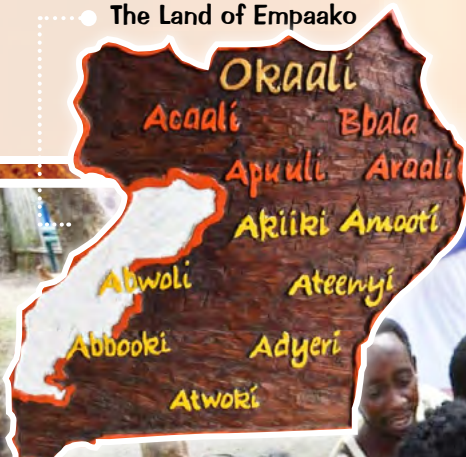


CEREMONIES AND PRACTICES ASSOCIATED WITH EMPAAKO NAMING SYSTEM

The Land of Empaako



Edited by: Atwoki Rwagweri

2019

Produced and Printed with support from UNESCO

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Published by

Engabu Za Tooro (Tooro Youth Platform for Action)

P.O. Box 886, Fort-Portal - Uganda (East Africa)

www.engabuzatooro.or.ug

Printed by

MPK Graphics Ltd.

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The Book designed by

Ms. Ndagire Julian Dianah

ISBN: 978-9970-9852-1-0

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We thank the UNESCO for the co-funding of project UGA-01210 which enabled the development of this book as one of the key results of the project. We acknowledge the technical, advisory and funding support from the State Party in this case represented by Department of Culture and Family Affairs of the Uganda's Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and Uganda National Commission for UNESCO. These institutions were represented by Ms. Juliana Naume Akoryo whose personal commitment on overall programme of safe guarding *Empaako* remains exceptional, Hajjat Hajara Nalubega Abwoli and Mr. Daniel Kaweesa for the full time follow-up of the work that resulted in this publication.

We recognize the invaluable contribution of the community sponsors and fund raisers who demonstrated the spirit of self reliance and mobilized substantial community resources for the implementation of the project that resulted into this book. These were led by Msgr. Peter Kumaraki Araali, Mr. Isaya Kalya Atwoki, Mr. Deogratius Kabagambe Adyeri, Mr. Peter Mugenyi Abbooki, Mr. Peter Kagoro Amooti, Mr. Moses Kigambo Araali, Mr. Clovice Makune Araali, Mr. Amos Mugisa Abwoli, Hon. Alex Ruhunda (MP) Akiiki, Mr. Stephen Alinaitwe Akiiki, Mr. Augustine Byabasajja Amooti, Msgr. Bonaventura Kyaligonza Ateenyi, Rev. Sr. Taddeo Basirigenda Akiiki, Mrs Beatrice Mukancwanga Monday Adyeri, Dan Chwa Rubombora Ateenyi, Mr. Robert Tumuhairwe Araali, Brig. Gen. Ronny Balya Ateenyi, Hon. Mwesige Apuuli, Hon. Tom Butime Ateenyi, Mr. Epafura Mugasa Atwoki, Mr. Emmanuel Basaliza Apuuli, Rt. Rev. Bishop Rauben Kisembo Amooti, Rt. Rev. Robert Muhiirwa Akiiki, the family of Lt. Dr. L. T. Rubongoya among others.

We extend great appreciation to community documentors and coordinators who collected and assembled community knowledge on *Empaako* naming ceremonies which were consolidated into this book. These were led by Stephen Mugabo a.k.a Kijegere Abbooki (Batooro), Allan Bamuha Byakagaba Atwoki (Banyoro), Musasizi Smith Apuuli (Batagwenda), Tusime Robert Amooti, Asimwe Robert Atwoki, Nyakabwa Olive Kiiza Adyeri (Batuku), Kanyoro Xaviour Adyeri, Muhumuza Janet Abwoli, Bazira Guma Christopher Ateenyi (Banyabindi).

We appreciate, in a special way, the input of community sages and custodians of cultural knowledge who became key respondents and provided knowledge that greatly informed the development of this book. These include among others; Rev. Richard Baguma Adyeri, Mrs. Regina K. Rubongoya Nyinabarongo Akiiki (Batooro), Mr. Asaraf Mugenyi Akiiki (Banyoro), Mr. Zaveriyo Byabagambe Ateenyi (Batagwenda), Mr. Cosia Mpaka Madukule Atwoki (Batuku).

Finally, we thank the following people who provided technical services in the process of data collection, processing and production of this book; Mr. Julius Isingoma Amooti (photographer), Mr. John Kintu Amooti (reader), Ms. Suzan Namwanje (secretary), Mrs. Nabbanja Beatrice (secretary), Mr. Kahwa Kansengerwa Abbooki (coordinator).

INTRODUCTION

This book presents a comprehensive documentation in form of text, transcription and photography of the Empaako naming system.

The first chapter introduces five bearer communities of Empaako naming system which have been covered by this research and two chapters that follow bring out the definition, interpretations, translations and theories of the origin of Empaako naming system as a cultural practice.

Chapters four and five dwell on description, preparations and performances of Empaako naming rituals and ceremonies and explanation of the underlying spirituality and social philosophy in five Empaako naming communities.

Chapter six expands on the social functions of Empaako names in daily life of the bearers in the interactions with the immediate others in the context of the culture within its community and society. The underlying final meaning and interpretation is also explained.

Both the risks and threats of the entire Empaako practice in the context of the changing religious, social and economic contexts are explained in chapter seven which also articulates the safeguarding measures being undertaken and their emerging results.

This documentation which is also presented in audio-visual formats has reclaimed the hitherto disappearing complex knowledge about Empaako practice and especially its attendant naming rituals and ceremonies and their spiritual and moral meanings and interpretations. The documentation which has been done with massive participation of the bearers, practitioners, custodians and stakeholders has edited the details of the practice especially on naming rituals and perceived meaning in the details of the practical use of Empaako names, in order to adapt the practice to the changing social, economic and religious context of communities. The enduring values, meaning and practices in this heritage have been consolidated and promoted while the meanings and actions that have been outlived by time and the changing contexts have not been given much emphasis. Such meanings and actions practiced by some families which have been edited out included those that can be mistaken not to be compliant with fundamental human rights as enshrined in international instruments, those actions which the changing economic and structural contexts render them unpractical and those, actions and meaning which set a sharp conflict with the changing religious context from traditional religions to the emerging modern religions where most of the Empaako bearers are irreversibly moving.

The overall objective of the documentation was to improve the viability of Empaako practice by reclaiming the disappearing knowledge, promoting enduring values and removing distortions so that Empaako naming system as a cultural practice is conveniently transmitted by its bearers to successive generations.

Atwoki Rwagweri
Executive Director- Engabu Za Tooro (2019)

IMPORTANT HERITAGE SYMBOLIC IMAGES



The Land of Empaako



The forty four clans which were mobilised by Engabu Za Tooro in 2012 and petitioned UNESCO through resolutions of their assemblies to inscribe Empaako on the world list of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding



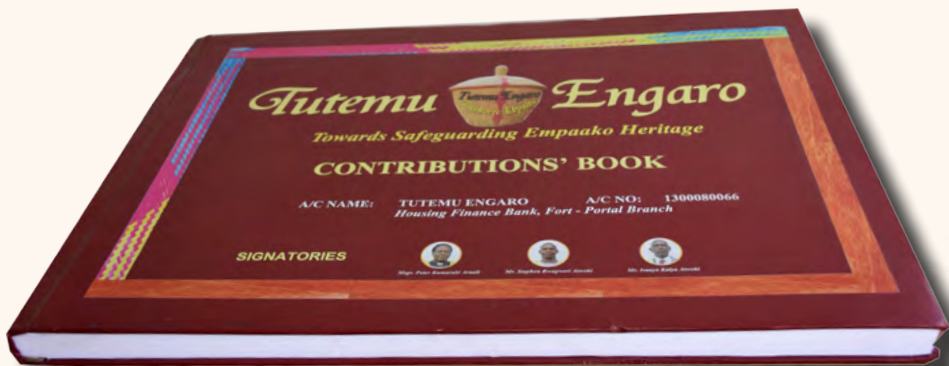
Empaako -UNESCO inscription memorial monument at Empaako Island in the heart of Fort-Portal City



UNESCO-Empaako Inscription Certificate



The twelve Empaako



Empaako Community self-help grand contribution book

CHAPTER ONE:

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCING EMPAAKO COMMUNITIES

a) **The legendary Bunyoro-Kitara Empire**

Empaako practice is part of the shared heritage among the communities which are associated with the legendary Bunyoro Kitara Empire which is the oldest and biggest African-Ancient Empire south of the Sahara.

It is important, therefore to introduce this empire since it is associated with the Empaako communities as a historical and cultural uniting factor.

Bunyoro-Kitara Empire at its zenith stretched from Madi and Bukedi, present day Eastern Uganda to Karagwe in Northern Tanzania and Ituri and Bulenga in the present day Democratic Republic of Congo. This empire is believed to have been established before 200BC and effectively existed up to around 1700AD. (Nyakatura 1999:4)

The Bunyoro-Kitara Empire has been ruled by three dynasties including the Batembuzi (Earliest inhabitants) who established it and had 19 reigns, the Bacwezi who mysteriously withdrew after four reigns and disappeared and were later deified and Babiito who so far have 23 reigns in the current Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom which hosted the headquarters of the former Empire.

b) **Common heritage among the communities of the former Bunyoro-Kitara Empire.**

1. **Common Bantu language**

This is the official language of the Empire and subsequently common to most communities that belonged to that empire. The name of that language has remained a subject of debate up to the present time. What emerged as official language of the empire was Runyamwenge dialect. Every province of the empire had its dialect and mwenge was a centre of Education and civilization of the empire. Children of the royals and chiefs from the entire empire were groomed and trained from Mwenge. This language is currently called Runyoro-Rutooro, combining the names of two kingdoms that were carved out of the provinces that hosted the headquarters of the empire. This language is customized in different communities by minor difference especially in accent. In each community the members adopt a name of the language from the name of the community. Hence among the Batooro community it is Rutooro, among the Banyoro it is Runyoro, among the Batuku it is Ratuku, among the Basongora it is Rusongora, among the Banyambooga it is Runyambooga etc.

2. Common royal traditions

All the communities of the former Bunyoro-Kitara Empire which have chiefdoms and kingship have common royal customs and traditions which originate from the royal history of Bunyoro-Kitara. Such kingships include Bunyoro, Tooro, Busoga, Booga, Buruli etc.

3. Common Oral Traditions

These communities have common oral traditions and expressions like folk stories, legends, marriage traditions etc.

The cultural differences are created by how different communities adapted to different geographical conditions in the region. There are communities that live in mountain areas, the plains, the rain forests, the dry and rocky areas and along the banks of the lakes. Hence there are cultivators, pastoralists, gatherers and fishing communities.

c) Communities of the former Bunyoro-Kitara Empire

1. Background information on these communities

It is not easy to establish, at any particular point, the exact number of communities that constituted Bunyoro-Kitara Empire since it had different geographical and community coverage at different times. Equally the communities that could be influenced by the empire varied at different times and in different degrees. It is also important to note that social groups are not homogeneous and the definition of a community is not fixed and closed. In contemporary time, social and cultural groups keep seceding from initially bigger groups and prefer to stand independently and be described by different names. However, it can be noted that communities which were under Bunyoro-Kitara Empire for some significant time have identifiable common heritage which can be categorized as Bunyoro-Kitara heritage.

The modern communities found in the former Bunyoro-Kitara Empire at its zenith stage are estimated to be about thirty, but in a reducing order these communities have evolved and maintained some common traditions. Some of the common practices practiced by several communities from the former Bunyoro-Kitara Empire is the Empaako naming system. This system is currently practiced by about thirteen communities who include; Banyoro, Batooro, Batagwenda, Batuku, Basongora, Banyabindi, Banyaruguru in Uganda and Banyambooga, Abanyamitego, Abagengere and people of sofa, chomia and Kisenyi all these from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

This particular research and documentation has covered five communities including; Batooro, Banyoro, Batuku, Batagwenda and Banyabindi, all from the western Uganda.

2. Empaako communities covered by this research and documentation

(i) The Banyoro community

This community is the indigenous people domiciled in North Western Uganda along the eastern side of Lake Albert, traditionally called *Mwitanziye*. The Banyoro community form subjects and occupy what is currently called Bunyoro-Kitara kingdom comprised of eight administrative districts of the republic of Uganda including Hoima, Masindi, Buliisa, Kiryandongo, Kibaale, Kikuube, Kagadi and Kakumiro. Banyoro is a traditional nation or kingdom comprised of several ethnically related groups, which are essentially based on the traditional provinces of the kingdom (Masaza). These groups include; Abagahya, Abanyabuyaga, Abagangaizi, Abagungu, Abakobya, Abacope, Abaruuli. The Banyoro people are currently estimated to be 970,000 (UDS: 2016), both living at home and in the Diaspora.

This community hosted the headquarters of the Bunyoro-Kitara Empire and as the epicenter of the history and common traditions among the communities of the Empire.

The Banyoro speak a language which was the official language of the former Bunyoro-Kitara Empire and spoken in several other communities of the former empire. While among the Banyoro community it is called Runyoro and in official communication in Western Uganda, it is called Runyoro-Rutooro.

Bunyoro is considered as a cradle land for several communities in western and Eastern Uganda, Northern Tanzania and Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. The Banyoro are exclusively cultivators and among their cherished traditions is the Empaako naming system.

(ii) The Batooro community

The Batooro are a collection of groups of people from several former provinces (Masaza) of Bunyoro Kitara Empire which congregated in 1830 to form a Tooro kingdom. These groups were connected by the same language, neighbourhood and the common will to break away from Bunyoro kingdom by establishing an independent kingdom of Tooro.

The name 'Tooro' comes from an ancient word "Omutoora" which means a ceremony and "abatoora" meaning a group of people in or set for a ceremony. According to the existing oral tradition, Kiro Muhimba, a son of Ndahura, the first Mucwezi king, when he was on expedition, conquering communities, experienced resistance in all communities but over powered them. He approached a community around the present day *Mpondwe* and *Kazingo* villages where he expected and was prepared for a similar resistance. But he instead found people set for a ceremony to receive him as a hero and crown him their prince. This particular group became known as Batooro or people set for a ceremony instead of war and their language as Rutooro. But this group has been assimilated and

its unique language Rutooro disappeared. But the name was adopted by the neighbouring groups as a uniting name in the kingdom formed by association of the willing groups and adopted the Runyamwenge dialect as official language of the kingdom and therefore Rutooro language.

The community areas based on the traditional provinces (masaza) which formed Tooro as an association of the willing included mwenge, Kyaka, Kibale, Kitagwenda, Bunyangabu, Basongora, Bukonjo, Bwamba and Batuku.

The official and common language is Runyoro-Rutooro localized as Rutooro. This means that Tooro is a name of nationhood or big tribe composed of several culturally related ethnic groups. When someone says I am a mutooro, this is a general identity but there is a particular identity which points to the particular traditional county of Tooro where he/she comes from. Over the years, some of these communities based on traditional counties of Tooro, have been seceding and preferring to stand independent as cultural and administrative entities.

The Bamba and Bakonzo who clearly have very different cultures, in 1976 got separate administration in form of separate districts and there after established their separate cultural institutions in form of kingships, which don't even make reference to Bunyoro-Kitara royal heritage. Other communities like Basongora, Banyabindi and Batuku also increasingly do not reflect allegiance to Tooro as cultural bloc but prefer to consolidate individual cultural names and identity.

The significance of Batooro community in the former Bunyoro-Kitara Empire is that Mwenge which was the most admired and strongest province of Bunyoro-Kitara Empire ended being part of Tooro in the process of the disintegration of the empire. Mwenge was centre of education and civilization and a grazing land for the royal cattle and yet cattle played a significant role in the royal traditions and the whole prestige of the empire.

All the cattle keeping communities ended in the then Tooro kingdom. These communities include Batuku, Banyamwenge, Basongora and people living in Rwamwanga. Most strategic resources for the economy of the Bunyoro-Kitara ended in the independent Tooro. These included minerals like salt at Katwe, Copper at Kilembe and cement in Hima in addition to good agricultural land in areas of Bunyangabu, Kibale, Kitagwenda, Burahya and Bwamba.

Batooro community reflects a mix of three cultural blocks, the royal culture, the cultivators' culture and cattle keeping culture. All these are reflected in their oral traditions, language and social and economic practices. In the same vein, Batooro community practices a mixed economy predominantly of cultivation and cattle keeping.

Most people among the Batooro community will point to Bunyoro as their cradle land or where their ancestors came from and places like chope and Bugungu are referred to in folk stories.

The population of the people currently referring themselves as Batooro is about 960,000 (UBS: 216) including those living at home and those living in the Diaspora.

(iii) **Abanyabindi community**

This is a Runyoro-Rutooro speaking indigenous community that live in the low lands and plains of the southern part of Rwenzori Mountain which is currently belonging to the present day Kasese district. This area is in the traditional county of Busongora.

The community is part of the ancient Bunyoro Kitara Empire living in the traditional province (*Isaza*) of the Empire called Busongora which later became one of the provinces that formed Tooro after breaking off from the Bunyoro-Kitara in the process of the disintegration of the Empire.

This community developed a particular identity around a specific economic role it played in Bunyoro-Kitara Empire. It lived in a land which has clay and got specialized in pottery and it produced for the whole empire. This is where the community's name Abanyabindi emerged literally meaning people of "*Emiindi*" (traditional sauce dish) which is a product of pottery.

However, over the years this community in the modern times lost their traditional skills and specialization in pottery after being displaced from part of their ancestral territory which contained clay, for the establishment of Queen Elizabeth National Park. Having cultural characteristics which relate closely with Batooro tribal bloc, the Banyabindi live at the edge of tribal boundaries between Batooro and the Bakonzo, a majority tribe which is advancing from the highlands of Mountain Rwenzori and the Eastern part of Democratic Republic of Congo where they have a strong base. This situation of living at the boundary of tribal blocs generated historical pressure which leaves the Banyabindi with the options of either to succumb to forced assimilation to the populace tribe of Bakonzo which is advancing into their territory and influencing all the social and political life or abandon their ancestral territories and be extended and resettled in the areas influenced by Banyoro-Batooro culture.

Many Banyabindii got assimilated into Bakonzo culture as a mechanism of survival in the area, while others abandoned their ancestral place and moved to areas of Tooro fleeing the constant tribal wars. However, some of the community families resisted both denying their identity and succumb to forced assimilation and fleeing their ancestral territory for safety elsewhere which also includes losing their specific identity. They live rotating around their ancestral territory in the face of constant tribal wars and displacement. The Banyabindi are currently a community under stress and its general outlook is characterized by resilience, determination, polarity and suspicion as a result of historical injustices and systematic exclusion.

With a population estimated at 16,000 people (UBS:2016), Banyabindi are considered as indigenous minority community in Uganda. They assert their identity and preserve their traditions which include Empaako naming system.

(iv) **The Batagwenda community**

This is one of the communities that belonged to the big Bunyoro Kitara kingdom and later seceded with communities that up day form Tooro kingdom. It lives in the traditional province (Isaaza) of Kitagwenda and currently Kitagwenda district of the Republic of Uganda. A name that is constructed from the cultural name of the community itself. This community speaks Runyoro Rutooro language localized in the community as Rutagwenda dialect. Although it is Runyoro-Rutooro language it has influence of Runyankole since the community borders Tooro with Ankole. It is also increasingly getting influenced by the culture and language of the migrant Bafumbira-Bakiga, a situation that applies to several communities of the Bunyoro-Tooro cultural bloc.

People who form the Batagwenda community are believed to have come from different areas. There are those who come from Mwenge, and the current Bunyoro. These in the Batagwenda community have clans like Abasiita, Abagabu and Ababiito. The second group came from Mpororo in Ankole and have clans like Abahinda, Abaliisa, Abasambo, Abasyaba, Abaitira, Abakurungu and Abanyamberya. The group which is believed to have the biggest number came from Buganda. It was a movement of a big group. When they reached the present day Kitagwenda area, part of the group settled and they named it "*abatagyenda*" (people who cannot proceed). And this is where the name Kitagwenda originates. The rest of the people proceeded up to the present day Bunyaruguru and were named "*Abanyamaguru*" (people with legs which can walk). The Batagwenda are mainly cultivators and their population is estimated to be 60,000 people (UBS: 2016)

(v) **Batuku community**

This is a pastoralist community living in the plains along the southern part of Lake Albert (Mwitanzige). The area is called Butuku from the name of the community and currently it is in the administrative district of Ntoro in the western Uganda. The community speaks Runyoro-Rutooro language which is localized as Rutuku. It was part of the ancient Bunyoro-Kitara Empire and belonged to Tooro kingdom falling under the traditional province (Isaaza) of Burahya. The Batuku are estimated to have a population of 36,000.

CHAPTER TWO:

CHAPTER TWO:

THE DEFINITION OF EMPAAKO NAMING SYSTEM

a) The twelve Empaako names

Empaako is a naming system whereby in addition to surname and given name, a person is given a special name selected from a closed and fixed list of 12 of them called Empaako. The 12 Empaako names include **Okaali, Bbala, Acaali, Araali, Apuuli, Akiiki, Adyeri, Abwoli, Atwoki, Ateenyi, Abbooki and Amooti.**

These twelve names are called Empaako whether you are referring to one of them, several or all of them. Over the generations, this list stand closed and fixed without any detected tendency of adding or removing or altering any letter and sound of any of the 12 Empaako names.

b) The spelling of Empaako and its justification



Prof. Oswald Ndoleriire Ateenyi; A linguist and scholar of Runyoro-Rutooro, presents the orthographic authority in writing and pronunciation of twelve Empaako words.

By Professor Oswald K. Ndoleriire Ateenyi

The orthography or spelling of the above *empaako* is justified as follows:

- 1- **Abbooki**- It is written with double **b** because this is a hard **b**, called a *plosive* in phonetics, as opposed to the soft **b**, called a *fricative b* in words such as **abantu**. It is also written with double **o** because the pronunciation of this **o** is prolonged as opposed to the **o** in words like **kuboha** (to tie).
- 2- **Abwoli**- Many people write it as **Abwooli**, but that is wrong because the prolonged **o** after **bw** is always predictable and there is therefore no need to write it with double **o**.

- 3- **Acaali**- It is written with double **a** because this **a** is pronounced in a prolonged manner.
- 4- **Adyeri**- Some people write it as **Adyeeri**, with double **e**. This is a mistake because the vowel **e** appearing after a **y** compound, that is **b+y**, is automatically prolonged in its pronunciation. So there is no need to write a double **e**.
- 5- **Akiiki**- It is written with double **i** because this is a long **i**, i.e. pronounced in a prolonged way.
- 6- **Amooti**- It is written with a double **o** because the pronunciation of **o** is prolonged just as the **i** in **Akiiki**. This **o** is pronounced in a prolonged manner.
- 7- **Apuuli**-This is written with double **u** because the pronunciation of **u** is prolonged.
- 8- **Araali**- It is also written with double **a** because this is a long **a**, pronounced in a prolonged manner.
- 9- **Ateenyi**- Just like in the previous four *mpaako*, **Ateenyi** is written with double **e** because it is a longe.
- 10- **Atwoki**- Although the **o** in Atwoki is a long **o**, it is however written as a single **o** because the lengthening of this vowel is due to the presence of **bw** preceding it. Since this lengthening is predictable, it does not need to be written with two vowels.
- 11- **Bbala** or **Abbala**. It is written with double **b** because this is the strong **b** or *plosive* in phonetics. Compare **Abbala** (*empaako*) with **Abara** (he counts).
- 12- **Okaali**- It is written with double **a** because the pronunciation of **a** is prolonged.



Conclusion

Eight out of the twelve *mpaako* are written with a double vowel because this vowel is pronounced long. For **Abwoli**, **Atwoki** and **Adyeri**, their middle or *intervocalic* vowel is pronounced long but written as one vowel because the lengthening of that vowel is predictable, caused by the preceding **w** or **y** compound. **Bbala** or **Abbala** is the only *mpaako* without the lengthening of the middle vowel but it has its **b** written double because it is pronounced as a strong sound.

c) Translation of Empaako practice to other languages

There is no agreed translation of Empaako naming system as a cultural practice to English or any other languages outside its cultural context. The descriptive attempts in English language have included; **pet names**, **names of honour**, **names of affection** and **names of praise**. However none of these expressions can singularly and sufficiently explain the complexity of the Empaako naming system as a practice. It is the combination of all four expressions above that can bring out about 70% of the description of the practice. Therefore Empaako practice cannot be adequately described by a single expression of any language, foreign to its cultural context. The bearers agree that it should remain Empaako without a translation to any foreign language.

Equally, the twelve Empaako words individually are not translatable to any foreign language because their literal meanings are not accessible even in Runyoro-Rutooro-the contextual language of the practice. The literal meaning is culturally reserved as a mystery or a secret. This is the strength of Empaako as a cultural practice because nobody can add, remove or alter these twelve words since their origin and basis of their literal constitution is a mystery. You can permanently search to know but you will never completely know.

d) Alternative names to Empaako practice in its cultural and language context

(i) Engundu, Enimi and Enyana

Some members of the Bearer communities may refer to the Empaako practice by alternative words which evolved as nicknames.

The above are nicknames for the noun “Empaako.” This nicknaming is done by pastoralist Empaako community of Basongora, families with a strong cattle keeping background among the Batooro community and people who are proud of cattle keeping economy for prestige and would wish to present themselves as such.

In an exclusively cattle keeping Empaako community, the entire social philosophy rotates around the cattle and expressed in the language of cattle life and its relationship with the human beings. Any expression of value, respect or dignity must bring out the metaphor of a cow, a calf, a bull or their products.

So *Empaako* practice being an expression of social value, the pastoralist communities tend to customize it in the language of cattle keeping life and therefore the following words have been applied as nicknames to the practice.

(ii) **Engundu**

This means the biggest bull in the Kraal and the king of the Kraal. This is the highest value in the Kraal. So **Empaako** noun especially among the Basongora pastoralists community is replaced by **Engundu** while referring to the 12 **Empaako** names singularly or collectively.

(iii) **Enimi or Enyana**

Enimi means a bull while **Enyana** is a calf. This is an attempt to qualify application of *Empaako* noun according to gender. When any of 12 *Empaako* names is applied to a male, then it is referred to as **Enimi** and when it is applied to a female it is referred to as **Enyana**. The metaphor of a calf is preferred to a cow because the highest value of a female is determined by the aspect of fertility which is projected more in a calf than a cow.

When applying *Empaako* to a king this use of cattle images is common across all communities because royalty is fused with cattle keeping practices. So when greeting a king, a male subject makes a statement of honour that Zoon'okaali which is a shortened form of **Engundu Zoona Okaali** and this implies that all big bulls bow to you **Okaali**. The greeting of a king does not take the form of asking "how are you" and the counterpart replying "I am alright" as it is among the ordinary people. Instead in greeting a king, the male subject shouts that statement of honour, to which the king does not reply. A female subject simply kneels down and saying nothing.

CHAPTER THREE:

CHAPTER THREE:

THE THEORIES OF THE ORIGIN OF EMPAAKO NAMING SYSTEM

a) Theories and the desire to know origins and meaning of Empaako

Anthropologists, linguists and culture heritage scholars advance different theories to explain the origin of Empaako practice and the meaning of each of the twelve Empaako words. However, it should be noted from the very beginning that the bearers of Empaako heritage, are not as such, bothered about the origins of the practice and literal meaning of each of the 12 Empaako words and knowing the literal meaning and origins is not a condition for practicing the heritage and enjoying the social, cultural, spiritual and moral benefits accruing from living the reality of Empaako heritage. Searching for and debating the origins of the practice is a luxury of the scholars for their own intellectual utility. When people are living the reality of their heritage, they don't look for the intellectual meanings of things but they are ceased by the attendant social, moral, cultural and spiritual utility. In attempting to establish the origin and meaning of Empaako practice, three theory groups can be identified.

b) The three identified theories of origin and meaning of Empaako

1. The linguists' theory

(i) Explanation of the theory

The language scholars led by Prof. Oswald Ndoleriire, Cathy Byakutaaga, John Kintu, Bebwa Isingoma and others maintain that the noun Empaako itself and eight out of the twelve Empaako names, etymologically are linked to words in the Luo language.

Empaako noun, they urge come from the Luo word "Pako" which means not only "praise" but also to give honorary titles to cattle (Byakutaaga, 1990:51, Ndoleriire & Oriikiriza) 1996: 169.

The illustration below shows the relationship between the eight Empaako names and the words in Luo language according to this theory.

Table 1: Luo name forms, meanings, and corresponding *empaako* (adapted from *Byakutaaga, 1990:53*)

Luo name	Etymology (based on Acholi)	English translation	Corresponding <i>empaako</i>
Abwol	A-bwolo Isg-PRES.deceive I deceive	I deceive you	Abwoli
Amot	A-moto Isg-PRES.greet I greet	I greet you	Amooti
Abok	A-bok Isg-PERF.narrate I have narrated	I have narrated to you	Abbooki
Acal	A-calo Isg-PRES.resemble I resemble	I resemble you	Acaali
Adyero	A-dyro Isg-PERF.sacrifice I have sacrificed	I have sacrificed it	Adyeri
Atenyo	A-tenyo Isg-PERF.leave I have left	I have left it	Ateenyi
Abalo	A-balo Isg-PERF.spoil I have spoiled	I have spoiled it	Bbala
Okal	O-kal 3sg-PERF.jump over He/she has jumped	He/she has jumped over you	Okaali

They urge that factors that underly borrowing words from another language include presence of lexical gap in the recipient language and desire for prestige.

They conclude that the noun **Empaako** and eight **Empaako** words were borrowed from Luo language and the practice was introduced with Biito conquest of the Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom in the 14th or 15th century. The eight words were borrowed from Luo language due to prestige as the Runyoro-Rutooro speakers admired the Biito rulers who had conquered them and phonologically assimilated the words into Runyoro-Rutooro.

(ii) **Issues to be noted on the theory**

- * The debate is around eighty Empaako names and the word Empaako itself which are said to be having etymological connection with words in Luo language but not around Empaako as a social-cultural practice. Empaako as a cultural practice or naming system is unique to its bearer communities.

There is a difference between etymological meanings of words and the *Empaako* practice which is a complex social phenomenon. The linguists are concerned with the etymology of words but not the crafting of a complex social practice. The linguists assert; “*Empaako* were introduced by Luo speaking migrants who established the Biito rule in then Empire of Kitara around 1500AD” (J.Kintu: 2014). This assertion is wrong. You can’t give what you don’t have. *Empaako* as a naming system and a complex cultural practice as it is crafted has never been identified to have existed among the Luo speaking communities at any point in history. How then could these migrants introduce a practice which they did not leave at home.

- * The theory does not account for the origin of the four *Empaako* words namely Atwoki, Apuuli, Akiiki and Araali which were not associated with the borrowing from Luo language although it reluctantly asserts that these could have been coined by Runyoro-Rutooro speakers, adopting the format of the borrowed words.
- * The meanings of the so called borrowed words in their original language have nothing to do with the social and practical meaning they are assigned in *Empaako* naming system and practice and in some cases, the two meanings are contradictory. For instance Ateenyi (I have spoilt it) Adyeri (I have sacrificed it) Okaali (he has jumped over) have nothing to do with the practical and social roles assigned these words in the complex *Empaako* practice. This creates a rationale gap and weakness of this linguistic borrowing theory and certainly it’s not useful to the survival of *Empaako* as a cultural practice.
- * The theory does not consider the fact that a word should be appreciated from its current context and purpose than suspected etymological context. A word can be picked from a particular linguistic context and adopted in a completely different linguistic and social context and given different and multiple meanings and purposes. In its new contextual home, the initial etymological meaning is irrelevant.

2. Anthropologists’ theory of the origin of *Empaako* practice.

(i) What anthropologists say

The anthropologists led by Rev. Richard Baguma Adyeri maintain that the oral traditions of Bunyoro-Kitara provide evidence that *Empaako* practice existed much earlier before introduction of the Biito dynasty in 14th and 15th centuries. They provide evidence to illustrate that both Bawezi and Batembuzi are associated with *Empaako*.

The Bawezi who ruled Bunyoro-Kitara Empire between 12th and 13th centuries withdrew their leadership and simply disappeared because of insurrection

of the subjects. This action terrified the subjects who elevated the disappeared Bacwezi rulers into demi-gods and started worshipping them. So each of the Bacwezi demi-gods (*Embandwa*) is ascribed Empaako as a language of honour. These demi-gods, in addition to their surnames, are given and are addressed by Empaako.

Some of the Bacwezi demi-gods (*Embandwa*) with their Empaako include the following;

- Kaikara - Adyeri
- Nyinamwiru - Adyeri
- Mulindwa - Abwoli
- Ndahura - Atwoki
- Wamara - Amooti

Among these, Bacwezi demi-gods (*Embandwa*) those who were kings include the following;

1. Ndahura Atwoki Kyarubimba Rwesakara Myambi-Rumooma Mahanga.
2. Mulindwa Abwoli – Mulinzi w’obukama (Regent)
3. Wamara Amooti, Bwigunda Njojo Eyona Rwabwera

The known names of other Bacwezi who are neither kings nor Demi-gods (*Adopted from Rev. Richard Baguma write-up*)

Men

1. Isimbwa Ruhiga Nengobe Rwa Kisozi Amooti– Ise Ndahura
2. Ndahura Kyarubimba Rwesakaara Myambi Rumooma Mahanga Amooti
3. Wamara Bwigunda Njojo Eyona Rwabwera Atwoki
4. Mulinda Nyabweriza Ngango, Munywani Wa Mihingo Amooti
5. Kyomya Ruganda Araali
6. Kagoro Byarankanduro Nkubaitera Matambara Gatoosa Amooti
7. Ibona Iya Waraga Muhigi Atakanda Amooti
8. Irungu Iya Bwekale Omusabwa Nyama Amooti
9. Mugasa Ibebe Kirimani Araali
10. Kahuka Ka Muzinga Nyabagabe Ba Igoro Atwoki
11. Rubanga Biinonkondo Mujumba Gwa Itongo Akiiki
12. Ruboha Rwa Kabombo Atwoki

Women

1. Kaikara Ihiga Adyeri
2. Rwose Rwabanyiginya Nyamujwara Empu Nemambo Akiiki
3. Nyabuzana Rubumbuguza Rwa Mugizi Adyeri
4. Rukohe Nyakaliika Irikangabu Nkabasaita Adyeri
5. Kange Abwoli
6. Mugenyi Amooti
7. Mugaarra Adyeri
8. Byanyanbwe Amooti
9. Kiro Muhimba Ateenyi
10. Kazoba Adyeri
11. Waraga Abwoli
12. Kacope Abwoli
13. Muruli Adyeri
14. Rwandana Akiiki
15. Kihimba Akiiki
16. Muhazi Amooti
17. Nkuna Amooti
18. Samaga Adyeri



Rev. Richard Kalyegira Baguma Adyeri; A community sage and an anthropology legend of his time in Bunyoro-Tooro, maintains that Empaako is beyond Bũito establishment and there is no time when Bunyoro-Kitara people existed without Empaako.

Anthropologist Rev. Richard Baguma extends Empaako further to the Batembuzi kings to emphasize his point that Empaako existed before Babiito dynasty. He also cites the Batembuzi leaders who are believed to have had Empaako as follows;

1. Nyamuhanga - Acaali
2. Bukuku - Acaali
3. Koogere - Atwoki
4. Nyinamwiru - Adyeri

The linguists who maintain that Empaako practice was introduced by the Luo migration around 1500AD, when faced with the above argument they speculate that probably the Bacwezi and Batembuzi were given Empaako posthumous. This means that Empaako practice as a form of civilization and language of respect, after being introduced was applied backwards to describe the history and interface with the spiritual forces which have roots in the previous dynasties.

(ii) **Empaako practice and the modern notion of “Paganism”**

Some extremist religious groups use the link of Empaako practices to religious expressions which involve the Bacwezi demi-gods to dismiss the whole Empaako naming system as pagamic and fight to uproot it. They argue that Empaako are names of Bacwezi demi-gods which are given to people as a spiritual command in order to incarnate those demi-gods in people. This position is wrong from many aspects;

Empaako are not primarily and exclusively names of the Bacwezi demi-gods (*Embandwa*). Their meaning and functionality go beyond being used in religious communication. Not all the twelve Empaako are ascribed to the Bacwezi demi-gods. As part of Runyoro/Rutooro language expressions, some of them could have been used to address demi-gods in spiritual sessions but this does not condense them to exist exclusively for that purpose. They have diverse roles in expressing relationships among people and between people and nature. Moreover, the surnames of the Bacwezi demi-gods like Mulindwa, Kaikara and Kagoro are used as surnames of believers of such religious groups without being condemned.

Any religious doctrine that rejects Empaako being used by the believers, should first reject the entire Runyoro-Rutooro language as a medium of communication among the believers. This is because Empaako is simply an integral part of Runyoro Rutooro language expressions. It is a means of constructing and expressing social values and relationships in Runyoro/Rutooro language. Therefore you cannot pluck it out and yet maintain the language.

3. **The opinion of culture specialists on the origin and meaning of Empaako names**

The contemporary experts of culture and heritage from Empaako communities who have carried out scientific research and philosophical reflection on Empaako Heritage led by the editors of this book, have advanced an opinion regarding the origin and meaning of Empaako practice.

- * Culture touches the spiritual and moral faculties of humans. It is like religion or religion itself is culture. Any element of cultural heritage, especially at the level of its origin and definition, has got some level of mystery which intellectual curiosity of scholars can never explain. Scholars will research and debate until the end of time without reaching a conclusion. A mystery in culture is that understanding which is searched and searched and if it is reached completely, then there is no more curiosity to sustain the interest. Culture and religion survive on mysteries and when the intellectuals out reason the mystery, they kill the faith. So *Empaako* must have some level of understanding which is reserved as a mystery and failure by intellectual curiosity to explain it fully, is what makes the heritage survive.
- * Even if one was to be over zealous, to create answers, he cannot logically coin answers on all the questions about *Empaako* practice. Questions like what crafted that complex and unique practice? Why twelve *Empaako* words and not any other number? Etc will never be answered by any level of human intellect. The text of the UNESCO 2003 convention for safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage recognize that the people's cultural heritage may have secret information and understanding which is not accessible by everybody. The convention foresees the reality of culture. You can never intellectually explain everything about people's cultural heritage which is moral and spiritual.

As already noted, knowing and understanding the origin and literal meaning of the twelve *Empaako* words is not a pre-condition for the bearers of the heritage to get the spiritual, moral and social satisfaction that come from practicing it. The bearers of the heritage are actually never bothered to investigate the origins and literal meaning of those words but enjoy the practice as it is handed over to them by their ancestors. It is only the linguists in their academic theatres who seek intelligible meaning for their intellectual satisfaction. The visitors, who come in touch with *Empaako* heritage, may also ask “what does this *Empaako* you are giving me mean?” This question does not necessarily mean the person is asking for the intelligible meaning. He may be asking for the social, cultural and contextual meaning.



Stephen Atwoki- Rwagweri;

*A social analysts and culture facilitator, he represents the emerging movement of culture scholars and maintains that the twelve *Empaako* words are largely mystical and magical in their cultural context. The *Empaako* practice is complex and spiritual and cannot be understood by mere analysis of the etymology of words*

c) **The question of the literal meaning of Empaako words**

1. **Empaako words are literally meaningless in Runyoro/Rutooro language**

It is generally agreed upon that the twelve Empaako words and the noun Empaako itself have no meaning in Runyoro/Rutooro, the contextual language of the practice.

2. **Attempt to coin literal meanings of Akiiki and the noun Empaako**

There has been attempt to coin in Runyoro-Rutooro the literal meaning of Akiiki as coming from a noun “*Kikuramahanga*” which may mean ‘Liberator.’ This is done especially when applying Akiiki on rulers and leaders in attempt to assign this Empaako relevant meaning to the situation. Some people also attempt to argue that Empaako comes from a verb “*Kubaaka*” which may mean to make someone spiritually feel good. However both words are not detected in Runyoro-Rutooro diction and daily speech.

3. **Attempts by linguists to etymologically draw meaning of Empaako words from Luo language**

As it has been explained before, linguists have tried to create meanings of eight out of twelve Empaako words and the noun Empaako itself by etymologically relating them to some words in Luo language and hence assert that they were borrowed and adopted in Runyoro-Rutooro. As it has been explained, the literal meaning assigned to the words is contextually contradictory and irrelevant. And the theory does not attempt to give literal meaning to all the twelve words.

4. **The literal meanings of the twelve Empaako words are reserved as a secret.**

The cultural explanation is that the literal meaning of each of the twelve Empaako words and Empaako noun itself is reserved as a secret. This secrecy is where Empaako practice draws its spiritual authority as a cultural heritage. Culture like religion survives on some level of mystery. We can attempt to understand and answer questions about Empaako as a cultural heritage up to a certain level but not completely and the remaining un answered questions or secrecy is what sustain our curiosity and interest. This secrecy is the strength and source of survival of Empaako practice across generations, times and changing world views.

The questions about Empaako heritage for which answers are reserved as a secret include; what do these words literary mean? What are their actual origins, What determined the number of these words, What determined assigning of gender and royalty categorization and what determined their roles, functions and social effects. Therefore because of these questions of which answers are not easily available, the purpose and list is fixed, exclusive and closed. They cannot be duplicated because their literal meaning is not readily available. They

cannot be expanded or reduced in numbers or assigned new roles because the original determining rationale is not openly accessible.

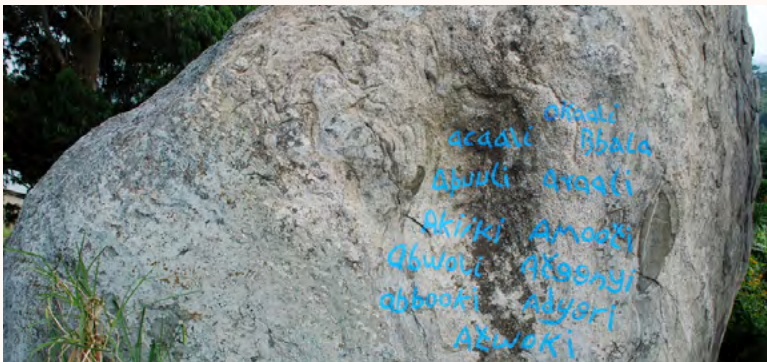
5. **We openly access only the functional or practical meaning but not the literal meaning**

People openly and generally access the practical and functional meaning of the twelve *Empaako* words. This is the description of how the twelve words are used as a cultural practice and the socio-spiritual effect they make on people.

When asked about the origin and meaning of *Empaako*, elder Mpuuga Apuuli said *“when my father gave me Empaako Apuuli, did not tell me its origin, etymology or literal meaning of the word Apuuli. But as I was growing up, the community oriented me to use it in greeting, expressing respect, love, intimacy, bidding farewell, pleading for favour and appeasing anyone to secure my survival. The community also oriented me to feel good, happy, loved, respected, honoured and appealed to, whenever someone addresses me using it. This is my meaning of Empaako and its value and purpose, finished.”*

d) **Some myth on the origin and meaning of *Empaako***

The aspect of secrecy about the literal meaning and origin of the twelve words and the question of what determined the number, gender segregation and specific social function has allowed people, over the years, to generate myth and assert the spiritual authority of the practice. One of such myths is that those words were given from heaven and written by an invisible authority on a rock at Mwibale. Society was commanded to use these words to keep peace, human dignity, respect and love in everyday life up to eternity.



e) **Promotion of the theory of linguists about origin and meaning of *Empaako* practice is a threat to its viability as a cultural heritage**

1. **Removing the secret is killing the heritage**

As we have established *Empaako* like any other cultural heritage has some truths which is reserved and not accessible to everyone. Whoever starts a journey of inquire about the ultimate questions about this cultural heritage must end in a tunnel of mystery. You search and search without reaching a conclusion. This

reservedness and the secret is where the practice draws its spiritual strength that sustains it as a cultural heritage. Culture survives on beliefs and feelings but not intelligibility of things.

When scholars create theories to remove the secrets in people's heritage and successfully promote these theories to replace the secrets, then they kill the cultural heritage.

2. **Interpretations of the linguists are contradictory to the values of Empaako as a cultural practice**

The etymological meanings from Luo language given to eight Empaako names by linguists present irrelevant or even contradictory messages in the context of Empaako as a cultural practice. Therefore promoting these meanings is to confuse and kill Empaako as a cultural practice. For instance Empaako Adyeri is given etymological meaning as "I have sacrificed you or it" If I give Empaako Adyeri to foreign friend and he asks me the meaning and I answer "I have sacrificed you, what value would it be expressing?"

3. **Killing confidence and a sense of pride among the bearers of Empaako practice**

A cultural heritage generates confidence and a sense of pride among its bearers. But the notion of borrowing words and a language from the group of conquerors as advanced in their theory; undermine capacity of Empaako heritage to sustain confidence and pride in its bearers. The notion De-contextualizes and alienates the practice from its bearers.

f) **The cultural explanation on the ultimate questions about Empaako practice**

- (1) Empaako practice has no known historical starting point. There is no known historical time when the bearer communities existed without Empaako and so Empaako practice is as old as the bearer communities themselves.
- (2) Empaako are a fix, closed and exclusive list of twelve names used in greeting, expressing love and respect in human interactions.
- (3) The information about origin and literal meaning of these twelve words is reserved as a secret so that they should never be replicated and distorted since literal meanings of words may keep changing with the constantly changing contexts and world view. The twelve Empaako words transcend the ever changing ideological contexts, linguistic meanings and world view. They are largely magical and mystical in their cultural context.

g) **Empaako meanings evolved by associations**

1. **What are meanings by association?**

It is a human tendency to evolved some kind of meaning by associating one thing to another thing over time. Such evolved meaning does not mean it's

the original and deliberate meaning of the thing being associated to another thing. Some of *Empaako* names over the generation have gotten associated to some animals, outstanding personalities, family demi-gods, social status, folk expressions, reptiles and social characteristics.

2. **Some meanings evolved by associating some *Empaako* with social characteristics.**

(i) **Amooti:**

This *Empaako* overtime got associated with characteristics of aristocracy or people of high repute in community and hence kings, royals and chiefs.

(ii) **Abwoli:**

This got associated with characteristics of feminine tenderness and innocence and has been given a symbol of a cat and generally associated with younger girls in a state of innocence before they develop mature character. Although *Abwoli* is given to both sexes, it is generally associated and given to females because of the character of tenderness associated with female sex, compared to the male counterpart.

(iii) **Apuuli:**

This got associated with the characteristics of a boy child. The presumptive attitude people had towards a boy child is comparable to attitudes of people have towards a cub or the young lion. A man in society just like a lion in wildlife family was associated with courage because life was essentially hostile. So, although *Apuuli* is open to any male, it got associated generally with the boy child to enjoy the presumptive attitude of characteristic of courage expected of a man in the making.

3. **Some meanings evolved by some *Empaako* being associated with expressions of achievement or joking.**

(i) **Akiiki:**

This evolved some meaning by attempting to coin etymological meaning in Runyoro/Rutooro “**Kikuramahanga**” which means an adventurer or liberator

(ii) **Bbala:**

This overtime got to be qualified by the word “*bikobeko*” which is taken to be just an expression of joking.

4. **Some meanings evolved by some *Empaako* being associated with fierce creatures and super natural forces.**

(i) ***Empaako* function of appeasing**

As it is explained in the statement on the social and religious functions and purposes of *Empaako*, one of such functions was to appease or plead with the dangerous creatures or super natural forces, to spare people and their

livelihood. So some Empaako were given to some human-feared creatures or super natural forces and used in human interface with those forces. Over time, those creatures evolved as if were the meaning of those particular Empaako associated with them.

(ii) Araali:

This was used in human engagement with lightning and thunder. According to the beliefs of Empaako communities, the striking of thunder was not a natural phenomenon but a spiritual one and it needed a spiritual engagement to prevent it or the disaster it can cause. Thunder and lightning was a god called Kagoro who has Empaako Araali and strikes people as a form of punishment. So Araali was used in pleading with thunder not to strike an individual, a family or a village and overtime thunder evolved as if it was the meaning of this Empaako.

(iii) Ateenyi:

At a certain point in history, Ateenyi got associated with a mythical snake at river Musiizi. This is a big river and swamp which make the boundary between Bunyoro and Tooro kingdoms. In the old days, people used to struggle crossing this big river without any strong bridge. Crossing of the river itself was so risky and scaring and then, in addition to the scary nature of the river, people believed it contained a deadly snake. People would remain worried and unsure of reaching their destination until they have crossed this river with its associated threats.

As we have noted that in such a highly spiritual and mythical community, Empaako were used to address dangerous powers not necessarily to respect them but to appease them so that they spare people and not strike them. So Ateenyi was given to this mythical snake and therefore with time some meaning evolved as “Ateenyi Ekijoka kya Muzizi” (Ateenyi the huge snake of Muzizi). The underlying message is *“You dangerous snake we address you Ateenyi so that you feel praised and you spare us we crossover.”* So Empaako Ateenyi is a symbol of crossover.

5. Some meaning evolved by some Empaako being associated with some animals (pig)

(i) Abbooki:

At some point, among the Batooro community Empaako “Abbooki” was given to pigs and qualified as “*Bakeebwa*”. The Batooro traditionally never used to eat pork as the pigs were considered dirty animals not worth eating whatever is associated with them neither coming closer to interaction with people. But through influence from interaction with neighbouring communities, the Batooro slowly learnt to eat pork and realized it was delicious after all. So they regretted that all along they had missed very nutritious and delicious food and to bring out this regret, they nick named the pig as “Abbooki” with a qualifier as “*Bakeebwa*” literally meaning “they forgot or they missed” Therefore the associated meaning of Empaako name Abbooki as pig.

h) **What should we tell those who ask the meaning and origin of the twelve Empaako names?**

1. **Knowing literal meaning and origins of Empaako names is not a demand for the immediate bearers of the practice.**

The immediate bearers of Empaako practice do not feel a need to know the literal meanings and origins of the twelve Empaako words as a condition of enjoying the moral, spiritual and social benefits from the practice. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural benefits of using Empaako names are not constructed from intelligibility of the literal and etymological meanings and the origins of these Empaako words. This is why the efforts of linguists to coin literal and etymological meanings and origins are considered culturally irrelevant. The bearers are satisfied to use Empaako words as they are culturally prescribed and given from the experience of the ancestors.

2. **Categories of people who may feel a need to know the meaning of Empaako names**

(i) **Linguists**

The linguists from Empaako communities may have a need, as part of their academic research to know origins and literal meanings of the twelve Empaako words. It should be noted however, that this need of linguists to know the origins and literal meanings of Empaako names is not based on the desire to re-enforce the viability of Empaako as a cultural practice. There is no any evidence to show that linguists' inquiry into the literal meanings and origins of Empaako is a result of realization that people are abandoning Empaako practice because they don't know the etymological and literal meanings of these twelve Empaako names. So the inquiry purely serves academic purpose but not enhancing the viability of the practice.

(ii) **People from other cultures and societies**

People from other cultural backgrounds who interface with Empaako practice, either as visitors in the land of Empaako or meeting people of Empaako from anywhere, may ask "what do these words mean?" Such inquiry is often prompted by the uniqueness of the practice and the process of giving Empaako to someone from another culture as a gesture of social integration.

It should be noted that this inquiry is not necessarily demanding the etymological or literal meanings of the words and their origins. The contextual meaning which give the social functions and the moral effects the words make can be sufficient. If one insists that he/she wants the literal meaning and origin of words, then is given the cultural explanation on those ultimate questions.

(iii) **Inquisitive children and students**

The growing young people are always inquisitive may like to know the meaning of Empaako. As it is the case above the first assumption is that they want to know the functional meaning and then the cultural explanation may be given on the ultimate questions.

CHAPTER FOUR:

CHAPTER FOUR:

PREPARATIONS FOR EMPAAKO NAMING CEREMONY

a) When does the Empaako naming ceremony take place?

The nine months period of pregnancy of a mother prepares the extended family for an impending Empaako naming ceremony in the affected home. As time draws closer for an expecting mother, the affected relatives begin planning a journey to the affected home, organize the gifts to offer the newly born and essentials for the ceremony like food, tools and dress are assembled, cleaned and organized ready for the ceremony. In all Empaako communities, the naming ceremony takes place after three days of birth for a baby girl and after four days for a baby boy.

The number three for a female and four for a male apply on all ritual actions among the Empaako communities. For instance when a person dies, rituals called **Kuturukya orufu** are performed three days after burial for a female and others called **“Kuhenda Ekimasa”** after three months while in the case of a male, the same rituals are done after four days and four months respectively. The traditional blessing (**kubukara**) by sitting on the lap of an elder, is three times for a female and four times for a male. And so many other ritual actions observe the same numbering.

The origin and basis of this number three for females and four for males in all rituals actions on a person, is not clear but some traditional explanation exists which link this numbering to the period and interval difference between a male and female in realization of changes in human body, both in composition and decomposition. The changes that take three months to occur in a female, the same require four months in a male counterpart.

In several communities the ceremony takes place in the evening at sunset. The cultural reason for that particular time is that it is believed many changes about life of a human being speed up and intensify at night. The body growth speed up at night, conception mainly takes place a night, pain as a result of sickness intensity at night and most deaths are likely to occur at night. A section of the Banyoro community emphasizes critical naming ritual to take place between mid day and one O'clock. This originated from the context of practicing traditional religions where it is believed that around mid day is time when the spirits are active and accessible to be invoked to grace the ceremony. This is a group which fuses naming ceremonies with the spiritual and religious practices. In this case it is believed that it is the family gods (**Embandwa**) which actually gives Empaako to a child and the ceremony is highly a spiritual and religious discourse.

b) **Who is involved in the Empaako naming ceremony?**

The ceremony generally attracts the participation of the members of the extended family and the home neighbors and family friends. In particular certain categories of people must attend and have specific roles. These include the mother and father of the newly born child, the paternal grandfather who represents the clan and is the main authority in the ceremony. He presides over the ceremony, guiding and directing all the rituals and he rules on debates and issues. He makes all important declarations in the proceedings of the ceremony.

Another important category are paternal aunts of the baby headed by the chief aunt. The critical role of these aunts in the whole ceremony, among others, is to examine the physical features of the baby and confirm that it truly belongs to the family. The final critical category is the young children and the boys and girls from the extended family. These are meant to observe and witness the details of the rituals and spice up the ceremony with entertainment especially at the ritual which involves generating loud and collective laughters in chorus. Among the Banyabindi community the children actually have got a specific ritual they perform exclusively called “*Ekiisubuurro.*”

c) **Essential tools and materials for the Empaako naming ceremony**

There are specific tools and materials which must be used for the Empaako naming ceremony. These include the following;

1. **Ekikaransi (Traditional ceremonial stool)**

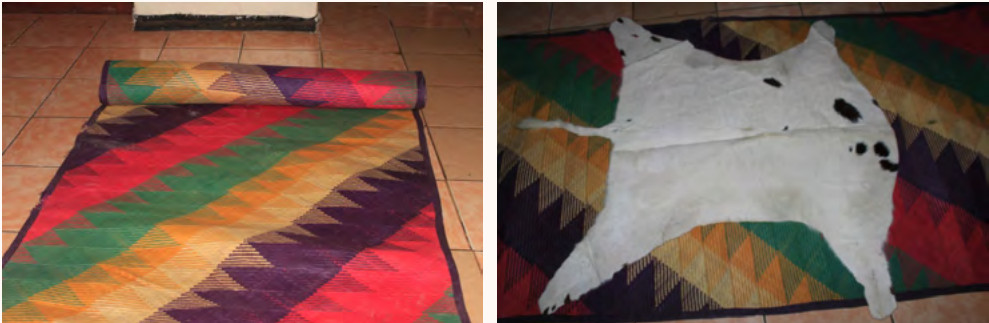
This is a traditional stool curved from wood and used as a seat of authority during all rituals and cultural ceremonies among the Empaako communities. It is where the head of the family as a presiding authority in the ceremony sits.



2. **Omukeeka, Enkeeto n’eteete (Mat, Animal hides & lemon grass)**

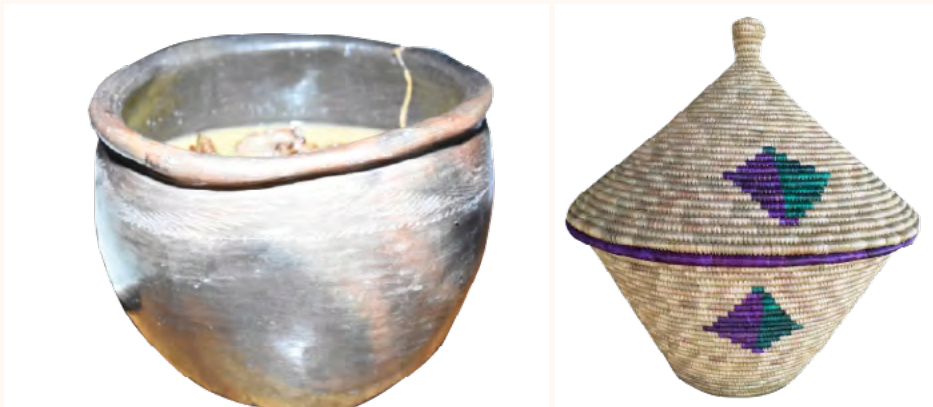
These are a traditional mat, a dry hide and skin of a cow or goat and grass be-

longing to the class of lemon. Any one or two of these are used as carpets on the floor in the room where the rituals are taking place and traditionally all of participating people sit on these, except the presiding head who sits on a stool. But today some people especially men may sit on different types of chairs.



3. Endiuro n'Ekibindi (Traditional food basket and clay sauce dish)

This is a basket from traditional handcraft (Endiuro) and traditional sauce dish made from clay (Ekibindi). This is where the ritual meal of millet and smoked beef or cow ghee sauce (Batuku) or ground nuts sauce (Banyoro) is served and all participating people partake of from the one same basket and dish.



4. Ekiibo kikooto (Big basket)

This an open big basket from the traditional handcraft and used for collecting gifts like money for the newly born baby.

5. Oburo n'Omukubi - Omukaro, Ebinyebwa rundi Amagita (Millet and appropriate sauce)

This is a traditional meal of food made of millet flour mixed with cassava flour and the appropriate traditional sauce differing according to community. This is official and central in all ceremonies and hospitality among *Empaako* communities.



6. **Ekicweka ky'omutoma n'Ekyana ky'Etooke ebyokubyaara (Banana sucker and stem of *Sicus spp* tree).**

These are the banana sucker and stem of *Sicus spp* tree for planting as part of the ceremony in several communities.



*A *Sicus spp* (*Mutoma*) tree which is planted for the male child during the Empaako naming Ceremony*

7. **Embuzi Y'okubaaga (Animal for meat - goat)**

Among the Banyoro and Banyabindi they must slaughter an animal (a he-goat or she-goat) as an important aspect of the ceremony. However today, availability of animals for meat is optional for those who can afford. Getting any amount of meat in the butchery or elsewhere can serve the purpose.



8. Enyungu (Traditional pot for mingling millet flour)

This is a traditional pot made from clay from which millet flour is mingled into millet food.



d) Background of millet and preparations for the ritual meal

1. The millet and how it is grown

Millet is a cereal crop and grows from the sown seeds and takes about three months to mature. The mature millet plant produces fingers containing grains and during harvesting, these fingers are plucked, dried and squeezed to get out the grains. Millet is known to be drought resistant and grows better in dry areas.

Traditionally, millet was only supposed to be sown in the second season of the year which starts around August and yet it takes only about three months from sowing to harvesting. This is explained by the long and tedious process of preparing the garden which was done in a special way that is different from the gardens for other crops. The millet garden was supposed to be prepared from a virgin land which has not been used before or for many years. The process of

preparing virgin land for millet garden had many stages which involved clearing the bushes and tilling the soil in different steps, punctuated by period gaps to allow soil to change from one quality to another. This garden preparation process started around February and moved up to around July.

The different stages in the cycle of growing millet like preparing garden, sowing, weeding and harvesting were important points of reference in marking periodic intervals in a year.

2. **The history of millet food among Empaako communities.**

Millet is an indigenous food crop among Empaako communities. Unlike many other food crops in these communities, it is not easy to trace a historical time when millet was introduced in the communities. Millet is identical with the existence of these communities. Existing oral traditions mention millet in the dynasty of Bacwezi about 700 years ago.

3. **The significance of millet meal in ritual and social life of Empaako communities.**

Millet remains official food across all Empaako communities and across generations. It is indispensable in all social ceremonies and hospitality and without it, they would be considered invalid. Every person, irrespective of personal tastes must partake of the millet meal to mark participation in any social ceremony and to signify acceptance of the hospitality offered.

All religious and social ceremonies in Empaako communities are centred around sharing a meal and the official component of the meals is the meal of millet and smoked beef. In Empaako naming ceremony, sharing of this meal is the centre ritual and the entire ceremony is built around participatory preparations and the shared partaking of the millet meal. The meal represents the entire ceremony. When inquiring whether the naming ceremony was carried out in respect to a particular individual's name; they ask **“Empaako yaawe bakagiriira Oburo?** (did people share millet meal for your Empaako?)

According to the existing oral traditions, millet played a key role in the transmission of power from Bacwezi dynasty to Babiito dynasty in Bunyoro-Kitara Empire around 1450AD. Mubimba, a member of the Basiita clan who was the custodian of the royal regalia under the Bacwezi dynasty, handed it over to the Babiito conquerors in exchange with millet to feed his family. This marked the end of the era of Bacwezi and the beginning of Babiito.

4. **The process of preparing the millet meal for the Empaako naming ceremony.**

(i) **Grinding millet and pounding dry cassava**

Millet fingers are picked from the granary, put in the sun to dry and squeezed using the feet or pounding mortar (*Ensekuro*) and pounding stick (*Ekyana ky'en-*

sekuro) to separate the grains from its fingers and husks. The grains are then fried a little and mixed with dry cassava particles and ground to generate flour that is a mixture of millet and a bit of cassava. More cassava flour is processed and further mixed with millet flour that was generated with a mixture of a bit of cassava until the required balance is realized. Millet is ground using a traditional grinding stone (orubengo) although today milling machine can be used.



Dry millet stored in a granary is got, ladies pound, winnow, roast and later grind it using a grinding stone (Orubeengo) to turn into flour that is later mixed with processed cassava flour.

(ii) **Processing the sauce (smoked beef, cow ghee or ground nuts)**

A traditional sauce made of smoked beef, accompanied by mushrooms and spiced with cow ghee is prepared in a traditional pot (akaso) and served in a traditional sauce dish (Ekibindi). Among the Batuku the sauce is made from cow ghee alone and among the Banyoro it is made from groundnuts. The traditional tools and utensils are required for the validity of the ceremony. They cannot be replaced by the modern ones that are imported from the technology which is not indigenous.



Cow ghee is boiled to turn into liquid form that is used in the preparation of the sauce made of smoked meat.

(iii) Boiling water and mingling

Water is boiled in a traditional pot (*Enyungu*) and on a traditional stove which is constructed by three stones and fire wood entered through the gaps between the stones. Some little millet flour is sprinkled on top of the water as it begins to get hot (*Kunina*). This is meant to make the water boil as fast as possible because the little flour create a layer to reduce evaporation and then maximize the effect of heat. When water boils, some of it, is removed using a cup before flour is powered in and mingling starts. The reserved water is meant for keeping the balance between flour and water as the mingling process progresses. The final food product of the process is then served in a basket (*Endiirro*) which is a handcraft made from the stems of millet plant.



Water is induced to boil faster by pouring little flour on the top, thereafter sizable flour is mixed, mingled and served in millet baskets.

e) **The dress code for Empaako naming ceremony - strictly traditional.**

All people dress in official and ceremonial way according to the traditions of the particular community. Any dress style which is not indigenous or attire which is not made of local material and indigenous technology in the community is discouraged for those participating in the central rituals.



Elder Isaaya Kahya Atwoki (Paapa) Bagumba Clan Leader putting on Batooro traditional attire and seated on the ceremonial stool, ready to preside over Empaako naming Ceremony



Banyooro elders traditionally dressed ready for the Empaako naming Ceremonies



Batuku elders traditionally dressed ready for the Empaako naming Ceremonies

f) **What determines the particular Empaako to give a baby?**

1. **The twins' traditions**

In *Empaako* communities, the twins are born with pre-determined surnames and *Empaako* as follows;

The first to be born if is a male is called *Isingoma* or *Nyangoma* if is a female and for both *Empaako* is pre-determined as *Amooti*. The second to be born if is a male is *Kato* and if is a female is *Nyakato* and in both cases *Empaako* is pre-determined as *Abbooki*. The child who immediately follows the twins is called *Kiiza* whether is a male or female and his or her *Empaako* is pre-determined as *Amooti* although there are some families that give *Akiiki*. The child who follows *Kiiza*, whether a male or female is called *Kabwa* and *Empaako* is pre-determined as *Abbooki*. A child who follows *Kaahwa* if is a boy is called *Irumba* and *Empaako* predetermined as *Ateenyii* or *Abbooki* but also some families give *Amooti*. And if is a girl is called *Nyamahunde* and *Empaako* predetermined as *Ateenyi* or *Adyeri*.

The subsequent borns following twins are not considered only in the nuclear family where the twins are born but the paternal extended family. This means these subsequent borns can be paternal cousins of the twins if there are new borns in the extended family, before the immediate and biological father produces the subsequent child in the pattern.

In this case of the twins and their subsequent borns in the pattern, *Empaako* naming rituals don't take place because they are believed to be born already with their surnames and the *Empaako*. However many rituals related to the traditions of twins are performed.

The situation of a mother giving birth to more than two children in one pregnancy is considered abnormal but if it occurs, the subsequent children in the order they leave the mother's womb, would be treated as the subsequent borns after the twins (the first two) as discussed above.

2. **The Bacwezi traditions**

If a family, because of religious or inheritance reasons, decides to give a baby the name of the former Bacwezi rulers who were elevated to demi-gods, those names have pre-determined corresponding *Empaako*. These Bacwezi names with their corresponding pre-determined *Empaako* include **Kaikara (female) or Rwakaikara (male) _ Adyeri, Nyinamwiru – Adyeri, Mulindwa-Abwoli, Ndahura-Atwoki and Wamara-Atwoki.**

3. **Inheritance interests**

(i) **General belief in immortality of families**

This is the most common factor in deciding which surname and *Empaako* to give a baby. The communities strongly believe in immortality and continuity of people, families and clans through inheritance systems and succession mechanisms.

(ii) Pre-determined Empaako inheritance

In some Empaako communities, parent elder receive slots of the offsprings who must inherit their surnames and Empaako.

For instance among the Basongora community, the first son of a family automatically takes the surname and Empaako of his paternal grandfather while the first daughter takes the surname and Empaako of the paternal grandmother.

(iii) Inheritance issues which are raised in naming session

In most families and communities inheritance issues are raised in the naming session and they dominate the discussions.

When debating the name and Empaako during the naming ceremony, participants raise proposed surname and Empaako around the following grounds;

- * The baby has resembled a particular relative and therefore the basis that he/she takes the Empaako of that relative.
- * There is a dead or living relative who has outstanding qualities so the baby should inherit the Empaako of that person as a way of reclaiming and transmitting those qualities to the next generation.
- * Conditions, circumstances and the social political context of birth of the baby can be considered to determine the surname but not Empaako of the baby as a way of describing and putting those conditions on record through the naming of the child.

4. Open preferences

The naming congregation is also free to propose Empaako and argue around casual factors, like “I just like that particular Empaako,” “there is someone I admire who has that Empaako,” “we have not had that particular Empaako in our family” etc.

g) Determining Empaako for an outsider who is being received in the community

Empaako is a tool of social integration and an indispensable means of social interaction. So an outsider who comes to visit or stay in the community must be given Empaako in a simple ceremony. The factors for determining the Empaako to give such a person are casual like the qualities which the host community wants that person to have and then link them to associated characteristics of some Empaako. Some Empaako have been loosely associated to some social qualities like Abwoli (tenderness, innocence, young woman), Apuuli (young nice boy), Amooti (highly respected person), Akiiki (liberator) etc.

CHAPTER FIVE:

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EMPAAKO NAMING CEREMONIES IN DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES

a) **Common principles of Empaako naming ceremonies in all communities**

1. **The details of the rituals are highly flexible**

There are no fixed standards regarding the details of different rituals in the Empaako naming ceremony. While there are common rituals which can be observed, their details may vary from family to family, from clan to clan and from community to community. The documentation is meant to put some information on record which can be referred to but not to set the standards of what should be done especially regarding the details of different rituals.

2. **Some details in the rituals may not apply today**

Some details in the rituals were conditioned to the specific contexts which have now changed. For instance planting a tree or a banana reflects an agricultural and rural context. Although families try as much as possible to go to the ancestral homes for these ceremonies, others may perform these ceremonies in fairly urban centres where planting trees and banana may not easily apply. Equally the traditions of observing three or four days after birth and perform the naming ceremonies may not apply as mothers are encouraged to give birth from hospitals which cannot be controlled by traditions.

3. **Empaako is given together with the surname**

In all the communities, the traditional naming ceremony gives both Empaako and the surname and the two are only separated by social functions and effects in usage.

4. **Utensils and tools used in rituals must be traditional**

Across all communities, the utensils and tools used in the rituals have to be traditional for those rituals to be valid. The traditional tools and utensils understood as those that are made from local materials and crafted by indigenous technology and have been used in the community over generations. The modern utensils and tools may be used in the general entertainment and hospitality within the ceremony but not in the core rituals. These rituals have got their specific tools and utensils which have been adopted for that purpose and are recommended as part of the rituals.

5. **Traditional dressing must be observed at least by people involved in the core rituals**

The ceremony attracts traditional dress for all the people who attend and it is a must for people involved in the rituals. The type of traditional dress may vary

from community to community and it is also defined by being made from local materials and by indigenous knowledge and has been adopted by the community for a long time.

6. **These rituals do not include the twins or a child born in a birth that has included more than one human life**

Empaako communities do not carry out naming ceremonies to children born in a birth or a pregnancy which has carried more than one human life because such are born with pre-determined names with their corresponding Empaako. Such have separate rituals which do not involve naming.

b) **The order of Empaako naming ceremony**

1. **The order of Empaako naming ceremony among the Batooro community**

(Information compiled by Stephen Mugabo "Kijegere" Abbooki)

The 1st Ritual: Sweeping the room and taking out the waste (katurukya Orweyo)

Traditionally, when a mother is about to give birth, she is given a special room in house where she stays only with the specialized birth attendants. From the day of giving birth to the day of the naming ceremony, three or four days for a girl or boy respectively, this room is not swept and the waste collected is kept within the room. The baby remains in that room until the day of the naming ceremony and at that time the baby moves out of room and house for the first time. This is why the whole naming ceremony is sometimes referred to as *Kiturukya Ommwana* (taking the baby out). It is believed that the baby gets exposed to the world in stages. From the mother's womb to the closed room and from there to the open space where it can even get in contact with the sun and open weather.

The mother equally remains indoors for those days before the naming ceremony. If she must go out to answer the call of nature, she must be guided and cleared from possibility of being seen by un required people. In this period (three or four days) the mother is considered as "*Omuzaire ali bakyooto*" (A mother who is still at the fire place) This originates from the ancient set up of the house where they prepared a special fire for a mother who has given birth to light the room and warm the mother and her baby for three or four days before they are allowed to join the usual arrangements of the house. She is restricted in movement and actions and she is given special care to help her recover from all the emotional, physical and biological strains of giving birth. There are traditionally prescribed food for the mother in this condition and this include assorted offals and blood of the goat and soup of beans.

Accessing the room to see the baby and mother is restricted to a few categories of people who include only close and confidant relatives and friends. They strongly protected against possibility of people with wrong intention to access the baby at such a delicate stage.

The naming ceremony starts with a group of girls and women after cleaning the room and assembling all the waste, assisting the mother to carry the baby and all

the waste collected from the room and banana or sweet potato peelings from the kitchen, move out of the house in a procession and rotate around the main house three or four times depending on the sex of the newly born. Important to note here is that assortment of waste material includes the placenta and blood collected at giving birth which has been kept in a special pot with traditional preservatives to avoid smell. It is taken out of the room and deposited and buried, a process that is accompanied by a series of rituals. This placenta is traditionally personified as another baby “*Owenyuma*” (*the one who comes after*) and handled with sacredness.

It should be noted, however that this ritual has been adapted to fit into the changed context of giving birth from the hospital, instead of home, where factors of when to leave the hospital cannot be culturally determined.



Batooro ladies disposing off the wastes during Empaako naming Ceremony

The 2nd Ritual: Laughters in chorus (*Enseko z'okuturukya omwana*)

The group of women and girls accompanying the mother and the baby and carrying an assortment of waste materials which includes the placenta, laugh loudly, continuously and in chorus as they move out of the house, rotate around it three or four times, depending on the sex of the baby, and proceed up to the place prepared for depositing waste material.

The interpretation of this artificial laughter, which begins as they open the door of the house, is that they are opening the world of happiness for the baby. The baby is finding happiness as he/she is being exposed to the world, his/her life should be a journey of happiness and his/her life should contribute to sustaining a world of happiness. Those near the baby, touch his/her cheeks saying “*Hurra enseko zaawe, okule nosemererwa, okyanganukege, oteboga akammwegerro*”. (Hear your laughters, grow in happiness and always offer smiles to people)

The 3rd Ritual: Depositing the waste and planting a banana sucker (*Kubyaarra Omwana*)

After rotating around the house, and in loud laughters, this procession of women and girls accompanying the mother and the baby, proceed to a reasonable distance off the court yard into the home gardens or plantations where they have prepared to deposit the waste and plant a banana sucker. They reach at a prepared pit and

deposit the waste and plant a banana sucker in the same pit. For the female baby they plant banana species which gives food (*Enyamunyu*) and the male baby they plant the banana species for brewing local drinks (*Embiira*)

As they plant the banana sucker they speak spontaneously, imploring the baby to grow into a responsible person who is hardworking, caring and constructive to the family, clan and the community at large and according to the expected gender roles. In the case of a baby girl these words can be said; “*Kura obe mukazi wamaani*” (grow into a strong woman), “*olimege oyezege*” (always bring rich harvests), “*Obingege enjara, Obingege obunaku*” (always chase famine, always chase poverty). In the case of a baby boy, these words could be said; “*Kura obe musaija wamaani*” (grow into a strong man) “*osakirege eka*” (always work for the family) “*Oikalizege oruganda, Oikalizege abataka*” (host the clan, host the neighbours). Some families may just deposit the waste at the already grown clump of banana suckers instead of planting a new sucker.

The depositing of the waste which includes the placenta and planting a banana sucker in the same pit has a lot of cultural meaning. It is called “*Kubyaarra omwana*” (rooting the child). This is the ultimate home where the person is rooted. Women express community values and aspirations in supplications in order to root those values in the person and life of the baby who will grow to adulthood. When scolding someone for misbehaving, a question is posed “*Bakakubyaarra?*” (Did you go through the naming rituals or did the family root community values in you) or “*Bakakubyaarraki?*” (What values did the family root in you?) or “*Oli mwana w’oha?*”(Which family do you belong to, If you can behave like that?)



Batooro ladies performing a ritual of depositing the wastes on the clump of banana suckers.

The 4th Ritual: Identifying the baby (*Kutonda mwana*)

When the women procession return at the main house, they find the rest of the congregation seated in a circle in the ritual house or the living room of the main house. Most people are seated on the traditional mats (*Emikeeka*), goat or cow hides (*Enkeeto*) or on lemon grass (*Eteete*). The presiding authority who should be the paternal grandfather of the newly born baby or his equivalent and who represents the head of clan is seated on a ceremonial stool (*Ekikaransi*). The procession joins the seated congregation and is allowed in by the head of the ceremonies. The mother hands over the baby to the chief paternal auntie who examines carefully the physical

features of the baby in silence. After her part, the auntie hands over the baby to its grandfather who also examines, while showing a smile and a jolly face to the baby.

It should be noted that the process of examining the features of the baby in relation to the family starts immediately after birth. Confidant relatives visit the mother individually in the room and hold the baby as they examine its features. By the time of naming ceremony three or four days after birth, the relatives have individually and informally examined the baby and formed and discussed their individual opinions informally among themselves. At this point, it is only the chief auntie and the grandfather of the baby who makes a ceremonial examination and do not declare their findings.

The findings about which specific physical features relating to the family and the relatives which the baby has resembled come up in presenting proposals on the choice of Empaako and surname to give the baby. At that stage everyone in the naming congregation is free to present his or her findings about the features of the baby which relate to the family and about who the dead or living relatives, the child has resembled. The family and relatives being considered are only those relating to the father of the baby. Features relating to the family and relatives of the mother of the baby may be noticed but there are irrelevant in this context.

In the case where nobody identifies any convincing features relating to the family of the father of the baby and worse still if relatives instead identify features relating to the known neighbours, this becomes a child out of adultery on the side of the mother. Such abnormal findings are not presented in the ceremony or formally discussed in any official fora, instead there are whispered in informal talk.

In such a situation, the ceremony would still go on but Empaako given would not have a basis in the family characteristics. A surname to be given would also not connect to family characteristics instead would suggest that the biological fatherhood of the child in the home is doubted. Names which bring out messages like “belongs outside,” “conceived from the plantation or bush but not on the matrimonial bed” etc would be proposed and adopted to indirectly bring out the family disappointment.



Mr. Taddeo Balisanga Adyeri Bazira, clan leader performs the ritual of identifying the baby during Empaako ceremony

The 5th Ritual: Proposing and declaring Empaako and surname (*Kuruka Ibara n'Empaako*)

The presiding grandfather of the baby invites people to give surname and Empaako to the baby "*Omwana onu tumube Ibara n'empaako*" (We give a name and Empaako to this baby). Members take the floor one by one, giving the proposals of a surname and Empaako with a basis and justification of the choice one makes. Admissible factors to form basis and justification of choices include the following;

- Resemblance to the living or dead relatives of the baby.
- Need to incarnate any significant member with exceptional qualities or achievement in the extended family.
- Unusual circumstances and context of birth of the baby (this affects surname only)
- Marking a significant moment or event and putting it on record through the life of the newly born baby (this affects surname only)
- Free preferences that are not attached to serious reasons.
- Sending a statement of appreciation, scorn or disappointment to some people in the community and hence recording the mood of the parents around the time of producing the baby (this affects surname only)
- Recycling the established family or clan names.

There is no voting on the proposals to come up with the finally selected choice but the head of the family picks what has convinced him, even without giving reasons for his choice. He is also free even to ignore all given proposals and declare a choice that has not been presented. When the presiding head feels that all those who want to express themselves have done so, he rules and declares the surname and Empaako by addressing it directly to the baby three or four times, depending on the sex of the baby. *“Ibara lyawe komwiswa, Empaako AraaliX4,”* (Your name is Komwiswa, your Empaako is Araali). It is also possible that a name or Empaako which was not declared by the head of ceremony eventually take root through the family members preferring to use it continuously. Such a name would not be dismissed as a nickname, as long as it was one of those presented during the naming session but eventually ignored at the stage of declaration. After declaring Empaako, people applaud in jubilation for receiving a name and Empaako incarnated in another generation.

The 6th Ritual: Partaking of a meal. (*Kulya Oburo bw’Empaako*)

Sharing a meal of millet and smoked beef is the central ritual in the whole ceremony. Millet is served in one basket (*Endiüiro*) and the sauce in one dish (*Ekibindi*) from where all the members in the ceremony must partake of. They access the meal through a circle. The head of the ceremonies picks and swallows three or four times, depending on the sex of the baby, before he invites everyone to partake of. Anyone to qualify that has attended the ceremony must partake of this particular ritual meal.

This meal is the highest sign of the family unity. Members share from the one dish to demonstrate that they are bound together to a common destiny. The newly born must find a united family and if there were any differences, are reconciled before the ceremony. Any two conflicting parties avoid partaking of this meal if they have not had chance to reconcile. Partaking of the meal while one has outstanding grudge against a member who is also partaking of the same meal is believed to result in misfortunes.

This meal is only symbolic and ceremonial and does not necessarily aim to satisfy hunger. Other foods may be served for the general feeding and hospitality.

This ritual is crucial to the entire ceremony without which the ceremony is not valid and without which the name and Empaako given to a person is culturally invalid. There is a common saying in the community *“Empaako yaawe bakagiriira oburo?”* (Did people partake of the ritual meal for that Empaako?)





Batooro Empaako naming congregation par taking of the ritual meal.

The 7th Ritual: Giving resources to the baby (*Kugabira Omwana*)

A big basket is put in the centre to signal that it is time for people to give valuables and resources which the newly born will grow to find, own and build on. Some properties are presented and others are pledged which they collect after the ceremony. They give resources like cows especially in the pastoralists' families, goats, chicken and money. The domestic animals and birds which are given are those of the highest reproductive value like a calf, a she-goat and a chicken but not a bull, a he-goat nor a cock. They give the baby capital wealth but not material for short term enjoyment. The central meaning of this exercise is to secure the economic future of the new child and have the baby own property as he/she starts life in the world.

The ritual also starts a process of determining the level and type of personality fortunes the child is born with and will grow to exhibit. The parents take care of the resources on behalf of the growing child as they monitor how these resources are performing. When they multiply well, then the child is of good fortune and when they perform poorly then the child is determined to be having poor fortunes. For instance, if the given calf does not produce or it dies, this signals to bad fortunes where they will say "*Omwana taina mukono gw'Itungo*" (a child has no fortune in accumulating wealth). In this case herbs are collected and applied along with rituals which are aimed at cleansing the child to improve personal fortunes in life.



Resources given to the child

The 8th Ritual: Planting of *Sicus spp* tree (omutoma) only for a male baby: (*Kubyara Omutoma*)

This ritual is performed only in the case of the male baby and performed by the head of the family accompanied by the uncles and brothers to the baby. They move through the right side of the main house to the plantations near the homestead and plant a *mutoma* tree. The *mutoma* is a tree in the class of *Sicus spp* and traditionally has great significance in the social and spiritual life among the Empaako communities. This is because of the symbolic meanings that are drawn from its characteristics and a wide range of uses it has in the social and religious life of communities.

This tree in whatever dry conditions, it doesn't dry up and communities describe this quality as *Omutoma Ogutooma* (Omutoma which never dries). Equally once planted, it does not die. Even when you cut it, any part of its stem will eventually germinate again if it is put in contact with appropriate conditions. This provides the symbolism of resilience, perpetuity and immortality of the family and clan through the processes of intergenerational succession, value transmission and enhancing communion with the ancestors and the living dead in the day today life of the living. They plant this tree for the male baby because in these patrilineal communities, that gender represents succession of the family to the next generation, transmission of the values and reaffirms the immortality of the family and the clan.

The other important characteristics of the tree are that, it provides shade, traps rain water and accommodates and energizes other plants under its shades or near it. These characteristics point to the roles of a family and clan to its members and therefore the roles of a male member of the family and clan. It also points to the role of a home for its members. It shelters them, quenches their thirst, feeds them, empowers them and provides points of everlasting reference and the last resting place.

A wide range of products are made from that tree and which are critical in social and spiritual life of the communities. It provides material for making bark cloth from which a variety of products are made including dress, blankets and vestments for rituals and wrapping the dead bodies for burial.

This ritual is increasingly losing viability because of the changing home contexts from the traditional rural context to urban home with limited land for planting trees.

The ceremony ends with spontaneous dancing, music, eating, drinking and celebrations.



*Elder planting a *Sicus spp* tree (omutoma) during Empaako naming ceremony*

2. The order of Empaako naming ceremony among the Banyoro community

(Information compiled by Owek. Allan Bamuha Byakagaba Atwoki)

The 1st Ritual: Slaughtering a goat at 6:00am (*Kusarra*)

Early morning at 6:00am, a prepared she or he goat depending on the sex of the baby, is taken at the nearby home plantation ready for slaughtering. The mother of the baby slaps it once and then men begin slaughtering. This marks the beginning of the ceremony and underscores its significance. The assorted offals and blood constitute the recommended diet for the mother in her process of recovery from the strains of giving birth and the rest of meat is served for the general feeding of the guests.

In the context of practicing traditional religion, this ritual has a spiritual component whereby first and foremost this goat was offered as thanksgiving gesture to *Embandwa Nyabuzaana*. This, according to beliefs of that traditional religion, is a goddess-responsible for safe delivery of children which they invoked to intervene during labour pains.

Today, for many families, this ritual has been edited by removing the spiritual purpose and maintaining the nutritional uses for the mother and social values and hospitality. It is also optional for those who can afford a goat to slaughter but even if it is omitted, the ceremony would still remain valid.



Family member presents the goat for slaughter

The 2nd Ritual: Identifying the baby (*Kutonda mwana*)

At exactly 12:00noon which is signaled by a cock crowing, the grandfather of the baby call people to assemble in the sitting room or ritual house. The emphasis on this noon time originates from the context of traditional religion where it was believed that the spirits and gods who had to be invoked to grace the ceremony, are more active at noon. In the currently changing religious context, this particular time may not be emphasized. People sit in a circle and on traditional mats (*Emikeeka*) or cow or goat hides (*Enkeeto*) or on lemon grass (*Eteete*). The grandfather sits on a ceremonial stool (*Ekikaransi*) and orders the baby to be brought from the room. The baby is then brought by the mother and is handed over to the chief paternal auntie who examines carefully the physical features of the baby in silence. After her part, the auntie hands over the baby to its grandfather who also examines while showing a smile and a jolly face to the baby.

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The findings about which specific physical features relating to the family and the relatives which the baby has resembled come up in presenting proposals on the choice of Empaako and surname to give the baby. At that stage everyone in the naming congregation is free to present his or her findings about the features of the baby which relate to the family and about who the dead or living relatives, the child has resembled. The family and relatives being considered are only those relating to the father of the baby. Features relating to the family and relatives of the mother of the baby may be noticed but there are irrelevant in this context.

In the case where nobody identifies any convincing features relating to the family of the father of the baby and worse still if relatives instead identify features relating to the known neighbours, this becomes a child out of adultery on the side of the mother. Such abnormal findings are not presented in the ceremony nor formally discussed in any official fora, instead there are whispered in informal talk.

In such a situation, the ceremony would still go on but Empaako given would not have a basis in the family characteristics. A surname to be given would also not connect to family characteristics instead would suggest that the biological fatherhood of the child in the home is doubted. Names which bring out messages like “belongs outside,” “conceived from the plantation or bush but not on the matrimonial bed” etc would be proposed and adopted to indirectly bring out the family disappointment.



Banyoro Family, relatives and friends identify the child

3rd Ritual: Burying the umbilical cord (*Kubyarra*)- optional

The grandfather and the father of the baby move and dig a small hole near the door. In this hole they bury the umbilical cord (*Engoma/Orulera*) wrapped in different herbs depending on the sex of the baby. When the baby is a boy they bury at the inside door step and a girl they bury at the outside.

The meaning is that the boy belongs inside the home for ever and is referred to as “*Owomuka*” (belongs in the home) and the girl child is expected naturally to join a foreign home in marriage and therefore referred to as “*Birigenda*” (will go away).

This ritual, in modern context has largely been skipped and yet the ceremony remains valid.



A Munyoro elder burying the amblical code during the Empaako naming Ceremony

The 4th Ritual: Planting a banana sucker (*Kubyaarra Omwana*)

The naming congregation move out of the house led by the grandfather and proceed to a reasonable distance off the court yard into the home gardens or plantations where they have prepared to plant a banana sucker. They reach at a prepared pit and the grandfather plants the banana sucker along with sim sim seeds. For the female baby they plant banana species which gives food (*Enyamunyū*) and the male baby they plant the banana species for making local drinks (*Embiira*)

As they plant the banana, they speak spontaneously imploring the baby to grow into a responsible person who is hardworking, caring and constructive to the family, clan and the community at large and according to the expected gender roles. In the case of a baby girl these words can be said; “*Kura obe mukazi wamaani*” (grow into a strong woman), “*olimege oyezzege*” (always bring rich harvests), “*Obiingege enjara, Obiingege obunaku*” (always chase famine, always chase poverty). In the case of a baby boy, these words could be said; “*Kura obe musajja wamaani*” (grow into a strong man) “*osakirege eka*” (always work for the family) “*Oikalizege oruganda, Oikalizege abataka*” (host the clan, host the neighbours).

This ritual is called “*Kubyaarra ommwana*” (rooting the child). This is the ultimate home where the person is rooted. The people also express community values and aspirations in supplications in order to root those values in the person and life of the baby who will grow to adulthood. When scolding someone for misbehaving, a question is posed “*Bakakubyaarra?*” (Did you go through the naming rituals or did the family root community values in you) or “*Bakakubyaarraki?*” (What values did the family root in you?) or “*Oli mwana w’oba?*” (Which family do you belong to, If you can behave like that?) etc.



Banyoro Empaako naming congregation performing the ritual of planting a banana sucker

The 5th Ritual: Proposing and declaring Empaako and surname (*Kuruka Ibara n’Empaako*)

The presiding grandfather of the baby invites people to give surname and Empaako to the baby “*Omwana onu tumube Ibara n’empaako*” (Let us give this baby a name and Empaako). Members take the floor one by one, giving the proposals of a surname and Empaako with a basis and justification of the choice one makes. Admissible factors to form basis and justification of choices include the following;

- Resemblance to the living or dead relatives of the baby.
- Need to incarnate any significant member with exceptional qualities or achievement in the extended family.
- Unusual circumstances and context of birth of the baby (this affects surname only)
- Marking a significant moment or event and putting it on record through the life of the newly born baby (this affects surname only)
- Free preferences that are not attached to serious reasons.
- Sending a statement of appreciation, scorn or disappointment to some people in the community and hence recording the mood of the parents around the time of producing the baby (this affects surname only)
- Recycling the established family or clan names.

There is no voting on the proposals to come up with the finally selected choice but the head of the family picks what has convinced him, even without giving reasons for his choice. He is also free even to ignore all given proposals and declare a choice that has not been presented. When the presiding head feels that all those who want to express themselves have done so, he rules and declares the surname and *Empaako* by addressing it directly to the baby three or four times, depending on the sex of the baby. *"Ibara hyawe komwiswa, Empaako Araali X4."* (Your name is Komwiswa, your *Empaako* is Araali). It is also possible that a name or *Empaako* which was not declared by the head eventually take root through the family members preferring to use it continuously. Such a name would not be dismissed as a nickname as long as it was one of those presented during the naming session but eventually ignored at the stage of declaration. After declaring *Empaako*, people applaud in jubilation for receiving a name and *Empaako* incarnated in another generation.



A Munyoro elder declares the given Empaako to the child

The 6th Ritual: Partaking of a meal. (*Kulya Oburo bw'Empaako*)

Sharing a meal of millet and ground nut sauce (*Enyobyoy*) is the central ritual in the whole ceremony. Millet is served in one basket (*Endiiri*) and the sauce in one dish (*Ekiibindi*) from where all the members in the ceremony must pick. They access the meal through a circle. The head of the ceremonies picks and swallows three or four times, depending on the sex of the baby, before he invites everyone to partake of. Anyone to qualify that has attended the ceremony must partake of this particular ritual meal.

This meal is the highest sign of the family unity. Members share from the one dish to demonstrate that they are bound together to a common destiny. The newly born must find a united family and if there were any differences, are reconciled before the ceremony. Any two conflicting parties avoid partaking of this meal if they have not had chance to reconcile. Partaking of the meal while one has outstanding grudge against a member who is also partaking of the same meal is believed to result in misfortunes.

This ritual is crucial to the entire ceremony without which the ceremony is invalid and without which the name and Empaako given to a person is not culturally valid. There is a common saying in the community "*Empaako yaawe bakagiriira oburo?*" (Did people partake of the ritual meal for that Empaako?)



Banyoro Empaako naming Congregation par taking of the ritual meal

The 7th Ritual: Giving resources to the baby (*Kugabira Omwana*)

A big basket is put in the centre to signal that it is time for people to give valuables and resources which the newly born will grow to find, own and build on. Some properties are presented and others are pledged which they collect after the ceremony. They give resources like cows especially in the pastoralists' families, goats, chicken and money. The domestic animals and birds which are given are those of the highest reproductive value like a calf, a she goat and a chicken but not a bull, a he goat nor a cock. They give the baby capital wealth but not material for short term enjoyment. The central meaning of this exercise is to secure the economic future of the new child and enable the baby own property at the start of life.

The ritual also starts a process of determining the level and type of personality fortunes the child is born with and will grow to exhibit. The parents take care of the resources on behalf of the growing child as they monitor how these resources are performing. When they multiply well, then the child is of good fortune and when they perform poorly then the child is determined to be having poor fortunes. For instance if the given calf does not produce or it dies, this signals to bad fortunes where they will say "*Omwana taina mukono gw'Itungo*" (a child has bad fortune in accumulating wealth). In this case herbs are collected and applied along with rituals which are aimed at cleansing the child to improve personal fortunes in life.



Banyoro Empaako naming congregation contributing resources for the named child

The 8th Ritual: Planting of *sicus spp* tree (*omutoma*) only for a male baby: (*Kubyara Omutoma*)

This ritual is performed only in the case of the male baby and performed by the head of clan accompanied by the uncles and brothers to the baby. They move through the right side of the main house to the plantations near the homestead and plant a *mutoma* tree. The *mutoma* is a tree in the class of *sicus spp* and traditionally, has great significance in the social and spiritual life among the *Empaako* communities. This is because of the symbolic meanings that are drawn from its characteristics and a wide range of uses it has in the social and religious life of communities.

This tree in whatever dry conditions, it doesn't dry up and communities describe this quality as *Omutoma Ogutooma* (*Omutoma* which never dries). Equally once planted, it does not die. Even when you cut it, any part of its stem will eventually

germinate again if it is put in contact with appropriate conditions. This provides the symbolism of resilience, perpetuity and immortality of the family and clan through the processes of intergenerational succession, value transmission and enhancing communion with the ancestors and the living dead in the day today life of the living. They plant this tree for the male baby because in these patrilineal communities, that gender represents succession of the family to the next generation, transmission of the values and re-affirms the immortality of the family and the clan.

The other important characteristics of the tree are that, it provides shade, traps rain water and accommodates and energizes other plants under its shades or near it. These characteristics point to the role of a family and clan to its members and therefore the roles of a male member of the family and clan. It also points to the role of a home for its members. It shelters them, quenches their thirst, feeds them, empowers them and provides points of everlasting reference and the last resting place.

A wide range of products are made from that tree and which are critical in social and spiritual life of the communities. It provides material for making bark cloth from which a variety of products are made including dress, blankets and vestments for rituals and wrapping the dead bodies for burial.

This ritual is increasingly losing viability because of the changing home contexts from the traditional rural context to urban home with limited land for planting trees.

The ceremony ends with spontaneous dancing, music, eating, drinking and celebrations.



Banyoro in spontaneous dance and celebrations as climax of Empaako naming Ceremony

3. The order of Empaako naming ceremony among the Banyabindi community

(Information compiled by Mr. Xaviour Kanyoro Adyeri)

The 1st Ritual: Sweeping the room and taking out the waste (*kuturukya Orweyo*)

Traditionally, when a mother is about to give birth, she is given a special room in house where she stays only with the specialized birth attendants. From the day of giving birth to the day of the naming ceremony, three or four days for a girl or boy respectively, this room is not swept and the waste collected is kept within the room. The baby remains in that room until the day of the naming ceremony and at that time the baby moves out of room and house for the first time. This is why the whole naming ceremony is sometimes referred to as *Kiturukya Ommwana* (taking the baby out). It is believed that the baby gets exposed to the world in stages. From the mother's womb to the closed room and from there to the open space where it can even get in contact with the sun and open weather.

The mother equally remains indoors for those days before the naming ceremony. If she must go out to answer the call of nature, she must be guided and cleared from possibility of being seen by un required people. In this period (three or four days) the mother is considered as "*Omuzaire ali bakyooto*" (*A mother who is still at the fire place*) This originates from the ancient set up of the house where they prepared a special fire for a mother who has given birth to light the room and warm the mother and her baby for three or four days before they are allowed to join the usual arrangements of the house. She is restricted in movement and actions and she is given special care to help her recover from all the emotional, physical and biological strains of giving birth. There are traditionally prescribed food for the mother in this condition and this include assorted offals and blood of the goat and soup of beans.

Accessing the room to see the baby and mother is restricted to a few categories of people who include only close and confidant relatives and friends. They strongly protected against possibility of people with wrong intention to access the baby at such a delicate stage.

The naming ceremony starts with a group of girls and women after cleaning the room and assembling all the waste, assisting the mother to carry the baby and all the waste collected from the room and banana or sweet potato peelings from the kitchen, move out of the house in a procession and rotate around the main house three or four times depending on the sex of the newly born. Important to note here is that assortment of waste material includes the placenta and blood collected at giving birth which has been kept in a special pot with traditional preservatives to avoid smell. It is taken out of the room and deposited and buried, a process that is accompanied by a series of rituals. This placenta is traditionally personified as another baby "*Owenyuma*" (*the one who comes after*) and handled with sacredness.

It should be noted, however that this ritual has been adapted to fit into the changed context of giving birth from the hospital, instead of home, where factors of when to leave the hospital cannot be culturally determined.



Banyabindi Ladies sweeping, cleaning and disposing the wastes as part of Empaako naming Ceremony

The 2nd Ritual: Laughters in chorus (Enseko z’okuturukeya omwana)

The group of women and girls accompanying the mother and the baby and carrying an assortment of waste materials which includes the placenta, laugh loudly, continuously and in chorus as they move out of the house, rotate around it three or four times, depending on the sex of the baby, and proceed up to the place prepared for depositing waste material.

The interpretation of this artificial laughter, which begins as they open the door of the house, is that they are opening the world of happiness for the baby. The baby is finding happiness as he/she is being exposed to the world, his/her life should be a journey of happiness and his/her life should contribute to sustaining a world of happiness. Those near the baby, touch his/her cheeks saying “Hurra enseko zaawe, okule nosemererwa, okyanganukege, oteboga akammvegerro”. (Hear your laughters, grow in happiness and always offer smiles to people)



Banyabindi performing the ritual of laughters in Empaako naming Ceremony

The 3rd Ritual: Depositing the waste and planting a banana sucker (*Kubyarra Omwana*)

After rotating around the house, and in loud laughters, this procession of women and girls accompanying the mother and the baby, proceed to a reasonable distance off the court yard into the home gardens or plantations where they have prepared to deposit the waste and plant a banana sucker. They reach at a prepared pit and deposit the waste and plant a banana sucker in the same pit. For the female baby they plant banana species which gives food (*Enyamunyu*) and the male baby they plant the banana species for making local drinks (*Embiira*)

As they plant the banana sucker they speak spontaneously, imploring the baby to grow into a responsible person who is hardworking, caring and constructive to the family, clan and the community at large and according to the expected gender roles. In the case of a baby girl these words can be said; “*Kura obe mukazi wamaani*” (grow into a strong woman), “*olimege oyezege*” (always bring rich harvests), “*Obingege enjara, Obingege obunaku*” (always chase famine, always chase poverty). In the case of a baby boy, these words could be said; “*Kura obe musajja wamaani*” (grow into a strong man) “*osakirege eka*” (always work for the family) “*Oikalizege oruganda, Oikalizege abataka*” (host the clan, host the neighbours). Some families may just deposit the waste at the already grown clump of banana suckers instead of planting a new sucker.

The depositing of the waste which includes the placenta and planting a banana sucker in the same pit has a lot of cultural meaning. It is called “*Kubyarra omwana*” (rooting the child). This is the ultimate home where the person is rooted. Women express community values and aspirations in supplications in order to root those values in the person and life of the baby who will grow to adulthood. When scolding someone for misbehaving, a question is posed “*Bakakubyarra?*” (Did you go through the naming rituals or did the family root community values in you) or “*Bakakubyarraki?*” (What values did the family root in you?) or “*Oli mwana w’oha?*” (Which family do you belong to, If you can behave like that?)



Banyabindi ladies depositing the wastes during Empaako naming Ceremony

The 4th Ritual: Identifying the baby (*Kutonda mwana*)

When the women procession return at the main house, they find the rest of the congregation seated in a circle in the ritual house or the living room of the main house. Most people are seated on the traditional mats (*Emikeeka*), goat or cow hides (*Enkeeto*) or on lemon grass (*Eteete*). The presiding authority who should be the paternal grandfather of the newly born baby or his equivalent and who represents the head of clan is seated on a ceremonial stool (*Ekikaransi*). The procession joins the seated congregation and is allowed in by the head of the ceremonies. The mother hands over the baby to the chief paternal auntie who examines carefully the physical features of the baby in silence. After her part, the auntie hands over the baby to its grandfather who also examines, while showing a smile and a jolly face to the baby.

It should be noted that the process of examining the features of the baby in relation to the family starts immediately after birth. Confidant relatives visit the mother individually in the room and hold the baby as they examine its features. By the time of naming ceremony three or four days after birth, the relatives have individually and informally examined the baby and formed and discussed their individual opinions informally among themselves. At this point, it is only the chief auntie and the grandfather of the baby who makes a ceremonial examination and do not declare their findings.

The findings about which specific physical features relating to the family and the relatives which the baby has resembled come up in presenting proposals on the choice of Empaako and surname to give the baby. At that stage everyone in the naming congregation is free to present his or her findings about the features of the baby which relate to the family and about who the dead or living relatives, the child has resembled. The family and relatives being considered are only those relating to the father of the baby. Features relating to the family and relatives of the mother of the baby may be noticed but there are irrelevant in this context.

In the case where nobody identifies any convincing features relating to the family of the father of the baby and worse still if relatives instead identify features relating to the known neighbours, this becomes a child out of adultery on the side of the mother. Such abnormal findings are not presented in the ceremony or formally discussed in any official fora, instead there are whispered in informal talk.

In such a situation, the ceremony would still go on but Empaako given would not have a basis in the family characteristics. A surname to be given would also not connect to family characteristics instead would suggest that the biological fatherhood of the child in the home is doubted. Names which bring out messages like “belongs outside,” “conceived from the plantation or bush but not on the matrimonial bed” etc would be proposed and adopted to indirectly bring out the family disappointment.



Banyabindi performing the ritual of identifying the baby during Empaako naming Ceremony

The 5th Ritual: Proposing and declaring Empaako and surname (Kuruka Ibara n'Empaako)

The presiding grandfather of the baby invites people to give surname and Empaako to the baby "*Omwana onu tumube Ibara n'empaako*" (We give a name and Empaako to this baby). Members take the floor one by one, giving the proposals of a surname and Empaako with a basis and justification of the choice one makes. Admissible factors to form basis and justification of choices include the following;

- Resemblance to the living or dead relatives of the baby.
- Need to incarnate any significant member with exceptional qualities or achievement in the extended family.
- Unusual circumstances and context of birth of the baby (this affects surname only)
- Marking a significant moment or event and putting it on record through the life of the newly born baby (this affects surname only)
- Free preferences that are not attached to serious reasons.
- Sending a statement of appreciation, scorn or disappointment to some people in the community and hence recording the mood of the parents around the time of producing the baby (this affects surname only)
- Recycling the established family or clan names.

There is no voting on the proposals to come up with the finally selected choice but the head of the family picks what has convinced him, even without giving reasons for his choice. He is also free even to ignore all given proposals and declare a choice that has not been presented. When the presiding head feels that all those who want to express themselves have done so, he rules and declares the surname and Empaako by addressing it directly to the baby three or four times, depending on the sex of the baby. *“Tbara lyawe komwiswa, Empaako AraaliX4,”* (Your name is Komwiswa, your Empaako is Araali). It is also possible that a name or Empaako which was not declared by the head of ceremony eventually take root through the family members preferring to use it continuously. Such a name would not be dismissed as a nickname, as long as it was one of those presented during the naming session but eventually ignored at the stage of declaration. After declaring Empaako, people applaud in jubilation for receiving a name and Empaako incarnated in another generation.



Banyabindi elder declaring the given Empaako

The 6th Ritual: Partaking of a meal. (*Kulya Oburo bw’Empaako*)

Sharing a meal of millet and smoked beef is the central ritual in the whole ceremony. Millet is served in one basket (*Endiüiro*) and the sauce in one dish (*Ekibindi*) from where all the members in the ceremony must partake of. They access the meal through a circle. The head of the ceremonies picks and swallows three or four times, depending on the sex of the baby, before he invites everyone to partake of. Anyone to qualify that has attended the ceremony must partake of this particular ritual meal.

This meal is the highest sign of the family unity. Members share from the one dish to demonstrate that they are bound together to a common destiny. The newly born must find a united family and if there were any differences, are reconciled before the ceremony. Any two conflicting parties avoid partaking of this meal if they have not had chance to reconcile. Partaking of the meal while one has outstanding grudge against a member who is also partaking of the same meal is believed to result in misfortunes.

This meal is only symbolic and ceremonial and does not necessarily aim to satisfy hunger. Other foods may be served for the general feeding and hospitality.

This ritual is crucial to the entire ceremony without which the ceremony is not valid and without which the name and *Empaako* given to a person is culturally invalid. There is a common saying in the community “*Empaako yaawe bakagiriira oburo?*” (*Did people partake of the ritual meal for that Empaako?*)



Banyabindi partaking of the ritual meal in the Empaako naming Ceremony

The 7th Ritual: Giving resources to the baby (*Kugabira Omwana*)

A big basket is put in the centre to signal that it is time for people to give valuables and resources which the newly born will grow to find, own and build on. Some properties are presented and others are pledged which they collect after the ceremony. They give resources like cows especially in the pastoralists’ families, goats, chicken and money. The domestic animals and birds which are given are those of the highest reproductive value like a calf, a she-goat and a chicken but not a bull, a he-goat nor a cock. They give the baby capital wealth but not material for short term enjoyment. The central meaning of this exercise is to secure the economic future of the new child and have the baby own property as he/she starts life in the world.

The ritual also starts a process of determining the level and type of personality fortunes the child is born with and will grow to exhibit. The parents take care of the resources on behalf of the growing child as they monitor how these resources are performing. When they multiply well, then the child is of good fortune and when they perform poorly then the child is determined to be having poor fortunes. For instance, if the given calf does not produce or it dies, this signals to bad fortunes

where they will say “*Omwana taina mukono gw’Itungo*” (a child has no fortune in accumulating wealth). In this case herbs are collected and applied along with rituals which are aimed at cleansing the child to improve personal fortunes in life.



Banyabindi contributing Capital resources for a named child during Empaako naming Ceremony

The 8th Ritual: Children jumping and reciting (*Kuguruka Ekiisuuburro*)

Children run around the house three or four times depending on the sex of the baby and then, in a line, move to the presiding elder while jumping in a one step forward rhythm and continuously reciting the word “*Ekiisuuburro*” (untying, freeing or releasing) as the rest of the congregation reply “*Omwana ya Kura*” (the baby has grown therefore all the restrictions are lifted). They find the elder holding in his right hand a big piece of millet food with piece of smoked beef inside it. Each child, in a line bends and takes a bite directly from the elder’s hand and returns outside in the same jumping and reciting rhythm. They do this, three or four rounds depending on the sex of the baby and in the last round, the last child uses hands and receives all that has remained in the elder’s hand.

The three or four days period from date of birth to the naming ceremony, a baby is considered in special state with restricted accessibility and the mother equally does not engage in the normal interactions. The father of the baby suspends any sexual activity with women even in the polygamous context. So this ritual declares that the baby has grown (*omwana yakura*) now can be accessed and the parents can resume normal life.



Banyabindi children performing the “Ekiisuuburro” ritual during Empaako naming Ceremony

The 9th Ritual: Planting of *Sicus spp* tree (*omutoma*) only for a male baby: (*Kubyara Omutoma*)

This ritual is performed only in the case of the male baby and performed by the head of the family accompanied by the uncles and brothers to the baby. They move through the right side of the main house to the plantations near the homestead and plant a mutoma tree. The mutoma is a tree in the class of *Sicus spp* and traditionally has great significance in the social and spiritual life among the *Empaako* communities. This is because of the symbolic meanings that are drawn from its characteristics and a wide range of uses it has in the social and religious life of communities.

This tree in whatever dry conditions, it doesn't dry up and communities describe this quality as ***Omutoma Ogutooma*** (*Omutoma* which never dries). Equally once planted, it does not die. Even when you cut it, any part of its stem will eventually germinate again if it is put in contact with appropriate conditions. This provides the symbolism of resilience, perpetuity and immortality of the family and clan through the processes of intergenerational succession, value transmission and enhancing communion with the ancestors and the living dead in the day today life of the living. They plant this tree for the male baby because in these patrilineal communities, that gender represents succession of the family to the next generation, transmission of the values and reaffirms the immortality of the family and the clan.

The other important characteristics of the tree are that, it provides shade, traps rain water and accommodates and energizes other plants under its shades or near it. These characteristics point to the roles of a family and clan to its members and therefore the roles of a male member of the family and clan. It also points to the role of a home for its members. It shelters them, quenches their thirst, feeds them, empowers them and provides points of everlasting reference and the last resting place.

A wide range of products are made from that tree and which are critical in social and spiritual life of the communities. It provides material for making bark cloth from which a variety of products are made including dress, blankets and vestments for rituals and wrapping the dead bodies for burial.

This ritual is increasingly losing viability because of the changing home contexts from the traditional rural context to urban home with limited land for planting trees.

The ceremony ends with spontaneous dancing, music, eating, drinking and celebrations.



Banyabindi in spontaneous dancing and celebrations climaxing the Empaako naming Ceremony

4. The order of Empaako naming ceremony among the Batuku community

(Information compiled by Ms. Nyakabwa Olive Kizga Adyeri, Mr. Moses Tusiime Atwoki, Mr. Asimwe Robert Atwoki and Mr. Mpaka Cosia Mudukule Amooti)

The 1st Ritual: Taking the baby outside (*Kuturukya Omwana*)

For three or four days after birth for a girl or a boy respectively, the baby remains in the room from where birth took place. The baby is expected to come to the open world in stages. From the womb to the closed room, then to open space. The entire ceremony of the day is sometimes called “*Kuturukya Omwana*” (taking the baby out of the room).

During those days, the movement of the mother is equally restricted and the two are not accessed by everyone.

The ceremony begins by people getting seated in a circle outside the house. This seated group of people is led by the grandfather of the baby who presides over the ceremonies while seated on a traditional stool called (*Ekiikaransi*). At this point the baby and the mother accompanied by maternal and paternal aunts are inside the house and in the room where birth took place.

If the baby is male, a spear is put at the door step and a selected male brother or cousin, dressed traditionally, enter the house and picks the baby from the mother. He carries the baby with left hand side and when he reaches at the door step he also picks the spear and move out to the court yard while laughing loudly. He makes a

U-turn and move back to the house. He makes such four rounds and then hands over the baby to the grandfather as the congregation welcomes the baby with loud laughters of joy.

In the case of a female baby, a paternal auntie carries the baby from the mother and moves outside the house and back to the house three times while laughing loudly. At the last round, she hands over the baby to the grandfather as the congregation welcomes the baby with laughters of joy.



Child being taken outside the house in Empaako naming Ceremony among the Batuku

The 2nd Ritual: Laughters when taking the baby outside the house. (Enseko z'okuturukya omwana)

As the man holding a spear, in the case of a baby boy, carries the boy from the house to the court yard and back, four rounds, he laughs loudly. On the final round, he is joined by the whole congregation and they bring his laughters to a climax while doing it in chorus. These same actions are done in the case of the baby girl but who would be carried by an auntie and moves from the house and back three times.

In the first place these are laughters of joy welcoming a baby who is about to be given names to consolidate his or her identity. It is traditionally believed that the nine months period in the womb and the three or four days of consolidating the experience after birth, is a critical phase of human growth. Therefore these laughters signify joy for the baby for having successfully completed that critical phase of life. It is also an indication that baby is received in happiness. And has found a happy family and on her or his part should always bring happiness to the people and the community at large.



Batuku performing the ritual of laughters during the Empaako naming Ceremony

The 3rd Ritual: Burying the waste and the placenta (*Kuziika Owenyuma*)

For all the period of three or four days from time of giving birth, the placenta and its associated blood has been kept in a special pot with applied traditional preservatives to avoid smell. This pot together with the all the waste materials collected from the room are put in the big basket. Traditionally, the placenta is personified and handled with sacredness. It is called “*Owenyuma*” (the one who follow or comes after). At a point of finally taking the baby from the room to the waiting congregation seated outside, the accompanying aunties, carry this basket along. After handing over the baby to the grandfather who is seated on a ceremonial stool in the waiting congregation, the aunties, carrying the basket, proceed behind the main house at a prepared place and burry the contents of the basket. The family makes efforts to put a permanent mark on the spot where the placenta is buried. The group then re-joins the congregation to proceed with the ritual of identification of the baby.

It should be noted that this ritual of burying the placenta is increasingly being skipped because of the inconveniences involved in observing it in a changed context where mothers are encouraged to give birth from the hospitals.



Batuku women disposing the wastes during Empaako naming Ceremony

The 4th Ritual: Identifying the baby (*Kutonda mwana*)

The grandfather receives the baby with a smile. Carefully examines the physical features right from the head to the toes and nails. The purpose is to identify the characteristics of the family and relate the baby to any member of the extended

family whether living or living dead. After his turn he gives the baby to other key people to do the same.

It should be noted that the process of examining the features of the baby in relation to the family starts immediately after birth. Confidant relatives visit the mother individually in the room and hold the baby as they examine its features. By the time of naming ceremony three or four days after birth, the relatives have individually and informally examined the baby and formed and discussed their individual opinions informally among themselves. At this point the examination is essentially ceremonial and they don't immediately declare their findings.

The findings about which specific physical features relating to the family and the relatives which the baby has resembled come up in presenting proposals on the choice of *Empaako* and surname to give the baby. At that stage everyone in the naming congregation is free to present his or her findings about the features of the baby which relate to the family and about who the dead or living relatives, the child has resembled. The family and relatives being considered are only those relating to the father of the baby. Features relating to the family and relatives of the mother of the baby may be noticed but there are irrelevant in this context.

In the case where nobody identifies any convincing features relating to the family of the father of the baby and worse still if relatives instead identify features relating to the known neighbours, this becomes a child out of adultery on the side of the mother. Such abnormal findings are not presented in the ceremony nor formally discussed in any official fora, instead there are whispered in informal talk.

In such a situation, the ceremony would still go on but *Empaako* given would not have a basis in the family characteristics. A surname to be given would also not connect to family characteristics instead would suggest that the biological fatherhood of the child in the home is doubted. Names which bring out messages like “belongs outside,” “conceived from the plantation or bush but not on the matrimonial bed” etc would be proposed and adopted to indirectly bring out the family disappointment.



Batuku elders performing the identification ritual during Empaako naming Ceremony

The 5th Ritual: Proposing and declaring Empaako and surname (Kuruka Ibara n'Empaako)

The presiding grandfather of the baby invites people to give surname and Empaako to the baby "*Omwana onu tumube Ibara n'empaako*" (We give a name and Empaako to this baby). Members take the floor one by one, giving the proposals of a surname and Empaako with a basis and justification of the choice one makes. Admissible factors to form basis and justification of choices include the following;

- Resemblance to the living or dead paternal relatives of the baby.
- Need to incarnate any significant member with exceptional qualities or achievement in the extended family.
- Unusual circumstances and context of birth of the baby (this affects surname only)
- Marking a significant moment or event and putting it on record through the life of the newly born baby (this affects surname only)
- Free preferences that are not attached to serious reasons.
- Sending a statement of appreciation, scorn or disappointment to some people in the community and hence recording the mood of the parents around the time of producing the baby (this affects surname only)
- Recycling the established family or clan names.

There is no voting on the proposals to come up with the finally selected choice but the head of the family picks what has convinced him, even without giving reasons for his choice. He is also free even to ignore all given proposals and declare a choice that has not been presented. When the presiding head feels that all those who want to express themselves have done so, he rules and declares the surname and Empaako by addressing it directly to the baby three or four times, depending on the sex of the baby. "*Ibara hyawe komwiswa, Empaako AraaliX4,*" (Your name is Komwiswa, your Empaako is Araali). It is also possible that a name or Empaako which was not declared by the head eventually take root through the family members preferring to use it continuously. Such a name would not be dismissed as a nickname, as long as it was one of those presented during the naming session but eventually ignored at the stage of declaration. After declaring Empaako, people applaud in jubilation for receiving a name and Empaako incarnated in another generation.

The 6th Ritual: Partaking of a meal. (Kulya Oburo bw'Empaako)

Sharing a meal of millet and cow ghee sauce (*Ekyagyo*) is the central ritual in the whole ceremony. Millet is served in one basket (*Endiuro*) and the sauce in one dish (*Ekibindi*) from where all the members in the ceremony must partake of. They access the meal through a circle. The head of the ceremonies picks and swallows three or four times, depending on the sex of the baby, before he invites everyone to partake of. Anyone to qualify that has attended the ceremony must partake of this particular ritual meal. This meal is only symbolic and ceremonial but not to satisfy hunger. Other foods and drinks can additionally be served for the general feeding and hospitality.

This meal is the highest sign of the family unity. Members share from the one dish to demonstrate that they are bound together to a common destiny. The newly born must find a united family and if there were any differences, are reconciled before the ceremony. Any two conflicting parties avoid partaking of this meal if they have not had chance to reconcile. Partaking of the meal while one has outstanding grudge against a member who is also partaking of the same meal is believed to result in misfortunes.

This ritual is crucial to the entire ceremony without which the ceremony is invalid and without which the name and *Empaako* given to a person is not culturally valid. There is a common saying in the community "*Empaako yaave bakagiriira oburo?*" (Did people partake of the ritual meal for that *Empaako*?)



Batuku partaking of the ritual meal during Empaako naming Ceremony

The 7th Ritual: Giving resources to the baby (*Kugabira Omwana*)

A big basket is put in the centre to signal that it is time for people to give valuables and resources which the newly born will grow to find, own and build on. Some properties are presented and others are pledged which they collect after the ceremony. They give resources like cows especially in the pastoralists' families, goats, chicken and money. The domestic animals and birds which are given are those of the highest reproductive value like a calf, a she-goat and a chicken but not a bull, a he-goat nor a cock. They give the baby capital wealth but not material for short term enjoyment. The central meaning of this exercise is to secure the economic future of the new child and have the baby own property as he/she starts life in the world.

The ritual also starts a process of determining the level and type of personality fortunes the child is born with and will grow to exhibit. The parents take care of the resources on behalf of the growing child as they monitor how these resources are performing. When they multiply well, then the child is of good fortune and when they perform poorly then the child is determined to be having poor fortunes. For instance if the given calf does not produce or it dies, this signals to bad fortunes where they will say "*Omwana taina mukono gw'Itungo*" (a child has no fortune in accumulating wealth). In this case herbs are collected and applied along with rituals which are aimed at cleansing the child to improve personal fortunes in life.

The ceremony ends with spontaneous dancing, music, eating, drinking and celebrations.

5. The order of Empaako naming ceremony among the Batagwenda community

(Information compiled by Mr. Musasizi Smith Apuuli and elder Zaverio Byabagambi Ateenyi)

The 1st Ritual: Sweeping the room and taking out the waste (*kuturukya Orweyo*)

Traditionally, when a mother is about to give birth, she is given a special room in house where she stays only with the specialized birth attendants. From the day of giving birth to the day of the naming ceremony, three or four days for a girl or boy respectively, this room is not swept and the waste collected is kept within the room. The baby remains in that room until the day of the naming ceremony and at that time the baby moves out of room and house for the first time. This is why the whole naming ceremony is sometimes referred to as *Kuturukya Omwana* (taking the baby out). It is believed that the baby gets exposed to the world in stages. From the mother's womb to the closed room and from there to the open space where it can even get in contact with the sunshine and open weather.

The mother equally remains indoors for those days before the naming ceremony. If she must go out to answer the call of nature, she must be guided and cleared from possibility of being seen by un required people. In this period (three or four days) the mother is considered as "*Omuzaire ali hakyooto*" (A mother who is still at the fire place) This originates from the ancient set up of the house where they prepared a special fire for a mother who has given birth to light the room and warm the mother and her baby for three or four days before they are allowed to join the usual arrangements of the house. She is restricted in movement and actions and she is given special care to help her recover from all the emotional, physical and biological strains of giving birth. There are traditionally prescribed food for the mother in this condition and this includes assorted offals and blood of the goat and soup of beans.

Accessing the room to see the baby and mother is restricted to a few categories of people who include only close and confidant relatives and friends. They strongly protected against possibility of people with wrong intention to access the baby at such a delicate stage.

The naming ceremony starts with a group of girls and women after cleaning the room and assembling all the waste, assisting the mother to carry the baby and all the waste collected from the room and banana or sweet potato peelings from the kitchen, move out of the house in a procession and rotate around the main house three or four times depending on the sex of the newly born. Important to note here is that assortment of waste material includes the placenta and blood collected at giving birth which has been kept in a special pot with traditional preservatives to avoid smell. It is taken out of the room and deposited and buried, a process that is accompanied by a series of rituals. This placenta is traditionally personified as another baby "*Owenyuma*" (*the one who comes after*) and handled with sacredness.

It should be noted, however that this ritual has been adapted to fit into the changed context of giving birth from the hospital, instead of home, where factors of when

to leave the hospital cannot be culturally determined.



Batagvenda Ladies disposing the wastes during Empaako naming Ceremony

The 2nd Ritual: Laughters in chorus (Enseko z'okuturukya omwana)

The group of women and girls accompanying the mother and the baby and carrying an assortment of waste materials which includes the placenta, laugh loudly, continuously and in chorus as they move out of the house, rotate around it, three or four times, depending on the sex of the baby, and proceed up to the place prepared for depositing waste material.

The interpretation of this artificial laughter, which begins as they open the door of the house, is that they are opening the world of happiness for the baby. The baby is finding happiness as he/she is being exposed to the world, his/her life should be a journey of happiness and his/her life should contribute to sustaining a world of happiness. Those near the baby, touch his/her cheeks saying “*Hurra enseko zaawe, okule nosemererwa, okyanganukege, oteboga akamwegerro*”. (Hear your laughters, grow in happiness and always offer smiles to people)



Batagvenda performing the laughters ritual during Empaako naming Ceremony

The 3rd Ritual: Depositing the waste and planting a banana sucker (*Kubyaarra Omwana*)

After rotating around the house, and in loud laughters, this procession of women and girls accompanying the mother and the baby, proceed to a reasonable distance off the court yard into the home gardens or plantations where they have prepared to deposit the waste and plant a banana sucker. They reach at a prepared pit and deposit the waste and plant a banana sucker in the same pit. For the female baby they plant banana species which gives food (*Enyamunyu*) and the male baby they plant the banana species for brewing local drinks (*Embiira*).

As they plant the banana sucker they speak spontaneously, imploring the baby to grow into a responsible person who is hardworking, caring and constructive to the family, clan and the community at large and according to the expected gender roles. In the case of a baby girl these words can be said; “*Kura obe mukazi wamaani*” (grow into a strong woman), “*olimege oyezege*” (always bring rich harvests), “*Obingege enjara, Obingege obunaku*” (always chase famine, always chase poverty). In the case of a baby boy, these words could be said; “*Kura obe musajja wamaani*” (grow into a strong man) “*osakirege eka*” (always work for the family) “*Oikalizege oruganda, Oikalizege abataka*” (host the clan, host the neighbours). Some families may just deposit the waste at the already grown clump of banana suckers instead of planting a new sucker.

The depositing of the waste which includes the placenta and planting a banana sucker in the same pit has a lot of cultural meaning. It is called “*Kubyaarra ommwana*” (rooting the child). This is the ultimate home where the person is rooted. Women express community values and aspirations in supplications in order to root those values in the person and life of the baby who will grow to adulthood. When scolding someone for misbehaving, a question is posed “*Bakakubyaarra?*” (Did you go through the naming rituals or did the family root community values in you) or “*Bakakubyaarraki?*” (What values did the family root in you?) or “*Oli mwana w’oba?*” (Which family do you belong to, If you can behave like that?)

The 4th Ritual: Identifying the baby (*Kutonda mwana*)

When the women procession return at the main house, they find the rest of the congregation seated in a circle in the ritual house or the living room of the main house. Most people are seated on the traditional mats (*Emikeeka*), goat or cow hides (*Enkeeto*) or on lemon grass (*Eteete*). The presiding authority who should be the paternal grandfather of the newly born baby or his equivalent and who represents the head of clan is seated on a ceremonial stool (*Ekikaransi*). The procession joins the seated congregation and is allowed in by the head of the ceremonies. The mother hands over the baby to the chief paternal auntie who examines carefully the physical features of the baby in silence. After her part, the auntie hands over the baby to its grandfather who also examines, while showing a smile and a jolly face to the baby.

It should be noted that the process of examining the features of the baby in relation to the family starts immediately after birth. Confidant relatives visit the mother individually in the room and hold the baby as they examine its features. By the time of naming ceremony three or four days after birth, the relatives have individually

- Resemblance to the living or dead paternal relatives of the baby.
- Need to incarnate any significant member with exceptional qualities or achievement in the extended family.
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The 6th Ritual: Partaking of a meal. (*Kulya Oburo bw'Empaako*)

Sharing a meal of millet and smoked beef is the central ritual in the whole ceremony. Millet is served in one basket (*Endiuro*) and the sauce in one dish (*Ekibindi*) from where all the members in the ceremony must partake of. They access the meal through a circle. The head of the ceremonies picks and swallows three or four times, depending on the sex of the baby, before he invites everyone to partake of. Anyone to qualify that has attended the ceremony must partake of this particular ritual meal.

This meal is the highest sign of the family unity. Members share from the one dish to demonstrate that they are bound together to a common destiny. The newly born must find a united family and if there were any differences, are reconciled before the ceremony. Any two conflicting parties avoid partaking of this meal if they have not had chance to reconcile. Partaking of the meal while one has outstanding grudge against a member who is also partaking of the same meal is believed to result in misfortunes.

This meal is only symbolic and ceremonial and does not necessarily aim to satisfy hunger. Other foods may be served for the general feeding and hospitality.

This ritual is crucial to the entire ceremony without which the ceremony is not valid and without which the name and *Empaako* given to a person is culturally invalid. There is a common saying in the community “*Empaako yaawe bakagiriira oburo?*” (Did people partake of the ritual meal for that *Empaako*?)



Batagwenda partaking of the ritual meal during Empaako naming Ceremony

The 7th Ritual: Giving resources to the baby (*Kugabira Omwana*)

A big basket is put in the centre to signal that it is time for people to give valuables and resources which the newly born will grow to find, own and build on. Some properties are presented and others are pledged which they collect after the ceremony. They give resources like cows especially in the pastoralists’ families, goats, chicken and money. The domestic animals and birds which are given are those of the highest reproductive value like a calf, a she-goat and a chicken but not a bull, a he-goat nor a cock. They give the baby capital wealth but not material for short term enjoyment. The central meaning of this exercise is to secure the economic future of the new child and have the baby own property as he/she starts life in the world.

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Batagwenda contributing capital resources for a named child during Empaako naming Ceremony

The 8th Ritual: Planting of *Sicus spp* tree (*omutoma*) only for a male baby: (*Kubyara Omutoma*)

This ritual is performed only in the case of the male baby and performed by the head of the family accompanied by the uncles and brothers to the baby. They move through the right side of the main house to the plantations near the homestead and plant a *mutoma* tree. The *mutoma* is a tree in the class of *Sicus spp* and traditionally has great significance in the social and spiritual life among the Empaako communities. This is because of the symbolic meanings that are drawn from its characteristics and a wide range of uses it has in the social and religious life of communities.

This tree in whatever dry conditions, it doesn't dry up and communities describe this quality as *Omutoma Ogutooma* (*Omutoma* which never dries). Equally once planted, it does not die. Even when you cut it, any part of its stem will eventually germinate again if it is put in contact with appropriate conditions. This provides the symbolism of resilience, perpetuity and immortality of the family and clan through the processes of intergenerational succession, value transmission and enhancing communion with the ancestors and the living dead in the day today life of the living. They plant this tree for the male baby because in these patrilineal communities, that gender represents succession of the family to the next generation, transmission of the values and reaffirms the immortality of the family and the clan.

The other important characteristics of the tree are that, it provides shade, traps rain water and accommodates and energizes other plants under its shades or near it. These characteristics point to the roles of a family and clan to its members and therefore the roles of a male member of the family and clan. It also points to the role of a home for its members. It shelters them, quenches their thirst, feeds them, empowers them and provides points of everlasting reference and the last resting place.

A wide range of products are made from that tree and which are critical in social and spiritual life of the communities. It provides material for making bark cloth from which a variety of products are made including dress, blankets and vestments for rituals and wrapping the dead bodies for burial.

This ritual is increasingly losing viability because of the changing home contexts from the traditional rural context to urban home with limited land for planting trees.

The ceremony ends with spontaneous dancing, music, eating, drinking and celebrations.



*Batagwanda elders
planting a banana sucker
during Empaako naming
Ceremony*

c) **Giving Empaako to an adult who is from another cultural background**

1. **Factors for giving Empaako to an adult who is raised from out of Empaako communities.**

(i) **Expression of social hospitality**

Among the Empaako communities, to give Empaako to a person who comes to the community whether for short or long stay is a form of reception in the community and an expression of hospitality.

(ii) **A tool and means of social integration**

According to the social philosophy and belief systems of Empaako communities, anyone who comes to live in the community cannot remain a foreigner but becomes a member. The process of making that person a member of the community is a ceremony of giving Empaako.

(iii) **A cultural package and a permanent mark to take away**

Through the Empaako practice, the communities have got a cultural package to give to whoever visits or stays in the community to go with and which remains a permanent mark and souvenir to always remind that person of the time and experience in Empaako community.

(iv) **Inter marriage relationships**

When someone from a different cultural background gets in marriage relationship with a spouse from Empaako communities, must get Empaako which works as a means of social interaction with people from Empaako communities with whom a permanent relationship is established by marriage.

2. **What is required for performing the ceremony of giving Empaako to people from another cultural background?**

(i) **A host family or institution**

There must be a family or institution which hosts the visitors or new members of the community and therefore the same family or institution organizes the ceremony.

(ii) **A senior citizen or head of the family or institution**

This one presides over the ceremony and gives Empaako on behalf of the community. This person can be assisted by a professional ritual guide who directs the proceedings of the ceremony.

(iii) **The meal of millet and smoked beef**

The ceremony can be organized within the context of a luncheon or dinner but among the prepared food there must be a traditional meal of millet (Karo) and smoked beef of which all the participating people partake.

(iv) **A traditional dress**

For the ceremony to be valid, involved people should put on a traditional dress from that particular Empaako community. At least the presiding elder and the persons who are being given Empaako should be in the traditional dress.

(v) The traditional stool

The traditional stool (*Ekikaransi*) may be availed for the presiding elder to sit on when conferring Empaako and carrying out the ritual of receiving the new person into the community and giving blessings (*Kubukara*).

(vi) Coffee beans (Omwani)

Coffee beans which are dried and treated for chewing are put in a small traditional coffee basket from where they are served to the guests.



3. The order of the ceremony of giving Empaako to an adult from another cultural background.

(i) Introducing the ceremony and its meaning

The ritual guide or someone knowledgeable explains the meaning, values and uses of Empaako and the proceedings and meaning of the rituals in the ceremony.

(ii) Selecting Empaako to give

A brief open discussion on the selection of Empaako to give someone is made based on simple positive factors like basic positive characters one has or what the community wishes that person to have. Then Empaako is collectively chosen and confirmed.

(iii) First Ritual: Sharing the coffee beans (omwani)

The presiding elder, receives the small basket which has coffee beans, he opens it and picks some coffee beans and starts chewing. He then invites all people to do the same by picking the coffee beans from the same basket stationed in one place or extended by passing it on until the last person.

Coffee beans traditionally symbolize affirmation of relationship and friendship. It is served as the first meal in hospitality and entertainment at any social event and interaction. It is the main symbol that seals the pact of blood friendship that was traditionally practiced.

(iv) Second Ritual: Reception, blessing and conferring Empaako

The presiding official or elder dressed traditionally who is representing the community sits on the traditional stool (Ekikaransi) and admits the person who is being given Empaako. The person comes and sits slightly on the lap of the presiding official, three or four times for a female and male respectively as the official is declaring the selected Empaako "*Empaako yaawe Akiiki X3 or 4*" (Your Empaako is Akiiki X3 or 4). The rest of the congregation applauds, every time Empaako is mentioned by the presiding elder up to the last mention which attracts a prolonged applaud.

Sitting on the lap of the elder (Kubukara) is a traditional ritual for blessing either in reception or sending off. In this case it is for reception. One is being received in a home, clan or community with all the blessings.

If the adults to receive Empaako in a particular ceremony are more than one, all of them go through the same process one by one. If it is a mass Empaako naming ceremony, two representatives, a man and a woman will go through the rituals as the rest stand around them raising their right hand and each shouting own Empaako simultaneously. This act will suffice to mean that all of them have gone through the ritual. As alternative to sitting on the laps of the elder, three or four times, the person receiving Empaako may kneel before the elder who touches on the right shoulder as he is conferring by declaring it, three or four times.

(v) Third Ritual: Partaking of Empaako meal

A ritual meal of millet and smoked beef is served. The millet in one basket and sauce in one sauce dish from which all members of naming congregation serves one self beginning with the presiding elder who invites those who have received Empaako followed by the rest of the Empaako naming congregation.

Cultural speeches and entertainment may follow.

CHAPTER SIX:

CHAPTER SIX

THE USES OF EMPAAKO AND THEIR SOCIO-SPIRITUAL IMPLICATIONS

a) What constitutes Empaako as a naming system and cultural practice?

- The identification, fixing and closing a list of twelve words as special names for entire community.
- Determining and fixing the royalty and gender segregation of the fixed twelve Empaako words.
- Establishing the content and the underlying social philosophy of the Empaako naming rituals and ceremonies.
- Establishing a strong moral and spiritual content in the twelve words so that they exclusively serve the subjective expression in human interactions.
- Establishing the social and moral effects and implications in using the twelve Empaako words among people of different relationships and describing different human moods and state of mind.
- Allocating the twelve words different roles and functions in social and spiritual interactions.

This is what is meant by Empaako as a naming system and a socio-cultural practice. The linguists in their argument do not provide evidence that this particular complex system was designed and existed somewhere and only transplanted to Bunyoro-Kitara by the Biito migrants. The argument does not even show that its proponents are aware that a naming system and a social practice is something bigger than the etymology of words. You cannot allocate ownership of a complex social practice and system on the basis of the etymology of words. You need to do a broader study of the entire social practice.

b) The difference between Empaako and other types of names.

1. The difference between Empaako and the surname

The key difference between Empaako and the surname is that the former is subjective with strong moral, emotional, and spiritual content. It is not a mere identity label to distinguish an individual from a collection of individuals. But rather it is a moral, emotional and spiritual expression, uplifting an individual in the collection of individuals.

2. The difference between Empaako and the first name.

Among the Empaako communities, the first name is a new phenomenon that comes with the western civilization. It does not say anything about the indigenous context of the individual but emphasize the universality of human

family as determined by the internationally dominant religions, cultures and languages. Among the Empaako communities there are three religious blocs; the traditional religion, the Islamic faith and the Christian religions. The first name among the Empaako communities will be either from Moslem or Christian traditions.

c) **The gender categorization of Empaako**

Out of the twelve Empaako names, four are exclusively for males and these include; *Apuuli*, *Araali*, *Acaali* and *Bbala*. *Okaali* is exclusively for a king and since a king is always a male, so it is also exclusively for a male. The traditions of Empaako communities do not provide for queens or female at the top of royal institutions. There is nothing masculine that can be stated about these Empaako words but the tradition has simply assigned them that way.

d) **Social implications and subjective effects in the use of Empaako**

1. **Defining social relationships**

The use of Empaako help to define and categorise a web of social relations and generate subjective effects between the two people using it. When someone addresses another person using Empaako, he or she makes silent declarations to the addressee, depending on the seniority, class or social relationship between the two. A declaration is made from the point of the addresser to the addressee.

2. **Generating subjective effects**

i) **Respect**

The most common social meaning in using Empaako is the declaration of respect. The practice emphasizes a behaviour of interpersonal respect or respecting the principle of humanity shared by all people.

ii) **Love**

In addition to respect, the second most popular subjective effect generated by use of Empaako is declaration of love. However the type of love implied will depend on the social relationship between the addresser and the addressee. When it is an elder addressing a young and minor, it is endearment and when it is between couples or potential couples it may suggest intimacy.

iii) **Appeasing**

Empaako could be used to make a dangerous person or power feel praised so that he or it spares or be less dangerous. So Empaako was used as a human mechanism to cross or pass over danger. Dangerous super natural and natural creatures were addressed by Empaako to make them feel good and reduce their wrath and spare people and their property. Hence the deadly thunder was addressed by Empaako *Araali*;- the scaring mysterious snake at river *Muzizi* was addressed Empaako *Ateenyi*.

Empaako were also used in religious prayers to appease the spirits to spare people and not bring misfortunes. People from Empaako communities give Empaako to rulers who are foreign to the Empaako culture not necessarily to declare respect and love to those rulers but at times to make them feel they are praised and then spare the community.

Table 2: Subjective effects of Empaako against different seniority, classes and social relationships

Addresser	Addressee	Subjective effect
Young/Junior/Child	Adult/Elder/Senior/Parent	Respect
Adult/Elder/Senior/Parent	Young/Junior/Child/Minor	Endearment
Peers	Peers	Respect/Intimacy
Couples	Couples	Respect/Love/Intimacy
Leader	The Led	Respect
The Led	Leader	Respect
The Led	Ruler	Appease/Respect
Believers	Spirits/gods	Appease/Respect

3. Subjective effects of use of Empaako in different moods

The use of Empaako can invite or mark different emotions according to the prevailing mood or situations.

(i) In the mood of grief

In such mood, use of Empaako is an expression of sympathy. The suffering, the bereaved and the sick are addressed using Empaako which implies expression of sympathy and empathy. The dead persons at the point of mourning them, they are exclusively addressed by Empaako.

(ii) In the mood of joy

In such a mood, in addition to declaring respect and love, addressing using Empaako between peers, may invite strong feelings of intimacy depending on social relationship that exists between the two if it allows socially acceptable legal and legitimate intimacy or not.

(iii) In the mood of anger

In such mood, Empaako excuses itself and completely disappears from the memory of an angry person. And when a mood of reconciliation is negotiated, Empaako is restored in the memory of the person who is recovering from anger. This quality is what makes Empaako a tool in the process of conflict resolution and its application generates effects of compromise and reconciliation.

Table 3: Subjective effects of Empaako in different moods

Prevailing mood	Subjective effect
Grief	Empathy and sympathy
Joy and happiness	Intimacy and love
Anger	Empaako is absent
Reconciliation	Compromise and forgiveness

(e) The social roles of Empaako

1. Greeting

This is the most common role of Empaako. In greeting the two address each other using Empaako. The initiator of the greeting ask “*Oli ota Akiiki*” (or any of the relevant Empaako name) “How are you Akiiki” The other responds “(*Ndi kurungi Amooti*)” (or any of the relevant Empaako name) “I am alright Amooti.” Other questions to explore and exhaust the state of well being of the two people, who are greeting each other continue without repeating the mention of Empaako.

Universally, greeting is a subjective exercise. There are two underlying principles in the exercise of greeting namely: the desire to know and be concerned with the state of wellbeing and the recognition of the shared principle of the human person. Universally, it is never enough one to make a statement of inquiry about one’s wellbeing without stating the identity of that person whose state of well being you are inquiring about. It is also universally impolite and inconvenient to subjectively inquire about the state of wellbeing of someone by addressing that person using surname. (How are you Rwomubitooke?) Other world societies at least add there a title (How are you Mr. Rwomubitooke?) and others use the first name in greeting, considering it to be more polite and bringing out the subjective aspect. (How are you John?). Others apply descriptive titles and qualifiers like uncle, aunties, daddy, friend, sister, brother, lovers etc. But the people of Empaako replace all those struggles with a clearly established subjective name-Empaako.

Just as *Empaako* excuses itself and evaporates from the memory of two people who are in mood of anger against each other, greeting is equally difficult between people engrossed in conflict because that desire to inquire and wish state of wellbeing to the other person is impaired by that negative emotion of anger.

2. **Declaring personal recognition and acquaintance**

There are only twelve *Empaako* names shared by the entire society of millions of people. For someone to know the exact *Empaako* of another person and *Empaako* being a symbol of positive subjectivity, it means that one knows the other in person and passion. So by addressing someone by his exact *Empaako* one is making a declaration to the other that “I know you in person and passion”

3. **Addressing parents and senior people in informal communications**

In many cultures of the world, it is impolite and lack of respect to address a parent or a senior person directly using the surname especially in informal communication. In many cultures, people devise some words and expressions to use in addressing or referring to a senior. Words and expressions like uncle, auntie, mother of so or father of so (picking on a name of one of the children of the person intended to be addressed) etc. So *Empaako* communities use *Empaako* names which are culturally designed conveniently to serve such subjective address.

4. **Expressing love, affection and endearment**

In most cultures of the world, different words would be artificially generated to express love, affection or endearment. Words like dear, honey, sweetheart etc are often adopted by individuals in expressing love. But in *Empaako* communities, *Empaako* names are culturally designed to serve this purpose. This is why some attempt is made to describe *Empaako* in English as names of affection.

5. **Expressing thanks and appreciation**

Thanking and appreciating something from an individual is an emotional and subjective experience. The addresser need to mention the identity of the addressee in expressing thanks. And since surnames are not appropriate in any subjective and emotional address, then *Empaako* comes in conveniently.

6. **Expressing compassion**

Empaako are exclusively used in addressing people who are sick or suffering in different ways. During the time of grief as a result of death, the deceased people are referred to by their *Empaako* and not surnames.

7. Addressing people in emotionally charged moments

In moments charged by positive emotions, individuals involved address one another by Empaako and not surnames. Such moments may include receiving and welcoming visitors, the session of bidding farewell, moments of exchanging gifts, celebrating exciting victory etc.

8. Addressing spirits and deities

As a language of respect, people used Empaako in addressing the spirits of the ancestors and clan deities during religious activities. However, it should be noted that there is no evidence to show that Empaako were principally names of gods and essentially established as integral part of religious activities in the traditional religions. It should also be noted that people used Empaako always not necessarily to respect and love but at times of appease as a strategy of survival.

9. Appeasing potentially dangerous people and super natural forces

By analyzing the practice of people's interactions with the potentially dangerous human and super natural forces, it can be concluded that people believed that any dangerous force which you cannot survive by destroying it you instead appease it so that it feels good and praised, consequently it spares you and you "Passover". Therefore, in some aspects, Empaako were used to appease the potentially dangerous human and super natural forces in order to secure survival of the families and communities.

Hence a mysterious snake at River Muzizi was addressed Ateenyi to appease it so that it spares people and they cross the river to their destinations. Lightning and thunder was believed to be representing anger of supernatural forces which could be directed to particular targets to destroy them as a punishment. This lightning and thunder had destructive powers which could not be neutralized physically, instead appease them using Empaako so that they can feel good and spare the people.

During rain when there was signs of thunder threatening to strike, a last born girl in the home would move out to the rain and make supplications, pleading innocence on behalf of the family and addressing thunder using Empaako Araali to by-pass the home and spare it. Although the content of the supplication would be spontaneous and varied, some common message would be identified as follows;

Humura Araali! Humura Araali! Humura Araali!

Cool down Araali! Spare us Araali!

Eka enu tiine nsongo yona! Humura Araali

This home is innocent, spare us Araali!

Ndi Macura ga Taata ninkugambira, Humura Araali

I am the last born of my father, I tell you, spare us Araali!

Titwita, tituroga, titurumba, Humura Araali

We don't kill, we don't bewitch, we don't invade others, spare us Araali!

Otakubuluka hairembo tyaitu! weyongeyo Araali

Don't notice our gate, proceed on Araali! and go elsewhere, probably blow from the lake

The reason behind the selection of last borns to perform this ritual of supplication, is that it is believed that they attract sympathy because they grow up when their parents are old, retired and helpless. Therefore, they are subjects of sympathy.

Even when *Empaako* were used during religious sessions, people were essentially pleading with the spirits and gods (*Bacwezi*) to stop causing suffering and misfortunes. There is no evidence to show that *Empaako* were being used in prayers of praise and adoration. The content of the common religious rituals called "*Kubandwa*" involved inviting the spirits, offering them food and in return request them to spare the family from suffering and misfortunes. The following message could be cited in the conversation between family members and the spirit in a religious ceremony called *Kubandwa*.

- Family: **Koowe Atwoki! Koowe Atwoki!**
(Welcome Atwoki! Welcome Atwoki)
- Spirit: **Kasangwe**
(Thank you! Thank you!)
- Family: **Ekiihuro Kyaawe nkinu! Atwoki**
(Here is your meal)
- Spirit: **Mwebale!** (Thank you)
- Family: **Mutabani wawe Rwomubitoke akalemwa**
(Your son *Rwomubitoke* is bed ridden to near death)
- Spirit: **Obu kiraba nikiruga omwange, akire aho naho**
(If am the cause, he should recover immediately)

10. Appealing for favour

Empaako as identity symbol which can involve subjective feelings is used in appealing for all forms of favour which could be mercy, forgiveness or requesting for anything which is not an entitlement.

11. Serving as a tool of reconciliation

Empaako serves as a tool of reconciliation and enhancing social cohesion both at *Empaako* naming ceremony and in the day today use of the practice. When a baby is born, all the members of the extended family, friends and neighbours are expected to reconcile of any differences and conflicts before they all assemble in the ceremony to partake of the ritual meal. The partaking of the ritual meal, all of them picking from one basket and one dish is a highest expression of

unity and a declaration that they are bound together by a common destiny.

It is believed that if one shares in the ritual meal while still nursing grudges against another person who is also partaking of the same meal, that act would create misfortunes.

When there could be conflicts among members of the extended family and clans, elders and leaders would organize reconciliation sessions and after discussing and resolving the issues, the parties would be asked to address each other using Empaako three times as a sign of declaring reconciliation. At a point when conflicts erupt, the opponent's Empaako evaporates from the memory, only to be recovered at reconciliation. So Empaako is a cultural mechanism to facilitate reconciliation and ensure social harmony.

12. A tool for social integration

Everyone from any culture of the world, if he socially interacts with the bearers of Empaako, whether in the land of Empaako or outside, must get Empaako because it is indispensable means of social interaction. Someone who is born outside Empaako communities to get one must first belong to a host family, clan or local institution which organizes a simple ceremony to give that person Empaako. People who visit Empaako land all go away with Empaako.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CURRENT VIABILITY OF EMPAAKO NAMING SYSTEM

a) The threats which Empaako naming system has faced in the past.

1. Loss of knowledge of Empaako naming ceremonies.

The information and knowledge of the traditional practices including Empaako naming ceremonies was passed on orally from generation to generation. With introduction of modern methods of communication and education, the oral methods of passing on knowledge and information were abandoned. The traditional forums of education and transmission of knowledge like social evening around the fire place, periodic social events and apprenticeship were replaced by modern classroom education, library, media platforms and entertainment stage. And the knowledge of traditional practices including Empaako naming practice was not documented in modern forms and adapted to these new platforms of education and sharing of information. These changes, over time led to loss of capacity to transmit knowledge on traditional practices to successive generations. So the younger generation was increasingly losing the knowledge and the details of Empaako naming practices and their cultural meanings.

2. Abandoning observance of naming ceremonies.

With the influence of modern educational, political and religious institutions, communities lost confidence and enthusiasm in their own traditional values and practices including Empaako naming ceremonies. Some of these modern institutions dismiss traditional practices as demonic and pagan.

In this particular case, Empaako naming ceremonies were increasingly being replaced by baptism ceremonies and negating the role of traditions and culture in the formation and development of a person.

3. Direct attack from some modern-religious sects and cults.

Like any other cultural practice, Empaako existed within the holistic social context of the communities. So Empaako ceremonies and practices had links to the spiritual beliefs and practices of the traditional religion. This created ground for attack by emerging religious sects and cults in an effort to convert communities to their faith. In this line some sects decampaigned Empaako naming ceremonies as well as the use of Empaako names themselves. Those who convert to such sects and cults abandon their Empaako on the day of conversion and subsequently do not give Empaako to their children.

It should be noted however that the mainstream modern religions among Empaako communities integrated well with local culture and Empaako practice. These main stream religions among Empaako communities include

Islam, Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Pentecostal churches.

The first Christian missionaries adopted Empaako in order to integrate themselves in the communities, they were evangelizing. Some examples of such missionaries can be cited. Pere Boswa (Beauchamp) Akiiki, Pere Koma (CauMartin) Amooti, Bishop McCauley Akiiki, Father Zargoc Apuuli, Father Richard Potthast-Akiiki, father John Keefe-Amooti, Brother Tom Keefe-Amooti. There is a growing inculturation movement which is promoting harmonious co-existence between modern religion and culture and integrating other cultural expressions in modern religious practices and ceremonies.

4. Declining use and un competitive development of the contextual language of Empaako naming system.

Over the years, Runyoro-Rutooro, the contextual language of Empaako naming system, faced uncompetitive development and declining use even in its own indigenous territories. Any oral tradition survives in the vibrancy of its own language. So the decline of the language directly affects the viability of Empaako naming practice.

5. Weakening cultural institutions in Empaako practicing communities

Families as the basic cultural institutions, which nurtured cultural values and practices were reformed and rebuilt around values and practices of the advancing modern religions with less recognition and integration of indigenous culture and traditions, including Empaako naming practice. Cultural institutions above the family unit like lineages, clans and chiefdoms were thus demobilized and attention on them was shifted to the hierarchical order of modern religious and political institutions which have national or foreign base and origins.

6. Shocks from unhamornized modern communication technology and intellectual infrastructure.

Empaako practice is built on a fixed, exclusive and closed list of twelve names of affection which are shared by all individuals in the entire society. In its indigenous form, it survived on a strong natural memory of people, close contact and personal relationship which are characteristics of small and simple communities.

But today natural memory of people is being replaced by computer memory cards, oral transmission of knowledge is being replaced by digital communication, personal relationships being replaced by impersonal relations and formal, complex and diverse interactions. Empaako practice had not been adapted to these new forms of human interaction, relationship and communication and hence it was wavering.

Language scholars, attempting to give origins of the twelve Empaako words, create theories which alienate and de-contextualize Empaako as a cultural practice and hence weakening its spiritual and social values in its people.

- b) Empaako naming system safeguarding measures in place.
 - i. **Raising awareness of the social value of Empaako naming system and the threats facing it.**

In 2011, a local Ugandan Nongovernmental Organization, Engabu Za Tooro, carried out research on social values of Empaako naming system and the threats facing it and published the reports. In 2012 government enlisted Empaako naming system in the national inventories as an element of intangible cultural heritage and subsequently Engabu Za Tooro NGO mobilized the communities and stakeholders and nominated Empaako for UNESCO inscription on the world list of intangible cultural heritage in need of urgent safeguarding.

On 4th December 2013, UNESCO inscribed Empaako practice on the world list of intangible cultural heritage in need of urgent safeguarding and subsequently several stakeholder institutions and groups coordinated and facilitated by Engabu Za Tooro NGO initiated safeguarding activities and programmes.



UNESCO - Empaako Inscription Certificate

- ii. **Comprehensive documentation of ceremonies and practices associated with Empaako naming system.**

This book presents a comprehensive documentation in form of text, photography and transcription of Empaako naming ceremonies and rituals

and the social-cultural functions and meanings of the practice in the daily life of five bearer communities.

Produced in thousands of copies and in Runyoro-Rutooro language with an English translation, the book is also published online www.empaako.org and is being distributed to community libraries, culture centres and schools and being adapted to formal and informal education especially on culture, functional adult literacy and language.

There has been a 30 minutes video production on *Empaako* naming ceremonies and rituals for each of the five bearer communities. Recorded and produced in Runyoro-Rutooro language with English subtitling, these audio-visual productions are published online www.empaako.org, distributed to schools and libraries and adapted to multimedia formats for dissemination to different audiences and through different social media platforms.



Video recordings of Empaako naming Practices and Ceremonies among the Empaako communities

As supplementary to *Empaako* naming ceremonies, there has been a recording and production of at least four folklore master items for each of ten communities from the greater western Uganda (Banyoro, Batooro, Batuku, Bakonzo, Bamba, Banyankole, Bakiga, Bagungu, Basongora and Banyabindi). The produced folklore films are published online (www.empaako.org) and adapted to television programmes and the CDs are distributed by folklore groups to schools, community centres and tourist centres.

This comprehensive and participatory documentation has broadly and massively availed information and knowledge on ceremonies, rituals and

practices associated with Empaako naming system and the meaning, social values and philosophy of the practice for the practitioners in living the reality of that heritage.

The documentation which was driven by the custodians and practitioners, also streamlined and standardized the procedures of the ceremonies, removing uncertainties, contradictions and distortions and adapting them to the changing social-economic and religious contexts of the communities.



Folklore audio-visual recordings associated with Empaako naming communities

iii. Mobilization of clan institutions for revitalization of performance of cultural ceremonies and rituals including *Empaako* naming ceremonies.

The lineage and clan institutions which support and propel customs and traditions including *Empaako* naming system are being mobilized and strengthened to revitalize performance of cultural rituals and ceremonies including *Empaako* naming ceremony. They are being documented and helped to develop internal mobilization tools and platforms like data bases, recording clan songs, and recitals and organizing periodic meetings and get together.



Abafumambo clan lineage book and audio-visual recorded clan songs and recitals



Clan Launching Video Products (songs and recitals)

iv. Developing and promoting culture documentation facilitators

Beginning with developing and publishing methodological guide books on documentation of culture as a key measure of safeguarding, young people have been trained and given equipment to work as trainers and community based documentors of cultural heritage to promote ongoing documentation of culture. These are also enlisted in institutional databases so that they are easily accessible by the communities.



ICH Documentation Unit at Engabu Za Tooro

v. Developing career ritual guides and cultural services providers

To remove the stigma where cultural practices and services were reserved for volunteers from people perceived as of a low class, organize and improve the profitability of those services, cultural services providers are trained, and promoted to provide their services as a profitable career in today's economy.

There is emergence of career ritual guides who are commercially hired to guide Empaako naming rituals, traditional marriage ceremonies and ceremonies of funeral and installing a hair.

Traditional and folklore performances are increasingly being adapted into commercial entertainment in social and public events and their performance being increasingly adopted as a career even by people who have attained modern education to high levels.

The traditional pottery, weaving and handcraft industry is increasingly getting recognized and competitive in modern economy as the products are increasingly being demanded for cultural rituals, ceremonies and performances and tourism.



Stephen Mugabo (Kijegere) Abbooki and Mwesige Zebidayo (Mukwikwi) Abbooki are youth practitioners, examples of emerging class of career ritual guides and professional performers of traditional expressions, which is put on modern stage



Kaahwa - Kansengerva Abbooki; a career guide of traditional marriage and Empaako naming rituals and a professional performer of traditional dances and folklore. A graduate of modern education, he is the first mutooro to use his graduate education to develop traditional dance and earn a living and personal development through performing traditional dances and guiding rituals thus removing stigmatization of offering traditional entertainment as a reserve of the uneducated

vi. **Developing community self help cultural fund for ongoing safeguarding activities.**

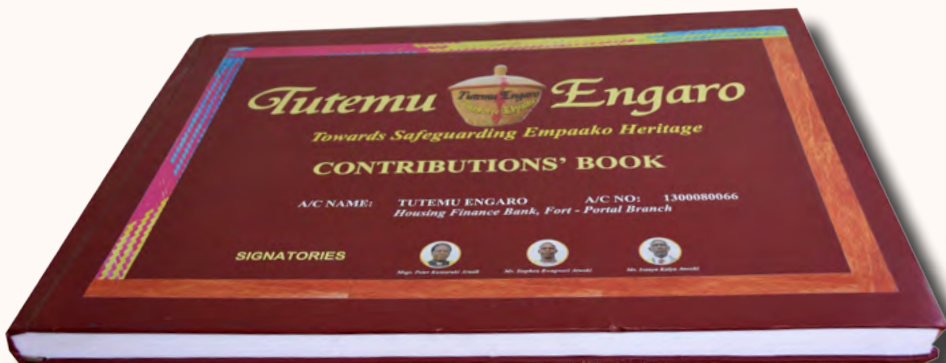
Tutemu Engaro self-help cultural fund was established and is growing and it rekindles the traditional spirit and practice of common pool and mobilizes community self-help resources towards supporting the ongoing safeguarding activities. The fund mobilizes communities with shared heritage which have people who are living at home and those living in Diaspora around a common aspiration and effort to safeguard common identity and heritage. Every individuals, family, clan or institution makes a cash or material contribution in the fund’s bank account and signs in a very big and historical book which will be kept as an important record in community archives and museums.



Self-Help Cultural Fund Leaflet



Community Self-Help Cultural Fund Basket



Empaako Community self-help grand contribution book



Example of families contributing money and cows to the community self-help cultural fund

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Published 2019

