

## INVENTORY FORM

**NAME OF COMMUNITY:** Bakonzo

**Date:** 22/02/2021

### Background Information

Name of respondent	Status/role	Gender	Age	Location	Date and Time
1. Kyiringabakwe Donia	Spiritual leader	Male	72	Bulyambaghu	22/2/2021
2. Asa Mbaragha	Ridge leader	Male	73	Kasangali	9:00 am - 1:00pm
3. Justus Muheka	Chieftain	Male	65	Basecamp village, Kasese	23/2/2021
4. Mr. John Baptist Bukombi	LC1 Chairperson	Male	60	Kilembe	2:00pm - 4:15pm

1. **Facilitator(s):** 1. Mr. Nyakango Thembo Eri, Community Engagement Practitioner  
2. Ms Masika Ronah, Deputy Project Coordinator

### PROOF OF FREE, PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSENT OF RESPONDENTS

We have thoroughly informed the respondent(s) about this ICH inventorying exercise and its importance and (s)he has freely given us consent. (*Refer to consent form No. 5,6*).

### SECTION 1: IDENTIFICATION OF THE ELEMENT

**1. What is the name of the element, as used by this community?**

The hot springs healing tradition of the Bakonzo

**2. For someone from outside this community, how would you briefly explain this title? (Probe for the domain under which the element falls.)**

The Bakonzo have for long understood that immersing the body in naturally hot water is not only splendidly relaxing but has healing benefits as well. Because the Bakonzo inhabit an area on the slopes and below the Rwenzori Mountains formed as a result of uplifting caused by tectonic movements responsible for the formation of the western rift, they have several hot springs but the most popular ones are *Embugha* (also known as *Rwagimba* by the Batooro) and, *Kyiriba Kyathumba* (also known as *Kibenge*).

*The Embugha/Rwagimba hot springs*

The *Embugha* hot springs are located on the banks of River *Rwimi* (*Lhume* for the Bakonzo), at the border of Kasese and Bunyangabo districts, near the Fort Portal-Kasese Road. The hot springs are believed to have both physical and spiritual healing powers, good for various skin diseases and stomach ailments, fever and infertility in both men and women. *Embugha* means “trouble” and the hot springs provide a place for problem solving. *Rwagimba* means “being carried”, referring to patients who are carried to the hot springs, get healed and leave walking and unsupported. The hottest spring is called *Kanyungu-Kabera* or *Kanyungu Kasero* (the boiling pot). The King of Tooro, Rukiidi II, was one of the ardent visitors to this site. He would be carried by his subjects on their shoulders to spend days lying in the warm waters. A designated 'royal' stone in one of the ponds was reserved as a seat for his personal use.

Spiritual leaders come to the springs to consult, especially in times of health pandemics and natural catastrophes related to climate change: landslides, earthquakes and rivers in flood. People also come to the site to cleanse themselves from bad omens. Strict protocols must be followed when visiting the hot springs: women and men, for instance, cannot bathe naked in the same pool. It is believed that *Endyoka*, the god of the water, would cause infertility to the culprits. Immorality and randy behaviour around the site are prohibited for the same reason.

Before the floods, there were 20 hot springs on the Bunyangabo side and 18 on the Kasese side. Most have now been washed away by the flooding river, leaving only three on the Bunyangabo side. This limits the Bakonzo’s access to the site, despite its cultural significance to them, as crossing the river can be dangerous. On the other hand, flooding has brought large rocks down the valley. The site is also dotted with wooden seats for visitors.

### *Kyiriba Kyathumba*

Located on the Kasese-Kilembe road, *Kyiriba Kyathumba* hot springs are said to possess healing powers for skin diseases, bone-setting and general body weakness. Traditionally, spiritual leaders, traditional bonesetters and ridge leaders cleanse themselves before and after performing cultural practices like bone-setting and worshipping. Members of the community requiring cleansing, for example, to avert the implication of mishaps like killing a pregnant animal also wash themselves here after undergoing cleansing rituals. For it was a taboo to kill a pregnant animal.

Taboos protecting the site from desecration include the prohibition of immorality that would culminate into death or infertility of the culprit or their relatives, and the mentioning by name of the water god while at the hot spring, as this would amount to evoking them.

### **3. Apart from this community, which other community (ies) practice this element?**

Besides the Bakonzo and Batooro, the hot springs are visited and used by other nationals such as the Baganda, Banyankore, etc, as well as people from other countries such as Kenya, DR Congo, Tanzania.

### **4. Where is this element practiced/performed? (Probe for special venues).**

Embugha: The hot springs are located on the banks of river *Lhume/Rwimi*, which serves as the boundary between Kasese and Bunyangabo districts, lying between Bulyambaghu village (on Kasese side) and Kangoloholo village (on Bunyangabo side).

Kyiriba Kyathumba: It is located on Kilembe road, in the valley of River Nyamwamba Base Camp village, Kasese Municipality, Bukangama Butale Chiefdom.

## **5. Briefly tell me how this element is performed /practiced.**

This element is practiced through the following ways:

- Bathing in the hot water
- Body massage using the hot water and herbs
- Ritual performance by spiritual leaders at the sites. Birds and animal sacrifices are made.

## **SECTION 2: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ELEMENT**

### **1. a) What are the materials/implements/tools/props used while performing/practicing this element?**

The materials/implements/tools used while performing this element include: hot water, musical instruments such as xylophones, drums, flute, shakers and medicinal herbs. Chicken, goats and sheep are sacrificed, and local brew is used during the process.

### **b) Are the materials/implements/tools/props easily available in the community? (Probe to establish whether these materials are freely available in the community or are bought from far and whether they are in abundance or scarce.)**

The materials are easily available in the community at an affordable cost.

### **2. a) Are there any special costumes/clothing used while performing/practicing this element?**

Yes, there is special clothing and costumes required such as backcloth, special animal skins, beads, medicinal runner-plants, ankle bells and raffia skirts.

### **b) Are the costumes/clothing easily available in the community? (Probe to establish whether these costumes are freely available in the community or are bought from far and whether they are in abundance or scarce).**

Some costumes are still easily available except animal skins.

### **3. Which are the other ICH elements associated with this element?**

Other ICH elements associated with this element include:

- Ritual for blessings
- Sacrifice for peace during times of civil strife
- Ritual to shed-off or bathe-off bad omen

### **4. Which languages are used while performing/practicing this element**

On the Kasese side, it is the Lhukonzo language that is used while performing the element, while on the Bunyangabo side, it is the Rutooro language.

**5. Is there any special language and phrases used in performing/practicing this element?**

The spiritual leader use proverbs, parables, hidden language in mentioning the names of gods and human activities related to sex.

**6. How did this element originate? (Probe for the individual who is perceived to have started the element, where and when the element is perceived to have started.)**

*Embugha:* It was started by the Muhira clan leader who led a group of his family from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) at a place called Mbaghu, “literary meaning a type of yam called *omumbaghu*.” The people around called them *abalya mbaghu*, hence, the name of *Bulyambaghu*. The leader was spiritually led to the spot to conduct healing exercises and perform rituals.

*Kyiriba Kyathumba:* It was started by the Bahira clan who came from *Bulyambaghu*.

**SECTION 3: PERSONS AND INSTITUTIONS INVOLVED WITH THE ELEMENT**

**1. Who in this community performs/practices this element? (Probe for name(s), age, gender, location social status, and/or professional category).**

This element is practiced by mainly the sick but increasingly, there are people who come around for leisure. The rituals are led by the ridge leader who also doubles as the spiritual leader. His name is Kyiringabakwe Donia, aged about 60 and male.

**2. Are there any other people who are concerned with the element? If so, who are they and what is their role in the performance/practice of the element? (Probe for name(s), age, gender, location social status, and/or professional category)**

Yes, there are other people concerned with the element. The ritual performance involves other concerned players such as drummers and dancers. Also, the first wife of the spiritual leader is the one tasked with the responsibility of cooking food for the ceremony.

**3. What are the customary values and practices governing the element?**

The customary values and practices governing the element include taboos:

- Avoiding abusing the site by engaging in sexual activities while at the site
- Avoiding carrying out agricultural activities at sacred areas
- The performance of a ritual must include a black chicken

**4. In which ways is the element passed on to the young generation? (Probe for who transmits the element).**

- The ridge/spiritual leadership is hereditary and is by choice of the spirits. The reigning leader makes sure he mentors his successor.

- The element is also passed on orally through cross-generational dialogues between elders and the young.

**5. Which organizations participate in performing/practicing and/or promoting the element and how?**

The organisations that participate in performing/practicing and/or promoting the element include:

- The cultural institution of Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu, right from the subjects to the ridge/spiritual leader, chieftain and other cultural leaders who are involved in carrying out the rituals. Community members participate by contributing materials for sacrifice and food to eat.

**SECTION 4: STATE OF THE ELEMENT: VIABILITY**

**1. What challenges and constraints have the community experienced in performing/practicing the element?**

The challenges include:

- The high costs of the materials to use
- The negativity attached to cultural practices as a result of western religious influence
- Civil strife and political interference/influence, for instance, at the peak of the rift between the central government and the OBR cultural institution
- Climate change as a result of increased human activities that have had negative impact on the sites

**2. What challenges and constraints have the community experienced in passing on the element from one generation to another?**

- There is a generation gap between the young and old as a result of young people moving to the cities and increased mortality rate of the elderly.
- There is significantly reduced quality family time as parents who are the custodians of cultural knowledge are busy fending for their homes.
- The influence of western culture, education, religion and globalisation has also affected the interest of young people in their culture. They regard it as backwardness.

**3. Which measures have been taken in safeguarding the element?**

- An association for each respective site were formed to work as platforms to rally the communities to safeguard the sites, regularly de-silt the hot springs after floods
- The presence of cultural leaders ensures that the site is safeguarded and rituals are performed
- The acknowledgment and enforcement of taboos
- The association also carries out community sensitizations about the importance of the site

**4. Which other measures should be taken to safeguard the element in future?**

- Empowering landowners surrounding the sites to plant vegetation so as to reduce soil erosion and flooding.

- Strengthen the cultural aspect of transmitting knowledge to the young ones, packaged in a way that is enticing to the young people.

## **SECTION 5: DATA GATHERING AND INVENTORYING**

### **1. How would you want this information to be used?**

It should be considered important archived information

Information should be published for easy access by tourist, cultural and developmental organisations so as to improve use and preserve the heritage sites

Writers, publishers, researchers should be helped to access this information and publicise it.

### **2. Would you like this information to be shared with other communities?**

Yes, it can be shared to popularise the heritage of the Bakonzo.

## **SECTION 6: REFERENCES TO LITERATURE, DISCOGRAPHY, AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS, ARCHIVES**

### **1. Are there books or any other documents written about the element? If so, where can I access them?**

Not applicable. The only record about the site is with CCFU.

### **2. Are there any audio or video recordings about the element? If so, where can I access them?**

Not applicable