

**PRESS RELEASE**

**BUNYORO KITARA**

**COMMEMORATION OF 100<sup>TH</sup> YEAR SINCE THE CAPTURE**

**OF**

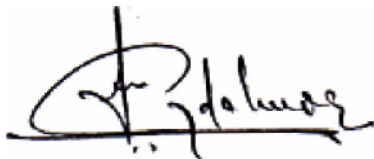
**OMUKAMA CWA II. KABALEGA**

On 9<sup>th</sup> April 1899, Cwa II. Kabalega, Omukama of Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom and Pioneer African Freedom fighter was captured by the Colonial British and their collaborators. He was taken from his people and for 24 years exiled in the Seychelles Islands in the Indian Ocean. The Banyoro suffered a brutal war, the capture of their king, loss of land and subsequent subjugation.

On 9<sup>th</sup> April 1999, we commemorate that day with

- a) Pride for what he stood for, the way he fought the intruder and his henchmen and for never compromising on his principles: - African Independence.
- b) A resolve to end the mourning and withdrawal into self and focus on rebuilding what was left of the Great Bunyoro Kitara — "A rebirth of Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom"

We call upon Africa's patriots and all those who hold dear our hero freedom fighter to come, pray, and lay a wreath in his honor. The day's other activities will be advised in due course,



**I.KAMANYIRE NDAHURA**  
**KATI KIRO OF BUNYORO KITARA KINGDOM**

11, 3, 1999.

## BUNYORO KITARA

### REMEMBERING OMUKAMA CWA II. KABALEGA

Ornukama Cwa II. Kabalega was born a Prince. Son to Omukama Kyebambe IV Kamurasi and Ornugo Kanyange Nyarnutahingurwa. Ornunyonzikati. In 1870 at an age between 20 and 25 years he was crowned King of Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom as Omukama Cwa II. Kabalega and pet-named Ruhigwa, Kitule Kinobere Abemi.

He set about consolidating and developing his Kingdom, concentrating on manufacturing of tools and implements, mining of salts at Kibiro and general trade.

However, the British Colonialists and their collaborators arrived and sought to colonize his kingdom and he resisted. On 1st January 1894, they declared war on him and Bunyoro Kitara. He was to be killed or captured and Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom dismantled — No negotiations.

For over the years he fought gallantly a protracted guerrilla (Baligota Insansa) war, but could not beat off the maxim guns, and combined force of Britons, Indians, Somalis, Nubians and others.

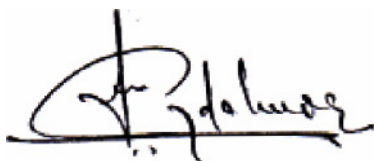
On 9th April 1899, Col. Evatt and his collaborators got him in Lango shot breaking his hand and a thumb of the other, his sons Jasi in the shoulder and George Nyakana in the thigh and finally captured him and Kabaka Mwanga of Buganda.

He was exiled to the Seychelles (Mahe) Island for 24 years. While being returned a dignified, sick old man he died at Mpumwire (Mpumude) Jinja on 6th April 1923. His body was interned on 26th at his old Palace now Gasani Mparo Hoima.

The Banyoro people suffered a long and brutal war in general and the terror of the then strange devastating maxim guns in particular, the loss of a beloved king, a stretched out conspiracy, loss of Band and subsequent subjugation, but are still here.

Now with prayers, we stop mourning and with fresh zeal and resilience rise to rebuild what was left of our land and peoples.

Rest in Peace Great king



## **BUNYORO-KITARA**

### **REMEMBERING OMUKAMA CWA II. KABALEGA**

On the 9th April 1999, it will be 100 years since the capture of the unsung Great Freedom guerrilla fighter King Cwa II. Kabalega (1850 - 1923) ruler of ancient large and prosperous Bunyoro Kitara Empire from 1870 to the 9th April 1899.

He resisted colonization and his name symbolizes bravery, resilience, and patriotism. Unlike most of his contemporary chiefs and kings in the lake region save Chief Rwot Awich of Chwa and Payira (Acholi) with whom they shared views close to modern politics and military science. They saw that "in this savage no stranger went anywhere simply in friendship, he conquered the countries he invaded and automatically turned their inhabitants into vassals" and Kabalega resisted.

Various small chiefdoms and kingdoms then leaving in perpetual fear of attack from within and out beyond (Slave traders and Colonizing Europeans) embraced colonization for the sake of protection and as the then Order of African Social organization. They signed treaties with colonizing powers, little comprehending the conditions therein thus automatically signing away their sovereignty. Kabalega was the odd man out and the British just could not stomach it. They declared a determined and vindictive war against him and Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom.

"... Were determined to get him out of their way because he was disappointed with Fellow rulers... Mwanga had betrayed their common cause and interest in admitting, for the sake of their Beads and Cloth, the Europeans into the Country"

Kitara was overrun and occupied by the British invading forces by March 1894 which forced King Cwa II. Kabalega to take refuge in neighbouring Lango and Acholi, although he occasionally sneaking into his Kingdom to command some battles. On the fateful day in the early morning, that hampered vision in the swamps near Kangai Dokolo County Lango the enemy finally surrounded him. Across fire bullet shattered his right arm later amputated, and another bullet hit the thumb of his left arm. His gun (called Bagwigairebata) fell down and he was captured. He had lost the battle but not the war for African Independence. Although a captive he still commanded allegiance from Banyoro People as a result, he was exiled first to Kismayu then to Seychelles Islands where he arrived aboard the SS "Booldana" to Kismayu on 7th October 1901. On arrival, he was imprisoned at Pointe Cnad and later at Beau Vallon. Because of ill health and old age he was released and allowed to return to Bunyoro aboard the SS "Karapara" on 14th February 1923. He rested at Mpumude (Mpumwire) Jinja, Busoga. He felt at last he was in safe hands and at home the Basoga have their ancestry from ancient Bunyoro Kitara and that is evident when they bury their dead with the heads facing the direction of Bunyoro Kingdom symbolic that the dead has gone to join his ancestors. He was at home in Jinja Busoga because at the time of the break out of the war in 1893, prince Nyaika of Busoga who was being groomed to inherit the throne in Busoga was being brought up in King Cwa II. Kabalega's palace. And on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1923, died. His Body was returned to the wailing Banyoro and on 26th April 1923 was interred at his old Palace now Gasari at Mparo Hoima.

Other famous African Freedom fighters detained in the Seychelles at the time included Prempeh of Kumasi, Gold coast (Ghana) he was arrested in January 1896 and deported to the Seychelles where he lived up to 12th September 1924. Two years later after his return to Kumasi his people elected him to the office of Chief of the Kumasi tribe until he died on 12th May 1931.

Elsewhere, resistance to colonial rule was being felt in Nyasaland (Malawi) "Three chiefs,

Eliot Yonanne Achirwa, Elliot Kenah Kamwana Achirwa and Willard Mwenda held mass meetings urging rebellion by preaching the coming of the Messiah, the liberation of the Blacks and the end of British rule "they were arrested detained for some time in Africa and Mauritius and in 1919 sent to Seychelles they lived at Anse Royale. In 1928 Mwenda was released the remaining two were allowed to return to their country on July 13 1937 on board the SS Kenya.

Further, "The Sultan of the Warsangli Tribe Somaliland Mahmood Ina Ali Shirreh was hostile to British occupation...he was deported to Seychelles, arriving there on board the SS Odin on May 3 1920" he lived at Anse Etoile during his eight year exile, returning to Somaliland aboard the SS Karapara on May 20 1928.

Such was the fate awaiting Africans who refused to bow to the Whiteman. The aftermath of the brutal military invasion is still evident in present day Bunyoro; sparse population and underdevelopment. Hoima, Masindi and Kibaale districts were ranked among the under developed districts in the 1991 House hold census. Col. Colville who executed the invasion against King Cwa Kabalega in 1893 had a number of objectives to achieve:

"It was clear that we were not likely to defeat Kabalega in open fight... but for the peace of Uganda I considered it absolutely necessary that his power should be permanently broken...".. my first thought was the belittlement of Kabalega

Sir Harry Johnson Governor of Uganda Protectorate in 1902 wrote "But as a matter of fact this native prince (Kabalega) deserves no pity ...Col Colvilles set himself to break Kabalega's power and succeeded in the main in doing so"

"As had information that Kabalega had crossed Nile determined to make another attempt to capture him or at all events further weaken his prestige" Such was the ferocity and determination and the follow up after the conquest was not any kinder either leading to the Nyangire rebellion.

In a matter of 6 years 1893 - 1899, Bunyoro Kitara was no more

The Banyoro like their captive King Cwa II. Kabalega were broken. They were arrested in time and space, disillusioned and have ever since been lamenting in a state of defeatism.

The oppressive and suppressive colonial rule encountered rebellious minds which decided that Banyoro put on a silent opposition. That bred apathy, mistrust, individualism, and lack confidence and resilience. The bitter history began dictating on culture and vice versa. Time came when everything and attempt done by the various governments to reverse the sad trend or affairs was utter hopelessness. It was a dead -end, there were no results. Everybody, Banyoro themselves inclusive have been asking, "What happened to Bunyoro? What is wrong with Banyoro? What can one do for Bunyoro?"

The Banyoro gave up on life and left providence to shape their destiny much unlike their hero who "even when near defeated never gave up so long as there was the ghost of a Chance of arousing his men to resist".

The Whiteman and his Cronies were poised to achieve their desire beyond their dreams and could if not reversed. Bunyoro was set to go into the records of myth and legends to come like legendary Mayan in Central America.

One observed while in captivity and succumbing to old age Kabalega's spirit was still alive" there is a Photograph taken of him in his old age that shows him standing with a walking stick, yet still the gaze of the eyes is direct and fearless; and it is a fine and indomitable head such as one might expect to see cast on heavy bronze."

When the two Images are compared then Chinwa Achebe in his novel Things Fall Apart was right to say that fire produces ash.

It is time the Banyoro emulated their ancestral's firebrand, determination and resilience as to salvage and catapult Kitara onto a new and progress modern course. The tack is not an easy one but possible with a concerted effort. Together in unison it shall be done. Come take the heat out of the fire, end the lamentations and make a new beginning.