917. On 19/9/1917, the Ag Governor suggested the Attorney General to conduct the prosecutions. This was aimed to inflict fear into the peasants. Two of the rebels were executed publicly at Kabale in February while the third was executed in Kampala. The rest had long term Rigorous Imprisonment. Also see K.D.A.R. 1917-18.

wealth from above, a system that was greatly detested. Agents were busy using the system for their economic gains. This counter-insurgency led to disastrous famines in the two following years.²¹² Nyakishenyi resistance shows the skilled organisation and leadership of this resistance, and the commitment of Nyabingi Abagirwa to mobilize peasants into self-emancipation. But what explains the vigorous participation of various parties in this counter-insurgency?

In this counter-insurgency, colonialists wanted to smash the resistance before it spread in the whole area. They had the political and economic interests to protect. They had everything to lose and it was their duty to punish the resisters and restore some order while also teaching them directly and implicitly never to resist again. They also had to prove to their agents and local allies that they had a strong state which could smash any resistance, contain the situation and protect them as well.

Baganda agents had also to prove to their masters their ability and capability to serve the system. They did not want to lose their lucrative, privileged positions by being replaced with new agents. Furthermore, they were beneficiaries of the colonial system and any threat to overthrow it threatened their interests. Many of them had been accumulating wealth through malpractices. Furthermore, they had everything to gain from showing extra zeal, co-operation and courage. This would be in form of rewards like property, promotion, retaining their employment, good recommendation, good records and loot from this counter-insurgency. They had some scores to settle with these peasant resisters who had murdered their Baganda relatives, and friends. Seen from a narrow perspective, it appeared as a war of Nakishenyi peasants against Baganda and Banyankole. This was what the colonialists presented persistently in their communication and later capitalised on to reform the system. This view of Bakiga hating Baganda tended to be over-emphasised by our respondents.²¹³ However, others saw Baganda and other agents as their enemies. These included the small local chiefs who were rivals to the alien agents and wanted to take their positions. They had opted for collaboration for various reasons. They did it for material gains in form of rewards from looted property, jobs, promotion, retaining their employment,

²¹² K.D.A.R., 1917-1918 commended the great work by Agents: Stephani Musoke, Zambatisi Jute, Sowedi Sabadu, Zakaria Barake, Namunye and Sulimani.

²¹³ Interviews with Keigwanisa, Ziryaharuga, Rwakasheya, Bafokuhuka, Bayanguha and Kanganabusha et al. Other respondents like Kakuru, Bakamwatirenda, Mayanja Bakeiba, Mucori, et al argued that the peasants were resisting Baganda, Belgians, and the Germans. Rwamafwa Dezi, Kandeku, Rugogamu, Tibereeba, Twongyeirwe, Kyebete, Muyaga, Karangizi et al. attributed these resistances to defence of their land and power.

good recommendation, good records, social status, new religions etc. There was also an element of ignorance especially among the new converts and the agents' followers.

A question arises whether the Nyabingi movement was forward looking or backward looking at this time, whether it was a tactical, mobilising strategy. The resisters' objective was that everyone in the oppressive exploitative system should go. They wanted to be independent as their forefathers, without any state obligations. However, the leadership must have been divided on the future that they envisaged. While there were some Abagirwa, who wanted a return to the past, where they were living off the surplus of peasants, other members of the leadership like Ndochibiri appreciated the role of an organised administration, with a strong armed force to protect the area. And it was this leadership that would have qualified in the new leadership. The P.C.W.P. reported to the C.S. that the D.C. had handed over some livestock and other property to agents and collaborators, settled claims and he wanted sanction to give out rewards to collaborators, compensate others and sell the surplus livestock. The most important point was his request `for the sanction to offer a reward of 20 head of cattle for the capture of the witchdoctor Kaigirwa alias Musige'.²¹⁴ This brutal suppression did not cow down the movement, as the P.C. hoped:

'I trust there will be no further trouble of this sort amongst the Bakiga, who are fine race but unfortunately intensely superstitious as regards the powers of the "Nyabingi" and at Certain seasons of year addicted to excessive beer drinking, which frequently leads to fighting among themselves'.²¹⁵

Transformation of Peasant Resistance under Kaigirirwa into a Guerrilla Force

The role of Kaigirirwa did not end with the Nyakishenyi resistance. This was a step towards a stronger and longer peasant guerrilla warfare under Ndochibiri, Kanyarwanda and their followers. This new development cannot be attributed merely to the fear of colonial repression unleashed in Nyakishenyi or to the fear of the price on her head. This development can be explained from their new programme for the movement; their patriotic objectives and impact of intensive repression on the peasants. It should be understood that peasants were not ready to betray her to the colonialists. They

²¹⁴ P.C.W.P. to C.S. on 26/9/1917. The C.S. sanctioned all these in his telegraph to P.C.W.P. of 12/10/1917.

²¹⁵ *op. cit.*

considered colonialism as their principle enemy and considered their struggle as ordained by Nyabingi. The opportunists who would have ventured to earn those cattle did not know her movements and programme. Even those who could have known them feared revenge and mysterious deaths.

However, the price on her head led to other consequences. Peasants became more vigilant to protect her. Others were forced to harden and join the struggle by her charisma, realising that a woman had threatened this colonial force. Her capacity to elude enemy's traps like this one, intensification of militancy, organisation and determination transformed her into a hardened, seasoned fighter, who, with other resisters shed away all attachment to home or village life. They joined Ndochibiri's guerrilla forces actively. It was her long experience in resistance and commitment, courage, military training, leadership qualities and charisma that brought her to top leadership after the tragic death of Ndochibiri and other three top leaders. In pre-colonial peasant circumstances, she would have been expected to withdraw from all activities for days to mourn her husband and comrades. She would have had to sit docile having been widowed and waited for one of her brothers-in-law to inherit her. Instead, this hardened her, made her more resolute to rid the whole region of the colonialists. However, it should be noted that it was impossible for her to mourn her husband even if she had wanted since she was on the run as colonial forces were pursuing her. Right from joining ranks with Ndochibiri, her programme of emancipation had extended beyond the colonial borders.

Kaigirirwa had distinguished herself in her capacity to organise peasants, inspire in them courage and lead them to war. Her capacity to understand people's grievances and problems went beyond gender limitations. Women began identifying with men's cause, seeking appropriate solutions and implementing these solutions. Their capacity to study the whole situation, integrate themselves into it, then come out with correct solutions of self-emancipation through armed struggle and then carrying out the task of mobilising a cross section of society into militant resistance was a testimony to their leadership role. This charismatic leadership inspired and united the combatants into more comradeship.

It is these Abagirwa who purported to alleviate people's burdens from colonialism and then change the order of things in their favour. Their capacity to identify people's rights and the methods to regain them, to unite with men leaders to plan struggles and convince local colonial agents to cross to the people's side and fight for their popular rights. This forced colonialism to intensify brutality, witch hunt for them, deportation, executions, long, Rigorous imprisonments, and prices on some of them.

Kaigirirwa, Ruhemba and their followers led their forces and joined

Ndochibiri's forces. In the struggles that ensued, Kaigirirwa played a key role in military training of the fighters, in organisation and planning, spying and other intelligence network and actual struggle. She contributed a lot in training these peasant resisters in using lethal weapons, etc. It is no wonder therefore to find that she was commanding a peasant force of over 600 fighters by 20th June 1917.

It is of interest to note that the death of Ndochibiri, Ruhemba, Rumuri and their followers did not discourage her from the struggle but instead strengthened her into more resistance. She took on the new tasks of providing the fighters with arms and food, training, creating and strengthening friendship between the resisters and the peasants; creating more brotherhood and recruiting more combatants etc. Colonialism hurried to change the site of the administration headquarters with a new Boma at Kabale, re-roofed the buildings with corrugated iron sheets since colonialism was

fully alive to the fact that incendiarism on the part of fanatical followers of the late Ndochimbiri, the late Luhemba and the still existing witch doctress Kaigirwa is a real danger and not to be scoffed at.²¹⁶

She led an attack on the colonial forces within two weeks after her assumption of top leadership. She led another attack on 8th July from the Kisalu area. This was driven off by a Police Patrol in Nakishenyi - Kinkizi area and that

In retiring they announced that they would wait for vengeance until the Government relaxed their precautions and forgot their presence.²¹⁷

They waged other attacks in the subsequent months. It was in combat in 1921 that she was shot and killed in combat, after twelve 12 years of active anti-colonial struggles.²¹⁸

The other challenge to colonialism was that while all actors in its service were men, Nyabingi had both men and women in the membership and leadership, with women playing a dominant role in the leadership. The same applied to the new religions, which came with it. Men dominated its ranks, both at home and in these colonies. Back in Europe, the European woman was discriminated against in public roles like in the military, active politics, and in

²¹⁶ O.C.W.P. to O.C. Police on 7/7/1919.

²¹⁷ P.C.W.P. report of July, 1919. Ag C.S. to the Director of P.W.D. Kigezi Station. File: Western Province, Kabale Station, Defence Precautions. U.N.A. Entebbe.

²¹⁸ op. cit.

the leadership of religions like clergy and bishops. Yet, here was a locally established religion dominated by militant women in rank and file, addressing people's spiritual, temporal, military, physiological and psychological needs. This complicated matters for colonialism both in terms of armed struggle and its justification.

In conclusion, this section has shown with concrete evidence the role of women in the leadership of the Nyabingi movement, how they took the initiative to mobilise peasants under tension and their contributions to the movement. It has also shown how they were able to combine politics and religion to mobilise peasants, unite them and lead them into armed struggle, the various forms of transformation and changes that the leadership underwent, the types of demands that they were able to address, their capacity to identify grievances of other sections of society and incorporate them into a comprehensive programme. It has shown how they mobilised peasants around certain programmes and gave the movement both vigour and an internationalist approach. This section has also shown colonial response to these Women Abagirwa, how it tried to separate them from the membership and the various developments from this course of action. Continued attacks and heavy losses in terms of personnel and expenditure forced colonialism to make certain reforms. These were aimed to remove some of the social grievances so as to undermine the Nyabingi movement and its Abagirwa.

Section Six

New Methods of Struggle and the Demise of Nyabingi Movement

1920s witnessed the decline of Nyabingi Movement simultaneously with the increasing anchoring of colonialism in the area. Abagirwa like Komunda, Ndemere and the others. went on the defensive to prevent its decline by proclaiming its greatness vis-a-vis the state and the new religions. The D.C. gave an interesting narrative of events between Komunda and Zaribugiri, a colonial agent. He narrated how the latter had arrested Komunda for witchcraft. The D.C. released him due to lack of evidence. Komunda then testified to the peasants that his "*Nyabingi*" had defeated Government and left him free. The chief's wife and child fell ill immediately and nearly died. This proved to the peasants Nyabingi's greatness and powers of revenge.

It had become clear to colonialism how Nyabingi was

above all revolutionary political... chief among chiefs, a state in the state. Its aim is to free the country of Europeans and of all authority other than "*Nyabingi*"...All the agents of Nyabingi with their pretended mysterious and occult power give themselves out as liberators of the country.²¹⁹

The colonial state's predicament was its failure to distinguish between Nyabingi as a religion, Nyabingi as a supernatural force, Nyabingi as a revolutionary movement, Nyabingi as an ideology, its character and dynamism. and other practices like witchcraft, prophesying, healing, curing, rain-makers, etc. It lumped all of them together. This was advantageous to the resisters. It helped them to recruit all those that colonialism persecuted, even those who would have refrained if the state had first made a theoretical and analytical study of this society's movement. Thus, by 1927, the D.C. reported a large amount of Nyabingi practice.²²⁰ Threatened by religious and political persecution for Nyabingi leaders, worshippers and resisters by the state and the new religions, and lies by missionaries of the imminent arrests of peasants who did not join Protestantism, Abagirwa like Komunda began to create propaganda to weld together the disintegrating Nyabingi movement. Trying to live with the times, they issued declarations against colonialism and proclaimed the supremacy of Nyabingi over all people, state, other religions

²¹⁹ P.C.W.P. to C.S. of 17/7/1928: "A Supplementary Report on NYABINGI Movement Kigezi District".

²²⁰ K.D.A.R. 1927.

and institutions. They called upon all peasants and chiefs to adhere to Nyabingi's teachings, work on Sundays and observe Mondays and Tuesdays as Nyabingi Days. No work was to be done on those days. Peasants feared to die and followed this decree. This was challenging European religions which had set aside Sunday for their god. This was underlined by D.C.

Many people going to him for Nyabingi from all parts of the district and all being informed by him that his Nyabingi was more powerful than the Government, that no work should be done on Mondays in the shambas, that no taxes should be paid, and that the Europeans would be driven out.²²¹

What compounded the problem was their weapon of secrecy: Direct evidence is always difficult to obtain as the pursuit of witchcraft is carefully screened from chiefs who are regarded as the eyes of Government.²²² The colonial dilemma still remained in 1928 that;

It is therefore in Rukiga that Nyabingi presents a peculiar character with more persistent and more dangerous aspirations than elsewhere. It pretends moreover to sovereignty. The principle verse of their hymn in Rukiga is ... "The king (or queen) has come to his country".²²³

In pursuit of their resistance, the Abagirwa called upon all peasants in Belgian Rwanda, Kigezi and Congo to bring in votives and sacrifices for Nyabingi in form of money, beads, etc in preparation for a broader resistance. This money was meant to be for sustaining the resistance. However, it cannot be ignored that the Abagirwa would have appropriated most of it for their personal ends. This was the phase when Nyabingi became known as Muzeire Kasente: a parent that needed or accepted money. They also called upon peasants to smith more weapons, sharpen them, and begin intensive military training for an imminent resistance. The theme was *Now the Omukama (Nyabingi) is coming in the Country*.²²⁴ D.C. Trewin warned all Saza Chiefs of an imminent Nyabingi resistance.

The affair of "Nyabingi" is wanting to increase in this district, also I think that all the chiefs are not aware of everything which is going on in this country. Because I see that many chiefs do not want to converse with peasants. If you

²²¹ D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 29/5/1930 on Komunda's Sect of Nyabingi.

²²² D.C. to P.C.W.P. ON 1/3/1928.

²²³ K.D.A.R. 1928.

²²⁴ Idem. the C.M.S evangelist also testified that he and his Mkungu Busisiri had reported to the Gombolola Chief, when two hundred persons under the Nyabingi "priest" Ndemere marched through his garden. The D.C. noted that the Sub-Chief was away as he 'had knowledge if not complicity in the Organisation'.

want to be aware of the news in your country with ears wide open. I know that witchcraft is going high, and that someone is telling people not to do their work on Mondays and Tuesdays. Not one single chief has told me of this ... people are afraid to go to work on Mondays and Tuesdays because they are obeying the "Nyabingi". Why do not you all put strength to find out about the "Nyabingi"?²²⁵

Indeed, anti-colonial resistances followed in the first quarter of 1928. The leadership mobilised peasants and they began war preparations in Kagarama Mountains opposite Kabale. They aimed at the C.M.S., Kabale Station and Kikungiri, centres of colonial oppression and exploitation. Their object remained to chase away the oppressive, exploitative system and all in its service.²²⁶ The leadership organised peasants in Kigezi, Rwanda, Congo and Ankore, under the theme of self-emancipation. The leadership urged peasants to contribute something to the movement. Over a thousand peasants from the whole region are said to have participated, contributed in cash, livestock, beads and bracelets. Acceptance of sacrifices in money and beads was another qualitative change of Nyabingi religion. There was a movement to build more shrines for Nyabingi and peasants began military training with bows, arrows and spears. Peasants came from different parts of the region, in preparation for an attack on Kabale Station. It was during this time that they were surprised by colonial forces. People came from Karuzanga and Kumba to attend these "Nyabingi" chiefs and give their offerings.

The whole resistance began in January to March, from Kabale (Kagarama) to Karujanga and across in Rwanda, under the leadership of Ndungusi, Ndemere, Mweyahusi et al. The first was betrayed by a Protestant convert Senyange, who reported to colonial authorities. The one near Kabale was organised in mountain forests and hills of Kagarama, four miles (and sight) of Kabale. The resisters screened all events and secrets from a Muganda agent although over 300 of them passed through the Gomborora compound that day. The local agent had been informed of this resistance and had left the area to avoid being blamed as an accomplice of the resistance.²²⁷

²²⁵ D.C. Trewin to Saza Chiefs on 28/1/1928. File, Nyabingi (1928).

²²⁶ File: Raids and punitive Expeditions. Refer to memo of C.S. to the Governor on Nyabingi, Criminal Case File No. 4 in which two peasants were found guilty and sentenced to five years R.I. Also see telegraph of Chief Secretary to Districter, Kabale of 24/2/1928 and D.C's reply to C.S. of 28/2/1928. U.N.A. Entebbe.

²²⁷ D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 13/9/1928 on "Unlawful Assemblies and Incitement to rebellion by "Priests" of NYA-BINGI Society, 1928". Also see communication from D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 1/3/1928. P.C.W.P. to C.S. on 29/3/1928 on a Recrudescence of "Nyabingi Movement - Kigezi District". File op. cit.

The principal objectives were the Government Station and the Protestant Mission whose houses and contents were definitely allocated by the leaders. At roughly the same time, exactly a similar manifestation under some of the same (escaped leaders took place 15 miles South of Kabale on the other side of the frontier.

Resistance in Karujanga and in Belgian Rwanda developed faster and in a more organised manner. Peasants crossed from Uganda and joined others in Belgian territory, murdered collaborators, burned many villages, and threatened to burn the Gomborora headquarters. Inside Belgian Rwanda, resisters were reported to have killed 24 Belgian Police.²²⁸ Colonialism went on the offensive on both sides of the border. Belgian colonialism deployed 100 police who subdued about 2000 peasant resisters. This force burnt many villages, killed or injured many of them. British forces suppressed the resisters on Ugandan side, disarmed them and detained them.²²⁹ Colonialism got alarmed on learning how this was one organised revolt from Kagarama to Rwanda under the leadership of Ndungusi. It sent in a reinforcement of ten police and one officer from Mbarara. Furthermore, it was not going to show any leniency to "Nyabingiites" as it would be taken as a manifestation of Nyabingi's omnipotence and indestructibility regardless of time. Colonialism was aware of the political dangers in Nyabingi leadership

since it involves the fundamental basic anti-European element whereby all Europeans must be driven out in order to make way for their God and King and queen "Nyabingi" to rule their country and who for the time being has entered in and is depicted in that particular person.²³⁰

And adds further thus:

Any unaccountable incident is put down to "Nyabingi" and is at once seized upon by the witch doctor as a proof of his powers which all helps to foster any agitation he may have in mind. The recent dry weather causing the matama crop to begin to wilt of course lent colour to the general rumour that a new Sultan would arrive in the country in the place of Government and would bring "nyabingi", new seed, rain, etc.²³¹

The two colonial states used all means at their disposal to suppress it.

²²⁸ Ag P.C.W.P. to the C.S. on 4/4/1928.

²²⁹ D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 5/4/1928. Also refer to Document of 3/5/1928 on Peasants' uprising in Belgian Ruanda against Belgian Administration and Belgian colonialists demand for extradition of the resisters who had fled to Uganda. File: Nyabingi (1928).

²³⁰ Idem.

²³¹ *op. cit.*

Some members in the leadership were captured, convicted and sentenced heavily.^{232*} There were new colonial reforms, based on the weaknesses of Nyabingi institution. Colonialism had learnt the exploitative character of 'Nyabingi cult to enable it to impose its character of liberator, strikes the imagination of the simple. Thus it preys on the people demanding payment of cows, goats, foodstuffs and money'.²³³ It exploited this coercive taxation to mobilise peasants in its own favour against Nyabingi. It preached against Nyabingi, suspended taxation and other demands in Butare, Bufundi and British Rwanda. It should be noted that by this time, peasants could see some tangible results from communal labour in form of roads, hospitals etc. On the other hand, there was nothing tangible by Nyabingi Abagirwa that they could cite. All peasant contributions to Nyabingi were consumed by those in its service.

Colonialism devised a gradualist strategy to undermine the Nyabingi movement. Peasant resistance was prevalent even after arrests. Peasants were hostile to the colonial system and were not ready to incriminate their fellow peasants. They

...had to be forcibly brought to Kabale on order to obtain their evidence which was given reluctantly in awe of the presence of accused, it was clear they were endeavouring to suppress incriminating evidence and had they not been brought in their evidence would not have been obtained.²³⁴

After this, peasants refused to give information about the captured leadership. Even those who were dragged to court still refused to co-operate. The D.C. therefore recommended that Kagarama be fined 75 head of cattle under Section 2 Collective Punishment Ordinance for conniving in these witchcraft dances well knowing their nature and illegality and were suppressing and combining to suppress all evidence which would cause the leaders to be apprehended. He argued that this would serve as an example and deterrent to other local areas should they at any time contemplate similar

²³² Extradition to Belgian East Africa (Mandate). Dairy of events 1928/29. File Nyabingi (1928). The D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 30/11/1928 about the Extradition Proceedings following Nyabingi rebellion on Belgian east Africa (Mandate) and Uganda Frontier, MArch 1928 charge:- Murder and Arson reported that he had arrested the following additional accused against Belgian Arrest Warrants of April:- Maheranni, Lupfumu, Bariganengwe and Kagambire. *: To concretise this, Ndemere and Mweyahusi were given five years R.I. each.

²³³ Report of P.C.W.P. to C.S. of 17/7/1928: "A Supplementary Report on NYABINGI Movement Kigezi District" concluded that Nyabingi belonged to all tribes with its headquarters at Omukyante...

²³⁴ *op. cit.* P.C.W.P's communication to the C.S. on 23/5/1928.

acquiescence in holding these Nyabingi agitations.²³⁵

It was due to the vigilance of agents like Zaribugire and Ndyabahika that Komunda and other resisters were hunted down. When Komunda received news of his imminent arrest, he moved camp with his followers to the Kayonsa Forest, and he continued his political and religious work for two weeks. The arrest of Komunda and some of his fold caused marked resistance. One of the askaris was wounded and a peasant resister shot dead. Komunda was arrested with peasants from the vicinity. The peasants in the neighbourhood were fined fifty head of cattle under Section 2, Collective Punishment Ordinance. The Colonial view, presented by the D.M. was that `any waiving of punishment on these people in those areas can but have the most serious and deleterious effect and would probably endanger the safety of others in future'.²³⁶

It adds further thus:

In the native mind the forfeiture of cattle causes a deep and everlasting impression, well-heeded and observed by others, but a contribution in the shape of work is merely a phase which is ephemeral, possibly irksome, and will by no means be stamped on the minds of onlookers as a deterrent. "*Emandwa*" is of much more personal a nature - and infinitely less harmful - than "*Nyabingi*". Nyabingi may extend to the attempt at expulsion from the land of any form of government: *Emandwa* is not anti-Government in characteristic.²³⁷

It is with this resistance that the convicted appealed against the judgment. This alarmed the colonial state. One of them appealed and was released.²³⁸ However, this appealing was a testimony of the waning of the Nyabingi movement.

It was this resistance that marks the final decline of the Nyabingi movement. Many peasants began to join the new religions. This was partly due to the religious persecution of local religions and the political threats while at the same time promoting the European religions, and partly due to the rewards, privileges and favours that colonialism accorded converts to these new religions. This would be on recommendation of missionaries and agents.

By late 1930s, Nyabingi Movement had been undermined. Their new

²³⁵ D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 1/3/1928 He stressed that it was "...essential to impress on these people that the government will not tolerate these Nyabingi outbursts".

²³⁶ D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 29/3/1928. Chiefs who failed to track this resistance were dismissed. File: Nyabingi (1928)

²³⁷ Idem.

²³⁸ D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 29/5/1930. File: Nyabingi 1928. However, Ndemere died in prison.

resistance occurred in form of *Ruvaivuro* 'Revivalist Movement', whose membership and leadership were pre-dominantly women. The main explanation why this resistance came under cover of a religion was that their productive forces were still at a low level, had a weak economic base and their outlook was still narrow, still attributing whatever they could not understand to the supernatural forces. They lacked any other organised forum around which they could organise to express their interests and wishes. The explanation of the dominance of women has to be sought in the effect of colonial policies which developed Kigezi into a labour reservoir. Through this, most men had to leave the district annually for wage labour for taxes and for other political, economic and social demands. As such, they were mainly women and children who remained in the villages, practising these religions.

By then, the colonial state was sure of itself. The balance of forces had tilted in its favour. The local allies, most of whom had been incorporated into the colonial system, were promising;

They are slow to learn new methods but, once learnt, are steady and reliable, with the notable exception of fear of the supernatural as represented by the organisation known as NYABINGI. I know no African race who retain their social equilibrium and mental stability so well under modernising influences.²³⁹

Resistance began to take more individualised forms like arson, murders, suicides etc. As an instance, they burnt the house of the District Clerk in July, 1932 and the culprits escaped.²⁴⁰ The same happened to one Mandelbaum's hut in 1933 in Bufuka. Colonialism had brought her to study these peasants so as to know how to control Nyabingi Movement. Peasants objected to being objects of her anthropological study. The choice of Bufuka was based on the fact that it was taken as part of the headquarters of Nyabingi.²⁴¹

However, the combined measures by the colonial state against the Nyabingi movement finally produced results. Gradually, the Nyabingi movement declined. Resistance was changing to other forms like avoidance of poll Tax or Ruharo work or other obligations.²⁴²

Some Colonial Reforms in Response to Nyabingi Movement

Confronted by Nyabingi Movement, colonialism was able to examine its

²³⁹ Idem.

²⁴⁰ K.D.A.R. 1932.

²⁴¹ K.D.A.R. 1933. She was carrying out an anthropological research between 1932-33.

²⁴² K.D.A.R. 1933.

policies and practice. It came to realise that Baganda Agents were causing unnecessary social grievances among the peasants.

Judicially Baganda endeavour to force their language upon the local population. In a recent case an old woman was refused a hearing for three months being told she must speak Luganda in Court - which she was unable to do. Indigenous peoples are insufficiently consulted by the Baganda caucus (who in Rukiga have the overwhelming majority in court) on cases arising from local usage and tribal custom...

Following the compulsory use of Luganda by the Government; and the consequent association of officers with it, Baganda lords, customs and outlook are gradually becoming fastened... peaceful penetration, upon the local people whose point of view is largely lost sight of in Native Courts where Baganda preside or predominate much natural resentment is felt by the indigenous population with which I entirely sympathise. I consider it almost entirely due to the GANDA atmosphere created by the use of Baganda interpreters, and the Luganda Language which is imposed by the Government in Districts where it is as alien as it is unnecessary.²⁴³

As such, it now tried to reduce Baganda agents and their powers. It re-introduced Swahili as the official language. It accused Kago Sebalija of nepotism; `forwarding unduly the interests of his own family and advising D.C. to introduce alien (Baganda) customs resented by the indigenes' which formed inflammable material for the incipient fires of rebellion organised by powerful witchcraft associations, under capable leaders.²⁴⁴

Philipps pursued this issue further to show how Baganda had become a liability to colonialism;

The District has been almost entirely in the hands of the Baganda (who have been steadily increased) since its opening. The mediums of communication between the Government and the local population have been Luganda, though heretofore agents have always to employ Kiswahili in personal intercourse with officers - i.e. both being on terms of equality in using a medium of speech which was not their own.

The Compulsory use of Luganda has been the most material influence in misleading the indigenous population as to the Government's attitude towards alien (Baganda) customs, in misleading the Baganda as to their own position in the country... I cannot but consider its employment in this district to be a distinct political error.²⁴⁵

The role of Baganda as agents in expansion of British colonialism became

²⁴³ K.D.A.R. 1919-1920.

²⁴⁴ *op. cit.*

²⁴⁵ *op. cit.*

a basis for contradictions between Baganda nationality and other nationalities, hitherto. This was a great achievement for colonialism - pitting the colonised into wars against each other. Colonialism had two options - either to retain the Baganda agents or to dispense with them. It opted for the latter option. This would have the effect of hoodwinking the colonised peoples that this was a transformation to self-rule. This would make the position of colonialism even more obscure and secure. At the same time, it reverted to Swahili language as the official language, brought in more personnel from Tanzania of Baziba nationality to replace Baganda as agents, interpreters, etc. Swahili also was re-emphasised as the language for instruction at school. It was made compulsory for all government personnel to learn it and the state offered a bonus to whoever accomplished this task.

British colonialism used these proxy administrators from other nationalities and later from the local ones for various reasons. It was handicapped in terms of British personnel, wanted to keep low the administration costs and also minimise contradictions between colonialism and the colonised by using these proxy administrators as shields. However, contradictions between agents and the colonised developed over exploitation, oppression and domination. In implementing colonial policies, Baganda agents used crude and oppressive methods. These were felt in tax-collection; collecting and supervising forced labour etc. It was also felt in collecting forced contributions of food, money and livestock. There is evidence of corruption, misuse of resources and embezzlement of taxes, famine food, and bribery. Worse still, these agents were rude, obscene and lacked any human relations in dealing with these peasants. They were uncompromising, tracked down all peasants who had defaulted these dues. They harassed peasants for Nyabingi movement, meted heavy punishments on peasants who failed to comply with these requirements and those who tried to resist them or who showed signs of insubordination etc. What made matters worse was that these were strange anti-people practices on formerly independent peasants. Furthermore, they were meted on men, who were the political heads of the households. What should be understood is that, many of the colonial demands, laws and policies tended to focus on men, and made them accountable to the colonial state. This had the effect of undermining these men's social positions in society.

Administrators were also judges or assessors, clerks or interpreters in these native courts. In other words, the team of agents came from the same nationality, understood each other and cooperated in their transactions. This connection based on nationality compounded the crisis for the peasants. There was a crisis of impartial judgment and lenience. If a peasant appealed, there

was no immediate authority to appeal to except other Baganda agents. This had the effect of fortifying conspiracy. Even when peasants tried to appeal to the European officials, the agents tried to overshadow or block them. However, if they succeeded, then, the interpreters would try to give wrong or distorted translations so as to confuse or destroy the case and intimidate the complainant. Another method was to record the case badly for such purposes.

This type of network that these alien agents formed grieved the rest of the colonised. This was worsened by their marginalising the local agents, and treating them as "primitive backward pagans" instead of taking them as colleagues. Worse still, these Baganda agents developed a superiority complex over the rest. These were some of the issues that created contradictions between the Colonised and these agents. These grievances had the effect of arousing petty nationalism among the peasants, and propelling them into militant struggles.

The local population has been submerged incoherent and voiceless. Their attitude, needs and aspirations have only reached the Government indirectly, coloured by Baganda intermediaries - who have been from time to time confuted by volcanic upheavals arising from the resentment of the people whom they have, perhaps unconsciously, misrepresented. Although strongly supported in execution of their legitimate duties, the small but noisy Baganda oligarchy loses no opportunity of expressing their displeasure and annoyance at the firm check kept upon their continual attempts to impose their language and customs upon the incoherent masses of the population... their overbearing and domineering attitude to the local populations has without doubt been the direct cause of more than 90% of so-called local "rebellions" in the country where European Government has never been personally unpopular". (Sic!)²⁴⁶

However, once colonialism realised the gravity of the crisis and the likely repercussions, it took steps and replaced them with local agents, whom it gave necessary rewards and privileges.

Colonialism learnt the necessity of dispensing with the Baganda agents so as to reduce bloody resistances. Local agents had been learning from Baganda how to man the system. It embarked on reforming the political system, reorganising the political leadership of the district by removing the less indispensable Baganda agents and replacing them with the local agents.²⁴⁷ By then, both the major and minor chiefs were salaried. However, the role of Baganda as instructors and advisors was still important. As such, many of

²⁴⁶ op. cit.

²⁴⁷ op. cit. Bakungu earned Fls.4/= per month.

them were retained.²⁴⁸

However, these do not exonerate British colonialism from responsibility. The colonial ploy was to dissociate itself from the crises and attribute all of them to Baganda agents. However, colonialism cannot shun away from the question of responsibility as it was the one in command, formulating policies and supervising their implementation. Real power lay with colonialists, not agents. Baganda agents did not have autonomy to act as they wished, or to formulate policies. Further more, colonialism represented British and not Baganda interests. As such, Baganda agents could not be considered at the same level with British colonialism as these colonial accusations do. As such, British colonialism had to bear full responsibility of the mistakes by its agents. One needs to go beyond this colonial apologia of shunning away from responsibility of their recruiting Baganda agents as a political error. Available facts prove that they were an indispensable tool for British colonialism in invading, conquering, penetrating and setting up the first administration system in this area. Even after phasing them out later on, neither colonialism, nor the post colonial Governments have tried to abolish this system.

It had become clear to colonialism how `the Nabingi organisation cannot be dealt with by military measures'.²⁴⁹ The new colonial proposals for remedies and safe-guards against future Nyabingi troubles were: General civilisation of the District, the levelling up of administration on both sides of the two international frontiers, abstention from pressure of tax or labour in frontier areas, increased tolerance of the Ruanda Imandwa (anti-Nyabingi institution), and employment of Batutsi, the hereditary rulers whenever possible and increasing the police force to seventy.²⁵⁰

In a bid to accomplish this, it increased educational grants to missions, began pushing religious missions to carry out their ideological and educational work and to tolerate the passive Emandwa. In this line, it criticised the C.M.S' method of work and hostilities against animists and other religions, their lack of tolerance with them as a basis for social grievances. The P.C.W.P. warned;

One of the dangers of these illegal aggressions by native proselytisers, mistaught by Europeans ignorant of the nature of the religions or cults which are endeavouring to destroy and replace is not only the creation in Africa of a feeling of persecution and antagonism against Europeans in general, but also

²⁴⁸ *op. cit.*

²⁴⁹ *op. cit.*

²⁵⁰ Idem. The P.C.W.P. said that the first two proposals were a matter of time while the last three proposals had been laid down and placed on record as general policy.

the natural possibility of exasperated reprisals on local churches. The latter are mostly grass huts and easily inflammable.²⁵¹

Drawing from the protest in the newspaper the previous year, Philipps advocated for recognition and respect of animists (as in modern China and ancient Rome) who practice the same cults of the ancestral spirit and of great men now with the gods (*mandwa*). He argued that these religions could not be mistaken since

The little shrine can often be seen within the enclosure or behind the house... It is unthinkable that English or native mission-teachers should forcibly penetrate the residence of a Japanese officer or official and set fire to the shrine or even utter threats about it. In Africa, however, even under the British flag and religious liberty mission teachers have been and are known to trespass on private residences of Africans, chiefs and peasants, to destroy or molest their shrines.

He exposed the C.M.S. and mission teachers who accused the colonial state for its new position of hindering the burning of "devil-huts" in the district. Philipps criticised one of the teachers for this view published in the vernacular newspaper thus:

He doesn't add whether he considers the spirit of his own father an animist, to be a devil... Animists in Africa are set down contemptuously as heathen. A sense of both history and realities of the world as well as perspective, seen still to be relatively rare.²⁵²

Colonialism found another solution in deliberate creation of social distinctions in this society. This was conceived by W.P. administrators in 1921.

The question of getting into close touch with younger and more educated natives with a view to giving them some vent for their aspirations and preventing them by practical measures from becoming revolutionary or disloyal.... To form a club or reading room in each station for the native clerks, interpreters, young chiefs and other native youths of similar education.... The idea is to enable these natives to have a place where they can meet to pass their spare time, and providing papers and suitable literature to endeavour to curb those ideas which are at present making headway in the country.... The

²⁵¹ P.C.W.P. to C.S. on 15/10/1930. File: C. 1605: Missions: Ruanda (C.M.S.) Mission Methods.

²⁵² Extract from "The Japanese Mystery" (1930), *Atlantic Monthly*, Sep. 1930. p. 290. Also refer to J.E.J.P. Philipps' work of 1/10/1930. Colonialism had moderated its position and was advocating for Emandwa and other mild religions. His criticism is multi - barrelled: criticising actual malpractices of C.M.S. and their greed; their failure on the ideological front, and also pushing forward the political programme to defeat peasants under Nyabingi. File: C. 1605 Missions: Ruanda (C.M.S.) Mission Methods.

club should be managed by a committee of natives under the guidance of the D.C., who would draw up such rule as local conditions found necessary, and see that only suitable natives are permitted as members.²⁵³

To ensure discipline, conformity and to discriminate against many people, they set up rules, which prohibited access to the club of women and children. They were to set up a committee to screen and bar unsuitable people from entering, to check on political or religious discussions *inter alia*.²⁵⁴

It should be noted that colonial authorities had learnt clearly the insurgent character and influence of women in Kigezi. They also understood that the mixing up of different sections of society would lead to the revolutionary tendencies that were developing in the district and the world over. Class creation was at the same time aimed at undermining women, and their improved position in society. It aimed at entrenching or exacerbating inequalities through isolationism and social distinction based on gender, age, religion, education and employment. Fears of the past resistances, the Nyakishenyi resistance, and the prevalent revolutionary feelings demanded colonialism to create such a club of docility, of non-active political membership etc., who would form a dependable ally. In colonial words, the club was "intended as a rendezvous for the educated type of young natives and as a check on revolutionary tendencies".²⁵⁵

All these colonial measures had some impact in the movement. Colonialism spelled out how the matter was one of general administration, which would always require watching. But as the district progressed, any possible danger to Government would disappear and all cases harmful to natives would be dealt with by law.²⁵⁶

Promotion of missionary Work for Ideological Purposes

The ideological, political and cultural contributions of European religions to colonial interests were quite clear to colonialism. Being the most interested party, the state could not leave this important work unplanned. Yet, missionary work was hotly challenged by peasants. It was noted in 1915 how the religious and secular work by both missions had been retarded by the Nyabingi movement. This had climaxed in the murder of the C.M.S. teacher.²⁵⁷

²⁵³ File: Provincial Administration: District Commissioners Conferences:- Minute of Meetings:- Meeting at Mbarara on August 4th-8th 1921 of D.Cs. of Toro, Ankole, Kigezi and A.D.C. Kigezi and Secretary.

²⁵⁴ Idem.

²⁵⁵ *op. cit.*

²⁵⁶ F.D.C. to C.S. on 17/1/1922 & P.C. to C.S. commenting on Philipps' report *op. cit.*

²⁵⁷ W.P.A.R. 1915-16.

Colonialism wanted a planned education for the "natives". The creation of a semi-literate and unskilled class of native was most undesirable. It therefore planned a strategy for the success of this work through compartmentalising the District, basing on nationality and other differences.

It was clear to colonialism that Protestantism had been rejected in RWANDA where they stuck to their religion. The W.F.M. had nine Catholic missions in Rwanda. Its personnel spoke local language and a wide experience with the people. Colonialism correctly understood that Baganda Protestant teachers would hinder this valuable work by Banyarwanda teachers and White Father Missionaries. This also applied to the Bakiga, who disliked Baganda but liked Banya Rwanda and were accustomed to them. Colonialism saw it as 'politically and tribally desirable' that 'these two counties which are ethnologically, historically and geographically part of Rwanda' be under the spiritual charge of the vicariate of Sub-Nyanza. Rujumbura of Bahororo and Kinkizi of Batumbi, who were 'not unsympathetic to Ankole and Protestant influence' had to be left for Protestants whose personnel spoke Runyankore. This plan was implemented successfully. One of its achievements was to create deep-rooted divisions amongst nationalities in the region based on religions. It sharpened these differences, undermined local religions like Nyabingi and increased religious animosity amongst the new converts.²⁵⁸

As the military option had failed, it began to combine various methods to defeat these resistances. It saw education as important

if only to combat the influence of the witch doctors. The intelligence of the natives generally could be much improved by widening their outlook and education would prove of much assistance in this and in making the chiefs independent of alien clerks.²⁵⁹

In pursuit of this, it maintained its supportive programme to these missions. By 1930, it offered Pounds 500 as educational grants and it raised it to pounds 547 the following year. In 1933, the total educational grants had been raised to pounds 656.12²⁶⁰ Although these figures cannot tell how the money was used, they still show a commitment of the colonial state to education.

It increased its spies and informers to monitor Nyabingi movement and all other subversive activities. It mounted politicisation programmes through constant barazas, issued threats etc.

²⁵⁸ Idem. Also see K.D.A.R. 1961 on District politics and Provincial Reports from 1956-1962 on religion and politics in Kigezi.

²⁵⁹ K.D.A.R. 1917-18.

²⁶⁰ K.D.A.Rs 1930-1933.

Reforms to Control Mission Activities Among Peasants

The new religions created new antagonistic contradictions between the whole colonial train and the colonised. There is another school of thought which argues that the coming of these missionaries was a blessing for the pagans. See Rwampigi (1980) Ngorogoza (1969), Sebalijja (1911) et el. These contradictions revolved around material resources, notably land, labour and livestock. These increased peasants' resolution to wage armed struggle. This needs concretising.

In Kigezi's context, the cross followed the sword. They were the colonialists with the Kivu Mission, who paved way for Christianity. The White Fathers, who had arrived earlier in the southern part of the region did not extend their work to the Ndorwa-Mpororo-Kajara areas. Colonial administration embarked on hoodwinking peasants to allow in these missionaries. In 1913, the P.C.W.P. quoted chiefs that peasants would allow missionaries to come provided they did not deprive them of their plural wives or their land.²⁶¹ It was in the following year that White Fathers and C.M.S. selected plots around Kabale.²⁶² The so-called conditions laid by the peasants were violated immediately.

Continued peasant resistances necessitated intensive ideological work. In this pre-literate, peasant society, religion would play an important role. The problem facing colonialism was that Nyabingi, the dominant religion was against colonialism. Worse still, Peasants did not and could not understand or accept British interests, let alone representing them. The duty fell on European religions, as was happening elsewhere on the continent. It had its own religions which people believed in, revered and feared. In such a context, the new religions could not be accepted wholesale. This was aggravated by misconduct by the missionaries and their new converts. Their association with the murderous state and its forced demands exacerbated the situation. Eventually, the activities of these new missions caused a lot of contradictions with the peasants. This called for the state to come in and control their activities. Let us concretise this.

The first major contradictions revolved around land. On his first visit, Lewin, of the C.M.S. `marked out the choicest pieces of cultivated land for his plots'. Instead of compensating the peasants for their gardens and land, he deceived them that 'If they resigned their claim to the land and became

²⁶¹ P.C.W.P. Report 1913-14.

²⁶² K.D.A.R. 1914-15.

mission people that they would be released from all obligations to their chiefs, the government, and also from road work¹. He forced them to supply free food to mission teachers. This became a basis for contradictions and the state had to come in to resolve it.²⁶³

Owing to the density of population and extremely strong feeling among the clans as to alienation of their land whether fallow or cultivated it has been explained to the indigenous population that such lands will not be alienated without their consent (obtained after individual explanation to those interested that lands then granted would cease to belong to them) missionary societies were simultaneously informed that applications for unoccupied lands (not cultivated or fallow) would receive sympathetic consideration.²⁶⁴

The subsequent years witnessed an intensification of scramble for land by missions. By 1928, the colonial state was alarmed. Missions had 407 Temporary Occupation Plots, of which 272 belonged to C.M.S. In addition to that, they had three miles of freehold land. This land had been acquired through force, intimidation and deceipts to peasants. The C.M.S. later deceived the state that all its plots were bush schools. Because of that, they were able to get educational grants from the state for these unoccupied plots.²⁶⁵

However, the state came to understand how the C.M.S. was failing to execute its ideological duties. Most of its plots lacked teachers while the rest were manned by young boys, 'practically illiterate, irresponsible... unfit to teach the doctrines of Christ'. To D.C., their presence had done more harm than good to the community. The C.M.S. preferred to exploit this cheap labour which it paid only a shilling a month and freedom from Ruharo. What disturbed colonialism most was that the C.M.S. was receiving enormous educational grants for these empty plots on the pretext that they were schools. Yet, it was exporting teachers to Belgian Rwanda, where its outlook and main interests lay.²⁶⁶ Colonialism was forced to spell out its educational policy;

We owe it both to a contented continuance of English trusteeship, and in fairness to the men with whom we shall have to deal in the new Africa of ten and more years hence, that the rising generation should either remain under a proper African or a proper European influence. Unless such conditions are rectified, we would appear to be drifting aimlessly (if not dangerously between the two).²⁶⁷

²⁶³ F.A.D.C. to Governor on 23/8/1914 in defence against C.M.S. accusation "Obstruction in the Granting of Plots to C.M.S. in Kigezi". Sullivan to A.D.C. on 13/3/1916. File C.M.S.

²⁶⁴ K.D.A.R. 1919-20 & W.P.A.R. 1919-20.

²⁶⁵ D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 1/8/1929: "Land, T.O.L., Missions." Sub-grade (Bush) Schools.

²⁶⁶ D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 1/8/1929. Also see K.D.A.R. 1933.

²⁶⁷ *op. cit.*

The state limited the amount of land acquired by missionaries. It also forced them to visit these plots regularly and staff them with qualified personnel. It did not want these plots to develop into centers for dissention, resistance and insubordination to disrupt colonial order. In its view, these evangelising classes made children 'develop a contemptuous insubordination to both domestic and tribal discipline'.²⁶⁸ It threatened to withdraw educational grants, deprive them of most of the land and the privilege to church teachers if the C.M.S. did not fulfill its ideological obligations. It demanded accountability of the C.M.S. It stopped C.M.S. from exporting teachers to Rwanda, accused them of embezzling most of the resources received for educational purposes. In its own words, 'Money granted to White Fathers seems to go much further than an equal amount given to Protestants, who encumber themselves with large families'.²⁶⁹

It was evident in 1931 when the Roman Catholics had nearly twice the number of converts of Protestants. The former had 9,186 converts and the latter had 5,087.²⁷⁰ This was also reflected by the enrollment at school. In 1930, C.M.S. had less than half the enrollment number of the W.F.M. It had 109 pupils while the W.F.M. had 230 pupils. This worsened the following year when W.F.M. had 287 pupils while the C.M.S. had 96 pupils. By 1933, W.F.M. had 525 pupils while C.M.S. had 164 pupils. The colonial state continued demanding accountability from C.M.S. as it was demanding and receiving more money than the W.F.M. The C.M.S. was forced to respond. We find that by 1960, it had considerably narrowed the gap. It had 8,817 pupils while the W.F.M. had 11,398 pupils.²⁷¹

Secondly, it discouraged the C.M.S. from using crooked, cunning and deceitful methods to extort peasant resources in form of free labour. The first example is Seseme church, which was struck by lightning. The C.M.S. demanded its replacement by Ruharo labour, lying that it was 'burnt by incendiaryism'. It received and used Ruharo labour worth a hundred pounds to build a bigger and better one.²⁷² Contradictions between state and C.M.S. arose when the church was being completed. Dr. Smith informed the D.C. that he had made a sad "discovery" that he had been appealing for help 'under

²⁶⁸ Report of D.C. on "272 Temporary Occupation Plots. Plots at Kihi".

²⁶⁹ K.D.A.R. 1929 & 1930.

²⁷⁰ 1931 Returns on Converts, K.D.A.R. 1931. It recorded that 232,603 peasants still stuck to their pre-colonial religions.

²⁷¹ K.D.A.Rs 1930-33 & 1960.

²⁷² Dr. Smith C.M.S. to D.C. on 23/9/1927: "The C.M.S. "Freehold" at Seseme (Kisoro), Bufumbira (Rwanda)" D.C. to Dr. Smith on 13/10/1927 and Dr. Smith's reply on 3/11/1927. File: C.M.S. N.A. The Ruharo labour was worth more than Pounds100.

false pretences. Apparently it was not destroyed by incendiarism after all but struck by lightning.²⁷³ The D.C. was angered by this duplicity and exploitation; "an act of god and not of naughty natives, though it was the latter who had to suffer for it... the C.M.S. asked (and obtained) `unpaid forced labour' against the existence of which they inveighed so forcibly public.²⁷⁴ He was forced to warn them.

C.M.S. created lies and promised converts rewards, absolution from work and other obligations and punishments. One of the lies it created was that natives that were not Christians would be considered sympathisers with NyaBingi and thrown into prison and that safety lay in the 'religion of the Government' namely Protestantism. This led 'A few pagans, oscillating alarmed between Scylla and charybdis, betook themselves to Islam.' The Roman Catholics retaliated by creating rumour that the P.C.W.P. had become Catholic and that Catholics alone could and would communicate to him and would be the ones to get jobs. The D.C. had to disapprove this publicly that 'there was no religious "reservations" mediaevalisms which would get them into or keep them in any post...'²⁷⁵

Resistance between peasants and missions arose over school fees. The best case is of Ruhara's three children, who were expelled from school for failing to pay church dues. What complicated matters was that they had paid school fees. The state accused the Catholic Church of manipulating school fees to exploit resources for the church. After a lot of correspondences, the colonial state clearly concluded thus:

Education, is after all a social service. In Uganda the Protectorate Government has entrusted it, almost entirely, to the mission Societies.... Responsibility still rests with Administrative and Education Officers to exercise, in the name of Government, ... who wish to make use of educational facilities, provided largely by public funds, in spite of statements to the contrary, and are willing to behave themselves, must be allowed to do so; and to attend Mission schools until state schools are established. Schools must not be used as instruments for enforcing Church discipline against children or parents, especially when it appears to be only a matter of tithe payments.

Uganda has suffered since 1890, or earlier, from the political and religious rivalry of the Mission Societies...²⁷⁶

Thirdly, the colonial state stopped the C.M.S' activities in the out-lawed

²⁷³ Dr. Smith to D.C. on 3/11/1927. File Idem.

²⁷⁴ *op. cit.*

²⁷⁵ K.D.A.R. 1915-16, 1928.

²⁷⁶ *op. cit.* Also see Memos of 10/2/1941 and of 15/2/1941 on the same issue.

Sleeping Sickness (S.S.) of killing game for ivory. In addition to violating S.S. laws, they were depopulating the animals. To make matters worse, the colonial state had prohibited peasants from going there, let alone hunting there or killing animals. During its hunting expeditions, the C.M.S. personnel exploited unpaid labour of peasants on these trips. They took an average of 50 porters per trip to these S.S. areas for an average of twelve days. The colonial state accused the C.M.S. of exposing these porters to sleeping sickness, overloading them without remuneration, separating these peasants from their families for 12 days without remuneration, forcing peasants to contribute food and milk without pay, and then forcing men to carry them for long distances and many days, inhuman exploitation of not feeding these porters on these trips *inter alia*.²⁷⁷

Not only were these grievances bases for Nyabingi resistances but they also had the effect of teaching peasants to defy government laws and go into the S.S. areas to hunt as the Whites were doing. Peasants saw this as a racist move to block the Africans from hunting and keeping it exclusively for Whites. The state threatened to prosecute any missionary violating this rule.

Fourthly, the state intervened when peasants appealed against forced milk contribution. When peasants changed their methods of struggle - from militant armed struggles to legal methods, and appeals, the state seized the opportunity and came in with a pro-peasants' face. It began to address some of the social grievances of peasants. Peasants appealed to D.C. against forced milk contributions *Ezekibeere* by the C.M.S. They had been compelled to take one cow each to the C.M.S. at Kabale, three days' march away. They were compelled against their will to remain on the C.M.S. Mailo for thirty days and to supply milk. They had to take their own money to Kabale for food and cook the food themselves while so-detained. To make matters worse, the C.M.S. gave them two Shillings per cow for the month's milk. An average of thirty peasants were thus compelled every month to take each a milk cow to the C.M.S., principally from Nalusanje and Nakishenyi Gombololas.²⁷⁸ The D.C. explained this super-exploitation by showing how a Kiga cow produced as much as three bottles of milk. The standard price of milk was 20 cents a bottle, which meant Shs.9/= per month per cow.

This forced-milk contribution was class-based. In sanctioning this forced milk contribution, the colonial state, still in its embryonic stage, was too careful to antagonise the organised, large cattle owners. The victims were

²⁷⁷ D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 15/5/1929. File: C.M.S.

²⁷⁸ D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 28/9/1928. See Appendix. File: C.M.S. I am grateful to the valuable information from Kanyima, Bwirirenkanya, Rutanga et l. regarding forced milk contributions known as *EZEKIBEERE*

peasants owning an average of two head of cattle apiece. The agent received orders of the needed cattle and he then acted. There was very high mortality rate among the cows and calves thus brought to Kabale due to great climatic differences and pasturage which were injurious to the cows and their calves.²⁷⁹ 'This is a source of grievance among the peasantry. The average price of a cow in milk is about Shs. 100/=. No compensation is paid by the C.M.S. in case of deaths'. Worse still, there were relatively very few cattle. The D.C. explained how

The proportion of cows, and in milk, at any one time was small, and nearly all Rukiga cattle were owned in ones and twos which made the taking of the only cow a man had, and any death, a matter of real hardship.

To gain a sense of perspective, one might reasonably say that the loss of a cow to a mKiga is equivalent to the loss by fire to a poor European, who has neither income nor bank balance, of his house and all its contents ... uninsured! A cow to a mKiga frequently represents the savings of a life time.²⁸⁰

He warned that these were just the kind of injustice which were exploited by the Nyabingi and an accumulation of which produced the periodical flares-up in Kigezi.²⁸¹

The P.C. ruled against the practice and how 'The assistance of chiefs and the native Courts cannot be invoked in this matter'. He stressed that it was not equitable that the peasants of Rukiga should be forced to bring the cows for providing the milk and butter for the 16 Europeans on the C.M.S. hill.²⁸² This form of super-exploitation was abolished that December.²⁸³ The D.C. then castigated the criminal nature of forced milk contribution;

It should however be placed on record that throughout the past eight years the cattle have, in point of fact, had to be brought in by ORDER of the D.C.

²⁷⁹ Idem. The D.C. recounted to the P.C.W.P. the hazards these cattle and their owners were exposed to: The marked climatic differences (damp-cold) in Kabale; differences in composition of both water and pasture between the valleys of the Edward watershed and those of Victoria (e.g. Kabale). On pasturage, he argued that MBULLALA and RUMBUGU formed the staple pasture while the latter was relatively rare and the former practically did not exist. 'The MUBALLI grass at Kabale was injurious to cattle when unaccustomed to it, leading to high mortality among cows and their calves brought to Kabale'.

²⁸⁰ Idem.

²⁸¹ Idem.

²⁸² P.C.W.P. to C.S. on 23/10/1928 and C.S' comments on 30/10/1928.

²⁸³ Telegraph of C.S. to P.C.W.P. of 22/12/1928 and telegraph of P.C.W.P. to Districter, of 24/12/1928. Also see D.M. to the Attorney General on 13/1/1929 and the Solicitor General to C.S. on 22/1/1929. File Op. cit.

supported by criminal convictions (flogging and fines) in Native Courts, all of which are now stated to have been illegal. The question of influence has never arisen. The matter is now seen frankly to have been one of illegality, profiteering on and discrimination against, the native. Had the cattle belonged to a White man, this state of affairs would clearly never have occurred.²⁸⁴

Peasants needed this milk for themselves. This form of exploitation led to detention of men, who commanded respect in society and as heads of households on this mission station for a month was highly detested. It forced them to carry out the role of cooking, which was exclusively done by women hitherto. This had the effect of degrading and humiliating men. It had the possibility of undermining their social position in society. This forced milk contribution disorganised them and their families, their production plans, and their defence system. Worse still, they had other compulsory state obligations to carry out including Ruharo, Kashanju and taxation.²⁸⁵ In fact, colonialism was able to assess the effectiveness of its reforms the following year by attributing the confinement of NYA-BINGI to "a MAGNI NOMINIS UMBRA" to be principally the

removal of a number of grievances, petty enough to the European who is not touched by them but acute and infuriating to the African, and easily exploitable by the Nya-BINGI, laudator - temporis - acti.²⁸⁶

This section has shown some trials by the Abagirwa to resuscitate the waning Nyabingi Movement, the politics that emerged in late 1920s leading to broad resistance of early 1928. This was a great shock and threat to colonialism, which had committed itself publicly that Nyabingi had been defeated. This resistance, which stretched across Kigezi to Belgian Rwanda was a real threat. Its objects, secrecy, the swiftness of the leadership among peasants, and the peasants' willingness to bring offerings in livestock, money, beads etc. from all over the region to finance this resistance proved their determination to emancipate their land.

Though colonialism moved in swiftly and carried out counter-insurgency in the region, it was forced to institute some reforms. By this time, its policy of creating Kigezi into a labour reservoir was under way. Males were being forced to move into wage labour outside the district for taxes. Its other

²⁸⁴ D.C. to P.C.W.P. on 14/2/1929 on "Compulsory Milk C.M.S". File Op. cit.

²⁸⁵ D.M. to Attorney General on 13/1/1929 & Communication of the Solicitor General to C.S. on 22/1/1929.

²⁸⁶ K.D.A.R. 1929.

reforms included synchronising the activities by the new missions in this area. At the same time, it demanded their accountability and caution in dealing with peasants. It warned them against unnecessary contradictions with peasants. On the side of local religions, it began to tolerate Emandwa religion so as to undermine Nyabingi religion. Peasant resistance forced the colonial state to control the land race and alienation by these missions. It also discouraged these missions' naked exploitation through forced contributions of food, milk, labour and other demands that overburdened peasants. All these reforms and changes were a response to pressures from the continued Nyabingi movement.

Section Seven

Contributions & Limitations of Nyabingi Movement

It is important to acknowledge that these resisters were able to defeat colonial forces in some of these battles because of some advantages they had over the latter. These included numerical strength, commitment, methods of struggle and timing; knowledge of the terrain and its effective utilisation, people's support and involvement etc. However, being masses, at low level of production and with a narrower outlook than their counterparts, they could not press home for more successes to final victory. Neither did many of them develop beyond mass resistance and create a regional, armed force to fight for their rights and defend their successes. Many of them saw these wars in the same way as pre-colonial wars with other enganda, where the initial defeats meant final victory. Yet, here was colonialism which attacked in succession with no attachment to production, no family responsibilities, no shortage of supplies etc. This new adversary did not first make war preparations and climaxes through dances or beating drums. It did not even first challenge its enemies to fight as these peasants did. Its rules of the game were different and overwhelmed the resisters. As such, peasants' military success would be short-lived.

Peasants' defeat arose out of their objective weaknesses. These included lack of organisation and broader unity of all peasants in the region to resist at the same time. They failed to neutralise collaborators either politically or militarily. This excepts Nyakishenyi resistance and the one under Ndochibiri. Most of them failed to learn and master the enemies' military methods and weaknesses. This was worsened by their crude pre-capitalist weapons and military methods which made them vulnerable to advanced capitalist ones. To concretise this, throwing stones and spears while standing were no match to repeated fire of self-loading machine guns while taking cover. These measures contributed in undermining the Nyabingi movement. By mid 1930s, Nyabingi resistance was declining, taking new forms such as avoidance of Poll Tax, Ruharo or other obligations.²⁸⁷ The state had penetrated deep in the peasantry.²⁸⁸ By 1939, the Nyabingi movement had been weakened considerably.²⁸⁹

Despite the eventual defeats, armed violence had great impact. Peasants

²⁸⁷ K.D.A.Rs. 1933-38.

²⁸⁸ Idem.

²⁸⁹ Buganda Resident to C.S. on 14/4/1939. Also see File: Historical and Political Notes (West) 1941.

knew that this was their collective responsibility. It helped them to patch up their differences and join forces for self-emancipation. Right from the beginning, the more they were beaten, the more resistances flared up. All these show how this area did not surrender but was conquered militarily by colonialism after bitter wars. Successive defeats, massacres, tortures, imprisonments, public executions, deportations, etc. demoralised the resisters. They had come to terms with reality and learnt the invincibility of colonialism at this point in time given their low - level of social formulation. They gradually began to use it from within and began to appeal to it for arbitration.

Colonialism itself had learnt that militarism alone could not last long. It therefore resorted to political solutions, reformed its administration, made changes in its demands, promoted some local institutions to undermine Nyabingi, reduced witch-hunts and punishments to the culprits. It changed its approach and policies and adopted a cautious approach in dealing with them. Faced with this insurgency, British colonialism was forced to import an anthropologist in the person of Edel May to study these peasants and devise measures to control them. Gradually, it made peasants form councils up to village level in which they would discuss colonial policies and air their grievances. The new reforms were not outright hostile. On their part, peasants who were tired of continuous defeats, punishments and famines wanted to settle down to production.

To solve this crisis, colonialism was forced to reform this system. In its own words, it embarked on the programme of 're-construction and soothing a volcanic people by explaining or removing causes of potential upheavals rather than by initial punishment and by substituting where possible indigenes for aliens in the control of local affairs'.²⁹⁰ It was also forced to shift its administration center, first from Kigezi to Ikumba and then to Kabale. In 1919 alone, it had to spend more than a thousand pounds to change Kabale Station. All these were from real fears of the Nyabingi movement.²⁹¹

It gradually began to remove any grievance that would form a basis for peasant resistance. This included warding off Christian missionaries from exploiting peasants, who had been exploiting the peasants in different ways under the blessing of the state. These malpractices revolved around taking away peasants lands through lies, forced food and milk contributions, forced free labour, overworking them, exposing them to sleeping sickness etc.

It undermined these peasants by depriving them of their capacity to make wars. This was done through policies outlawing carrying spears and any other sharp object, which could be used as a weapon. Secondly, it made policies

²⁹⁰ *op. cit.*

²⁹¹ File: 146: Native Administration: Nabingi and Kabale defence (1919-1923).

against local smithing, and inflicted heavy penalties on anyone that violated this. Punishments included imprisonment and chopping off thumbs. This was worsened by forced labour, labour migration, massive importation of cheap manufactured goods. These undermined the local industry and tied the area to the new economic order. Yet, the new weapon of making war - the gun was never availed to them. This was worsened by restrictions against free political organisation.

It would be erroneous to look at the Nyabingi movement like a balance sheet full of losses without gains. There were some political, military and social gains. This success depended on unity, organisation and mobilization. They had the peasants as the sea, made effective use of weaponry and military skills. Their leadership exemplified in secrecy, timing, organization, planning and execution of their plans, creating rear-bases and effective use of concealments, their military capacity and will to fight to death resisting.²⁹² Through contact with the enemy, the leadership became aware of the enemies' strength and viciousness. It therefore encouraged the resisters²⁹³ exemplified great ability in evoking Nyabingi to exploit social, cultural practices for sealing comradeship etc.

Some of the leadership developed sophisticated, solid resistances which lasted longest. The leadership in this particular movement were widely travelled, with wide geographical knowledge, had a lot of new relations and blood brotherhood, and had developed wide political consciousness through direct contact with the colonialists and different peoples from different regions and countries. Most of these were in colonial service. They became clearer of this new enemy, its origins, its political and military dangers and the need for preparations before attacking. All this was vital for military purposes, knowing the terrain helped them to attack or engage the enemy at its weakest points. It also gave them chance to their rear bases - forests or across the borders or to disappear into the population. It also assisted them to procure and/or store food supplies, arms freely or cheaply from the environment. The leadership also learnt many languages, cultural practices and secrets, languages and codes during their interaction in colonial service and after. These were instrumental in their struggles as they used them when they went there with their forces in mobilisation and recruitment. It facilitated them to create a strong intelligence network among the people, which the colonialists failed to penetrate. The D.C. Ruzizi-Kivu confessed this;

²⁹² *op. cit.* Colonialism responded with burning all property and crops from there and shifting all the peasants from there.

²⁹³ As an example, Ruchezi, who succeeded Ndochibiri would hold out his hand to protect his followers from bullets.

Our experience in this district has been that the only possible method for his apprehension is to entice him into open country, away from forest areas, and employ native spies in plain clothes with the inducement of a large reward in cash or stock for his arrest... whenever pursuing troops were told that their objective was the apprehension of NDOCHIMBIRI, the news of their movements was always regularly conveyed to him by camp followers or porters.²⁹⁴

It should be noted that in all these struggles, these resisters put their faith and protection in Nyabingi, even in those households and lineages where Nyabingi religion had not permeated. Confronted by colonialism, peasants accepted that Nyabingi had sanctioned this struggle. Nyabingi was their leader and protector in this war. Nyabingi religion therefore transcended its spiritual roles to address peasants' temporal needs. As such, the leadership of this resistance had to use Nyabingi religion, even if it might not have believed in it. Resistance had to be given a solid faith to hold on to. This gave the Abagirwa a vital role in increasing the resisters' faith and fear in Nyabingi, encouraging them to fight, threatening the waverers and the weak to become strong and fight. This gave Nyabingi more legitimacy and expansion among the peasants and the area freely, without threat of internal opposition much more than ever before. It also helped in undermining the passive religions. While some of them were pro-established orders, all of them offered no practical solution to secular, psychological and spiritual problems confronting peasants. With colonial invasion, these religions could not come up with any solution either. It was only Abagirwa, who attended to these problems and offered some solutions and explanations.

At the time of invasion, Nyabingi confronted two enemies, the external and the internal. It became clear that while the main enemy was external, to confront him required internal reforms first, that every step forward demanded internal reforms. Internal reforms were demanded both in society and Nyabingi institution. It was necessary to avail instruments of violence and subordination to different sections of society regardless of gender, age, lineage or historical origin. and allow various sections of society to come into leadership and address issues of gender, and the minorities. As earlier noted, women, children and men formed its social base. With colonialism as a new oppressor, various sections of society found the solution in Nyabingi movement. All were forced into anti-colonial struggles at various levels, in various forms. While some took to arms, others supported them with information, logistics like coverage and shelter, arms, food, guidance, and transmitted messages.

²⁹⁴ *op. cit.*

It was in these anti-colonial Nyabingi struggles that women took up a critical leadership role in armed struggles - not only as mediums of Nyabingi but as defenders of society; directing the fighters and participating fully in combat both in the leadership and among fighters, planning, providing ideologies, encouraging fighters and administering invocations of secrecy under Nyabingi. In addition to holding local weapons, women held guns and taught other resisters how to use them. This was the first time that they stood side by side with men in battle, fought courageously side by side with men and died together! It was this colonial invasion, which ushered women into active fighting at all levels. This active participation in wars by women - both in membership and leadership, allowed an atmosphere of commitment, dedication and comradeship among the resisters without any discrimination. This ensured sustenance of these resistances. This was a great leap from the pre-colonial period.

This demonstrated clearly that a solid, long-lasting defence for society depended on all members of society, and that in time of crisis, every member had something to contribute. This called for all sections of society to have and use the weapons to defend it. In other words, defence for society was not determined by gender but on all who lived in it. It showed that basing on gender to determine defence of society spelled out peril, that all sections of society needed each other in this struggle and that this unity had to be built basing on equality, comradeship and the call on all members of society rather than basing on inequality, oppression and discrimination. This new development became the basis for the development, sustenance and longevity of the Nyabingi movement. Hence, the struggles that ensued gradually had shed away spontaneity and developed into arduous, protracted sharp struggles of mobile peasant resisters.

While these internal reforms were made, they did not extend deep to household level. In other words, these reforms did not permeate in the whole society, beyond the immediate requirements of defence of society. Even those who did not engage in resistance did not experience them. The same old hierarchy remained but on top was added the colonial state. Such reforms therefore remained superficial, without any profound effect on the existing relations. Secondly, even these reforms were not long-lasting. After the military encounter, the various sections of society resumed their social positions in the existing framework. Meaningful, profound reforms would have to address the existing social relations, address issues related to gender, youths and other minorities. In this context, equality and comradeship was experienced only in the battlefield. This narrowness of these reforms finally contributed to the defeat of the the Nyabingi movement.

Even on the question of incorporating new ideas, methods of struggle, the peasants did not fully accomplish it. While Abagirwa accepted sacrifices in monetary terms and foreign military technology and science, they restricted its followers from accepting certain innovations being preached by the state. A situation developed where Abagirwa brought forward explanations to counter any colonial move. The colonial state brought forth counter-arguments in defence of such moves. These colonial explanations were backed by coercion while those by Nyabingi were backed by fear of the supernatural and the unknown consequences. Force, therefore compelled peasants to implement these programmes, against peasants' will and against the wishes of Abagirwa. However, as these programmes produced positive results in conformity with what colonial authorities had earlier explained, this had the effect of undermining the ground for Nyabingi religion. They were such issues related to health, sanitation, production, soil protection, medicine and vaccines for people and cattle that the state's explanations and policies proved most successful and convincing. Gradually, peasants began weighing these explanations by Abagirwa versus those by the colonial state.

In line with this were sacrifices to Nyabingi in form of alcohol, daughters and foodstuffs. This was gradually abandoned due to the dynamics of this war. Secondly, the long, pretentious process of selecting an Omugirwa was abandoned. With these new continuous struggles, it became clear that any rigidities or delays in leadership-formation, or initiative-taking spelled out peril for Nyabingi and its people. Nyabingi therefore became very flexible to the membership in joining its ranks. Since all Abagirwa were busy mobilising peasants into resistance, and on constant run from colonial repression, there was no time for a systematic initiation of these new Abagirwa into Nyabingi secrets. War conditions demanded continuity in leadership. Where one Omugirwa got killed or arrested, another had to emerge promptly, take up her place and continue the struggle. As such, many more people became Abagirwa and sustained the struggle.

This paralysed colonialism. This dynamic process had the advantage of bringing in different people with different leadership qualities, military skills and experience into leadership. Most of these would never have qualified in normal conditions to become Abagirwa. Many of these were men, formerly in colonial service. Such would never have qualified to join its ranks due to gender bias and their former role in the colonial service. It should be recalled that most pre-colonial Abagirwa were women. Yet, during these struggles, even personalities with royal origins like Muhumuza and Ndunguzi became its Abagirwa. It was this new leadership that emerged after 1914 which became instrumental in these resistances and led peasant resisters into long, protracted struggles. This new leadership had new skills and politics to teach

them.

This was an important critique to Nyabingi religion - that in confronting the external enemy, there had to be internal reforms within Nyabingi institution itself. It critiqued longer initiations into Nyabingi secrets and exclusion of people into its ranks. This new development further demanded merit to leadership rather than any other consideration. It proved that long, segregative initiation into Nyabingi secrets was not necessary to answer society's temporal and defence needs. It showed that restrictions of membership into its ranks spelled out peril for Nyabingi religion and for society. These events showed that even non-believers had something to contribute to save society and Nyabingi religion. It demonstrated that beliefs were not enough.

However, this fluidity and flexibility into the ranks of Nyabingi also led to its undermining. This broadening the choice had the advantage of bringing in capable, skilled leadership for the struggle, and also ensuring continuity of the struggle through immediate replacement of the leadership. It had the weakness of undermining Nyabingi religion. Many who replaced the old Abagirwa had not undergone any initiation into the secrets and rituals of Nyabingi. Neither had they been chosen in the usual way. These hampered them from managing adequately the spiritual aspects and defending Nyabingi outside this resistance. Worse still, some of those who came into leadership in that manner did not have a lot of commitment to the spiritual aspect like the chosen, initiated Abagirwa. Their main object was to struggle although they still feared and revered Nyabingi. It was this type of Abagirwa who came to understand some weaknesses of Nyabingi and either exploit them for personal gains or disorganise the movement. In colonial language, this gave rise to 'charlatans masquerading as Nyabingi'.

Separation of leadership from the membership through death, imprisonment or disappearance did not wipe out the movement although it affected the course, magnitude and momentum of the resistance. This was because Nyabingi Movement did not depend solely on individual leadership, which would have made it incapable of bringing up new leadership. New leadership always sprung up and led the struggle. The limitation with this type of leadership was that it was handicapped by lack of experience, absence of prior records of the struggle and a consistent programme, strategies, lack of continuity, experience and lack of the capacity of the former leadership. These had negative consequences. It was also hard for the new leadership to know the connections in the enemy's camp, all the codes used, their contacts, etc. This gave advantage to colonialism over them as it was organised, had

records, with a systematic programme etc.²⁹⁵

This explains why the death of Ndochimbiri and his comrades was followed by the weakening of their resistance. As seen, their attacks under KAIGIRIRWA's leadership on British forces were easily defeated although they were well-armed with 28 rifles. Worse still, they began showing other weaknesses to the enemy. One of them was when 'they announced that they would wait for vengeance until the Government relaxed their precautions and forgot their presence'.²⁹⁶

While this dialectical process of Nyabingi was very important in sustaining the struggle, it also became a weakness. People believed in religion so much that they failed to advance ahead to make longer, comprehensive planning against the enemy. Similarly, they did not study the situation concretely after being defeated in these battles and learn from such experiences and defeats. This denied many of them opportunity to learn more about the enemy and his skills, strength and weaknesses and the necessary internal reforms and planning before attacking the enemy. Another critical point was of timing when to wage it. The wholesale belief in the invincibility of Nyabingi contributed heavily to a series of defeats. While this process was very crucial and timely, with the effect of paralysing the enemy, still, it had weaknesses. It undermined Nyabingi as it increased the death toll, arrests, mistakes, political fines etc. This decreased morale and forced peasants to re-think and re-assess the whole situation. This contributed to the undermining of Nyabingi movement.

Continuous peasant attacks that resulted in humiliating defeats also contributed to the undermining of the struggle. There was no time to study the enemy's resources, tactics, methods of struggle, strategies and weaknesses. They did not have time to make comprehensive reorganisation and modifications of strategies and arms. In many of these struggles, no trials were made to capture or acquire the enemy's weapons and master his skills so as to defeat him. Repeated defeats and massacres of peasant depleted them numerically and demoralised them. It also depleted their weapons and livestock while the enemy increased in strength and numbers.

This had negative consequences on the movement. Many peasants came to understand the invincibility of the enemy and the weaknesses of Nyabingi. Some came to recognise their weaknesses vis-a-vis the enemy and decided to withdraw from resistance, or to migrate across the borders while some resorted to other individual solutions like suicides, murders or joining the enemy's forces. In other words, they began to withdraw their faith from

²⁹⁵ K.D.A.R. 1928.

²⁹⁶ W.P. July 1919 report.

Nyabingi as they could no longer continue dying for beliefs. Others began to understand the need for better organisation and preparation for a general mass resistance by all the peasants. The proponents of this view included Ndochibiri, Ndemere, Komunda and Ndungusi. Their move was pre-empted in 1928. Some resorted to sending their children to these centers to learn the enemy's knowledge although objecting to their conversion into new religions.

The persistent defeats, lootings and collective fines that went on for two and half decades had an important lesson on peasants. It dissuaded them from intensifying resistance but instead to devise new methods to cope with the situation. Three major options open to peasants were either to continue resistance, abandon it or to join the colonial system. By 1930s, many peasants had dropped the option of militant resistance and were joining the new religions. Others were being recommended to join the colonial ranks by missionaries and agents. In fact, the C.M.S. had proposed in 1914 to A.D.C. 'to appoint only Protestants as chiefs in a certain district, a proposal which I was unable to accede to. I have yet to learn that Protestants make superior chiefs to those of other denominations'.²⁹⁷

Looking through the whole movement, it becomes clear how resistance under was characterised by high level of organisation and military planning. Being highly conscious of the necessity of a broader effective leadership and the importance of capable leadership to command various sections of resisters, and prompt replacement with capable leadership in case of separation through death, arrest, he incorporated many serious-minded, skilled and committed people into the leadership. He involved them in planning, leading the forces, and trained them to train others in use of new weapons, and guerrilla tactics. He took them to various places to learn about the terrain, peoples and languages, made new contacts etc. He was able to create a strong mobile force of thousands of peasant resisters, which resisted for over eight years. He was able to provide for them, popularised their cause, explained the object of their struggle, and exposed to them facts about their adversaries.

The leadership linked these peasant resisters with the peasantry in the three colonies, taught them how to use the terrain and the people as the sea, methods of dispersal and concealment, and new military tactics. These were a combination of the enemies' tactics and the local ones, taught them methods to acquire weapons from the enemy, making them or buying. Above all else, the leadership led them into successive battles. Ndochibiri underscored the importance of infiltrating the adversary with intelligence system, knowing their military plans, troop movement, etc. This was very crucial for

²⁹⁷ *op. cit.*

preservation of his forces, preparations for counter-attack and retreat. He underscored the importance of the masses. He concretised this by developing a high intelligence system among the peasants and this was very important for this struggle. D.C. Ruzizi-Kivu in June 1919 confessed to the D.C. Kigezi their failure to defeat Ndochibiri's forces.

we shall find it extremely difficult to effect his capture since he is always informed of our slightest movements. He is held in terror by the native population by reason of his supernatural associations, and no one dares to denounce his gatherings from the additional fear of reprisals ... he seldom risks remaining in villages and takes the precaution of establishing his camps in places which are far from population and kept secret, these rendezvous even he changes frequently.²⁹⁸

The leadership won people's trust and sympathies by linking this struggle with the people's cause. Others feared reprisals from Nyabingi, from the resisters and the peasants and also from the colonial system. With rigorous training, constant fighting and mobility, his forces developed into a sophisticated mobile guerrilla force. Peasants were its supporters and suppliers of food, weapons, information, secrecy, new combatants and other sacrifices and risks. This resistance under Ndochibiri, gives a good example of resistance that thrived for years. They were these resisters that had time to study the whole situation, make plans long before the attack was launched. They were mobile and attacked all colonialists any time of the year. They were these resisters, who gradually lost ties with the soil. However, some of the membership, who would still be having roots with the soil gradually lost them as they got hunted out of their areas and lived in forests, mountains, caves, swamps and among other nationalities far away from home. They lost touch with their environment and the agricultural rhythm and concentrated on the struggle.

Many resistances took place in the dead season: July - November. They were free from agricultural production and had surplus to live on. They had time to think beyond agricultural requirements, got solutions and tried to implement them. In fact, this dry season was time for merry making and leisure, reflected through beer drinking, dancing, marriages, feasts etc. It was also in this dry season when they could stay out without threats of rain etc. Colonialism misunderstood this and argued that *Enturire* beer was the basis of Nyabingi resistance. It therefore outlawed its brewing and fixed other tight restrictions. However, this did not stop these struggles. It should be noted, however, that although this alcohol was not the cause of these resistances, it

²⁹⁸ D.C. Ruzizi - Kivu, Rutchuru to D.C. Kigezi on 18/6/1919.

helped in giving peasants time to plot resistance, in carrying out some sacrificing, invoking and swearing to Nyabingi. Despite these legislations, these resistances continued. The explanation is that colonialism was side-stepping the issue.

However, there were some resistances, which occurred during other months of the year. This depended on the immediate cause, on who attacked first, the nature of the leadership, their programme etc. However, most resistances in production season could not be sustained for long. They created insecurity, which threatened food production. Peasants wanted to return to their fields to cultivate and plant crops. This made most of these resistances spontaneous, short and easily defeated. This was advantageous to colonialism, which lived off the surplus extracted from peasants and some from without.

It is important to note that there were other various forms of peasant resistance, which were not under the Nyabingi movement. These included resistance to colonialism by crossing both internal and international borders, with all their property for new settlements. The best example was in 1912, when 132 peasants crossed from Ankole to Kigezi. The second effective and frequent form of resistance was through cutting and stealing telephone wires and smashing the insulators. While the stolen wire was used for manufacturing anklets, the whole act disrupted communication with Mbarara and Entebbe. Another related resistance was the interception of messengers and looting mail and parcels. Another important form of resistance was through refusing to volunteer information about fellow peasants or about the Nyabingi movement. Silence was one of their main weapons. In other cases, they would deceive the colonialists, aiming at derailing them.

Peasants developed a hostile attitude towards collaborators, sell-outs and the wavering. They punished collaborators through ostracisation, scolding, killing etc. It is not surprising that even some individuals took to committing suicide. Faced with this new invincible force, the peasants complicated their method of communication and speech. This denied colonialists and their local allies vital information. One of these was creation of new methods of communication locally known as orupikya. This blocked colonialism and its agents from deciphering the messages. Colonialism was led to attribute this sophistication to Nyabingi. The issue, was that, confronted by this invincible adversary, the peasants had to build a secure, coherent internal system amongst themselves, aimed at keeping out the enemy. Even at the level of local languages, there was a problem of communication. Their was a lot of distortion or misunderstanding by both parties, which was worsened by alien people being employed as interpreters and intermediaries. The peasants would decide to misunderstand certain commands and do the opposite or

what was not wanted to be done. All this increased the dilemma of colonialism.

It would be far from the truth to argue that peasant resisters under Nyabingi had the same objectives. Their objectives differed, depending on their outlook. However, what they had in common was some form of nationalism. They wanted to free their land of the invaders and leave it free from these new obligations as in the pre-colonial times. This was the dominant view among the membership and the leadership had to capitalise on it. However, while some peasants' sole objective stopped there, others wanted to return society to the past. Among these were many Abagirwa, former lineage heads and chiefs. They wanted to return to a time where they would once again dominate the religious and political life under Nyabingi institution. They wanted a return to this glory where they would extract the surplus from peasants in form of sacrifices etc. Similarly, former chiefs and lineage heads wanted a return to the old society where they enjoyed certain material benefits and occupied a higher social status. There was another section, whose outlook went beyond the existing structures. This was composed of people formerly in colonial service, or those whose origins were in areas where kingdoms had formed. These were forward looking.

This group learnt much about their enemies, their strengths and weaknesses, about their system, how to use their weapons, learnt their tactics and methods of fighting, stole their weapons and ammunition. They trained peasant resisters all this and how to apply them. Nyabingi religion had to move with the times and accept incorporation of these new weapons and methods of struggles. It also accepted the enemy's products like money, beads as votive and sacrifices. Many in the leadership had travelled widely in the area and learnt much about various resistances and methods of struggle, their strengths and limitations and how to avoid or overcome such limitations. It was this group which appreciated the role of an established administration, the importance of united peoples in struggle etc. They wanted a strong administration, which would unite peasants and protect them. This way, this group saw itself as the vanguard and beneficiaries of the new administration.

Section Eight

Conclusion

This study has shown how the Nyabingi movement arose on the bases of various social grievances from both within and without society . Within society, the Nyabingi movement was against the ruling classes in areas with states like Rwanda, Mpororo and Kinkizi. In other areas, it was against the privileged members of society, like heads of households. From without was colonialism.

What became evident was that to confront the principle enemy, colonialism, there had to be internal reforms. Secondly, it also became clear that in the absence of an organised political forum and an armed force to defend peasants' rights, the peasants had to do it themselves. The Abagirwa took up the initial initiative to mobilise them. As a dynamic, armed force, imperialism posed a direct threat to the Abagirwa's privileged positions, social status and religion. To protect these, the Abagirwa had to mobilise their fold. This led to the flaring up of the Nyabingi movement up to 1930s. Nyabingi as an institution transcended other religions by its active politics. Its Abagirwa devised new ideologies and practices to retain and encourage their fold.

It is important to note that unlike other religions in highly developed class societies, where religion is an ideology of oppression and exploitation, Nyabingi became a solid ideology for peasants' struggles. All the leadership that followed came to recognise the importance of religion in this area. Even the most advanced and sophisticated guerrilla movement under Ndochibiri and his followers recognised this and exploited it intensively. Another important thing was that the leadership tried to incorporate some of the pre-colonial practices, methods of struggle, and language to enrich the movement.

One of the major weaknesses lay in heavy beliefs in Nyabingi as a religion. This was dominant between 1910 and 1914. In here, peasant resisters put too much faith in the Nyabingi institution. This was worsened by the Abagirwa claiming to be personifications of Nyabingi. While this transformation had the positive effect of encouraging resisters, it led them to be massacred by the colonial forces. In the same manner, the dialectical character of the Nyabingi movement of bringing up new leadership whenever the existing one got separated from the membership had positive and negative effects. While it encouraged and sustained the resistance, it led to defeats due to limitations like lack of continuity.

We find the Nyabingi movement developing with the world war. The movement gets new leadership from colonial forces and its detentions. These

bring in the enemy's military hardware and methods of struggle, planning and commanding. This group exposes the enemy's strengths and weaknesses, and it devises new methods. It is this new leadership which paralyses colonialism and forces it to make various reforms. However, at this point the Nyabingi movement is not an organised, armed force like a state, even though living off the surplus of others. While supply of resources to the state was compulsory, it was by peasants' willingness that helped the movement. They withdrew from the struggle when they realised that the movement was not likely to defeat the enemy.

Gradually, the Nyabingi movement got defeated. The colonial state achieved this through combining various methods. These included the military option, which it sustained throughout and various reforms that it was compelled to make. In administration, it had been forced to replace proxy agents with local ones, avoided taxing women, was careful to make Kigezi a labour reservoir instead of introducing production of cash crops and high technical skills, industries or any other major investments. It had to modify its demands in taxation, forced labour etc. Colonialism also intensified deportations, deprived resisters of resources to fuel the movement and maintained its scorched earth policy.

On the ideological front, it encouraged and financed the new missions to promote their work. It broadened its social base among the peasants using pecuniary and other incentives. It also intensified its propaganda. With the use of force, peasants were able to compare results of colonial policies vis-a-vis the blind opposition of the Abagirwa to these policies. Through all these times, colonialism managed to anchor onto the peasantry while undermining the Nyabingi movement. The state increased legislations against Nyabingi religion, giving jobs and other privileges to the new converts, offering medals, honours etc. All these had an impact on the peasants. Gradually, peasants began to withdraw into the new religions.

The Nyabingi movement is a concrete testimony for people's persistent struggles to defend their rights and independence. It demonstrates that no matter how backward people may be, they will always resist any threat to their rights, irrespective of level of advancement of the adversary. It demonstrated practically how religion can be instrumental in providing a platform for struggle, theories, courage, ideology and leadership. It also shows that in a situation characterised by backward forces of production, with no state or other strong social or political organisation, people will find a base in any form of organisation like religion to advance and defend their interests. It is in such a situation that religion takes on a progressive role. On the other hand, we see colonialism using Christianity to penetrate and control these new colonies. It is in the latter case that religion is being introduced for reactionary

purposes as "an opium of the people" for oppressive and exploitative purposes.^{299 *}

Their defeat was a landmark to their loss of independence and incorporation into the broader capitalist system. It was a turning point for this pre-capitalist, pre-state area. The fixing of borders and lumping together of different peoples under one administration was a step forward. Former antagonisms were dropped and peasants began to work together towards self-emancipation. However, the colonial state was quick enough to understand the effects of such nationalism and began fragmenting them. It denied them rights to grow and develop crops for export, killed their industries and developed them into labour reservoirs. Furthermore, it disrupted their social set-up, outlawed their pre-colonial religions. Peasants gradually became more scared of colonialism and tried to combine both pre-colonial religions with the new ones. They took on European names as a sign of conversion to the European religions. At the same time, they worshipped their pre-colonial religions in secret. The new movement that emerged "Revivalist Movement", took the new religious line instead of Nyabingi or any other pre-colonial religion. The state approached the C.M.S. and the latter confirmed that it was 'in full control of the enthusiasts'. It was 'to impress on their followers the necessity for obedience to civil authority on all forms' In fact, Dr. Church promised to take disciplinary action in any case of insubordination.³⁰⁰

The Nyabingi movement showed in concrete terms the need for leaders of organisations like religions to get involved in solving people's problems, the need for them to give courageous and untiring leadership. It showed that dependence on any single section of society while denying others chance in these roles spelled out peril for society.

Though the Nyabingi movement got defeated, still, it represented popular interests. It was a popular movement, though reactionary. This movement, whose base was in religion, was not able to transform into a revolutionary movement. However, though the leadership took a religious fervour, the causes of the movement were materialistic. It is from these characteristics that the Nyabingi movement shares some commonalities with other peasant movements such as the Maji Maji movement,

²⁹⁹ Marx, Engels & Lenin V.I.(1972) *On Historical Materialism* Moscow: Progress Publishers.
*: Also see, Adas, Micheal (1979) *Prophet of Rebellion, Millenarian Protest Movements Against the European colonial Order*; London: Cambridge University Press. Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. II. Marx noted in *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law* that 'Religious distress is at the same time the oppression of real distress and also the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of the heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the people'.

³⁰⁰ After interview with Archdeacon Pitts and Dr, Church, the D.C. left the C.M.S. with the duty to control the Revivalists movement. D.C. instructed the chiefs that they had tribal powers to ensure obedience by women to their legal guardians and to control unruly gatherings. File: op. cit.

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Abbreviations

A.C.S.	-	Assistant Chief Secretary.
A.D.C.	-	Assistant District Commissioner.
A.S.P.	-	Assistant Superintendent of Police.
Cap.	-	Captain.
C.M.S.	-	Church Missionary Society.
Co.	-	Company.
C.S.	-	Chief Secretary.
D.C.	-	District Commissioner. He was the Political Head of the District.
D.M.	-	District Magistrate.
D\O	-	Daughter of.
G.E.A.	-	Germany East Africa.
H.M.	-	His/her Majesty.
K.A.R.	-	Kings African Rifles.
K.D.	-	Kigezi District.
K.D.A.R.	-	Kigezi District Annual Report.
Maj.	-	Major.
N.A.	-	National Archives.
O.C.	-	Officer in Charge.
P.C.	-	Provincial Commissioner.
P.C.W.P.	-	Provincial Commissioner, Western Province.
P.W.D.	-	Public Works Department.
R.I.	-	Rigorous Imprisonment.
Rs	-	Rupees was a currency which Colonialism introduced at the beginning.
S.E.	-	South East.
U.N.A.	-	Uganda National Archives.
Unpub.	-	Unpublished.
U.P.	-	Uganda Protectorate.
W.C. Ord.	-	Witch-craft Ordinance.
W.P.	-	Western Province.
W.P.A.R. -		Western Province Annual Report.

Glossary

<i>Abafumu</i> (Sing. <i>Omufumu</i>):	Traditional doctors or healers. It also embraces witch doctors.
<i>Abagirwa</i> (Sing. <i>Omugirwa</i>):	Priests or priestesses
<i>Abahaniki</i> :	Rain makers.
<i>Abahuuku</i> :	Slaves.
<i>Abairukazi</i> :	Women slaves. It also refers to women.
<i>Abambari</i> :	Priests or priestesses.
<i>Abaraguzi</i> :	People who claimed to see beyond in the past, present and future and prophesy.
<i>Abarangi</i> :	priestesses/priests of a new religious Movement that has emerged in Kigezi.
<i>Abashumba</i> :	Slaves.
<i>Abazaana</i> :	Female slaves. It also refers to women.
<i>Amateeka</i> :	Public rallies/address. The word gradually meant laws or rules.
<i>Askari</i> (<i>Omusirikari</i>) :	means soldier.
<i>Bakopi</i> :	Peasants.
<i>Bakuru B'emiryango</i> :	Lineage Leaders.
<i>Baraza</i> :	From Swahili means Monday. In colonial context, it mean the day of public address, which was Monday.
<i>Batwa/Watwa</i> :	Short people, living in forests in Kigezi, the Congo, Rwanda.
<i>Ba Nyinamaka</i> (sing. <i>Nyineeka</i>):	heads of households.
<i>Boma</i> :	where administration was situated.
<i>Duka</i> :	a shop or business premises.
<i>Ebitooma Bya Muhumuza:</i>	site of Muhumuza's homestead.
<i>Emandwa/Imandwa:</i>	a religion mainly for the status quo. It was also a state religion.
<i>Emihunda</i> :	sharp-pointed metallic staves.
<i>Endaaro</i> :	a shrine or huts for local religions.
<i>Endiga</i> :	a sword.
<i>Enganda</i> (Sing. <i>oruganda</i>):	a combination of various lineages sharing historical origins, totems, symbols, taboos etc.
<i>Entaara</i> :	trays for winnowing pulses, cereals etc.
<i>Enteeko/Karubanda</i> :	Councils or courts in pre-colonial times.
<i>Enturire</i> :	a very intoxicating drink brewed by fermenting sorghum beer and honey.

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<i>Esente</i>	:	means money.
<i>Ezekibeere</i>	:	referred to cows brought by force for free milk contribution.
<i>Kahukeiguru</i>	:	one of the pre-colonial religions.
<i>Kashanju</i>	:	Forced paid labour.
<i>Kubagana</i>	:	sharing property or inheriting.
<i>Kukaraba</i>	:	a practice of atonement after a person had killed another accidentally.
<i>Kuhindiza</i>	:	invoking spirits or gods to punish someone.
<i>Kuzimura</i>	:	the act of paying back the bride price after separation or divorce.
<i>Kuhonga</i>	:	giving in something for appeasement.
<i>Kuhoora</i>	:	Revenging.
<i>Kusinda</i>	:	respecting elders by not pronouncing their names.
<i>Matama</i>	:	swahili name for sorghum.
<i>Mugasya</i>	:	one of the pre-colonial religions.
<i>Mukaaka</i>	:	a religious movement that emerged in 1970. It was a precursor to Abarangi Movement.
<i>Muzeire Kasente</i> :		the name that Nyabingi acquired in the 1927-1928 resistance. It came to be known as Muzeire Kasente as Nyabingi required money for the struggle.
<i>Nyabingi</i>	:	a militant revolutionary religion. Its other names were <i>Biheeko</i> , <i>Rutatiina Mireego</i> , <i>Nyinekyaro</i> , <i>Omukama</i> and <i>Muzeire Kasente</i> .
<i>Omukazi</i>	:	means woman.
<i>Okucwa</i>	:	Ostracising or excommunicating rebellious children by fathers and elders.
<i>Okutendera</i>	:	Working for a man with daughters and whose pay is in form of a bride.
<i>Okutweija</i>	:	offerings and sacrifices to Nyabingi.
<i>Okuterekyerera</i>	:	offering sacrifices to Nyabingi.
<i>Okuzira</i>	:	the malpractise by men to reject food or entering a house of certain wives in case of conflict.
<i>Omukama</i>	:	King or ruler. In Kigezi's context, this referred to Nyabingi.
<i>Omukyimbo</i>	:	tributes or payment paid to Abaraguza or to doctors for their services.
<i>Potoro</i>	:	Patrol to net defaulters of taxes.
<i>Ruharo</i>	:	forced labour.
<i>Rukiko</i>	:	Council or meeting of chiefs.

- Rutatiina Mireego:* was another name for Nyabingi because of its militant and courageous character. It literary means one who can never be scared by bows and arrows.
- Ruvaivuro :* a religious movement that emerged among the converts of the Protestant Church in late 1930s.

N.B.

Unless mentioned in this paper, the P.C. refers to Provincial Commissioner, Western Province; D.C. refers to District Commissioner, Kigezi; A.D.C. refers to Assistant District Commissioner, Kigezi; and Governor refers to Governor of Uganda.

Due to pre-literacy of Kigezi prior to Colonialism, there was no alphabet. We acknowledge the contribution of Colonialism and its train for putting these local languages in alphabet for the first time, regardless of their imperial motives. Out of this objective limitation, names were spelled differently as they sounded to the colonialists. In this study, therefore, the following names should not be taken to refer to different personalities or places.

1. Basebya - Basebjia - Basebia.
2. Chinchizi - Kinkizi.
3. Kaigirirwa - Kaigirwa.
4. Katuregye - Katulegye - Katuleghi - Katulegi.
5. Muhamuza - Nyamuhumuza - Muhamusa - Mumusa & Mamusa.
6. Ndochibiri - Ntochibiri - Ndochobi-biri - Ndochobi-mbir - N'docki-bili - Knochibilillis - Ndochikembiri- Bichubirenga.
7. Ndungutsi - Ndungutzi - Ndunugutzi - Ndungusi - Ndunguse.
8. Nyabingi - Nabingi - Nya-Bingi - Nya Bingi.

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