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Creation of Cultural Institutions and Ethnic Conflicts between the Bakonzo and Basongora in Muhokya Sub-county, Kasese District: A Case Study of Rwenzururu and Busongora Kingdoms

Since the restoration of kingdoms in Uganda in 1993, the communities where these cultural institutions are found are gradually experiencing conflict. These types of conflicts have been experienced in Buganda, Ankole, Busoga, Bunyoro and recently in Rwenzururu kingdom. These conflicts which have taken different shapes and dimensions have resulted into hatred, violence and destruction of property. This has made the present study imperative. The study was, therefore, interested in looking at the relationship between cultural institutions and conflict in Muhokya sub-county in Kasese district. The study used Rwenzururu kingdom and Busongora kingdom as case studies. I have adopted the insights of the realistic conflict theory to theorise the nature and understanding of the conflict. The research also looks at ways in which the conflict can be resolved as well as possible ways through which the affected communities can co-exist peacefully. The study used qualitative research methods to collect and analyse both primary and secondary data. Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were used to collect primary data. Secondary data were collected by way of reviewing documents from previous studies. Qualitative data were then analysed thematically. From the study, the respondents agreed almost unanimously that the nature of the conflicts in Kasese is a result of conflicting cultural institutions. This also means that there is a close relationship between cultural institutions and ethnic conflict between Basongora and Bakonzo. Although respondents were somewhat divided on who to blame for the cause of the conflict, they agreed that there is nothing the two cultural institutions are doing to resolve the conflict and that there cannot be peaceful co-existence between the two ethnic groups as long as they are still in the same geographical location. In spite of the small sample, I argue herein that there is a strong connection between cultural institutions and ethnic conflict, but there still remains a challenge on what possible ways to resolve the conflict.

Key words: Institutions, Cultural, Conflict, Bakonzo, Basongora, Rwenzururu, Kingdom