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Uganda

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Bibliography

Uganda

Islam entered what is today the small, landlocked Republic of Uganda in the nineteenth century from two directions: from the east through the present Republic of Kenya, and from the north through Egypt and Sudan. However, the boundaries of present-day Uganda were not stabilized until 1914. Since then, Islam has remained one of the realities of the sociocultural life of this eastern African nation.

According to the first national census, taken in 1959, Muslims in Uganda represented less than 6 percent of the population. By 2002, a new census indicated that Muslims made up 12 percent of the population in a country of 26.8 million, making it the second largest religion after Christianity, with Catholics representing 42 percent of the population and Anglicans 36 percent. In the late 2000s, the majority of Muslims are found in the central region of Buganda and to its east in Busoga. In this part of Uganda the Shāfiʿī legal school predominates, while the Mālikī legal school predominates in the north.

The entry of Islam into Uganda from the north occurred in the 1860s, when Khedive Ismāʿīl of Egypt sent a force to occupy what became northern Uganda as part of the Turco-Egyptian empire. Islamization in Uganda was not accompanied by Arabization. Very few Ugandan Muslims speak classical Arabic (although their formal prayers are uttered in that language), and none identify themselves as Arabs. However, the Islam that came via Sudan was accompanied by an Arabic creole called Nubi, a language that was politically significant in the 1970s and is still spoken in many parts of Uganda.

The Qurʾān is widely read and is available in translation in at least two indigenous African languages, Kiswahili and Luganda. Over the years many Ugandan Muslims have adopted Muslim dress, culture, and cuisine. Male circumcision is almost universal. *Sharīʿah* is followed selectively and primarily in the private domain (marriage, divorce, and inheritance). Islamic education is carried out in mosques and in a variety of Muslim institutions in the country. The Islamic University in Uganda was inaugurated in Mbale in 1988; it was funded by the Islamic Development Bank in Jiddah, an affiliate of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). In 2001, the Aga Khan Foundation established the Aga Khan University Advanced Nursing Programme.

Most indigenous Ugandan Muslims are Sunnī. A few Ugandans have converted to the Aḥmadīyah sect, founded by Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad in British colonial India. Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs migrated to Uganda in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their influence was strengthened in 1945, when the Aga Khan founded the East African Muslim Welfare Society and started building schools, mosques, and community centers. In 1972 President Idi Amin expelled all Asians from Uganda, including the Ismāʿīlīs and other Shīʿī groups such as the Bohoras and Ithnā ʿAsharīs.

The introduction of Christianity with British colonial rule in Buganda early in the twentieth century

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1962, postcolonial Uganda has consistently been ruled by Christians, except during the Idi Amin years (1971–1979).

In Amin's Uganda, Islam was declared a state religion even though the majority of the population was Christian. Amin surrounded himself increasingly with fellow Muslims and gave preference to Muslims in public-sector hiring. In 1977, there were fourteen Muslims in a cabinet of twenty-one ministers. Under Amin, Uganda joined the OIC.

Factionalism plagued the Muslim community after the death of the Bugandan Prince Nuhu Mbogo in 1921, resulting in violence as well as court cases. The major division was between the Kibuli Muslims and those of the Butambala group. Efforts by the colonial government and Tanganyikan and Saudi Muslim leaders to mediate the disputes failed, and factional differences became politicized, especially during the Amin era and following his ouster. Court rulings failed to end the factional acrimony, as did further mediation efforts during the 1980s and early 1990s. Eventually the Supreme Court advised Muslim leaders not to use the courts to solve their differences, but rather to use their own institutional mechanisms.

Upon coming to power in 1986, President Yoweri Museveni declared neutrality and impartiality in religious matters. However, he soon confronted serious leadership contestations within the Muslim community, including violent outbreaks among factions. He took steps to try to reconcile the differences and backed Shaykh Saad Ibrahim Luwemba, a *muftī* who had been rejected by the 1993 General Assembly. According to most accounts, the government's efforts to intervene, coupled with its lack of impartiality and unwillingness to accept the results of the General Assembly election, aggravated the conflict. Luwemba died in 1997 and was succeeded by Muftī Shaykh Mohammad Semakula (1997–2000) and Muftī Shaykh Shaban Mubajje (2000–   ), who, in 2006, along with two top officials of the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council (UMSC), created by Amin in 1972, were charged with fraud for selling UMSC properties.

A fringe element, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), launched an insurgency in 1996 to overthrow the government. They were a Khartoum-supported rebel group backed by the Sudanese Islamic leader Ḥasan al-Turābī, with bases in Kasese district and eastern Congo. For years, the ADF sponsored almost daily killings of five to fifty citizens in the west and northwest, even reaching Kampala, where they killed dozens in random grenade attacks in 1998. In 1991 they briefly captured the UMSC headquarters as part of their opposition to the administration of the government-backed *muftī* Luwemba. By May 2007 it appeared that the ADF command in eastern Congo had been destroyed and the remnants of the army were surrendering.

When a Domestic Relations Bill was tabled in 2003, the UMSC became embroiled in battles with women's-rights activists. The bill was aimed at gender equality within the family, and it focused on the strengthening of property rights. Muslim leaders were a vocal force in preventing the enactment of the bill, which was finally shelved in 2006. They were mostly opposed to a clause that required a man to seek consent from his first wife before marrying a second one and another that legalizes extended cohabitation as formal marriage. In 2005, Muslims in Kampala protested the bill and some threatened a *jihād* (holy war) against those supporting it.

See also AFRICAN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES, subentry on EAST AFRICA; and ISLAM, subentry on ISLAM IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA.

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