

A FISHING AND WATER LOVING MINORITY TRIBE: THE BAKENYE OF UGANDA, EAST AFRICA AND BEYOND

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Above: The Bakenye carrying out fishing activities on Lake Victoria, Uganda

Introduction

The Bakenye also known as Island *Buganda*, *Bagandabanunyanja*, *Abakunta* in Uganda and *Bakhenyi* in Kenya are a minority Bantu speaking water loving and fishing ethnic group that is said have previously been part of the Mainland *Baganda*. The *Bakenye* are unique from the *Baganda* people in that the former by culture have fishing as their main economic activity, followed by subsistence farming and hunting.

Bakenye are affiliated to other East African tribes and ethnic groups, for instance in Uganda to the *Banyaruguru* and *Batagyenda* ethnic groups in Western Uganda; to the *Kisii*, *Abakuria*, *Gusii*, *Wagirango* and the *Suba* ethnic groups in Kenya, and *Luhya*, *Abakuria*, *Ababakusu*, *Abalogoli*, *Abakerewe* ethnic groups in Tanzania.

The *Bakenye* people normally occupy the watered/aquatic habitats where they have settled and carry out fishing activities. They speak a language called “*Lukenye*” a dialect that is a mixture of *Baganda*, *Basoga*, *Banyole*, *Bagisu*, *Baruli*, *Banyala* words/phrases etc

According to Kibira S.M (2016) the Bakenye are believed to have escaped from *Buganda* in the 16th century following the death of Kabaka (King) Kayemba who drowned in Lake Victoria

and the subsequent civil wars/conflicts that took place in *Buganda* kingdom between the Islanders and the Mainland inhabitants by then when the Kabaka (King) was on a tour from the Ssese Islands in Kalangala district.

The *Bakenye* were suspected of causing Kabaka's (king's) death because at that time, they had political differences with the Mainland *Baganda* as they too wanted to take over the kingship. The other *Baganda* were opposed to their wish and were defeated. The ambitious *Bakenye* were the only people in *Buganda* who were endowed with the knowledge and skills of fishing, swimming, watercraftmanship and were capable of dealing with movements and navigation on the water bodies such as the lakes, rivers and streams. (*Kifuko Faustine Wabwire: informal conversation, Pers comm, 1990*).

According to the Minority Rights Group International Report (MRGIR, 2018), the population of *Bakenye* (*Abakhenye*) in Uganda was estimated to be about 1.2 million. They were listed among the minority and marginalized groups in Uganda. In Kenya, there exists no adequate literature nor statistical data about the *Bakenye*, although in Kenya they are called *Bakhenyi* and they are grouped together with the other dominant Bantu speaking tribes/ethnic groups like the *Samia, Luo* or *Abasuba* living in Kenya.

Though the *Bakenye* in Uganda feel marginalized, the Ugandan Constitution (1995) recognizes them as one of the 56 tribes in Uganda. Apart from the *Bakenye* (*Abakhenye*), other tribes recognized in the Ugandan constitution which are also found in Kenya include *Basamia, Babukusu, Iteso, Pokot, Turkana* among others. However, the *Bakenye* (*Abakhenye*) are yet to be recognized as an independent tribe in Kenya (*Kibira S.M, 2016*).

The Origin of the Bakenye

The *Bakenye* are part of the *Buganda* ethnic group. Historically the *Buganda* people are Bantu speaking ethnic group who are thought to have originated and migrated from the Congo Basin in Katanga region. *Luganda* the language spoken by the *Baganda* is characterized by a suffix "ntu" in their words.

The *Bakenye* are said to have migrated from the Mainland of *Buganda* Kingdom and first settled down in the interlacustrine watered/aquatic regions of the Islands of Lake Victoria (locally known as Lake Nalubaale in *Luganda* language) around the 16th century before they moved further on to occupy diverse destinations of Uganda, East Africa and beyond.

According to **Obwaso (2007)** one of the best *Mukenye* oral historian interviewed Majanji Tororo District, according to him he recounted that originally the *Bakenye* lived in Ssese and Buvuma Islands, and according to him he believed that the *Bakenye* were *Baganda* and that

around 1740 the Kabaka Kiwewa the King of *Buganda* by that time planned to visit the Islands of Lake Victoria. and that *Bakenye* who were already settled around the shores of Lake Victoria. Since the King required means of transport to tour the Islands of Lake Victoria, the *Bakenye* cunningly made the Kabaka(King) a boat made of clay. When the King and his entourage embarked the boat it dissolved while they sailed on the waters of Lake Victoria and all the occupants perished. This was the genesis of a feud/conflict that broke out as the two Princes Jjunju Sendegeya and Ssemakookiro fought for power to control the King's throne of the mainland Kingdom of Buganda.

The *Bakenye* ancestors/forefathers supported Prince Ssemakookiro who is said to have not only defeated Prince Jjunju Sendegeya in the battle on the waters of Lake Victoria but had him killed. Eventually ,it is was recounted that Kabaka(King) Ssemokookiro turned against the *Bakenye* and their great fore fathers who later fled the Islands of Lake Victoria and migrated out of *Buganda* to diverse and various destinations within Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo and beyond.

According to *Joshua's project in Uganda 2016*, the *Bakenye* people are a minority ethnic group/tribe on the move, comprising of a scattered community living in different districts of Uganda mainly the Eastern and the Central Regions. It is believed that their ancestors originated from *Buganda* then migrated to Ssesse Islands in Lake Victoria originally considered to be *Baganda* serving as fishermen ('*Bakunta*'). and that around 1889 a conflict broke out between the *Baganda* and *Bakenye* after the death of Prince Junju of the mainland *Buganda* Kingdom whose demise was attributed to *Island Baganda (the Bakenye)*.

From that time up to the present day the *Bakenye* people have been migrating and settling in different destinations of Uganda in particular and East Africa in general. The group of the *Bakenye* who had settled in Soroti District, Teso region among the natives (the *Itesots*) had to re-migrate because the host natives developed some conflicts with the *Bakenye* for fear that these "visitors" (the *Bakenye*) were a threat to the host communities and there were allegations that the migrants would grab the land belonging to the natives if they were permitted to resettle amongst them.

.This group of the *Bakenye* later fled across Lake Kyoga to Kamuli and Mayuge Districts and later settled on the land along Lake Victoria and Lake Kyoga in those two districts of the Basoga ethnic group in Busoga region. The *Bakenye* being a minority ethnic group chose to settle and live amongst the host ethnic groups or tribes are often marginalized by these host communities.

Despite the fact that the *Bakenye* share so much of their culture with the surrounding Bantu speaking ethnic groups, their culture traditionally gravitate around fishing activities on the water bodies like lakes, rivers, streams found in areas where they have settled down with their extended families. Fishing is deemed to be their main economic activity and this solely defines their lifestyles and culture. The other secondary economic activities are farming, hunting and trade.

Most *Bakenye* people are Christians, mostly Catholics and Anglicans meanwhile others profess to the Islamic faith and to the “Born Against faith”(Balokole).Some *Bakenye* have not taken education seriously because they preferred fishing to studying. There are some *Bakenye* intellectuals who have obtain qualifications in different disciplines of study and they are working both with the government and the private sectors. There are some *Bakenye* intellectuals who have obtain qualifications in different disciplines of study and they are working both with the government and the private sectors. In this generation,the *Bakenye* in Uganda and elsewhere have organized themselves under an NGO called the **Bakenye Isaanga Development Association(BIDA)** for the purpose of networking and identity, to promote and further develop their culture, traditions and language (*Lukenye*) so as to be recognized as a full-fledged ethnic group and tribe in Uganda and the entire East African region.

The *Bakenye* of Uganda are a Bantu speaking ethnic group of people. It is believed that they migrated from the Buganda central region and moved eastwards settling in the eastern parts of Uganda around Lake Kyoga basin in the Buyende district in Sub counties like Kidera, Nkondo, Kagulu and others.Some of the members of this group moved further and crossed Lake Kyoga settling in the Teso region in areas of the Kadungulu sub county around Kagwara and Namulemuka fish landing sites,meanwhile another group moved and settled around the northern parts of Lake Victoria in the Bwonda and Masese landing sites in Mayuge and Jinja districts of the Busoga region respectively.

The ethnic setting of the *Bakenye* tribe is almost akin to that of the *Baganda*,the latter comprise of about 33 clans with different totems and the former with about 20 clans also with totem,examples of the *Bakenye* clans are *Bakoma*, *Baseregwe*, *Bawengere*, *Babango*, *Bagulu*, *Bandije*, *Bajwana*, *Batembe*, *Basagule*, *Babira* and others.

The history of the Bakenye

According to wikipedia.org It is stated that during reign of Jjunju Sendegeya the Kabaka of *Buganda* Kingdom from 1780 until 1797 , *Buganda* conquered Buddu (the present-day Masaka District) from Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom.The Buganda Kingdom is said to have

suffered a serious setback when the ruling King by that time experienced some wrangles between himself and his brother Prince Semakookiro, whom the Kingdom considered to be rebellious towards it. During this rebellion, Semakookiro ordered his men to capture Kabaka Jjunju Sendegeya and bring him to the rebel prince. This expedition did not go well as Kabaka(King) Jjunju Sendegeya was killed during the attempted capture.

When the regiment sent to capture Kabaka(King) Jjunju Sendegeya came back to report that they had killed him, Prince Semakookiro was so upset and furious that he decided to expel all the regiment members together with their families and friends from Buganda, or else they were informed that they would suffer the same fate as his brother. Those people who were expelled fled *Buganda* and migrated westwards to the present day *Kitagwenda* in Kamwenge District and *Bunyaruguru* in Rubirizi District, Western Uganda.

This group of descendants who migrated from Buganda were the reason why *Kitagwenda* and *Bunyaruguru* are called thus today. "*Kitagwenda*" seems to mean *those who cannot go further* and "*Bunyaruguru*" means *those with strong-legs*. Indeed, *Kitagwenda* district is located in the east of *Bunyaruguru* and is a relatively flat plain area while *Bunyaruguru* is composed of a hilly terrain west of *Kitagwenda*. The migrants without "strong legs" stayed in *Kitagwenda*, meanwhile the others who moved further on and perseveringly climbed the steep hills became the *Banyaruguru* ethnic group and they settled in *Bunyaruguru* in Ibanda and Rubirizi districts in the Western region of Uganda.

2.0 Migrations of the Bakenye from Buganda region

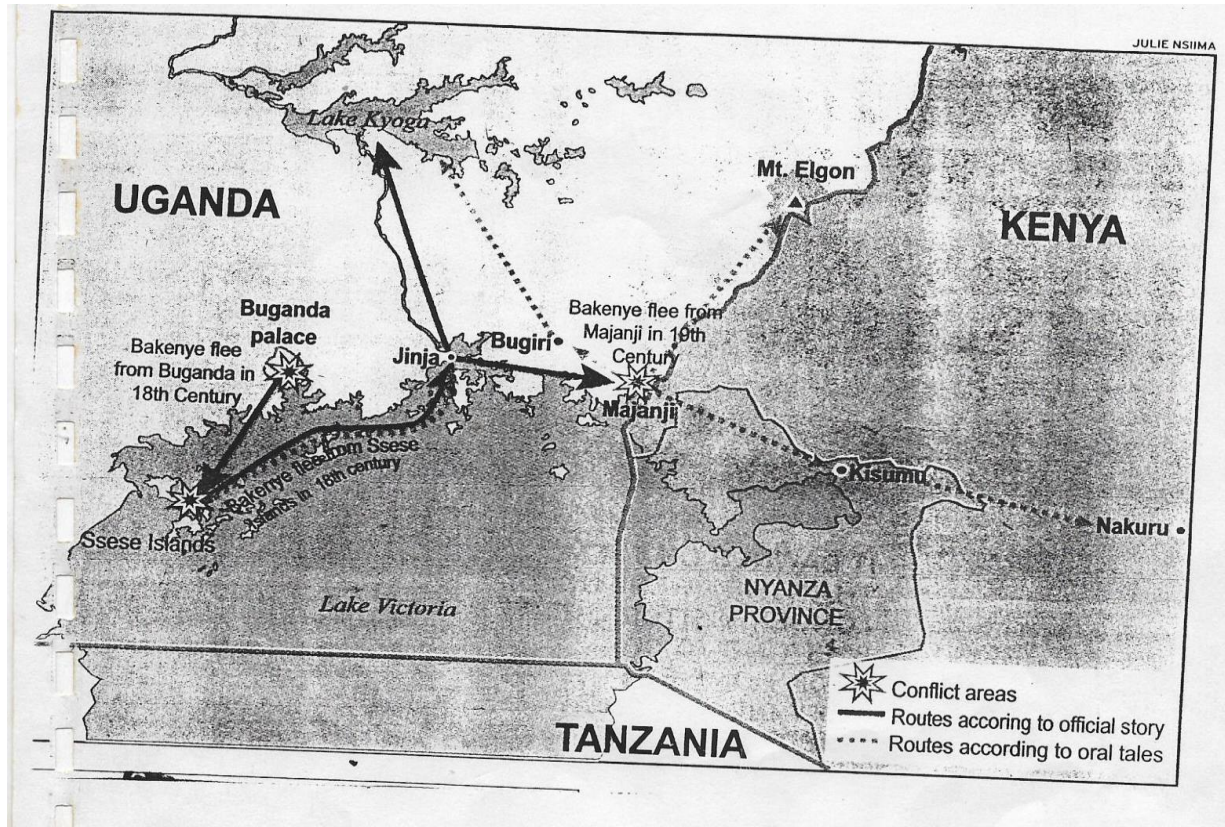


Figure 1 A map showing the migrations of the Bakenye from L. Victoria Islands, Buganda (Source the New Vision Newspaper 2007).

There were two major migrations that took place from the Islands of Lake Victoria, namely the eastward migration to Kenya and Tanzania and the westward migrations to Democratic republic of Congo (DRC) via *Butagyenda* and *Bunyaruguru* areas in the present day Ibanda, Kasese, Kabarole and Bushenyi Districts. Other migrants moved further towards the north to Sudan along the River Nile up to Ethiopian highlands and southwards to Tanzania around Bukoba, Mwanza, Musoma, Ukerewe, Uhai areas in the northern parts of the United Republic of Tanzania.

In the eastward migrations the Bakenye moved further from the Islands of Lake Victoria through Busoga region during the reign of Kyabazinga (King) Zibondo to Bukedi region (the present day Busia, Tororo, Bugiri, Iganga, Pallisa, Namayingo districts), Masaba region (the present day Bududa, Mbale, Manafwa, Bugongho, Sironko, Bulambuli districts), Teso region (present day Bukedea, Kumi, Ngora, Soroti, Serere, Amuria, Kaberamaido districts), Lango region (present day districts of Amolatar, Dokolo, Kole, Otike, Apac, Lira, Kwania, Aleptong, Oyam districts).

Along the way the *Samia-Bagwe* in Busia and Tororo districts in Uganda hosted the *Bakenye/Island Baganda* and welcomed them as “*visitors from the palace of the Kingdom of Buganda*” and offered them befitting hospitality. The *Samia Bagwe* ethnic group welcomed the *Bakenye* to their area uttering the following words “*Abahenyi Bakabaka Baidire* in Samia Lugwe dialect”, meaning “*The Visitors from the Kingdoms of Buganda have arrived*” (translated in English). The word “*Abahenyi*” was extracted from the *Samia Lugwe* dialect to mean “*visitors*”. This was how it is said the former immigrants from the Kingdom of *Buganda* who migrated and settled eastwards from the *Buganda* Kingdom were named as “*Bakenye*” by the *Samia Bagwe* ethnic group in Uganda. Meanwhile the *Bakenye* carried out fishing activities around River Majaji in Busia and Tororo districts. Up to this day there are still some remnants of families of the *Bakenye* in these areas, and intermarriages with the host communities also took place over several generations.

Some group of the *Bakenye* moved eastwards to Kenya and settled around the shores of Lake Victoria among the ethnic groups in Kenya. While others moved further and settled down in the southern parts of Tanzania along Lake Victoria regions of Mwanza, Musoma, Bukoba, Ukerewe Islands (“*Ukerewe*” is the birth place of Mwalimu Julius Kabarage Nyerere the former and founding president of the United Republic of Tanzania) in Lake Victoria.

It should be noted that music, dance and cultural performances of most African ethnic groups depicts their identities, traditions and cultures. The *Bakenye* are not an exception, have their cultures and traditions akin to those of their hosts, for instance Tanzanian artist and musician Saida Karoli has produced several albums with songs containing messages with words/phrases that can be understood by the Bantu speaking ethnic tribes within the East African regions and by other neighbouring countries (Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Uganda). The *Bakenye* therefore can also understand some of these songs for instance: “*Wacheka nga abinyewa*” song meaning *One was fried like ground nuts*,

There is a group of migrants who moved westwards from the Islands of Lake Victoria in Buganda Kingdom around the 16th century to Ankole region in Bunyaruguru and Batagyenda areas (the present day Kasese, Kabarole, Ibanda, Bushenyi, Kyengegwa districts, upon arrival there they practiced fishing activities around the water bodies of Lake George and Edward and others settled around Katungulu areas neighboring the Queen Elizabeth National Parks in the present day Kasese, Ibanda, Bushenyi, Kobohe and Kamwenge districts. Some of these migrants were involved in farming and the hunting of wildlife animals in the national park on subsistence levels.

In Teso region, in Uganda some of the *Bakenye* besides fishing as their main economic activity also managed to acquire hunting rifles from the government, for example Mzee Shillingi of Kamurojo village, Serere district was a renowned prolific village hunter of wild animals such as hippopotami, antelopes, water bucks, bush pigs and warthogs to mention but a few. They also used rudimentary hunting gears such as traps, bows, snares and arrows, spears etc.

According to **Kibira S M (2016)** the *Bakenye* may have migrated from the *Buganda* central region, moved eastwards and settled in the eastern parts of Uganda around Lake Kyoga basin in Buyende district in the sub counties of Kidera, Nkondo, Kagulu areas in the Busoga region, meanwhile others managed to move further and crossed Lake Kyoga settling in the Teso region in areas of the Kadungulu sub county around Kagwara, Mpingire, Kachomya and Namulemuka all located along the shores lakes and rivers where they carried out fishing activities. Many *Bakenye* settled around the northern part of Lake Victoria in the Bwonda and Masese landing sites in Mayuge and Jinja districts respectively.

The other group of *Bakenye* that settled along River Majanji in Busia district Uganda moved further towards the Sigulu and Migingo Islands in Lake Victoria located on the Ugandan and Kenyan borders in search of fertile fishing grounds. A sizeable number of these migrants have settled on the mainland areas in Kenya at Sio-Port and Port Victoria in Busia county, Usenge, Bondo, Asembo, Yimbo and other parts of Siaya County, Homa-Bay county landing sites along the shores of Lake Victoria in Kenya. Some migrants may have moved and settled down along the shores of Lake Victoria Islands and mainland areas in the United Republic of Tanzania.

According to **the Uganda Atlas of 1926**, the British Colonial government documented all the ethnic groups/tribes of Uganda and the *Bakenye* were indicated in this Atlas as an ethnic group/tribe that was found to have settled and resided around the watered, interlacustrine, aquatic regions of Lake Victoria (in *Buganda*, *Busoga*, Kenya and Tanzania) and Lake Kyoga (in *Buganda*, *Acholi*, *Lango*, *Teso* and *Busoga* regions). It should be noted that the *Bakenye* were and are still a minority fishing and water loving ethnic group/tribe not only in Uganda but also in the entire East African region.

In 2016 I met Honorable Jimmy Akena the current Uganda People's Congress (UPC) President (son to His Excellency Milton Apollo Obote the former president of the Republic of Uganda) in Kampala. During our personal conversation with him he intimated to me that he came to learn about the existence of the *Bakenye* through his late Father who described to him that the *Bakenye* were a minority fishing tribe that have settled down on the shores of different water bodies in Uganda. They are mainly a fishing community.

According to **the Uganda constitution of 1995, Third Schedule, Article 10(9)** it listed 65 Uganda's indigenous communities as at 1st February, 1926, Bakenye are listed number 16.

What were the drivers/ possible reasons why the *Bakenye* migrated from Buganda to other parts of Uganda and beyond ?

According to the different sources, accounts and tales from our ancestors and forefathers, they orally told us in these versions that the *Bakenye*, left their motherland the Kingdom of Buganda moving to other areas because of the following reasons stated below:

(a) The Flute Boy, the Prince and the Clay Boat:

According to this oral version, the Kingdom of Buganda around the 16th Century, experienced a feud between two Princes namely Prince Jjunju Sendegeya and Prince Ssemakokiro Wasajja Nabbunga about a power struggle to inherit the throne from their father Kabaka Kyabaggu of Buganda to the extent one of the prince planned to kill his brother. The *Bakenye* were enlisted by Prince Ssemakokiro Wasajja Nabbunga to design a mechanism to “*eliminate*” prince Jjunju Sendegeya. The *Bakenye* were therefore employed as mercenaries by Prince Ssemakokiro Wasajja Nabbunga to assist in the conflict against his brother Prince Jjunju Sendegeya. In this circumstances Prince Ssemakokiro Wasajja Nabbunga assigned the *Bakenye* task of *neutralizing* his brother Prince Jjunju Sendegeya and his entourage while they visited the *Bakenye* territories comprising of the several Islands of Lake Victoria.

In order to execute their plans, the *Bakenye* designed a boat made of clay and docked it together along side with the wooden royal boat that was destined to be used by Prince Jjunju Sendegeya to tour the Islands of Lake Victoria, a territory that belonged to *Bakenye* tribe, and that among the “*killer group*” of the *Bakenye* other members were sympathetic and loyal to Prince Jjunju Sendegeya.

A young Muganda boy (read *Mukenye*, *Mukunta boy*) was deployed by the group of the *Bakenye* loyal to Prince Jjunju Sendegeya along the two boats (one genuine, wooden and not nice looking and other made of clay, shiny but nice looking). The Flute boy's task was to blow the flute when prince Jjunju Sendegeya arrived at the dock in order to alert him not to board the nice looking clay boat, the prince was to board the wooden genuine boat that was safe for his onward journey to the Islands of Lake Victoria to tour the *Bakenye* territory .

As fate had it, when Prince Jjunju Sendegeya arrived at the shores of the lake, the flute boy blew the flute to alert Prince Jjunju Sendegeya about the impending danger together with his entourage not to board the clay boat but board the wooden one but unfortunately the Prince did not hear and understand the Flute boy's message, instead the Prince and his entourage boarded the clay boat and as they approached the deep waters of Lake Victoria, water soaked the clay

boat, later it crumbled and broke down into pieces killing all its occupants. This mission to "eliminate" Prince Jjunju Sendegeya and his entourage as assigned to the *Bakenye* by Prince Ssemokakiro Wasajja Nabbunga of the Buganda Kingdom was successfully executed without any difficulty.

As the *Bakenye* and Prince Ssemokokiro Wasajja Nabbunga jubilated/celebrated their success, Kyabaggu the Kabaka (King) of Buganda by that time issued a decree to have all those who were responsible for the death of Prince Jjunju Sendegeya to be immediately arrested, prosecuted and executed.

The *Bakenye*, were the main suspect in this murder. As a result of this they had to immediately start their migrations out of the Buganda Kingdom, they moved to different destinations and fled the wrath of Kabaka Kyabaggu for fear of their lives. This was the genesis of the migrations of the *Bakenye/Island Baganda* from Islands of Lake Victoria to outside the Buganda Kingdom (*Sajjabi Sekulima Silasi: informal conversation, Pers comm., 1988*).

This version was collaborated by president Yoweri Kaguta Museveni during his speech at the Uganda Solidarity Summit on Refugees, 23rd June, 2017 Munyonyo, Kampala. "that when there was a bad ruler (king or chief), portions of the population could *kumwimuura* (withdraw allegiance from a ruler) and they would *okwehongyera* (pledge allegiance to a new ruler). Thereafter, they would become citizens of the new area. Sometimes, there would be civil wars or wars of succession. The losing party would flee to another kingdom where they would be secure. To give example, in one of our kingdoms, *Buganda*, there was a succession war between two princes: Semakokiro and Jjunju, in the year, 1797.

The faction that lost scattered all over East Africa and became citizens of the new areas. There are now six districts in the East African countries of today where the diaspora of that conflict are now resident. They are no longer referred to as *Baganda*, but either *Bakenye*, *Banyaruguru*, *Bategweenda* ethnic groups in Uganda, *Abakuria*, *Gusii*, *Wagirango* and the *Suba* ethnic groups in Kenya, and *Luhya*, *Abakuria*, *Ababakusu*, *Abalogoli*, *Abakerewe* in Tanzania.

In Kamwengye district, they are called *Batagweenda* with a Parliamentary constituency. In Ibaanda, they are again, called *Batagweenda* with a Parliamentary constituency. In Kamwengye they are part of the *Batooro* people. In Ibanda, they are part of the *Banyankore* people.

In Rubirizi district, where they are part of the *Banyankore* people, they are called *Banyaruguru* or *Bakuunta* (the ones who came with rugs). The

word *Batagweenda* means the ones that could not continue travelling (fleeing — *kugyeenda*). *Banyaruguru* refers to those who could run more and more (fleeing). The diaspora of the Jjunju – Semakokiro war did not end in Western Uganda. Some are in Kayunga, which was not part of Buganda at that time. Others are in Pallisa districts.

In these two districts, they are called *Bakenye* (originally *Bagyenyi*). Two other branches went to Kenya and Tanzania. In Kenya, they have a whole district to themselves known as Suba district. In Tanzania, they are part of the Musoma-Kuria groups. They are called *Basuba* in both countries. This is a corruption of the Luganda word: “*Abasubwa*” — the ones who “missed” — meaning the ones who missed the throne. In all the direction of their dispersal, these *Baganda* became the citizens of the new kingdoms”.

<http://www.statehouse.go.ug/media/speeches/2017/06/23/presidents-statement-uganda-solidarity-summit-refugees>.

(b)The search for fertile fishing, hunting and farming grounds:

The other accounts,tales,oral history obtained our ancestors states maintained that the *Bakenye* migrated from their original homeland the Islands of Lake Victoria in the *Buganda* Kingdom in search of fertile fishing/farming/hunting grounds that were available in other parts of Uganda and beyond especially the watered/aquatic interlacustrine regions of East Africa.The *Bakenye* are by nature fishermen and as time evolved they also became cultivators/farmers on subsistence level whenever they lived and settled down within the host communities in the East African region, Uganda inclusive,

The ancestors of *Bakenye* carried out fishing activities as a major economic activity and resided on the Islands and the shores of the respective water bodies,for example around *Tisai* Islands in Lake Kyoga in Uganda, *Sigulu* and *Migingo* Islands in Kenya and Uganda borders around Busia and Tororo districts, River *Majanji* in Tororo and Busia districts; *Ssesse* Islands, *Buvuma* Islands, *Koome* Islands in Lake Victoria; around Lake George and Lake Edward in Katungulu areas in Kasese and Bushenyi districts; River *Rwampanga* in Nakasongola; River Nile in Busoga, Lango ,Acholi and West Nile regions of Uganda.

The *Bakenye* migrants lived harmoniously with the other native host communities in Uganda and beyond. They also intermarried and learnt cultures, traditions and languages of other ethnic groups, and became multilinguistic with the ability to fluently speak their own language (the *Lukenye*) in addition to other languages of the host ethnic groups.

In the early days of the 17th Century, the *Bakenye*, employed rudimentary fishing gears and tools in carrying out fishing activities on the water bodies, for example papyrus weaved fish

traps, wooden dug in canoes, spears, hooks and lines, fishing baskets and simple nets, to mention but a few.

With the passage of time, majority of the *Bakenye* had their lifestyles gradually changing from using rudimentary fishing gears and tools to better improved fishing gears and tools such as use of motorized outboard boats, stronger and superior nets, beach seine “*Kokota*” (use of these were outlawed by the respective authorities and countries because they were catching/trapping even immature fishes).

This meant that the *Bakenye* used this as an opportunity to increase on the volumes of their fish catches and they were able to supply large market comprise of various consumers both the local ethnic host groups and the fish processing industries, restaurants, hence also increasing their incomes and profits.

The *Bakenye* in addition to fishing as their main economic activity also practiced subsistence farming ,hunting, and trade in fish and other food products in the local markets available within the host native ethnic groups.

(c)The search for trade and business opportunities in Uganda and beyond.

The *Bakenye* left *Buganda* region to migrate to different destinations in search for trade and business opportunities that were by that time available in those parts. Some of them were originally involved in barter trade of the exchange of fish products with foodstuff by that time they were still mainly fishermen and staying on the Islands of the different water bodies in Uganda and other countries or around the shores of these water bodies, they were also persuaded by the host native communities to come out of their fishing grounds and settle on the mainland with the host communities. They then intermarried with the members of the host ethnic groups and learnt the cultures, traditions and the different languages. They carried out fishing as their main economic activity, meanwhile also practiced farming and hunting on subsistence levels on top of trade in fish and food products.

(d)To colonize other parts of the Uganda and beyond:

The *Bakenye* may have moved and migrated out of their mainland of the *Buganda* Kingdom around the 16th Century as representatives of the Kabaka (King) of *Buganda* by then sent to “colonize” and extend the rule of the Kabaka (King) of *Buganda* in other parts of the country and beyond.

The *Bakenye* may have accompanied Prince Semei Kakungulu to assist him execute his programme and mission to “colonize” the eastern region of Uganda. Under this arrangement Prince Semei Kakungulu set off on his journey together with the *Bakenye*, with the blessings of the then Kabaka of the Kingdom of *Buganda*. They moved eastwards from

Buganda region planting Muvule trees(*Chlorophora excelsa*),Musizi trees (*Maesopsis emini*) and Mango trees (*Mangifera indica*) on both sides of the main trunk road from Kampala city through Jinja,Iganga,Tororo, Mbale, Soroti and other towns of eastern Uganda. Prince Semei Kakungulu's mission was to "colonise" the other regions of the country starting with the eastern parts of Uganda. Some of the *Baganda* who moved together with the Prince Kakungulu were the *Bakenye*.Up to this day,when one travels to Eastern Uganda you are reminded about the Prince Kakungulu's visit from the Kingdom of *Buganda* by magnificent ,large and mature Muvule trees(*Chlorophora excelsa*) and Mango(*Mangifera indica*)trees planted alongside the roads and highways as one heads from Kampala city towards the eastern borders of Uganda(the present day Tororo and Busia districts),and towards Kumi,Bukedea,Soroti,Lira towns.

The *Baganda* and the *Bakenye* who moved with Prince Kakungulu found the journey to the eastern part of the country enjoyable and this created strong bonds of friendship with the local native ethnic tribes /groups especially the Bantu speaking people such as the *Banyole,Bagisu,Bagwere,Basoga,Balamoji,Basamia* ,*Bagwe,Basiki,Batenga,Bakooli* etc and this migrant later settled down in these areas,and they intermarried with them and later began their fishing activities complimented with subsistence farming and hunting activities. The *Bakenye* settled down by constructing simple mud wattle huts, roofed with dried grass and circular in nature with 5-7 huts lined up in a semi circular formation within a single compound, parents would stay together with their children,grand children and other relatives in a communal manner with an extend family arrangement.The family lineages were patrilineal in nature.These homesteads were similar to those that were erected by the native host communities whenever they had settled.

It is should be noted that up to this day the *Bakenye*, have learnt the art of surviving in any apart of the country and beyond because they are deemed to be industrious people, hardworking in nature, multilinguistic ,and they are endowed with a variety of skills namely fishing, boat making, farming, trade and hunting activities. They are versatile and can adapt to any environment whenever they chose to settle down in Uganda and beyond.

The Bakenye Culture and society:

The *Baganda* tribe have about 33 clans ,whereas the *Bakenye* tribe about 20 clans namely *Bakoma,Baseregwe,Bawengere,Babango,Bagulu,Bandije,Bajwana,Batembe,Basagule,Babira,Bakabire,Bamuyaga,Balinda, Bamaghanda*,among others,all these clans have animals or plants that symbolizes these clans as totems and its a taboo to eat or use these animals or plants because they are regarded to be sacred,for example the Buffalo,Hippotami,Lion,Leopard,Water buck,Porcupine,Wild peas,Yams,the Long tailed

bird(the African pied wagtailed bird),these are forms of totems that belong to different Bakenye clans.

Initially, the *Bakenye* hid their identity for fear of arrest, oppression and execution by the *Baganda* because of the mistrust that existed between the *Bakenye* and the *Baganda* as mentioned above, that was hinged on their historical aspects and reasons for migrations to different destinations. Today, some *Bakenye* hide their identity for fear of discrimination and marginalization, as a result of settling in different areas in East Africa, they have learnt the various languages which have in turn modified, corroded and affected their own language and culture. What they speak now is a lexical similarity which is very difficult to draw a line whether the person is speaking *Luganda*, *Iteso*, *Lusoga*, *Lugwere*, *Lunyole*, *Lugisu*,*Luwisi*,*Lunyala*,*Lululi* ,*Lusamia* or any other Bantu speaking dialect in Uganda.The majority of the *Bakenye* have been assimilated into the dominant tribes/ethnic groups of Uganda and East Africa and with marginalization and discrimination coupled with inter marriages and globalization, there is a danger of the *Bakenye* tribe of East Africa becoming extinct if measures actions are not taken to remedy this anomaly with haste.

Like other tribes found in Africa,the *Bakenye* tribe is culturally defined by the uniqueness of its language spoken and the behaviour of the people,the activities that form their main economic and social activities in a particular community,and the ecological relationship with other communities in those particular localities where they have setthled down.Music and the traditional dances also can be used to define the culture of the *Bakenye* as our dances are similar to those of the *Baganda* and other Bantu speaking ethnic groups within the East African region.The people are called *Bakenyi*.The language spoken by the Bakenye is called *Lukenye* which is similar to other languages spoken by the Bantu speaking ethnic groups of Africa characterized by a common suffix *-ntu*, some of the common *Lukenye* words/phrases are as follows:

Kweizeyo => How are you;

Tusangaire okukuwona=>You are welcome,

Ilikwaba haina=>Where are you going;

Oize kaisi=>First come;

Iza twabe eika=>Lets go home;

Inikutaka kulya mere=>I want to eat food;

Inikutaka kunywa maizi=>I want to drink water;

Inze njabire=>I have left;

Inikutaka kutenduka/kugoona=>I want to sleep,

Inikutaka kutwama ansi=>I want to sit down,
Inikutaka kunaba maizi akokya=>I want a warm bathe;
Webaale/Neyanzire=>Thank you;
Oize twabe kunsulo=>lets go and fetch water at the well,
Oize twiruke/tupyate=>Lets run away,
Tintaka okwaba mukyalo=>I have declined to go to the village,
Mukyalo=>Village,
Okukyaala=>to visit,
Okusugirya=>to greet
Naikonto=>a borehole where water is fetched from,
Ensiri=>a mosquito,
Ensowere=>a house fly,
Eirumba=> a wasp,
Enjuki=>a bee,
Omuzingiri=>a dragon fly,
Pyaata/Oiruke=>Run,
Wegiise=>hide yourself,
Embwa=>a dog,
Entaama=>a sheep,
Empuuli=>a rabbit,
Ekibbe=>a hyaena,
Engo=>a leopard,
Embogo=>a buffalo,
Enkoko=>chicken,
Abantu=>people,
Ekintu=>an object,
Nnsulo=>a well,
Ekidaala=>a home,
Zeiza=>Grand parent;
Zeiza omukali=>Grandmother,
Zeiza omusaiza=>Grandfather,
Ensua=>a pot,
Enziri=> Hair,
Effumu=>a spear,

Empaata=>a bald head,
Embiro/Ekidukano=>diarrhoea,
Ebigenge=>Leprosy,
Omusujja=>a fever/malaise,
Madaanga=>Squinting eyes,
Muwoffu=>a blind person,
Omusuka=>a boy;
Obwita=>Bread;
Kweiza=>Uncle;
Isenga=>Aunt;
Muko=>In Law;
Omukali=>a woman;
Omusaiza=> a man;
Omuwala=>a girl;
Omwana=>a child;
Ogone kusa=>Good night;
Omusota=>a Snake;
Emere=>Food;
Mugati=>a loaf of bread
Ebuli=>a goat;
Embizi=>a pig,
Ente=>cattle(either a cow or a bull),
Enume ye ente=>a bull,
Endusi=>a cow,
Enyana=>a calf,
Ekisolo=>an animal,
Ebisolo=> animals,
Ebisolo byo musiko=> wild animals,
Duuma=>Maize,
Epere=>Fish;
Omwiga=>a wetland/a water body;
Amaliga=> tears,
Okunge amaliga=>shedding tears,
Okulira=>crying,

Ekibira=>a forest;
Empasa=>an Axe;
Embago=>a hoe;
Amaizi=>Water;
Weraba=>Fare well;
Ebiri=>a hippopotamus;
Egulo=>the evening;
Olwati=>Today,
Eizo=>Tomorrow,
Emisana=>day time;
Enaalo=>war/conflicts,
Obwire=>night time;
Ekoli=>African kite bird;
Engira=>the road;
Oikendi=>Rain;
Amabaale=>Stones;
Omwigo=>a stick/cane;
Enjala=>Hunger;
Engaiza=>a Crocodile;
Omusyo=>a fire;
Enfuddu=>a tortoise;
Obukeke=>Sliced dried potato chips eaten during the drought season,
Ekidero=>a granary for food storage (eg grains,ground nuts,cereals etc),
Eyato=> a canoe,
Enyanza=> a lake,river,water body,
Musoke=> Rainbow,
Ekideku=>a Calabash,
Mweeza=>One
Eibiri=>Two
Eisatu=>Three

to mention but a few.

The *Bakenye* people are scattered to different parts of the countries of abode. The naming of new born babies is similar to the way other Bantu speaking ethnic groups carry out the naming of their children when they are born. In the *Bakenye* culture and tradition, the naming of new

born babies is done either be according to the time of day when the child is born,or the new born babies can be named by giving them names of our ancestors that existed before and some names are given to the new members of the family to depict a special message that is inherited from the *Bakenye* ancestors ,for example: *Wabwire/Bwire* => "a boy child born at night"; *Nabwire* => "a girl child born at night"; *Wegulo* => "a boy child born in the evening"; *Nawegulo* => "a girl child born in the evening" *Wekesa* => "a boy child born during the harvesting season of crops"; *Nekesa/Ikesa* => "a girl child born during the harvesting season"; *Musana* => "a boy child born during day time"; , *Namusana/Sana* => "a girl child born during day time"; *Wankya* => "a boy child born during the morning"; *Nankya* => "a girl child born during the morning "and so on. Some of the *Bakenye* names were given to their children with meanings that had cryptic messages from our ancestors to be passed down to the subsequent generations ,for example: *Baidubadese* => "the poor people have left me behind"; *Mufumu* => "a local medicine man/witch doctor"; *Galaama* => "Someone facing hardship/in trouble"; *Njaye* => "*marijuana*" (a drug that was used by our ancestors to treat animal diseases, it is used as a surname by the *Bakoma* clan of the *Bakenye* tribe ,research indicate that the name "*Njaye*" is also widely used by a numbers of ethnic groups in West Africa) ; *Mwambazi* => " given to a boy who is deemed to become gently, smart, intelligent and organised"; *Gabulugo* => "a boy child who is ever crying"; *Wamulanga* => "name given to a boy child who deemed to have a warrior-like behaviour/being brave"; *Byeyamu* => "a girl child whose parents experienced barrenness/childlessness"; *Baitabangi* => "tradition medicine man who treated complicated/unknown human diseases within the *Bakenye* communities such as *Ekidada/Etumbi* (the enlargement of the pancreas)"; *Musangogwantamu* => "given to a child who is ever crying for food", its means *that when the food is done, the child cried for more food, then the parent would inform the child that it's not her fault that food is done instead the child should blame the kitchen where the food was prepared from.* The list of the names is long. The above serve here as examples. The naming within the *Bakenye* was also shaped and influenced by the cultures and the behaviour of the different host native ethnic tribes amidst which they had settled down.

The *Bakenye* are instrumental in the development and the running of their countries where they have settled by playing numerous roles in different fields for example, they are found in politics, law/judiciary, finance, local government, leadership, the forces UPDF, Police, Prisons, private security, hospitality and tourism industries, religion, health, e, the Central and Buganda governments, etc , instance in Uganda some of the notable *Bakenye* in the different sectors are: **Politics:** Honourable George Wilson Nsamba Kuman (former member of the Uganda

parliament represented Bbale county Kayunga district,also former minister of culture in the Buganda Kingdom); Honourable Muhammed Mayanja(former member of the Uganda parliament represented Pallisa district);Honourable Justine Kasule Lumumba(former National Resistance Movement Secretary General and current member of parliament representing the women of Bugiri district, minister for general duties);Honorable Tebandeke Charles(member of the Uganda parliament representing Bbale county Kayunga district);Lino Musana(former district commissioner Jinja during the reign of president Milton Obote II regime/former company secretary the Uganda electoral commission);**Forces:**Late Kifuko Wabwire Faustine(former civil engineer Uganda prisons);Christopher Waitago(electrical engineer Uganda prisons-retired);Colonel Musana Tumbo(UPDF);Major Musana Lino(UPDF Medical Department);Late Daniel Wangoye(formerly with Uganda Army and Body guard to former Head of State of Uganda President Apollo Milton Obote);Late Abbas Kayongo(former Commandant MPPU Uganda Police);SSP Musa Kayongo(DPC Uganda Police);Late Charles Musana(former DPC/OC CID Uganda police);Late Abdullah Latiff Kayongo(former GISO Kayonza Kayunga district);Anne Kayongo(Peace Keeping Dept Uganda Police);Kizito Simon Njaye(Human Resources Specialist,G4S Secure Solution Uganda); **Health/medicine:**Dr Peter Ntuyo(Consultant Gynaecologist/Senior Lecturer Department of Medicine Mulago Referral Hospital;Dr Bazil Musana private practicing physcian;Late Dr Wankya Boniface Magino(former physcian at Kenyatta Referral Hospital Nairobi and UN Representative to East Africa for the control of zoonosis and trypanosomiasis diseases),Dr Wanda Musana private practicing physcian;Prince Charles Kitaka Kifuko(Medical Assistant Namayingo District Local Government);**Education:**Dr Richard Waitago Kifuko(Senior Lecturer Department of Biology Busitema University Uganda),Professor Okeyo Daniel(visiting professor Universities in South Africa and the USA),Hellen Namusana Senior Lecturer Department of Biology Busitema University Uganda),Dr Andrew Muwanika(former Senior Lecturer University of Botswana),Late Augustes Musana(former consultant in Information and Communication Technology at ESAMI Arusha Tanzania);Joseph Sserukenya Kifuko (Secondary School Teacher Bombo Army SSS),Moses Mukadiyo Kifuko(Secondary School Teacher Jinja College Uganda);**the Buganda Kingdom:**Honourable George Wilson Nsamba Kumam(former Minister of Culture),Late Sajjabi Ssekulima Kavuma Silas(one of Buganda Kingdom kings' representative for Bugerere county,founder member of BIDA-BAKENYE ISAANGA DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION);Late Sowedi Kayongo(welcomed Kabaka Mutesa I in 1956 in Kaberamaido in Teso region,constructed the first mosque in Nakyesa village Kayunga district);**Religion:**Late Pastor Deogratious Balabyekubbo(former proprietor of Open Bible

Churches in Uganda and the Prayer Palace Salaama Kampala), Bishop Musisi Gerstave (overseer of the Prayer Palace Salaama Kampala), Pastor Tibandeke Charles; Pastor Fred Byekwaso (retired from Bank of Uganda, now pastoring); Pastor Stephen Sajjabi (living and pastoring in the USA); Pastor David Kateeba (living and pastoring in the UK), Late Zubair Kayongo (former deputy mufti of Uganda); Father Joseph Mubiru (a catholic priest), Sister Carol Nantongo (a Catholic nun); **Local government:** Fred Byekwaso (formerly Local council chairman Sultan Village Kiyembe Kampala central); **Agriculture:** Late Amos Kaita (formerly a agricultural specialist with the district farm institute Mukono district); **Foreign Affairs:** Late Faustine Wabwire Owe Eriya (former civil engineer with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Uganda); **Forestry/environment:** Late Wilson Namwawo (formerly office superintendent Forest department Uganda); Nawegulo Beatrice (forest supervisor national forest authority Uganda); **Finance:** Late Grace Anne Sana Byeyamu (formerly an Accountant with Inspectorate of government IGG's office Kampala); Christopher Byekwaso (former auditor Kampala city council-KCC), Late Grace Kaita (formerly with Ministry of Finance Uganda), Late Pemima Lutaale (formerly with Ministry of Finance Uganda), Pastor Fred Byekwaso (formerly with Bank of Uganda-retired), Late Grace Nansubuga (former Makerere university senate accountant); Deziderio Wabwire (former accountant Soroti district local government); **Hospitality industry:** Late Henry Makula (former administrator the Uganda hotels limited); **Judiciary:** Late Saulo Musoke (former chief justice of the Republic of Uganda and a Titular head of state in the 1980s); **Mass media/writers:** Kizito Simon Njaye (freelance writer, researcher under the *African Research Consult Uganda Chapter*), Kirigwajjo Peter (BIDA), Wabwire George (BIDA), Moses Kintu (former journalist with the *Red Pepper* Newspaper Uganda), Professor Daniel Okeyo (Senior lecturer and author of many books including *The fish species of East Africa*); **BIDA Chairmen:** Late Sajjabi Ssekulima Sirasi Kavuma (pioneer BIDA chairman), Honorable George Nsamba Kumam Wilson (former BIDA chairman), George Wabwire (Current BIDA chairman) to mention but a few.

3.0 CONTENTIOUS ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

- *Allegiance to the Buganda Kingdom: Are Bakenye still Loyal to the Buganda Kingdom?*
- *Are Bakenye still Baganda?*
- *Do Bakenye have inferiority complex whereby they attempt to hide their true identity?*
- *Why doesn't the Bakenye have their own cultural leader/King?*
- *Can the Bakenye homogenize their language and communicate in one uniform language?*
- *Are intermarriages with other ethnic groups and being multilinguistic among the Bakenye survival strategies?*
- *Can the Bakenye be resettled in one district or region in Uganda?*
- *Do Bakenye belief in dark powers of Satan? Or are they religious? Or do they practice sorcery?·*
- *How can the Bakenye preserve their identity by avoiding to be assimilated into the cultures of other ethnic groups where they have settled down?*

4.0 APPENDICES

THE KABAKA OF BUGANDA'S VISITS TO TESO REGION:

(i) Kabaka Mutesa I's visits to Teso region (Ngora and Kaberamaido in 1956).

(Extracts from BIDA documents and archives 2007).

· Ngora, Teso Region

“The Migration of our great ancestors from Buganda during the 18th Century when they were fleeing to be captured by Kabaka Ssemakookiro after his brother Prince Jjunju to being killed 1764 to 2007.

Bugerere County,

Kayonza Sub County,

P.O.Box 18144,

Kayunga, Uganda.

Date: 12th/10/2007

Right Hon Minister of Buganda,
Ambassador Emmanuel Ssendaula,

We are delighted to come here to see you. They used to call us “*Bakenye*” while we had settled in Teso. The *Itesots* expelled us from their region and robbed us of the following property below: Land, houses, cattle, goats, bicycles, granaries of foodstuff, sliced potatoes, plantations, household items and other items that are used in the homesteads.

In order to stay alive we fled. We are grateful to His Majesty the Kabaka of Buganda Ronald Muwenda Mutebi II, when we introduced ourselves to him, he instructed us to rejoin our former *Baganda* clans for all those *Bakenye* who were remembering their *Baganda* clans.

I SILASI SAJJABI SSEKULIMA KAVUMA I was appointed as the clan head of the 16th lineage of the leopard clan. The clans that we were given are: *Ekkobe* (the yam), *Ngabi* (waterbuck), *Mvubu* (Hippopotamus), *Mamba* (Lungfish), *Mbogo* (Buffalo), *Engo* (Leopard) clans, we were also instructed to plant Fig trees to signify the existence of these clans.

Right Honourable Prime Minister some these grandchildren of *Buganda* are currently residing with their relatives and they cannot afford to buy their own land and settle down. Right Honourable Prime Minister we request you to take our message to His Majesty the Kabaka of *Buganda* Kingdom Ronald Muwenda Mutebi I. We request him to give us land in *Buganda* where we can build and settle. We shall be very grateful to get a feedback to our request.

Right Honourable Prime minister,our great ancestors migrated from *Buganda* fleeing from the internal wars/conflicts between Prince Jjunju and Prince Ssemakookiro ,the two brothers born by Queen Nanteza durng the year 1764 .During that time,we were compelled to migrated and move to differnt areas/countries.The first group of the migrants moved further to Kilimanjaro region and settled down amongst the natives(the *Chagga* tribe),meanwhile the second group of the migrants went to Ankole region and they were named the "*Banyaruguru*" by the natives of this area settling down to occupy the present day *Bunyaruguru* constituency in Bushenyi district of Western Uganda.The third group of migrants is moved further from *Buganda* to Busoga region during the reign of Kyabazinga (King) Wakoli in Bukoli county and on arrival there the natives of this place named them "*visitors*" (*Bakenye*) of Kyabazinga Wakoli who was the King of *Busoga* Kingdom by that time.The king gave the *Bakenye* migrants land to settle down at a place called Kayago in Bukoli making them "visitors" (*Bakenye*).

The some members of this group of *Bakenye* moved further to the Kingdom of Kyabazinga Zibondo in *Bulamogi* .His Majesty Zibondo the King of Busoga Kingdom by that time instructed the *Bakenye* migrants to settle down in the following areas within Kingdom namely: *Ntakwe, Nakuwa, Gadumire, Namugongo, Nawayikoke, Yingo Nashororo*, etc,part of this group of the *Bakenye* migrants moved further to occupy areas of Bugwere region(the present day Pallisa and Budaka districts) and settled down in *Gogonyo,Puti puti,Namisale,Lake Kyoga* areas and *Teso* region.In 1955 the *Itesots* the natives if Teso region where the migrant *Bakenye* had settled own decided to take complaints about the *Bakenye* migrants who had settled down in Ngora,Teso region to Mr.Kamulali the then District Commissioner of *Teso* region.The natives complaned that the *Bakenye* are *Baganda* who had illegally occupied their areas and they requested Mr.Kamulali the District commissioner to intervene and inform the *Bakenye* migrants to leave *Teso* regio and return to Buganda where they came from as soon as possible.

On recieving this complaint about the *Bakenye* migrants occupying land in Teso region,the Mr Kamulali the District commissioner immediately travelled to *Buganda* Kingdom to meet the then King of *Buganda* Kingdom Sir Edward Mutesa I to inform him the about that the native *Itesots* planned to evict his subjects who had migrated and settled down in Teso region for many years.As a result of this,on 4th/02/1956,His Majesty the King of the Kingdom of *Buganda* Sir Edward Mutesa I immediately travelled to Ngora ,Teso region to visit his subjects.The Kabaka of Buganda was a team comprising Mr.Okwerede (the county chief of Ngora by that time),District Commisioner Kamulali,the native *Itesots* and the migrant *Bakenye/Baganda* people.

At the meeting with the visiting King, the native *Itesots* were invited by District Commissioner Kamulali to bring forward their complaints about the migrant *Bakenye/Baganda*. They told the King that these migrant *Bakenye* are *Baganda*. They requested the King to inform his subjects to leave their area and go back to *Buganda* where they came from because they had occupied their land and other areas in the *Teso* region illegally.

After carefully listening to the complaint raised by native *Itesots*, the visiting King of *Buganda* then convened a meeting with the leaders of the migrant *Bakenye/Baganda* who had settled down in *Ngora, Teso* region. These leaders were namely: Reverend Yonosani Lutale Mwanje, Erukana Mutebi and James Kintu.

All the *Bakenye*/grandchildren of *Buganda* living in *Teso* region gathered together and built for the visiting King of *Buganda* a Royal shelter (*Lubiri*) where the visiting King spent that night. According to the *Buganda* culture, when a King visits his subjects in a particular area or within his Kingdom, it is their duty of his subjects to erect a Royal shelter using the reeds ("*emuli*"-in *Luganda* language) a symbol that signifies the allegiance and respect of the subject to their king. The natives *Itesots* were angered by this action done by the migrants and they kept on wondering how the migrants would construct a Royal shelter for their King on their land.

The King addressed all his subjects who had gathered to welcome and meet him amid jubiliations/ululations. The King is said to have asked his subjects why they had migrated from their home land *Buganda* and settled down in *Teso* region. They replied to him that they have migrated because of the war/conflicts which were there by that time in the *Buganda* Kingdom between the two Princes Jjunju and Ssemakookiro. The King then asked whether all his subjects were present at this meeting. The subjects informed him that another group of his subjects had moved further from *Teso* region and had settled in *Lango* region.

At this juncture the King then requested his subjects the *Bakenye/Baganda* to prepare to return to their homeland *Buganda* without delay and promised to offer every male *Muganda/Mukenye* who managed to return to his Kingdom 10 hectare of land upon which to settle down with their families and all returning males should be able to pay tax to the *Buganda* Kingdom. The King's land to be distributed to the returning migrant *Bakenye* is located at *Bugerere* (the present day *Kayunga* and *Mukono* districts). The king added that in case the returning *Bakenye/Baganda* occupy all the king's land located at *Bugerere*, more land is located at *Ssinga* (the present *Kiboga* and *Kyankwanzi* districts). The meeting ended and king then bade farewell to his subjects (*Bakenye/Baganda*) after addressing them and returned to his palace at *Mengo* in the *Buganda* Kingdom.

Right Honourable Prime Minister we request you to take our message to His Majesty the King of *Buganda* Kingdom Ronald Muwenda Mutebi II that we are requesting for a special representative to mobilize all the great grandchildren of *Buganda/Bakenye/Baganda* who had left *Buganda* Kingdom and settled down for many years in different parts of Uganda and beyond and now have returned to their homeland *Buganda*. We are going to convince all our people to come back home.

·(ii) Kabaka Mutesa I visits Kaberamaido, Teso region:

(Extracts from BIDA documents and archives 2007).

On 28th/July/1956, His Majesty the King of *Buganda* Sir Edward Mutesa I left his Kingdom to visit Teso region for the second time, this time around Kaberamaido where some of his subjects had settled after migrating from the Buganda Kingdom.

On arrival, visiting King was welcomed by the leaders of the *Baganda/Bakenye* migrants namely: Hajji Sowedi Kayongo, Lutaya Yonasani and others. All the King's subjects from Teso and Lango regions gathered to meet and welcome their King to the area with joy and jubilation. They went ahead to construct for the king a Royal shelter ("*Lubiri*") made of reeds ("*emuli*") where he would spend a night as a cultural norm of the *Baganda/Bakenye* people, although natives of these areas the *Langi* and the *Kumam* were not impressed by this action of the *Baganda/Bakenye* migrants constructing a shelter (*Lubiri*) for their king in their area, all the preparations to host the King went on as scheduled. The natives wondered how these migrants could construct a shelter for their king on their land.

The King spoke to his migrant subjects requesting them to return back home to *Buganda* where they had come from, and he promised that every male *Muganda/Mukenye* man who returned to his Kingdom and a tax payer in the *Buganda* Kingdom will be given 10 hectares of land to settle in *Buganda* on the King's land that is located at Bugerere (the present day *Kayunga* and *Mukono* districts). He added that in case the returning *Bakenye/Baganda* occupy all the King's land located at *Bugerere*, there is another land of the King located at *Ssinga* (the present *Kiboga* and *Kyankwanzi* districts). The king then bade farewell to his subjects (*Bakenye/Baganda*) after addressing them and return to his palace at Mengo in the *Buganda* Kingdom.

This letter was authored and signed by my maternal grandfather Sajjabi Sekulima Silasi Kavuma, a mukenyee, a Buganda Kingdom loyalist and founder and the first chairman of BIDA (Bakenye Isaanga Development Association - an umbrella organization bring together all the Bakenye people in Uganda and beyond).

(BIDA archives, 2007: The Kabaka of Buganda visits to Teso region, unpublished document).

(iii) An article that appeared in the New Vision dated 13th/10/1990 entitled “PROTECT BAKENYE CULTURE” Authored by Kizito Simon Njaye, Kampala.

The Editor,
New Vision Newspapers,
P.O.Box 9815,
Kampala,
Uganda

Sir, allow me to say something concerning the *Bakenye* community in Uganda.

The *Bakenye* are Bantu speaking group who speak a unique dialect called *Lukenye*. Their main economic activity was and is still fishing besides farming and agriculture and cattle keeping. Most of the *Bakenye* settled around the interlacustrine regions of Uganda especially around Lakes Kioga, Victoria, Albert and smaller lakes.

They are thought to have emigrated from large islands in Lake Victoria such as Ssese, Buvuma etc. This was during Kabaka Jjunju's regime around the 17th century. They had a King called Ssemakookiro.

They might have emigrated due to internal conflicts, famine, in search of good fishing grounds and probably due to wild animals.

One group of the *Bakenye* probably moved from the Islands of Lake Victoria through *Buganda, Busoga, Bukedi* up to *Teso* region in Eastern Uganda meanwhile other continued their journey to Kenya around Lake Victoria shores of Kisumu and Sio Port.

In *Samia* land, the *Samia* people called them visitors *abahenye* hence the name of the tribe *Bakenye*. They are said also to derive their tribal name from their fishing activities of their predecessors who used to fish while grunting *okukenyera*, hence the name *Bakenye*.

From the intellectual point of view the *Bakenye* have also taken up professional courses and some of them are prominent government/private servants.

These include Dr. Boniface Magino Wancha UN representative and also attached to Kenyatta National Hospital (RIP), Hon. Muhammed Mayanja MP for Pallisa district Uganda, Engineer Faustine Kifuko Wabwire Uganda Prisons (RIP), Dr. Andrew Muwanika working in Botswana, Mr. Augustes Musana working with ESAMI Arusha Tanzania (RIP), Ms Anne Sana UNIDATA Nairobi Kenya (RIP), Hellen Alibayaggade with Cash and Carry Company, Kampala etc.

The *Bakenye* today are found settled all over the country but mostly concentrated around the watered areas of *Buganda, Busoga, Lango, Teso, Bunyoro, Ankole* etc but those of the Eastern part of the country were displaced in the early 1980's by the wars and insurgency that erupted in that region by anti-government forces, which forced the *Bakenye* to re-migrate and settle down in other parts of the country and beyond.

The *Bakenye* speak a distinct language with a different accent from other Bantu speaking ethnic groups in the region. We hereby call upon the NRM government through the minister concerned to:

- To improve on the welfare of the *Bakenye*,
- To provide free education to children of the *Bakenye* whose parents were displaced in Teso region during the insurgency;
- To resettle the *Bakenye* in one district,
- To institute *Lukenyi* language in the mass media so that we can organize our people and protect our culture,
- To protect our rights under the new constitution of Uganda.

(This letter appeared in the New Vision dated 13th October, 1990 page 10, and was authored by Kizito Simon Njaye).

4.0 CONCLUSION

It is true the *Baganda* ethnic group migrated from the Katanga region as part of the Bantu group probably around the 15th century and crossed and settled around the interlacustrine region of Uganda.

There are two groups of *Baganda* namely the Island *Baganda* (the *Abakunta, Abasese, Abanulanyanja, Bakenye* who are the fishers who are said to have migrated from central *Buganda* and settled on the various Islands of Lakes Victoria, Kyoga, Albert and rivers in the 17th century for the reasons stated above),

The Mainland *Baganda* who lead sedentary lifestyle of farming and doing business. Both groups of the *Baganda* are Bantu speaking with a common "ntu" suffix in most of their words when they speak and converse. With the passage of time since the onset of the migrations of these fishing *Baganda* who moved out of *Buganda* and were welcomed by other native ethnic tribes in other parts of the country as "visitors" *Abakenye, Bakenye* in Uganda and *Abakhenye* in Kenya, it can be inferred that these *Baganda* after assimilations and absorption within other native ethnic groups metamorphosed in terms of their culture and began to imitate the host native ethnic group cultures whenever they settled.

The *Bakenye* are also said to be related to a numbers of ethnic groups in the region ,namely the *Banyuruguru* and *Batagyenda* in Western Uganda,the *Abasuba,Abakuria,Abalagoli* in Kenya ,*Abakuria,Abakerewe,Hai* in Tanzania.

It is for this reason that the *Bakenye* of Uganda,Kenya and Tanzania together with the above mentioned kins /relatives have decided to document their identity,origin and history so as to trace their “*roots*” and preserve, pass this information to the future generations,their children’s children, and their posterity.

It can also be noted that the migrations of the *Bakenye* is ongoing and continuous up to date as they are still on the move. This is due to a numbers of factors among them political, socio economic, search for fertile fishing /farming grounds, adventure, employment opportunities, and international deployments and for further studies.

The research about the *Bakenye* people of East Africa and beyond is ongoing geared towards the deep understanding of all the aspects of this minority Bantu speaking fish and water loving ethnic group and to unveil their uniqueness and characteristics on how they have survived over time while living among the native host communities in Uganda, the region and beyond.

DEDICATION:

*I dedicate all this work to my beloved family especially my beloved wife **Restituta Joseph Mushi Mdawa**, my late father **Faustine Wabwire Kifuko**, my mother **Veronica Namusana Naluboowa**, my late grandfather **Sajjabi Sekulima Silasi Kavuma**, the **BAKENYE ISAANGA DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (BIDA)** and **Professor Okeyo Daniel** to offer his precious time, allow me to collaborate and participate in the process of writing a book on the titled "**History of the Bakenye of East Africa region**", by providing him with information which he is helping us in compilation.*

May God Bless the Professor and our project to materialize.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Mr. **Kizito Simon Njaye** is a *Mukenye* by tribe, a teacher, author, an environmental, human resources, trainer and conservation management specialist by profession. He was born 54 years ago and raised in Teso region, the Eastern part of Uganda around the shores of Lake Kyoga. My father the **Late Faustine Wabwire Kifuko** (of the Waterbuck “*Ngabi*” clan) was a Civil Engineer with the Uganda Prisons and my mother **Veronica Namusana Naluboowa** (of the Leopard “*Engo*” clan) a housewife she still living. During the insurgency in the 1980’s in the Teso region Simon and his nine siblings/family migrated and settled in Kayunga district in *Buganda* region.

Simon has always been at the forefront to champion and advocate for the rights of the *Bakenye* people of Uganda and he is a member of **BIDA (Bakenye Isanga Development Association)** an NGO that is bringing and uniting all the *Bakenye* people in Uganda, the region and the diaspora.

Simon has also participated in this year’s submission of stories about the *Bakenye* in Uganda to Professor Okeyo Daniel a *Mukenye* based in South Africa in the project to write a book about the *History of the Bakenye in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania*, which is on going.

Simon holds a Post graduate Diploma in Education of Makerere University, a Bachelor of Science in Wildlife Health and Management of Makerere University, a Diploma in wildlife management of College of African Wildlife Management Moshi Tanzania, Certificate in Forestry of Nyabyeya Forestry College Masindi, Uganda and several national and international certificates in different fields/disciplines of study.

After school, Simon has worked with both the government organisations and the private sector and currently he is employed as a Human Resources Specialist with G4S Secure Solutions one of the leading provider of risk and security management solutions worldwide.

Simon is a prolific writer, reader and researcher and has authored several articles on topical issues, and his work has been published in different mass and social media platforms both locally and at international level. Some of the articles authored include the following:

- *A fishing and water loving minority tribe: The Bakenye of Uganda, East Africa and Beyond*, Published on 28th June, 2022

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/fishing-water-loving-minority-tribethe-bakenye-uganda-njaye/>

· GREEN OUR WORLD, Published on 20th May,2022, a project idea write up, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/greenourworld-uganda-kizito-simon-njaye-1f/>

· The politics of presidential succession: Is Uganda ready for a female or male military president ? ,Published on 26th April 2022,

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/politics-presidential-succession-uganda-ready-female-civilian-njaye/>

· Uganda: How can we best remember our fallen VVIPs(Very Very Important Persons)?,Published on 4th April 2022, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/ugandahow-can-we-best-remember-our-fallendeparted-vvipsvery-njaye/>

· Politics in the corridors of Parliament: Who will replace the late Right Honorable Jacob L'Okori Oulanyah as the Speaker of the Uganda Parliament? Published on 24th March 2022, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/politics-corridors-parliament-who-replace-late-rt-hon-njaye/>

· Uganda: Is the health system dysfunctional? Published on 27th February 2022, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/uganda-health-care-system-dysfunctional-kizito-simon-njaye-njaye/>

· What measures has the government of Uganda put in place to address the issue of teenage pregnancies among girls of school going ages? Published on 30th January 2022, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/what-measures-has-government-uganda-put-place-address-njaye/>

· Political succession in Uganda: Who will succeed President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni after he retires from active politics? Published on 27th January 2022, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/political-succession-uganda-who-succeed-president-yoweri-njaye/>

· Kayunga District: Was the district chairman(LC 5) election free and fair? Published 18th December 2021,

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<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/should-government-uganda-make-covid-19-vaccinations-compulsory-njaye/>

· *Smooth transfer of power in Malawi is great* ,Published on 1st July,2020in *Monitor Newspapers Uganda*,

<https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/oped/letters/smooth-transfer-of-power-in-malawi-is-great-1897636>

· *Slums in Uganda*, a video clip published on 28th May 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ghPcitP7Opw>

· *The cardinal role of Close Circuit Television (CCTV) in security management, a video clip*, published on 28th May 2019,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzNoaOu3nc4>

· *We want peace after elections*, Published on 12th February 2006, *New Vision Newspapers*, and Uganda.

<https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1154597/peace-elections-war>

· *Protect Bakenye Culture*, Published on 13th October 1990 in the *New Vision Newspapers Uganda*,

www.newvision.co.ug/archives/letters/october1990

Simon is married to **Restituta Mushi Joseph Mdawa** a Tanzanian and a *Chagga* by tribe from Kilimanjaro region,blessed with 5 children(3 daughters and 2 sons) and 3 grandchildren.

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