

INVENTORY FORM

NAME OF COMMUNITY: **Bakozzo**

Date: **24/02/2021**

Background Information

Name of respondent	Status/role	Gender	Age	Location	Date and Time
Masereka Augustine Mbalibulha	Spiritual leader	Male	68	Kasese town	24/2/2021 10:00am- 1:30pm
Kahunza Pady Kabyanga	Ridge leader	Male	60	Kasese town	24/2/2021 10:00am- 1:30pm
Musule Stanley Joshua	Spiritual leader	Male	63	Kasangali	24/2/2021 3:00- 5:30pm
Bithano Moses	LC1 Chairperson	Male	55	Kasangali	24/2/2021 3:00- 5:30pm
Justus Muheka	Chieftain	Male	65	Kanyampara	20/2/2021 2:00- 4:30pm
Baluku Huseni	Chairperson LC1	Male	68	Kanyampara	20/2/2021 2:00- 4:30pm
Erikana Baluku	Cultural leader	Male	52	Kanyampara	20/2/2021 2:00- 4:30pm

- 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. __1,2,3,4__*).

SECTION 1: IDENTIFICATION OF THE ELEMENT

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

The Bakonzo ritual cleansing of ridges and waterbodies

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 strong attachment to water bodies, especially confluences and waterfalls. Their cosmology places Nyamuhanga, the creator who made the snow (nzururu) at the top. Legend has it that Nzururu is the father of the spirits *Kithasamba* and *Nyabibuya* who are responsible for human life, well-being and continuity. *Kithasamba*, who is believed to live in the glaciated mountain peaks, is a giant force controlling the natural environment and the lives of all the mountain people. The Bakonzo interpret the snow as the frozen sperm of *Kithasamba*, who carries out the fertilisation of earth and Bakonzo society by the yearly snowmelt, which sustains the rivers flowing off the Rwenzori Mountains. *Kithasamba* has several spirits and one of them is *Ndyoka*, the water spirit. It is for this reason that river confluences and waterfalls are treated with such reverence that it is thought to be home of this spirit. Whenever there are calamities such as floods, drought, famine, etc, the Bakonzo do ritual cleansing of the ridges and rivers and usually this cleansing ends at a confluence where the ritual broom is thrown into the water. This practice is done at several places but the most outstanding is at the *Mulyambuli*, *Zwirangya* and *Nyamwamba* confluence, *Enterano* confluence, *Akasesa* swamp and *Musalhalha w'Ibugha* river valley.

Mulyambuli, Nzwirangya and Nyamwamba confluence

This is where three rivers - Mulyambuli, Nzwirangya and Nyamwamba - meet inside the Rwenzori Mountains National Park. It is where water-related rituals to appease the water god, *Ndyoka*, are performed, so that floods do not occur or when too many people are drowning. Tradition says whenever an impending calamity (such as floods, storms and landslides), people coming near Nzwirangya river see the signs: invisible beings thrash and chase people, who then report to spiritual leaders to hastily perform rituals to avert the calamities. Such rituals start far in the mountains and end at the confluence. Other important rituals performed at this confluence included a ritual for peace, in case of civil strife and good harvest. Whenever there was civil strife in the region, ridge leaders went to the confluence to pray for peace. To kickstart the planting season, crop seeds would be brought for cleansing at the confluence before they were distributed to people for planting. Before moving far on the trail, mountain climbers branch off at the confluence and offer sacrifices to the spirits to bless their journey.

Taboos related to the site include performing a ritual after one has had a conjugal engagement; sexual immorality which would otherwise cause death, abortion or infertility; and crossing at the main crossing point of Nzwirangya River when one has engaged in a fight, as one would get beaten by invisible beings or drown. It is also taboo for a woman to go for a ritual at the confluence, not even the very high-ranking, experienced female spiritual leaders like *embandwa* (or *Nyarubandwa*). It is also a taboo to mention the name of *Kithasamba*, the chief god of the Rwenzori Mountain, and *Ndyoka*, the god of the waters, at the confluence when making rituals if you are not a spiritual leader; as lots of lives would subsequently be lost.

Enterano ritual cleansing

Following river Rwimi/Lhume downstream from Rwagimba hot springs is the *Enterano*, also known as *Erisanganiro and Nterano*, meaning “meeting place” in Lhukonzo and Rutooro respectively, reflecting the cultural significance of the site to both communities.

The name is derived from its location at the confluence of two rivers: Rwimi and Rwiho, and the sacred ridges: Mihani and Kamukyi Mundere. The confluence has a point with hot waters believed to be part of the Rwagimba hot springs. Originally, this hot spring was visible but has since been silted by the floods. It is said that Mihani Hill is where the Batwa (forest people) first lived (within the Kitara region) before crossing to neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) as its first occupants. That is why the hill was originally called Kabatwa hill. The name is said to have changed following the Batwa’s departure, with people starting to call it Mihani Hill, following the name of a nearby market.

Cultural and spiritual leaders organise cleansing and god-appeasing ceremonies at this site whenever there are natural calamities such as drought, landslides, earthquakes, storms or floods. The broom used in one of the processes is placed in the river at *Enterano* signifying the end of the exercise.

The Bakonzo saying, “*Enterano ni buthatsimbwa*” (the confluence is a no-sticking zone), perpetuates the taboo of never intentionally putting a walking stick in the *Enterano-Erisanganiro*; as that act is reserved for spiritual leaders during the ritual of supplicating with water gods to release the corpse of a person who drowns in the river. Tradition says whoever tests this tradition drowns at the confluence. It is also a taboo to mention the water god’s name while performing rituals. While performing rituals, people, use code language and parables such as “*oko musya wa Lhume kuli mbeho nyinyi*” (in the valley of Lhume river, there is a lot of coldness) meaning at the *Enterano* there are many spirits.

Akasesa ritual cleansing

Located in the heart of Kasese town, next to Bakoko Sawuriyako Market and the Kasese Catholic Diocese, *Akasesa* is significant because it is this swamp from which the town and district are named Kasese, a mispronunciation allegedly by foreigners, especially constructors of the railway line to Kilembe.

The swamp is believed to be the dwelling place of *Kalisya*, the god responsible for domestic and wild animals among the Bakonzo. Therefore, rituals for the protection of animals, and concerning hunting and grazing are performed at this site. Also done at the site (as well as at the Kyiriba Kyathuma site) is *erighanga omundu*, the Kikonzo ritual of cleansing for people who would have erred in dealing with animals, for example mistakenly killing a pregnant animal.

The swamp is a habitat for wildlife, especially marabou storks, leaving the locals referring to it as *Akasesa k'Esyokaroli* (a small swamp for marabou storks). Folklore is rife with tales of hunters who came from the hills of Kitabu village to hunt for wild game, especially during drought when the animals gathered here for water. To date, the swamp is a good birding hotspot.

Musalhalha w'Ibugha medicinal knowledge and resources

Musalhalha w'Ibugha is a sacred confluence of two rivers: Nyamughasani and Kanyambara, found in Kinyamaseke Town Council, Kasese District in Muyina Chiefdom. “*Musalhalha w'Ibugha*” is literally translated as “a fall for talking”, meaning a place where one “regurgitates or tells the gods” his or her problems, swapping the retch for solutions that come by way of blessings.

It is home to a sizeable number of medicinal plants. The confluence is another home for *Ndyoka* (the spirit of the waters), as well as *Nyabingyi*, the god of wealth. Spiritual leaders also come here for consultation and rituals in times of pandemics and natural catastrophes related with climate change like drought, landslides, earthquakes, storms and sudden river flooding to cleanse ridges in the mountains. Prayers for health, hazards, for blessings in terms of wealth, human fertility, and good harvest in terms of crop, animal farming and fishing are also made at the site. *Omuhambo*, the ritual broom is placed at this confluence.

With the guidance of the spiritual leader, herbalists collect herbal medicine from the bush and trees around the site. The site is known for medicinal plants such as *embina*, *omutoho*, *emilhonge* (bamboo), *omusebere*, *ekyitakafiri*, *emisasa*, *emibale*, *akakororo*, *erikubya*.

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

The sites are visited and used by other ethnic groups such as the Baganda, Banyankore as well as people from the neighboring countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo, and tourists, especially those hiking the Rwenzori Mountains.

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

Mulyambuli, Nzwirangya and Nyamwamba: It is located in the Rwenzori Mountains National Park at the confluence of the three rivers.

Enterano: It is located at Mihani hill in the confluence of rivers Lhume/ Rwimi and Rwiho in Kasangali, Kasese districts, Katwabwemi Chiefdom.

Akasesa: It is situated adjacent to Sawuriyako Market in the centre of Kasese town, Central Division in Kasese District, Bukangama-Butale Chiefdom.

Musalhalha w'Ibugha: This is located at the confluence of rivers Kanyampara and Nyamugasani.

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

It is practiced through ritual performances by spiritual leaders. The rituals involve use of herbs and sacrifices of birds and animals.

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: 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
- Rituals for women's fertility
- Rituals cleansing the ridges and stopping the floods

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

Lhukonzo 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.)

Mulyambuli, Nzwirangya and Nyamwamba: It was started by the Bakonzo ancestors. The leader was spiritually led to the spot to conduct healing exercises and perform rituals.

Enterano: Before moving to the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Batwa started the idea of using the site for offering sacrifices to appease the spirits. Subsequently, a spiritual leader took over the site to lead the ritual performances.

Akasesa: It started with hunters from Nyakabingo Hills performing rituals here. The leader was spiritually led to the site to perform rituals.

Musalhalha w'Ibugha: Information about this site is not available, however, the story tellers say the last ritual of ridge cleansing was performed in 1982 (when the Omusinga, cultural leader of the Bakonzo, reconciled with the UPC government then). However, there are claims that people still use the spot for similar or the same rituals, privately.

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).

Mulyambuli, Nzwirangya and Nyamwamba: The element is practiced by the spiritual leader, whose name is Mr. Masereka Augustine Mbalibulha, aged 68.

Enterano: The element is practiced by the spiritual leader, whose name is Musule Stanley Joshua, aged 63.

Akasesa: The element is practiced by the spiritual leader, whose name is Masereka Augustine Mbalibulha, aged 68.

Musalhalha w'Ibugha: The element is practiced by the caretaker, Hon. Baluku Erikana. Aged 52, Hon. Baluku is the OBR Minister of Culture, Tourism and Native Administration. The land on which the site is located is owned by a Musongora who has no interest in the cultural aspects of the site.

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. 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.
- Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), a government conservation body charged with managing national parks. Mulyambuli, Nzwirangya and Nyamwamba confluence is located within the Rwenzori Mountains national park.

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?

- The presence of cultural leaders ensures that the site is safeguarded and rituals are performed
- The acknowledgment and enforcement of taboos

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 will be 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