

TANGAZA COLLEGE
THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

**TITLE: MARRIAGE PREPARATION AMONG THE BAGANDA
CHRISTIANS TODAY : AND IT'S PASTORAL NEEDS.**

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**This is a long essay submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts, Religious Studies.**

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STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the material used herein has not been submitted for academic credit to any other Institution/University. All sources have been cited in full.

Signed M Robert

Mugera Robert, C.S.C.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all my family members and Holy Cross members who have educated me in many ways, and all friends who are dear to me and have journeyed with me all the time.

THE FEAR OF GOD IS A SCHOOL OF WISDOM (PROV. 15:33)

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DEFINITION OF SOME TERMS USED

1. Christian Teaching/Church Teaching:

This refers mainly to the Catholic teaching. This teaching agrees with the Christian teaching in general.

2. Magisterium:

This term refers to the Popes and Bishops, and also their teaching.

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INTRODUCTION

Who are the Baganda? In Uganda there are many ethnic groups of people. The Baganda are one of the many ethnic groups of people found in Uganda. The term “Baganda” does not mean or refer to everybody from Uganda but it refers to one society of people from Buganda region. The map on p.54 shows the different regions of the various ethnic groups in Uganda.

Despite of the modern influence upon the traditional customs and culture, the Baganda still practice some of their traditional customs. For example, the Baganda still have rituals and ceremonies marking the different rites of passage: birth, naming a baby, puberty, marriage preparation, and funeral rites. Today, many of the Baganda people are Christians (Catholics and Protestants).

Problem of the study: As I listen to some of the old women and men in my home village, they always tell me that some of the important rituals of the traditional marriage preparation are not carefully observed or they are totally neglected by some people. Their observation is not different from mine. Today, there are a number of factors influencing both traditional marriage and also Christian marriage preparation. These factors have led to inadequate marriage preparation. In the fourth chapter of this research, some of the factors that affect marriage preparation are presented.

While reading the post synodal **Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Africa of Pope Paul II**, the same concern about marriage is expressed: “A major challenge emphasized almost unanimously by the Episcopal conferences of Africa, is the concern of Christian marriage and family life. The future of the world and of the Church passes through the family. However, the family is extremely at stake today.”¹

¹*John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Africa, p.37-38, 66.*

Purpose of the Study: This study is to emphasize that marriage is an important vocation. Just as the vocation of priesthood, marriage too requires proper preparation. It is primarily the right and duty of the Church to prepare the Christians for this divinely instituted vocation (Gen 1:27-28). The first chapter of this research presents the meaning and significance of marriage among the Baganda and according to the Christian teaching

Secondly, this study answers the question: Which ritual is more important? Is it the traditional preparation or the Christian preparation? This study emphasizes the values of each ritual. This study presents some pastoral approaches to continue integrating the two rituals. The second and third Chapters of this research present the values of marriage preparation according to each ritual, i.e. the Baganda traditional preparation and the Church's teaching on marriage preparation respectively. The gap that I intend to fill in this study is to adequately integrate the two rituals.

Thirdly, this study makes an attempt on the pastoral level to suggest some ways of how marriage preparation can be improved among the Baganda Christians today. The fifth chapter of this study presents the pastoral suggestions.

Application of this study: The knowledge that emerges from this study is to remind the parents, young spouses preparing for marriage and pastors, about what they are supposed to do (responsibilities) during the time for marriage preparation. This study also offers an opportunity to those who want to know the important features of marriage preparation among the Baganda Christians today.

Research method: I interviewed some old women and men about the traditional values of marriage preparation because of their knowledge and experience (wisdom of old age). Young people were also interviewed. I also interviewed the parish priest of my home parish and other

pastors about their experience concerning Christian marriage preparation today. The secondary sources of information, are books.

Literature Review: There are very few authors who have written books concerning the Baganda traditional marriage preparation. These books are also very old. The two Luganda books that have been consulted very much in the research are:-

- "*Empisa z'Abaganda*" which was written by Apollo Kaggwa in 1955. This book presents the different traditional customs among the Baganda.

- "*Kabbo Kamuwala*" which was written by Ekibiina Ky'Olulimi Oluganda (Association of Luganda writers) in 1955. This book presents some of the education that is given to the young people who are preparing for traditional marriage.

There is also a pamphlet which has been very useful in this study; "*Yiga Emikolo Gy'Ekiganda*." It was written by Waalabyeki Magoba in 1997. This pamphlet presents many of the traditional rituals involved in marriage preparation.

However, there are many books concerning Christian marriage or African Christian Marriage. These books have general ideas and very few do adequately address the issue of marriage preparation among the Baganda today.

CHAPTER 1: MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF MARRIAGE

In this chapter, I present the meaning and significance of marriage among Baganda, and also according to the Christian (Catholic) teaching. Before we discuss the preparation of marriage in chapters II and III, we need to understand the meaning and significance of marriage. The meaning of marriage that we acquire from this chapter, will help us to consider and to discuss the preparation for marriage.

A. MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF MARRIAGE AMONG THE BAGANDA

Among the Baganda marriage has got a purpose and meaning. The dimensions of marriage are: procreation, social and spiritual.

1. The Procreative Purpose of Marriage

Like in any other African traditional societies, procreation in marriage among the Baganda is very important. Without procreation marriage is incomplete. The chief purpose of marriage is the increase and prosperity of the community through the bearing of children. A childless marriage is a disaster.

Children are supremely important not only to ensure the basic survival of the Baganda society but also to pass on the sacred gift of life from one generation to another. Procreation is a very great blessing in marriage. "Marriage and procreation are means by which an individual contributes the seeds of life towards man's (humanity's) struggle for continual existence and against the loss of original immortality"²

²*John S. Mbiti, African Religion and Philosophy, p. 133.*

The personalities and physical characteristics of the dead are reborn in the children that is, their descendants. Therefore, a person who dies without children becomes dead forever since his or her line of physical continuation is blocked. Everybody is expected to get married and bear children.

2. The Social Dimension of Marriage

Among the Baganda, marriage is not just an affair of two individuals alone, it is a social affair bringing together families, relatives and friends from each side of the partnership. Marriage is a contract not only between two persons but also between two communities, that is, the clans and families of both partners.

The traditional sense of kinship among the Baganda makes the individual a child, brother, sister, father, mother, cousin, brother - in -law or sister - in - law. This makes someone a relative to hundreds of people. The radius of kinship extends very wide.

All these relatives feel that they have to participate in the marriage preparations of their family member or clan member. Relatives or kinsmen can give social sanctions to one's marriage. There are many traditional rules, customs and taboos (to be discussed in Chapter II) that govern marriage preparation. Individuals who break these customs become social outcasts. This social aspect of traditional marriage, has advantages of promoting security, solidarity and harmony, within the extended family.

Another purpose of marriage among the Baganda traditional society is the acquiring of status in society. The married person is respected more than the unmarried. Marriage is a sign of maturity. An unmarried man or woman is still regarded as a boy or a girl. It is marriage which gives one recognition and respect as an adult in society. A married person gets more duties and responsibilities in society and he or she receives more social privileges from society. For example,

it is only a married person who is called to clan meetings where controversial clan issues are discussed. In the traditional society, marriage is given maximum support e.g. advice, material needs, financial support, by the community. This support always helps the new couple to live a successful married life.

3. The Religious/Spiritual Dimension of Marriage

In the traditional society of the Baganda, as in other African traditional societies, daily life and religious practice are a unity.³ Every aspect of daily life is religious or connected with religion. Wherever a Muganda is, there is religion. All practices, beliefs, rituals, ceremonies, norms or taboos are religious. Religion is the strongest element in the traditional background and exerts probably the greatest influence upon the thinking and living of the Baganda.

Marriage, therefore, being an important aspect in the life of the Baganda, is also religious. The religious meaning and purpose of marriage lies in the fact that, marriage is regarded as a sacred duty and as a divine command.⁴ Its first purpose and duty is to transmit life and therefore extending the chain of generations and thus growing the seeds of life for continual existence and immortality.

Secondly, marriage links the living with the spirit-world. The after-life is entered into through children since it is believed that, the dead are re-incarnated in the children they leave behind. The one who dies unmarried is dead forever.⁵ Marriage and bearing children are therefore a religious obligation: to ensure continual existence and to ensure oneself of his or her immortality.

³*John.S. Mbiti, Love and Marriage in Africa, p.47.*

⁴*Informant: Katamba L.L.S*

⁵*Informant: Muzeeyi Kirabira*

So, marriage is a sacred aspect of life in which everybody is a religious participant and no person is to keep away from it. The many rituals and customs that precede and which follow marriage are also outward expressions of marriage as a religious ritual. That is why marriage is taken so seriously that a thorough and careful preparation should be given to those thinking about beginning a life of marriage.

B. MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF MARRIAGE ACCORDING TO CHRISTIAN (CATHOLIC) TEACHING

Marriage is a divine institution. The sacramental dignity of marriage is not a human institution but instituted by God.⁶ Marriage is God's plan. Holy Scriptures testify to this divine institution as illustrated here below.⁷

1. Marriage in the Bible

a) Old Testament

In the book of Genesis, marriage is placed in the context of creation: "God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created them (Gen 1:27)." From this text, it is very clear that the two sexes together represent God's image. The two sexes manifest the conjugal union and covenant of marriage. Marriage is a divine institution.

With creation of man and woman in his own likeness, God crowns and brings to perfection the work of his hands. After creating man and woman, God calls them to share in the

⁶*John Mackenzie, Dictionary of the Bible, pp. 548-551*

⁷*New Jerusalem Bible.*

responsibility of taking care of the earth, and gives them the gift of transmitting human life.

God blessed them, and God said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and conquer it (Gen 1:28)." The mandate to procreate is from God. Procreation in marriage is an original blessing from the Creator and procreation is a fundamental task of married couples. Procreation is one of the principle purposes of marriage.

These texts from Genesis (1:27, 28) show that there is an incompleteness of either sex. Each sex needs the other in-order to be fulfilled and completed. Therefore, these texts take marriage as a symbol of "equality" (i.e. complementarity of one another) of man and woman. God gives man and woman, all together, the power to fill the earth and conquer it.

In marriage, husband and wife become one body (Gen 2:22 - 24). God on seeing that man had not found a suitable companion (help mate), created the woman from the rib of the man who became very happy. The fact that the two become one body symbolizes the unity that should exist between husband and wife. This union between woman and man is indissoluble because it is a divine will.

The relationship, union and love that exist in genuine marriage relationship, this relationship symbolize the fidelity of God and his people. This relationship of marriage symbolizes God's love for his people. This fidelity of God and his people is portrayed in a number of Old Testament texts, as a marriage relationship (Hos. 1-3, Mal. 2:15, Is. 54:4-8, Jer.3:1-14). However, any defection or unfaithfulness of people to God was considered as idolatry or adultery (Hos. 1:2). The prophets describe Israel's relation to God in terms of a monogamous marriage where Israel is the one bride chosen by God.

In spite of these texts which speak of love, unity and indissolubility of marriage, there are also cases of polygamy and divorce which can be traced in other Old Testament texts. For

example in the case of Lamech (Gen 4:19), polygamy takes place because he was looking for more offspring. Again in Deuteronomy 17:17, those who have money or riches can have many wives (princes, kings,). Also a man who was married to a barren wife, that man would consider marrying a second wife in a move to have children.

Divorces were also common. Men could give a certificate of dismissal (Is. 50:1, Jer. 3:8) to the woman, if a man is displeased with her because of serious mistakes. It was always the man to consider divorce first, the woman was not given a right to consider divorce.

b) New Testament

The New Testament has also texts which show the divine origin of marriage and its perpetual stability. In the Gospel of Matthew and Mark, Jesus refers to the original creation story (Gen 1: 27, 2:24). Jesus emphasizes that by creating man and woman, God intended them to be joined, to be one and remain joined together in marriage (Gen 1:24, Mt. 19: 4 - 6).

In Mt. 5: 31 - 32, 19: 6 - 9, Mk 10:11, Lk 16:1, Jesus teaches about marriage as a divine institution and therefore has to be governed by divine law. What God has joined together, no human being must separate, the law of Christ absolutely excludes divorce and polygamy. Adultery too is condemned even in thought and desire (Mt. 5: 27 - 28).

The writings of the Apostles show that the ideal proposed by the Lord became the rule of life in the early Christian Communities. Following the command of Christ, divorce was forbidden (1 Cor 7:10), except in case of a Christian who was married to a non Christian partner (1 Cor 7: 12 - 16).

In Ephesians 5:30ff, St. Paul says that Christ treats the Church as his body, we are parts of his living body, we are united with Christ. Hence, we are one body and Christ is the head. In

a similar way, a man must leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one body (Gen 1:27, Is. 40:9). In Eph. 5:21ff St. Paul sees marriage as a symbol representing the relationship of Christ and the Christians (the Church).

From these and many other scriptural texts, the Church has drawn a constant understanding that God is the author of the perpetual stability of the marriage bond, its unity and firmness.⁸

2. Marriage and the Magisterium

The understanding and the meaning of marriage in the Church has been a path of development from the Scriptures, Traditions of the Church and the Magisterium. There are important personalities in the Church and Church Councils who have helped to deepen the Christian understanding of marriage.

The teaching of **St. Augustine** about the meaning of marriage is intended to defend marriage against those who hold that marriage is essentially evil and so they condemned it.⁹ Augustine defended marriage by teaching that marriage is originally intended by God, and he defends the fundamental goodness of marriage. Marriage is God's creation. St. Augustine teaches about the three "goods" that are found in marriage: fidelity, offspring and the sacrament. These are all the aspects on the account of which marriage is good.¹⁰ Therefore marriage as willed by God is essentially good.

"On his commentary St. Augustine explains the "goods of marriage". This 'good'

⁸Theodore Mackin, S. J., *Marriage in the Catholic Church: What is marriage*, p.127

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid. p. 129.

of marriage is threefold: fidelity, offspring, sacrament. Fidelity means that one avoids all sexual activity outside marriage. Offspring means that a child is begotten and accepted in love, nurtured in affection and brought up in religion. Sacrament means that the marriage is not severed nor the spouse abandoned...."¹¹

Augustine looks at the husband and wife relationship as a natural bond, or a tie of human association. The heterosexual attraction and union is created by God. However, Augustine calls this value of friendship in marriage as a "secondary good" of marriage because it yields from the natural bond of two sexes joined together.¹² St. Augustine emphasizes that outside the marriage bond, there should be no sexual intercourse, and because of the sacramental character of the marriage bond, marriage should not be broken.

Also **St. Thomas Aquinas'** teaching on marriage is also a response to some strong views which emphasized that marriage and sexuality are by nature evil.¹³ In response to the condemnation that marriage is evil, he begins with a pre-supposition that anything natural to human beings is the effect of creation by a good God. He insists that marriage is indeed natural. The marital relationship is in itself naturally good because it has the good of procreation and nurturing of children. This procreation is not possible outside the union of the father and mother. Since sexual intercourse is one of the most important aspects which keep marriage in existence, this too (sexual union) must be good by its nature.¹⁴ St. Thomas also recognized other helpful features of marriage such as the friendship and mutual help of the spouses. He says that the vocation of marriage is meant to preserve the human race.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*Ibid. p. 140.*

¹³*Ibid. p. 179*

¹⁴*Ibid.*

After the **Council of Trent** (1545 - 1563), Pope Pius V published the Catechism of the Council of Trent. The sacrament of matrimony is defined as: "the conjugal and legitimate union of man and woman, which is to last during life".¹⁵ During the Council of Trent, the Church Fathers emphasized that God is the author of the perpetual stability of marriage bond, its unity and its firmness.

Before the **Vatican II** (1962 - 1965) procreation was considered the primary goal of marriage. The emphasis on begetting children was based on Gen 1:28 (God commanded them to multiply and fill the earth).

In spite of the fact that marriage is by its very nature divinely instituted, the Magisterium teaches that, the human person, that is, the human will and co-operation too, enter into this divine institution in order to perform a most noble part. Marriage arises from the free and personal consent of each of the two partners. Marriage is a free act of the will. Each partner accepts those rights proper to the state of marriage.¹⁶

Pope Leo XIII said: "To take away from the human person the natural right of marriage, is beyond the power of any human law".¹⁷

There have been difficulties but also development in trying to comprehend the "conjugal act" in marriage and to understand the "sacramentality of marriage". The purpose of marriage is not only for biological functions or for procreation of children only. The recognition of marital love and the reciprocal giving of one another, takes first place in marriage. **Pius XII** said:

¹⁵*Ibid. p. 198*

¹⁶*Code of the Catholic Canon Law 1081.*

¹⁷*Pope Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum(1899).*

"The conjugal act in its natural structure, is a personal action, a simultaneous and immediate co-operation of the spouses... and the right character of the act is the expressing of the mutual gift, that according to the words of the scripture, effect the union, in one flesh only. The conjugal act is more than the union of the sperm and the ovum, which can also be brought about artificially i.e. without the natural action of the spouses. The conjugal act, ordained (ordered) and wished by nature, is a personal co-operation in which the spouses in the marriage contract exchange rights".¹⁸

The Vatican Council II contributed a lot towards the understanding and the place of love in marriage.

"For God, in the wisdom of his love, designed marriage not only for procreation, nurturing and for husband's and wife's mutual help in earthly matters, but also for mutual sanctification and shared glorifying of God..."¹⁹

Marriage is not a mere instrument of procreation. Rather the nature itself of the indissoluble covenant between the persons, and for the good of the children, demand that the spouses truly love one another. Even if the marriage has no children, it is in no way deprived of its fundamental value or its indissolubility. The character of marital love is oriented towards the procreation and nurturing of children. The conjugal love is as such placed first before the procreation of children. Therefore, it should not be put on the same level as procreation. In a marriage where conjugal love is not cared for, that marriage is not good even for the children.

In his apostolic exhortation, "**Ecclesia in Africa**", **Pope John Paul II** has the following

¹⁸*Fr. Ambrose Upendo*

Sacramentology Class Notes: Church Fathers on Marriage, Tangaza College, Nairobi.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

Cf. Vatican II Document: Gaudium et spes nos 48ff.

to say about the dignity and role of Marriage: The dignity of man and woman derives from the fact that when God created man, "In the image of God he created him, male and female he created them (Gen. 1:27)." Having both been created in the image of God, man and woman, although different, are essentially equal from the point of view of their humanity. The woman is another "I" in a common humanity,²⁰ and each is a help for the other (Gen 2:18-25). There is a plan which God has imprinted on the humanity of man and woman since their creation (Eph 5:32-33).

The mutual love of baptized spouses makes present the love of Christ for his Church, marriage is a sacrament of the new covenant: "Spouses are therefore the permanent reminder to the Church of what happened on the Cross. Therefore marriage gives witness to salvation."²¹ Marriage is a way of Christian holiness. Marriage demands an indissoluble love, stability and by its nature marriage has the special mission of perpetuating humanity.

3. Marriage and Canon Law

Marriage is an important sacrament in the life of the Church. Throughout history, the Church's Magisterium has made a lot of effort in trying to teach the faithful the significance and meaning of marriage. The Magisterium also saw the necessity to formulate marriage guidelines (Canon Laws)²². In this following section, a few of the Church laws that show the important elements of marriage are shared (presented).

²⁰John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation: Ecclesia in Africa* (1995), p. 64

²¹*Ibid* p. 65

²²James A. Coriden, et al, *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, pp. 737-828.

Cf. Theodore M, SJ., *What is Marriage?*, pp. 207-212.

a) The fundamental nature of marriage (Can. 1055)

The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole life, is by its nature ordered towards the good of the spouses, procreation and education of offspring. This covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament. For this reason a matrimonial contract cannot validly exist between baptized persons unless it is also a sacrament by that act.²³

The spouses commit themselves to each other by means of a covenant. The relationship does not cease even if the consent to the covenant is withdrawn by one or both of the parties. The covenant that exists between spouses, is a profound type of covenant symbolizing the covenant that exists between God and his people.

The covenant, based on the free choice of spouses, involves an interpersonal relationship, which is total, that is, involving their spiritual, emotional and physical joining. Aided by grace, the two are able to give themselves to one another, thus bringing the object of the covenant into reality.

b) The essential properties of marriage (Can. 1056)

The essential properties of marriage are unity and indissolubility, which in Christian marriage obtain a special firmness in virtue of the sacrament.²⁴ In Christian marriage the conjugal relationship has an intrinsic value especially the one of unity between the two partners. This unity in marriage allows total self-giving which is essential in marriage. Fidelity is not possible without unity. Fidelity requires one partner with whom to share one's life.

²³*Ibid p. 740*

²⁴*Ibid.p. 742*

Indissolubility is an essential property and necessity for the marriage covenant. This indissolubility is based on the gospel teaching. The bond of marriage which comes into existence with a valid, sacramental marriage is not simply a moral obligation but it is also an ontological reality (reality of nature). Therefore, a valid marriage covenant, consummated by sexual intercourse, is absolutely indissoluble.

c) Marital consent is the beginning of the covenant (Can. 1057)

Marriage is brought about through the consent of the spouses, legitimately manifested between persons who are capable according to law of giving consent, no human power can replace this consent.²⁵ Matrimonial consent is an act of the will by which a man and a woman, through an irrevocable covenant, mutually give and accept each other in order to establish marriage.

The marital covenant begins with the exchange of consent between the spouses. Since marriage is a specific way of life which demands a total gift of self, the mutual exchange of consent must be a free act of the will on the part of each party.

4. Reflection on the Theology of the Sacrament of Marriage

Marriage is a vocation. Marriage is a state of Christian life. God is the principal author of every state of life. Any state of life, vocation, is divine.²⁶ Marriage is the vocation of a baptized man and woman, consecrated by the sacrament of matrimony.

²⁵*Ibid.*

(*f. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, pp. 399-400*)

²⁶*Sedes Sapiential, Acta Apostolicae Sedis 48 (1956) p. 351*

Marriage is a way of mutual spiritual perfection. Marriage is not confined to mutual help only, but also to the objective of shaping and perfecting the interior life of husband and wife. Each person who carries out faithfully the obligations of his/her own state of life, is pleasing in the eyes of God. As children of God, he calls each one, not only to religious life or ministerial priesthood, but also he calls each one to the perfection of different vocations (e.g. Marriage).

The Council Fathers of Vatican II said that Christian spouses, in virtue of the sacrament of matrimony, signify and partake in the mystery of that unity and fruitful love which exists between Christ and the Church. Spouses help each other to attain the holiness in their married life and in the upbringing and education of their children. Married people, in their state of life, they have their own special gift among the people of God.²⁷

²⁷*Vatican II Document; Lumen Gentium, nos. 11 ff.*

CHAPTER II: TRADITIONAL PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE AMONG THE BAGANDA

In chapter I, we have seen how marriage is an important and sacred aspect in the life of the Baganda and also from the Christian (Catholic) perspective. In this chapter we consider preparation for marriage among the Baganda. A careful preparation is needed before one enters this state of life.

A. SEX AND FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Preparation for marriage is a long process. Like in other African societies, when a child is physically born among the Baganda, the child must also be born ritually or religiously in order to make the child a social member of the community.²⁸ For example there is a "second birth" among the Baganda which is called "**Okwalula**".²⁹ It is a ritual in which the child is given a clan name to show that the child belongs to the clan.

One goes through a series of initiation rites. For example, at puberty the young person is religiously and socially initiated into manhood or womanhood. The young person is taught secrets, responsibilities, and traditional values of the society. The educational purpose of puberty rites is to introduce the young people to matters of sex, marriage, procreation and family life.³⁰

Parents and relatives gradually educate their children in domestic affairs. Girls are taught how to prepare food, how to behave towards men, how to care for children, how to look after

²⁸ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, p. 134.

²⁹ J. Roscoe, *the Baganda*, p.65.
Cf. Apollo Kaggwa, *Empisa z'Abaganda*, p.187

³⁰ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, p.135

husbands and other domestic affairs.³¹ The boys are also taught what most concerns men: building a house, brewing beer, how to acquire wealth, behaving properly towards one's in-laws and how to be responsible as the head of the family. Young people also learn these things through daily experience by observation, working with and listening to their elders.

Sex knowledge is often difficult to impart from parent to child. Sex is sacred, it is not talked about openly or publicly. So there is no open or public sex education for children. Children are educated indirectly in sexual relations through taboos. Girls are restricted from playing with boys. Intimate relationships between girls and boys are strongly forbidden and punished for fear that, they can lead to sexual immorality.

In the traditional society, virginity before marriage is highly valued. There were also taboos which saved girls from losing their virginity. For example, it would be a great scandal if, one's daughter was found not to be a virgin at the time of her marriage. When a bride was found to be a virgin, her parents were rewarded with a goat by the bride-groom's side. This influenced parents to educate their girls and safeguard them from premarital sex.³²

Another great scandal among the Baganda is having sexual relations between cousins. Because of that fear, boys and girls were threatened that if they shook hands with their cousins, they would become nervous for ever. This was a taboo to keep boys and girls away from the scandal of incest. It was also feared that some disobedient boys would take their nieces into privacy and possibly make them pregnant, a thing that is a terrible scandal and shame to the families and clans of the two (More reference to incest is presented in Section D no. 2 of this

³¹*Ekibiina Ky'olulimi Oluganda, Kabbo Ka Muwala, pp. 19-26.*

"Mu maka omwana omwala mwaazalibwa bamuyigiriza okufumba emmere, okulima, okulabirira olusuku, etc." (From the home of the girl, she is taught how to cook food, how to dig, take care of the banana plantations, how to fetch firewood, etc.)

³²*Informant: Mrs. Muzeyi Kirabira.*

Cf. Waalabyeki Magoba, Yiga Emikolo Gy'Ekiganda, p. 16

Chapter).

Apart from such taboos which are helpful to educate children about sexual morality, there is also a positive approach to sex education. Parents or other elderly relatives provide the young ones with information about sexual matters. Girls are better off in this respect than boys, since girls spend more time with their mothers (and older women relatives) than boys do spend with their fathers. Boys spend little time with their fathers because there is too much respect given to a father. The father is seen as a symbol of authority. So boys and girls do not find it easy to talk about issues of sex with their fathers. In this regard girls at puberty, are more exposed to knowledge of sex and marriage than boys. There is usually a formal process of isolation and giving instructions to grown - up girls before marriage.

Girls gather a lot of information about sex and marriage from their mothers or other women relatives especially from the paternal aunt "**Ssenga**". These relatives give information to girls through secret cultural teachings. For example, one of such secret practices is what is known as "**Okukyalira ensiko**" (visiting the bush).³³ In this ritual, the mother or any experienced woman (relative) takes the young girls to a secret place. This can be in the banana plantation (**Ssenga azza Omuwala mu bitooke**) where she reveals to her information on sex, marriage and procreation. Sexual relationship with the husband is very much stressed. This puberty rite is done just at the time a girl begins to experience her monthly periods (**Okugenda mu myezi, oba okwekoona akagera**).³⁴

Apart from the mother or aunt, this secret information can be gathered from the girl's age mates who have already passed through this experience. These girls often go together to secret

³³Informant: Ssesanga Godfrey.

³⁴Waalabyeki Magoba, *Yiga Emikolo Gy'Ekiganda*, p.5.

places, say for collecting firewood in the forests.³⁵ These young girls instruct their younger friends in matters of sex and marriage.

For boys, this intimacy with their fathers or elderly relatives is rare. Much of the sex information is gathered from fellow young men and it is often a mixture of truth, myth, guesswork or jokes. An intimate friend or brother of experience can teach about the secrets of sex and marriage to the boy.

With time also, the boys acquire some information from their friends or elder brothers. During this time of preparation for marriage pre-marital sex and trial marriages are strongly forbidden. Procreation in marriage is stressed very much. In cases of impotence or sterility, divorce and re-marriage are always the solutions.

B. WHEN IS A MUGANDA READY TO MARRY

Among the Baganda, it is not just one's age that determines one's maturity but also the physical, psychological and moral maturity. So, the age as a condition for marriage, varies because people mature physically, psychologically and morally at different ages. Though in most cases from the age of 16 for boys, one is a possible candidate for marriage. And for the girls one can marry at the age of 14.

In the traditional society of the Baganda, the proposal for marriage is not a private affair between a boy and a girl. The parents' consent is required. No boy or girl can marry without the consent of the parents, especially the mother and father of the girl. When the parents see that the boy or girl is mature enough, they propose to him or her to get married. They take the responsibility, directly or indirectly, to find for him or her a marriage partner.

³⁵*Ekibiina Ky'olulimi Oluganda, Kabbo Ka Muwala, pp. 19-26.*

C. CHOOSING THE MARRIAGE PARTNER

Among the Baganda, different customs are observed in the matter of finding a partner for marriage. In most cases the search and choice, especially in the past, was made by the parents in consultation with other elderly relatives but without the knowledge of the boy or girl concerned. The parents of the boy went to another household where there was a suitable girl and they expressed their wish to take the girl. When the father thought he had found a suitable girl for his son, he informed the son of the "discovery" and asked him whether he liked the girl. The girl's side could also do the same.

Sometimes the young man himself can make it his business to search for a suitable girl. When the young man finds a good girl he has to tell his parents in order to have his choice approved. Once the parents have reached an agreement, the approval of the respective clans is requested.

Another custom of choosing a partner for a girl or boy was the offering of a girl, as a gift "**Okugaba omuwala**,"³⁶ In this respect, the girl was given to the man (or boy) just as an offer. The parents could offer their daughter to a friend as a means of strengthening the friendly - ties between the two families and also for other interests (e.g. giving their daughter to a family of good reputation). However, the parents or the boy himself, could refuse the offer if they found the girl not suitable. If she was found to be suitable, they accepted the offer and went on with marriage preparations.

We must note that, in the choices for marriage partners of their sons or daughters, the parents can have different intentions or aims. Apart from their interest in the marriage of their sons or daughters, the parents can have their personal interests. For instance, a father can choose

³⁶A. Kamyia (Msgr), *Omutwalo n'Amakulu g'agwo, Musizi, no. 128, Feb. 1966.*

a young man from a rich family for his daughter in order to have a great deal of bride-wealth. Another reason can be of gaining prestige. Parents can offer their daughter to a respected village chief in order to win prestige. In these cases, the parents can apply force or pressure to their son or daughter in case he or she was reluctant to abide by the choice.

In making choices for marriage, the community too is involved. It is not only the parents who carry out this exercise. Other members of the clan are also involved especially as regards the inquiries about the qualities of the spouse, such as moral behavior, health situation, physical abilities, psychological defects and the reputation of the family where one marries from. It is necessary that in this important vocation for life other members from the clan get involved in the marriage preparations of the individual.

D. FACTORS AFFECTING THE CHOICE OF A MARRIAGE PARTNER

1. Parents' Role

As already noted, the parents play a big part in the choice of a marriage partner for their son or daughter. The parents look for a boy or a girl coming from a family with good reputation, someone who is able to work and carry out domestic responsibilities. Parents look for someone who has no hereditary defects, physical or mental disabilities, one who does not practice witchcraft or sorcery. Most important of all, parents want their sons or daughter to marry in families which are blessed with many children.

Finding out all these important details is not always done by the parents directly. The normal practice is always to have an "intermediary" (**Omwogerezi**)³⁷ who has to find out all the

³⁷Cf. "Omwogerezi": *One who speaks on behalf of others.*

details about the girl or boy, and all about his or her family. If the parents are satisfied with the report from the "intermediary" (*Omwogerezi*) then they can declare the marriage proposal to the other parents.

2. The General Law of Exogamy

"One does not marry his or her own blood relationship." This is one of the most essential laws. This always forbids any sexual relationship between a man and a woman of the same clan. Marriage is not allowed between close relatives. As a rule, the marriages of the Baganda are exogamous i.e. a person cannot marry from his/her own clan but from another.

It is also prohibited for one to marry from his/her mother's clan. The Baganda society is patrilineal i.e. the children belong to the lineage or clan of the father. This law of exogamy forbids marriage with all people related even with those remotely related. Sexual relations between people of the same lineage or clan constitute incest. The person is seriously punished for incest, if that person is not excommunicated from the clan.

Taboos existed to enforce the law of exogamy. For example, it is feared that the children born by two close relatives can die because the living dead are displeased with such marriages. Another well known taboo among the Baganda as regards the rule of exogamy is the threat that one will become "nervous" all the rest of his/her life, if he or she marries from the patrilineal or matrilineal lineage.³⁸ If one commits such a scandal, he is forced to break down the marriage with a big fine (e.g. buy beer for the clan members or prepare to serve food to all the members of the clan) if he survives excommunication from the clan.³⁹ This rule of exogamy is full of meaning.

³⁸*Apollo Kagwa, Empisa z'Abaganda p.60*
Cf. W. Mpuga (Msgr), Amagezi g'Ab'edda, p.41

³⁹*Informant: Bazwane Kabbo.*

The Baganda understand the necessity of defending the clans against incest and adultery.

3. Impotence and Sterility

Impotence and sterility are also among the most problematic impediments to marriage. The marriage breaks as soon as the defects are detected. The impotent or sterile person finds it very difficult to find a marriage partner again.

4. Physical and Psychological Defects

These are also impediments to marriage. The deaf, the blind, mentally disabled and criminals can hardly marry. Nobody wants to get married to a person who is going to give him/her hard time.

E. BETROTHAL AND MARRIAGE NEGOTIATIONS

This section shows the essential features of the customary marriage preparation among the Baganda. The following customs are central to marriage preparation. It is a very great shame if a real Muganda does not follow the customs below.

1. Negotiations and the Introduction (Okwogereza n'Okwanjula)

Traditionally, the boy is never encouraged to approach the parents of the girl when he is alone. The first time the parents of the boy visit the girl's parents. Sometimes the parents go to visit with the **Mwogerezi** (an intermediary) to speak on their behalf. When they visit the girl's home, the parents of the boy declare their intention.⁴⁰ They go to the girl's home with a gourd of

⁴⁰*Informant: Mrs. Kibbula Teddy Nalubega.*

beer (*ekita ky'omwenge*) as a present. Once the parents of the boy declare their intention to the parents of the girl, and it is accepted then the second time the boy can be invited to be introduced to the girl's family.

On the day fixed for the introduction (*okwanjula*), the boy accompanied by his elder brother, sister and another relative or friend go to the girl's home. The boy has to be dressed in a *kanzu* (traditional costume). From the girl's side the following are expected to be present:

- her parents (*Abazadde b'omuwala*)
- her father's sister (*Ssenga*)
- her brother (*Omuko*),
- some few close relatives or friends (*Ab'oluganda n'emikwano*)

When the right time comes, the father of the girl calls the girl to greet the visitors. The girl is dressed in the traditional dress (*busuti, bodingi* or *gomesi*). She enters the sitting room and sits on a mat. She keeps quiet throughout and she keeps her eyes looking down. Then the aunt (*Ssenga*), speaks in first person (I....) on behalf of the girl. *Ssenga* introduces the young man as the man she wants to marry, saying "*Taata, nkuze njagala kufumbirwa, era oyo gwenjagala okufumbirwa*"⁴¹

Then the young man stands up and shakes hands with the girl's father. From the boy's side too, the boy's brother or intermediary (*omwogerezi*) stands up and speaks on behalf of the boy: "*Bakulu tuzze, nga twagala mutuzaale*".⁴² When the father of the girl accepts his daughter to get

⁴¹*Informant: Namayanja Anna.*

"Father, I have grown up, I wish to get married and this is the man I wish to marry"

⁴²*Informant: Mr. Kibbula Aloysius.*

"Elders, we have come wishing to be born by you".

married the parents of the girl begin to treat the boy as their son.

2. Fixing the Bride-Price (Okusala ebintu) and Paying the Bride Wealth (Okusasula ebintu)

Usually after the request of the boy to marry the girl, the reply of the girl's father is: "Nzikiriza mutabani wammwe awase muwala wange ssinga mumpa ebyange".⁴³ Then the girl's brother (Omuko) announces the amount of the bride price (Okusala ebintu). The list of things is decided upon by the girl's parents though it is formally announced by the "Muko". Among the things to be paid are:

- certain amount of money (Omutwalo),
- **ekanzu** for the girl's father (traditional long dress for men, long dress almost touches the feet),
- a piece of cloth for the girl's mother (olugoye Iwa n'azaala),
- a piece of cloth for the girl (olugoye lw'omuwala),
- a cock for the girl's brother (enkoko y'Omuko),
- a goat (embuzi) and
- a gourd of beer (ekita ky'omwenge).

If the boy feels unable to pay all the things, he begs through the Mwogerezi (intermediary) that the things be reduced. The boy's party (side) can ask the girl's father to allow them get out for a moment and discuss among themselves what should be reduced. When both parties reach an agreement, the boy's intermediary (Omwogerezi) hands over the amount of money

⁴³Informant: Mrs. Kalugendo Teddy.

"I have accepted your son to marry my daughter if you give me my things."

(**Omutwalo**) to the girl's brother (**Omuko**). If they are not ready to pay at that moment, another date is fixed for the payment of the bride-wealth. **Omutwalo** along with other items of the bride-price have to be paid before the wedding. After paying the bride-wealth, the parents of the girl want the wedding to take place immediately. They fear that if it takes long to complete negotiations one can be tempted to find somebody else as a partner.

3. Significance of the Bride Wealth

After the payment of the bride - wealth the woman is still a member of her own family. The bride wealth does not mean selling a girl as slave or worker to the side of the boy. The traditional payment of the bride wealth is symbolic.⁴⁴ Bride - wealth is just an appreciation (**akasiimo**) to the family of the girl. It is a great sign expressing the wish of the young man to marry the girl (**akabonero akakasa**). It is a public acknowledgment of the new relationship between the boy and girl.

The bride-wealth also contributes much towards the stability of marriage. After paying the bride-wealth, nobody wants the marriage relationship to break. If the wife goes back to her home without genuine reasons, her parents will not tolerate this for fear that they have to return the bride-wealth to the husband of their daughter. The Baganda recognize and respect very much a wife in a home whose husband has paid bride-wealth to her parents. A wife whose bride wealth is not paid, is considered as any woman picked from the streets to come and cook in a home.

Bride-wealth provides a guarantee of sincerity of the bridegroom, a symbol of friendship to the family of the bride. It proves to a young bride that her marriage is something of real importance and her presence in her husband's home is very much valued.⁴⁵

⁴⁴*Informant: Miss Nantongo Ruth.*

⁴⁵*Adrian Hastings, Christian Marriage in Africa, p. 108.*

After the payment of the bride-wealth, the young man makes an oath (*endagaano*) before the girl's parents and relatives to treat her well, to respect her parents and relatives, not to desert her and to look after their children. The girl too promises to be faithful and obedient to her husband, to cultivate and to cook for the family.

On the day of paying the bride wealth, the local beer (*omwenge omuganda*) which is brought by the boy's side is served by the girl. First she serves her father, then her brother (*omuko*) and other relatives. Then all other guests are served. The drinking of beer has a symbolic meaning. Beer is a symbol of friendship, communion, oneness and acceptability. The beer that the boy takes to the girl's family symbolizes his friendly attitude, his willingness to establish fellowship with the family members of his wife and his readiness to begin a marriage covenant.

4. Before the Wedding and on the Wedding Day (Embaga)

As soon as the bride wealth is paid, the date of the wedding is agreed upon and the customary wedding preparations begin.⁴⁶ About a week to the wedding, the girl undergoes a short period in which she is intensively looked after, instructed again and advised. The girl has a special person (paternal aunt or her sister) to cook for her (*Okufumbirira omugole*). During this week, the girl does not move out of the homestead and she does not do any work. She bathes twice a day, in the morning and in the evening.

After the morning bath, she rubs on her skin a local ointment (*okusiga omuzigo*) and dresses in a clean dress. After breakfast, the bride goes to the sitting room where she spends the whole day receiving visitors who come to say farewell to her and also instructing her to behave

⁴⁶*Informant: Miss Naluyiga Jane.*

well in her marriage and to remind her to be a responsible wife.⁴⁷

On the girl's side and boy's side, arrangements for the wedding feast take place. The local brew (**omwenge omuganda**) is prepared. At the boy's home a temporary shade (**ekidaala**) is built at the parent's home for the wedding occasion. On the night before the wedding, there is a celebration (**akasiki**) both at the girl's and boy's home. At these wedding - vigils people drink beer and dance throughout the night. At the girl's home on this **kasiki**, friends, and relatives get a chance to say bye-bye.

During that night of the **kasiki**, the young man goes to his father for the last instructions.⁴⁸

Some of the instructions are:

- **Osajjakudde toddangayo mu biduula bya bawuulu.....** (Now you are a man, never join the groups of the unmarried).
- **Tolwananga na mukaziwo** (Never beat your wife).
- **Oyambazanga omukazi** (Buy clothings for your wife).
- **Omukazi omwagaliringa ob'oludda lwe, naddala nnyina** (Respect and love the relatives of your wife, especially her mother).

In the morning of the wedding day, the bridegroom sends a gift to the parents of the bride before he takes her. This gift is local beer (**omwenge**). The gift is known as "**Kaasuze katya**". It notifies the parents of the bride that the bridegroom is ready and willing to take the bride that day. This gift "**Kaasuze katya**" is another confirmation to the parents of the bride their daughter is to be taken that day.

Before the bride leaves her parents they prepare for her a special meal. This meal consists

⁴⁷*Waalabyeki Magoba, Yiga Emikolo Gy'Ekiganda, p. 7.*

⁴⁸*Ibid. p. 2.*

of banana (**matooke**) and mushroom (**obutiko obubaala**). Both parents feed their daughter as if feeding a baby. The symbolic meaning for this feeding of the bride is to show that: the bride is going to carry the responsibility of caring for and feeding her husband and their children. After the meal, the bride is dressed up in her bridal - dress and made ready to be taken. The parents bless their daughter and they say fare well to her saying "**Gende ofumbe bulungi**" (go and cook well).

The bride is led outside the house and handed over to the party of the bride-groom waiting outside. These take her to the bride - groom's parents' home for the wedding feast. From her side, usually the bride is accompanied by her aunt (**Ssenga**), her brother (**Omuko**), relatives and friends. It is very rare for the parents of the girl to accompany her to bride-groom's home. At the wedding feast beer is served and people dance throughout the night. The newly married couple is given bridal gifts (**ebirabo**) by relatives and friends. Most of these gifts (e.g. mats, plates, cups, mattresses, etc) are necessary for starting a home.

At midnight both the bridegroom and the bride are led by the bride's aunt (**Ssenga**) to the bedroom prepared for them. The new couple have their first sexual intercourse when the aunt is near the bedroom. If the girl is found a virgin, it is a great honour to her aunt and parents. In this case they are given a gift (a goat) as a token of appreciation for keeping the bride a virgin.⁴⁹

It is a great shame to the parents if the bride is not found a virgin. Also if the man is found impotent, the marriage has to be dissolved at once and the bride wealth paid back.⁵⁰ A childless marriage is not easily tolerated by the relatives of the girl nor those of the boy.

If the couple's first sexual union is successful, the relatives of both the woman and the man

⁴⁹*Apollo Kaggwa, Empisa z'Abaganda p.127*

⁵⁰*Informant: Mr. Majwala Kabuta.*

eagerly expect to see the first child of this new marriage. A woman is expected to become pregnant within the first few months of marriage. If she does not, her marriage might end in divorce. Barrenness among the Baganda is an acceptable reason for divorce. Or the husband has a choice to take a second wife, if he does not divorce the barren one.

In this chapter, marriage preparation among the Baganda has been presented. However, today we are aware that the traditional preparation is influenced by a number of factors (as presented in chapter IV). Some of the rituals of marriage preparation as presented in this chapter may vary from one place to another today. Despite all these factors influencing marriage preparation today and the differences of how these rituals are carried out, we still find important traditional rites that we refer to as: Traditional Marriage Preparation among the Baganda today.

CHAPTER III: CHURCH'S TEACHING ON MARRIAGE PREPARATION

In chapter II, the traditional marriage preparation has been presented. In this chapter (III), the Church's teaching on marriage preparation is presented. Marriage preparation can be enriched very much when both rituals, traditional and Christian preparation, are integrated together. The Church has got the duty of not only blessing marriages but also preparing the faithful for successful Christian marriage. The Church has got a pastoral duty of guiding those preparing for marriage.

A. DECLARATIONS OF THE MAGISTERIUM ON SEX EDUCATION

It is the view of the Church that sex education is an important and inevitable aspect of preparation for marriage. The magisterium has promulgated (produced) a number of declarations containing the teaching and guidance about adequate sex education to young people. The declarations are always addressed to Church pastors, parents (families) and teachers.

The magisterium presents a current perspective of sex education which pastors, parents and teachers are called to follow. **Vatican II** in the "Declaration on Christian Education" (**Gravissimum Educationis**) emphasizes that adequate education must be taught according to the personal needs of the young people.⁵¹

The **Vatican II** states: "With the help of advances in psychology and science of teaching, young people and children should be assisted in their physical development, moral and intellectual endowments. They should be helped to acquire gradually a more mature sense of responsibility

⁵¹*Vatican II Document, Gravissimum Educationis(1965), pp. 655-666*
Cf. Pius XI, Encyclical Letter: Divini Illius Magistri(1929), pp. 49-86

in their lives. As they advance in years, they should be given positive and prudent sex education.”⁵²

The Pastoral Constitution “**Gaudium et Spes**,” in speaking of the dignity of marriage and the family, presents the later as the preferential place for the education of young people in chastity. But since this is an aspect of education as a whole, the co-operation of teachers with parents is needed in the accomplishment of this mission. Such education, therefore, must be offered within the family to children and adolescents in a gradual manner, always considering the total formation of the person.

In the Apostolic Exhortation on the mission of the Christian family in the world as it is, **John Paul II** reserves an important place to sex education as valuable to the person. “Parents are called to offer their children a clear and delicate sex education. The educational service of parents must aim firmly at a training in the area of sex that is truly and fully personal: for sexuality is an enrichment of the whole person - body, emotions and soul, and manifests its inmost meaning in leading the person to the gift of self in love”.⁵³

The Pope speaks about the school as also responsible for this education together with parents. “Sex education, which is a basic right and duty of parents, must also be carried out under their attentive guidance, whether at home or in educational centres chosen and controlled by them. In this regard, the Church reaffirms the law of subsidiarity, which the school is bound to observe when it co-operates in sex education, by entering into the same spirit that animates the parents.”⁵⁴

⁵²*Ibid.*

⁵³*Familiaris Consortio, no. 37*

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

In order for the value of sexuality to reach its full realisation, education for chastity is absolutely essential, for it is a virtue that develops a person's authentic maturity and makes him or her capable of respecting and fostering the meaning of the body. Chastity consists in self control, in the capacity of guiding the sexual instinct to the service of love and of integrating it in the development of the person.

B. STAGES OF PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

According to **Pope John Paul II**, marriage preparation is a gradual process.⁵⁵ It includes three main stages: Remote preparation, proximate preparation and immediate preparation.

1. Remote Preparation

This begins in early childhood. The family leads children to discover themselves as beings endowed with particular personalities. This is a period when fundamental human values are instilled in the children especially the values of interpersonal (social) relationships. This is the time when children are helped to notice the differences with people of the opposite sex. The parents educate their children in solid spiritual and catechetical formation.⁵⁶ Parents help their children to be aware of the different vocations: marriage and religious vocations.

In order to be able to give adequate guidance, pastors should help parents to carry out this responsibility with sufficient knowledge. In this regard, the pastors are called upon to organise seminars or workshops for married couples which will help parents to train and educate their

⁵⁵*Vatican II Document, Gaudium et Spes, no. 1*

⁵⁶*Ibid. no. 52.*

Cf. Familiaris Consortio, no. 37

children.

2. Proximate Preparation

This stage of catechesis will consider the specific needs of the young people (teenagers). The catechesis for each sacrament is given during this stage. At this stage, the Christian preparation that is needed for each sacrament is adequately given (taught).

At this stage of spiritual formation, the catechesis of the sacrament of marriage needs to be given special attention. Some important issues on marriage need to be discussed: marriage as a divine institution, responsible parenthood, conjugal love, unity and indissolubility of marriage covenant.⁵⁷

At this stage, young people should be encouraged to come together in clubs or movements of young people (eg. Y.C.S.). This will help them to exchange their views, and also to express their difficulties as regards the understanding of the Sacraments and the different vocations.

3. Immediate Preparation

This is the last stage of preparation that takes place some months before the wedding. This preparation is required and most essential for those who have already agreed to marry and who have asked for a Christian marriage.

Among the elements to be considered in this last preparation, there must be a deeper knowledge of the mystery of Christ and the Church, of the meaning of grace and of the responsibility of Christian marriage, and also prepare the spouses to participate in Church Liturgy

⁵⁷*Familiaris Consortio*, no. 33.

on the wedding day. This immediate preparation should also give a clear vision of the ethics about the Christian understanding of human sexuality. Future spouses must understand that marriage is a union of love. They should also understand the place of procreation in marriage. The Christian instructions given at this time will help the spouses to understand the significance, dignity and duties of the sacrament of matrimony.⁵⁸

Experienced married persons and marriage counsellors, can also give assistance to spouses preparing to marry. Knowledge about the natural family planning method is to be given. The Church's teaching on the artificial means of contraception must also be given.

C. GUIDELINES IN CANON LAW

Another means by which the Church teaches and guides marriage preparation is Canon Law. From the new Code of Canon Law (of 1985), there are important Canon which give special guidelines on marriage preparation. In this section I just present a few.

1. Assistance from Pastors (Can. 1063)

Pastors of souls are obliged to see to it that their own ecclesial community furnishes the Christian faithful assistance so that the matrimonial state is maintained in a Christian spirit and makes progress towards perfection. This assistance is especially to be given by:

- Preaching, Catechesis adapted to minors, youths and adults, and even the use of the media of social communications so that through these means the Christian faithful may be instructed concerning the meaning of Christian marriage and the duty of Christian spouses and parents.
- Personal preparation for entering marriage so that through such preparation the parties may be predisposed toward the holiness and duties of their new state.

⁵⁸*Vatican II Document, Gaudium et Spes, no. 48*

-A fruitful liturgical celebration of marriage clarifying that the spouses signify and share in that mystery of unity and of fruitful love that exist between Christ and the Church.

-Immediate post-marital assistance is also recognised by the Church as part of preparation for marriage. Assistance must be given to those already married so that, while faithfully maintaining and protecting the conjugal covenant, they may day by day come to lead holier and fuller lives in their families.

2. There Must Be No Impediments (Can. 1066)

Before marriage is celebrated, it must be evident that nothing stands in the way of its valid celebration. This canon encourages lawful celebration of marriage. The wedding cannot take place unless the pastoral minister is morally certain that it is valid. Some of the impediments are: people related by blood cannot get married, a religious person who has publicly professed his/her perpetual vows or a person who was married before (with a previous marriage bond), cannot validly marry again in the Church.

3. All The Faithful Are Obligated To Reveal Any Impediments (Canon 1069)

This Canon gives the duty to all the faithful to assist the priest in order to celebrate a valid marriage. All the faithful are obliged to reveal any impediments they are aware of to the pastor or to the local ordinary (Bishop) before the celebration of marriage.

All the Canons concerning marriage are so important that they need to be consulted by the pastors before the existence of the matrimonial covenant takes place. The pastors are encouraged to study them and use them as their pastoral guide to those preparing for marriage and all those already married.

CHAPTER IV: EVALUATION OF MARRIAGE PREPARATION AMONG THE BAGANDA CHRISTIANS TODAY.

In this chapter, we focus on the present situation and the factors affecting marriage preparation among the Baganda Christians. What is presented in this chapter is the analysis of what is prevailing today. What is happening today, does not agree very much with the values of traditional preparation nor the Church's teaching on marriage preparation. Much of what is presented here is from the research that I carried out by interviewing people (see list of informants p.50).

A. ANALYSIS OF THE PRESENT SITUATION

From the research findings, we see that there is lack of adequate preparation for marriage. Many of the traditional values and rituals (presented in Chapter II) for example: puberty rites, virginity, sexual morality, parent's role in choosing the marriage partner, betrothal and marriage negotiations, are not observed by many people today.

The Church's teaching on marriage preparation from the encyclicals of different Popes (presented in Chapter III) is very important. However, there is very little effort that has been made in order to enable the majority of the faithful to understand this teaching. I have not yet seen a copy of some of these encyclicals translated into Luganda (local language) so that the faithful can read for themselves. The gradual stages of marriage preparation (remote, proximate and immediate) emphasized by Pope John Paul II, are not properly followed.

Looking at the present situation, we see that many families of those who are preparing for marriage are more concerned with the "wedding day", than with preparing the young people who are about to enter the marriage covenant. Instead of proper marriage preparation, families spend a lot of time searching for the best bridal gown, the best groom's suit, the best place for the

wedding reception and where the best invitation cards can be printed. There is continuing decline in traditional marriage preparation and Christian (Church) preparation.

Some Church pastors too have not given enough time to prepare the young people for marriage. In some parishes the instructions given for marriage are only for three days. Surprisingly still, some pastors leave this responsibility of giving instructions to catechists only. Unfortunately, these instructions too will focus mainly on the liturgical celebration of the wedding day.

In many parishes, the time for marriage preparation is not enough to teach the core values of marriage, for example: the meaning of marriage itself, complementarity of each spouse, the place of love and children in marriage. There is no time to reflect upon responsible parenthood, marriage as a call to Christian holiness, problems concerning birth control and the need of dialogue in marriage.

Recently I asked the Parish Priest at Kitovu (Masaka) about his pastoral experience concerning marriage preparation. From the statistical point of view, he told me that out of 100 couples only 30 couples get adequate marriage preparation (Church and traditional preparation). Some young men seem to think that marriage preparation means just collecting enough money to buy a young lady from her parents. It is like gathering enough money to buy a radio cassette from a shop.⁵⁹

⁵⁹*Informant: Rev. Fr. Homisdius Muwuluzi*

B. FACTORS AFFECTING MARRIAGE PREPARATION TODAY

1. Breakdown of the Traditional Society and Values

The factors presented here do not only affect marriage preparation today, but also people's understanding of the meaning and significance of marriage presented in Chapter I. Generally, today, the "Modern Culture" has greatly influenced the Baganda Traditional Society.⁶⁰ The values of the traditional society are affected by the "permissive society", where people are inclined to believe that they should be allowed to do whatever they want regardless of its effects on other people or effect on the values and morality of the traditional society.⁶¹ Young people overlook traditional customs, for example they consider traditional marriage preparation as outdated. Many young people treasure very much and embrace any Western style, concepts and culture regardless of its impact or effect on their lives.

Some parents no longer fulfill their responsibilities. They have given too much freedom to their children. This is a time for cultural evolution. Also these days, young people go to schools, colleges which are far away from their homes (parents). Even after school, they go wherever (even in Europe) they can find good jobs. As regards such situation, the parents have little opportunity to educate their children. Today young people seek "peer groupings" and isolate themselves from older people. Because of such situation, the traditional marriage preparation too, is affected.

⁶⁰Cf. Mary Getui, "The Evolution of the Family in Africa," In: *Theology of the Church as Family of God*. Nairobi, St. Paul Publications, 1997. Vol. No. 3, pp. 39-47. (Tangaza College - Occasional Papers).

⁶¹Cf. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* No. 8, p. 17

2. Decline in Christian Religious Education in Schools

Today, the idea that religion is a private affair hence should not be taught in public schools, is spreading very fast and everywhere. There is a growing exclusion of religion from public schools. About three decades ago, the majority of the schools in Buganda were Church schools. Religious education was not excluded from schools, but this has now changed.

This situation too has an effect on the young people growing up, because they grow up without deep religious convictions. The subject of religion helps young people in schools, to get a perspective of the Christian understanding of the gift of the two different sexes and the meaning of marriage. Christian religious education can help the young people to understand that the two sexes and the vocation of marriage are divine gifts from God. Hence, young people can learn how to appreciate the gift of sex and not misuse it. Religious education also provides moral guidance.

Usually sex education and family life education, both are taught in schools under the subject of Christian religious education. Since there is decline in Christian religious education, sex education and family life education are both affected. In most cases many young people do not get any Christian instruction on the understanding of sex and marriage, till the last few days prior to their Church wedding. This is too late.

3. Pre-Marital Sexual Intercourse

The influence of Mass Media⁶², pornographic films and magazines have turned sexuality into an abuse and this sex abuse has become to be regarded as a normal thing. It has turned upside down the morality of traditional values of sexuality (e.g. virginity before marriage).

⁶²*John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio, no. 7,*

One of the questions that some young people ask today is: “what is wrong with enjoying sex right now? Sex is natural and good, why wait? Teenagers think that sex is merely for fun and enjoyment. If a teenager tells his/her fellow youths that he has not yet had sexual intercourse, he/she is considered as abnormal or mocked as a “holy eunuch” (like those ones mentioned in the Bible).⁶³

This pre-marital sexual intercourse usually brings unwanted pregnancy (hence unwanted children). Hence, this pre-marital sexual intercourse is a stumbling block towards the proper preparation for marriage among the Baganda.

4. Trial Marriages

Pre-marital sexual intercourse and unwanted pregnancy, usually lead young people into marriage contracts which they are not prepared for. These days some young people also argue that if they want to get married, it is better they begin staying together early so that they can find out whether they can manage each other for a permanent marriage.

Some young men want to ascertain whether the future wife (partner) is capable of bearing children before their permanent marriage. Many young people find so many reasons to justify trial marriages. Marriage between two baptised persons is supposed to be a real symbol of the union of Christ and the church (cf. Eph 5:1 ff), it is not a temporary or trial union but one which is permanent and indissoluble. Trial marriages violate the original Divine will of the Creator that man and woman be united and procreate to fill the earth.⁶⁴

⁶³Cf. *Eunuchs*. Mt. 19:12, Acts 8:5-12

Cf. The Luganda word used is “Abalaawo, abatunkirivu.” Literally means those holy people who can't have sexual intercourse.

⁶⁴John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 28.

5. Bride-Wealth:

In chapter II, we discussed the significance of the custom and practice of bride-wealth. However, in some cases this can be a problem for the poor people thus hindering a proper preparation for traditional and Christian marriage today.

There are some parents who take the bride-wealth as an opportunity to get rich or as a direct compensation for looking after their daughters and for educating them. With such mentality, some parents request enormous and unrealistic demands upon the young man intending to marry their daughter.

Therefore, very high bride-wealth, can cause great social and economic problems. This sometimes leads to a delay or prevention of proper marriage preparation. This payment of bride-wealth, if it is not realistic, can cause debts for the young man, or the young man can decide to marry without ever going to the Church to get the blessing and the sacrament of marriage.

6. Wedding expenses

Another complaint about marriage in the Church today among the Baganda Christians is the expense involved. Among the Baganda the custom of going to Church for the Sacrament of marriage is associated with very fine and expensive clothes, a big reception afterwards and a convoy of cars. Certainly, this is one of the reasons why Church marriages are often delayed for years or even avoided altogether.

Marriage in the Church has come to be associated with very "big celebrations". Many people tend to think that the big celebration is the one which constitutes the sacrament of marriage. Many young people, especially in urban areas, delay marriage because they have to

save or borrow money (take a loan) for these celebrations. These loans also have later consequences on marriage. The man has to find all means to pay back. Hence, family financial resources will be stretched.

The Church's pastoral approach and the responsibility of parents should be to teach the young people preparing for marriage to understand the religious meaning of marriage (ie. the Sacramentality). The social significance of the big celebrations is meaningful but should not take first priority over the meaning of marriage (significance of the sacrament).

7. Aids HIV Threat

The epidemic of Aids has also greatly affected the traditional custom of marriage preparation today. There is great fear of Aids among the parents, to such an extent that almost everybody is suspected to be HIV positive.

These days parents are very slow to encourage their children to quickly look for marriage partners. Parents have seen so many young people dying of AIDS. Parents have to think a lot before accepting or encouraging their children to go for marriage. Young people too think about choosing their marriage partners with great fear. This situation results into young people delaying marriage or avoiding it completely.

For the pastors of the Church it is important that they study carefully these factors and problems affecting marriage preparation today. In their pastoral work, for example by doing home visitations, pastors can address these problems well. This can be a good pastoral approach which will help the pastors to respond and find some solutions to these problems. The pastors have also to reflect upon their role/responsibility of preparing the faithful for this sacrament of marriage.

CHAPTER V: PASTORAL SUGGESTIONS REGARDING MARRIAGE PREPARATION

This chapter is responding to the problems concerning marriage preparation today, which are presented in chapter IV. The issues which have been presented in chapter I (meaning and significance of marriage), chapter II (traditional marriage preparation) and chapter III (Church's teaching on marriage preparation) can also help as we try to find solutions to the problems expressed in chapter IV.

Many recommendations are suggested to pastors and parents. This does not mean that they have done nothing at all. Some parents have made a lot of effort in this area of marriage preparation for their sons and daughters. However, the following pastoral suggestions are just a call to do more still in this fundamental aspect of life (preparation for marriage):

1. The Church should try / continue to understand the problems related to marriage preparation which young people are facing, and should adapt its ministry to help the faithful as much as possible.
2. One thing which makes the Church's pastoral and other work so difficult is the shortage of pastors. Besides the pastors, each parish needs to explore the possibilities for some married lay people to qualify as trained family life teachers and counsellors. Such trained people can be of great help to the young spouses seeking instructions for marriage preparation.
3. In some places, especially where some Christians live far away from the main Parish Church, there is reluctance for some pastors to reach those far away in villages (out stations). It is even possible that some faithful will have no personal contact with their pastors, till their wedding day.⁶⁵ It is recommended that the Church's instruction on marriage and the Church celebrations of marriage be extended to out stations / village

⁶⁵*Adrian Hastings, Christian Marriage in Africa, p. 105*

Churches.

4. There is very little literature available concerning the traditional marriage preparation among the Baganda. Parishes in Buganda should also avail booklets relating both: the Christian teaching on marriage preparation and the Baganda traditional marriage preparation. These booklets can also address the real situation and difficulties concerning marriage preparation today.
5. Booklets, encyclicals (documents) e.g. *Familiaris Consortio* of John Paul II, should be translated into vernacular and their study be promoted. This will give an opportunity to many Christians to read these documents for themselves. I also recommend that some Codes of Canon Law about marriage preparation be translated into Luganda.
6. Among the Baganda, like in other African societies, childless marriage is a calamity. Parents together with the pastors, should continue to emphasize that true and happy marriage is still possible even without a child. The young man should not send away his wife if she does not give birth during the first few months of marriage.
7. The demand for exorbitant bride-wealth is often one of the problems facing young people preparing for marriage. However, among the Baganda the bride-wealth is still acceptable and it is a very significant custom. In many areas the bride-wealth has to be paid before one's marriage is blessed in the Church. From the pastoral approach parents should be encouraged to moderate their demands (bride-wealth). Very high bride-wealth cause social / economic problems and can prevent marriage. If a husband pays a lot of money on bridal wealth, there is fear that the husband might treat the wife as a property.
8. Another factor affecting marriage preparation among the Baganda Christians today, is the decline in Christian values (religious values) taught in the families. The objectives of **Small Christian Communities** should be to help the families (parents) to see themselves as "little Churches" where spiritual values can be deepened. Families have to be called once again

to give witness to Christ by their way of living the gospel values.⁶⁶ The family is the “Domestic Church”. The family is called once again to fulfil its roles. Again the parents have the responsibility of teaching their children the traditional values of marriage preparation.

9. One of the major complaints about marriage in Church is the expenses it involves: very fine clothes, big reception, a convoy of vehicles, video cameras, etc... The Church’s pastoral concern must be to encourage inexpensive weddings. Pastors together with the help of Small Christian Communities, can help the Christians (especially young people) preparing for the sacrament of marriage, to understand that the blessing of marriage in the Church is possible and important, even when celebrated in a simple way (in case of poor people).⁶⁷
10. Parents, teacher’s and pastors have to look for helpful ways in which Christian instructions on sex education, family life and marriage preparation, can be taught to young people in secondary schools. There is a need for proper Christian instruction on the subject of sex education and marriage. Pastors, teachers and parents have to co-operate together (e.g. having meetings together) as they prepare to teach the young people the meaning of marriage(family life) and marriage preparation. The Christian instruction usually given just prior to Church wedding is both too late and too little.⁶⁸
- 11 The preparation of the engaged spouses should be accompanied by sincere and deep devotion to Mary, Mother of the Church, the Queen of the Family. Those preparing for marriage should be taught to recognize that Mary’s presence is as active in the family, the Domestic Church, as it is in the wider Church. They should be taught to imitate Mary in her virtues, and also look at the Holy Family, the home of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, as their

⁶⁶*Michael Foley: Marriage a Relationship, p. 74*

Cf. John Paul II, Homilies on; the Family: Domestic Church, Ireland, St. Paul Publications, 1983.

⁶⁷*Hastings, Op. Cit. pp. 110-111*

⁶⁸*Ibid p. 105*

model.⁶⁹

12. There is need to continue integrating the values of the two rituals: the traditional and Christian preparation for marriage. The integration of the two rituals will enrich the preparation for this sacrament. The Christian liturgical rites of marriage could hopefully be adapted in different places to make use of the familiar traditional symbols, languages and ceremonies of the people, so that all the faithful can actively participate and benefit from it. Traditional stages of marriage preparation for example: The Introduction (**Okwanjula**), paying of the bride-wealth (**Okusasula ebintu**), the handing over of the bride to the bride groom's side, be given Christian witness, celebration, or a blessing. The presence of a priest or a catechist can deepen the meaning of these traditional rituals.

Marriage preparation has to be understood and put into practice as a gradual process. Pope John Paul II points out that it is more necessary in our time to prepare the young people for marriage and family life. The family, the Church and society as a whole have got the role of preparing young people for their future responsibilities. Young people who have been well prepared for family life generally succeed better than others who have not been prepared.⁷⁰

⁶⁹*Council for the Family, Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage, p. 30*

⁷⁰*Familiaris Consortio, no. 66*

CONCLUSION

Just as priesthood, marriage too is such an important institution (vocation) willed by the Creator. It is primarily the right and duty of the Church, together with the parents, to prepare those spouses that are preparing for this sacred and important vocation.

Today, among the Baganda Christians, there exists a real need for young people to receive a sound marriage preparation, which should stress the true meaning and responsibilities of a marriage covenant (of love and permanent union) between the husband and wife. The meaning of this sacrament as a symbol of unity between Christ and his Church, should constantly be taught and explained.

There is enrichment and “wisdom” too, deriving from the Baganda traditional values of marriage preparation. The Church should encourage the integration of those essential traditional values with the Christian teaching on marriage preparation. The Christian celebration of marriage is given a deeper meaning and enrichment by some of these traditional values. The Baganda should not overlook the Church’s teaching on marriage preparation neither should the Church neglect the significant (meaningful) values of traditional marriage preparation.

LIST OF INFORMANTS

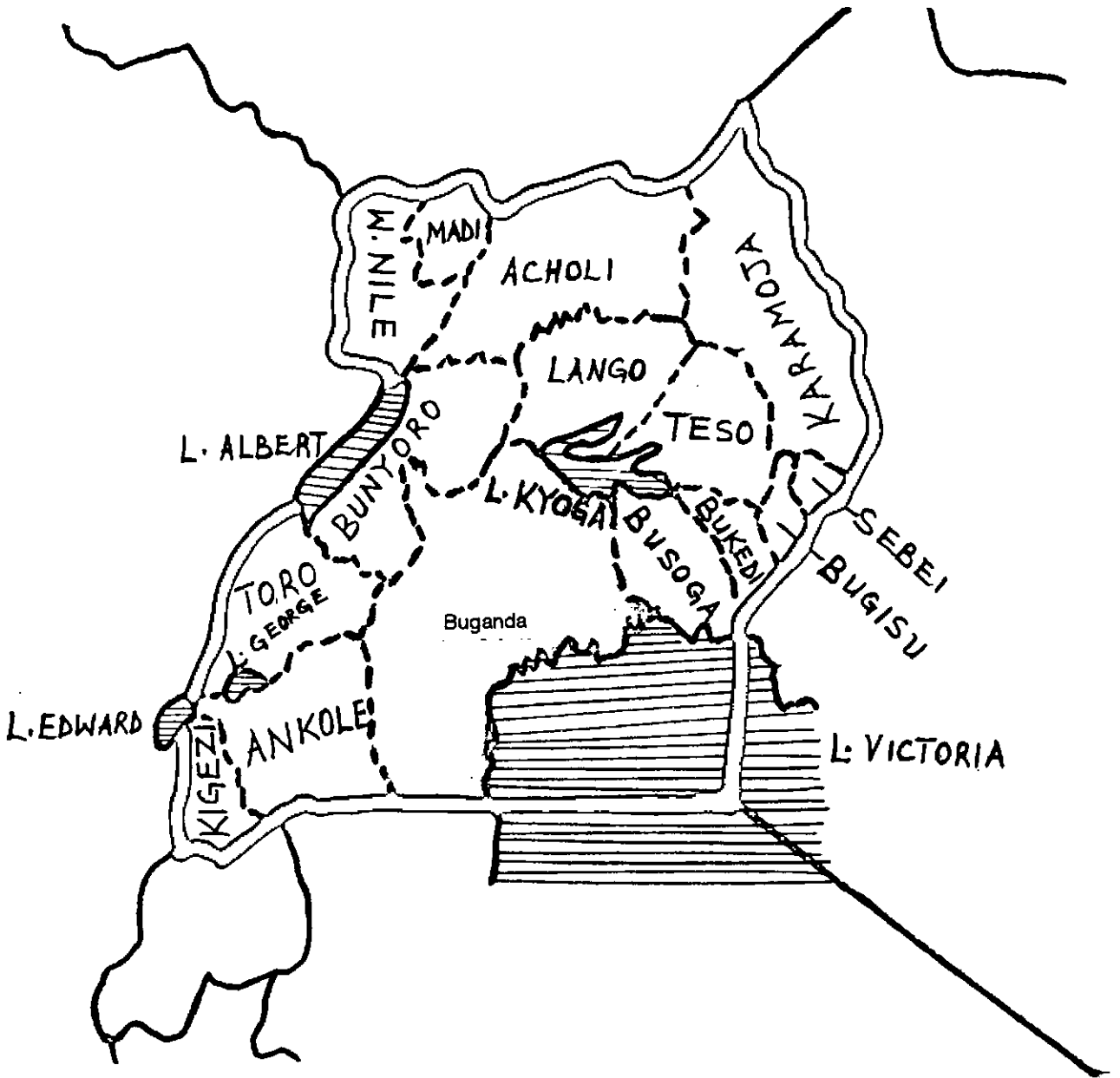
1. Name: Katamba L.L.S.
Sex: Male.
Age: 62 years.
Marital Status: Married.
Occupation: Self-employed.
Place of Residence: Kampala.
Date of Interview : 18-05-97.
Duration: 3 hours
2. Name: Muzeeyi Kirabira.
Sex: Male.
Age: 60 years.
Marital Status: Married.
Occupation: Farmer.
Place of Residence: Luweero.
Date of Interview: 06-01-97.
Duration: 2 hours.
3. Name: Mrs Muzeeyi Kirabira.
Sex: Male.
Age: 55 years.
Marital Status: Married.
Occupation: Farmer.
Place of Residence: Luweero.
Date of Interview: 05-01-97.
Duration: 1hour.
4. Name: Ssesanga Godfrey.
Sex: Male.
Age: 32 years.
Marital Status: Married.
Occupation: Driver.
Place of Residence: Kyotera.
Date of Interview: 30-05-97.
Duration: 2 hours.
5. Name: Baziwane Kabbo.
Sex: Male.
Age: 73 years.
Marital Status: Married.
Occupation: Farmer.
Place of Residence: Kakuuto.
Date of Interview: 10-01-97.
Duration: 3 hours.
6. Name: Mrs. Kibbula Teddy Nalubega.
Sex: Female.
Age: 40 years.
Marital Status: Married.
Occupation: Farmer.
Place of Residence: Kitovu.
Date of Interview: 10-08-97.
Duration: 3 hours.

7. Name: Namayanja Anna.
 Sex: Female.
 Age: 58 years.
 Marital Status: Single.
 Occupation: Farmer.
 Place of Residence: Sanje.
 Date of Interview: 07-08-97.
 Duration: 3 hours.
8. Name: Kibbula Aloysious
 Sex: Male.
 Age: 48 years.
 Marital Status: Married.
 Occupation: Accountant.
 Place of Residence: Masaka.
 Date of Interview: 09-08-97.
 Duration: 2 hours.
9. Name: Mrs. Kalugendo Teddy.
 Sex: Female.
 Age: 55 years.
 Marital Status: Farmer.
 Occupation: Farmer.
 Place of Residence: Kyotera.
 Date of Interview: 11-01-97.
 Duration: 1 hour.
10. Name: Nantongo Ruth
 Sex: Female.
 Age: 54 years.
 Marital Status: Widow.
 Occupation: Farmer.
 Place of Residence: Bwaziba, Luweero.
 Date of Interview: 20-05-97.
 Duration: 1 hour.
11. Name: Naluyiga Jane.
 Sex: Female.
 Age: 27 years.
 Marital Status: Single.
 Occupation: Nurse.
 Place of Residence: Mazinga.
 Date of Interview: 18-05-97.
 Duration: 2 hours.
12. Name: Mr. Majwala Kabuta.
 Sex: Male.
 Age: 59 years.
 Marital Status: Married.
 Occupation: Farmer.
 Place of Residence: Kabuta.
 Date of Interview: 20-05-97.
 Duration: 2 hours.
13. Name: Rev. Fr. H. Muwuluzi.
 Sex: Male.
 Age: 56 years.
 Marital Status: Single.
 Occupation: Priest.
 Place of Residence: Kitovu.
 Date of Interview: 20-05-97.
 Duration: 2 hours.

MAP 1: LOCATION OF UGANDA IN AFRICA



MAP 2: LOCATION OF BUGANDA IN UGANDA



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