

The Indigenous Knowledge and Natural Conservation Aspects of the Life of Baganda, the people of Uganda

1. Abstract

The researcher evaluated the role of “The Indigenous Knowledge and Natural Conservation Aspects of Life of Baganda, the people of Uganda” Facts are that, in Buganda Kingdom, Uganda, Africa and the world over, wildlife is decreasing and terribly deteriorating at a rate unseen and unheard of before. This could be addressed by the intervention of the Indigenous knowledge and natural conservation aspects of the life of Baganda , the people of Uganda, through the use of totemism, taboos and people’s spirituality. A phenomenological research design in the study was employed since it focused on the commonality of lived experiences (verbatim) within a particular group or individuals, aiming to arrive at a description of the nature of the particular phenomenon. As a qualitative study, sample size of 34 from the population size of 3,392,333 people was used for the study. This was because a qualitative study is supposed to have a large enough sample size to uncover a variety of opinions, but limited the size at the point of saturation which occurs when the collection of new data does not shed any further light on the issue under investigation. Findings showed that, Buganda’s traditional wildlife conservational knowledge based on totemism, taboos and people’s traditional spirituality was very effective in wildlife conservation, and the same knowledge is still applicable and relevant in nature conservation today. A ‘Culturally Based Conservation Model (CBCM) was arrived at aiming at amending the existing conservation policies by the Government of Uganda, integrating them with Buganda’s indigenous traditional conservation knowledge. The study therefore recommends that, environment authorities like National Environment Management authorities and (NEMA) and Uganda Wildlife authority (UWA) should work with various cultural institutions and researchers to ensure integration of the indigenous knowledge into modern conservation strategies.

Keywords: conservation strategies, wildlife conservational knowledge, totemism, Conservation Model.

Introduction

Buganda Kingdom, Uganda as a nation, Africa and the world over, are experiencing wildlife species completely wiped and extinct from the earth. Today, we are read about stories of some creatures which existed long time ago like the dinosaurs as giant reptiles, but are no more. Our future generations are most likely to face the same situations to be told stories that Buganda had giant elephants, lions, leopards, giraffes, zebras, hippopotamus, many types of fish in our lakes and rivers, crocodiles, thick forests with giant trees and all types of vegetation which were sources of our medicines, but are no more because they got extinct. Stringent penalties under the Wildlife Act such as arrests, severe beating of culprits and imprisonment have always been put in place and enforced to control wildlife related crimes. However, all these over the years have failed to yield positive results for conservation. This is done to the fact that people’s cultural systems, norms, taboos, values and beliefs connected with wildlife conservation, are rapidly

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eroding worldwide. This was the reason why this study took strides to explore into the revitalization of cultural practices that saved nature traditionally, which proved a worthwhile venture because Buganda clan system encourages a very close affinity between its members and the environment. For example, the totem for each of the clans is directly linked to a plant, an animal, a bird or any one of the creatures of nature. Imposed serious sanctions for eating a totem by the clan members, and as a result, this practice and the strict observance of the strict code of conduct imposed on the clans vis-à-vis their totems guaranteed a very successful method of wildlife conservation. To synthesize the indigenous knowledge and natural conservational aspects of the life of the Baganda people, and advance a conservation model. After critical analysis and discussion of findings of this study, the new hypothesized wildlife conservation model was established and adopted. That's the 'Culturally Based Conservation Model, aimed at amending the existing conservation policies by the Government of Uganda and Buganda's indigenous conservation knowledge for a sustainable environment.

2. 2 Literature review

2.2.1 Conservation of wildlife through Buganda's totems

A totem is thought to be like a brother or sister and is to be treated as such'' [3]. A totem if is an animal/plant, represents a clan or familial group in order to distinguish them from other clans and thus prevents inbreeding or incest, and helps one to monitor his/her kinship. It's a symbol represented by an animal or plant that serves as an emblem to a group of people, such as a family, clan, group, lineage, or tribe, reminding them of their common ancestry. The members through respect, veneration, awe and fear, believe it is an abomination to kill, eat, or touch a clan totem. In relation to conservation, that symbolic assimilation prompts the members to jealously protect that animal/ plant to ensure its future propagation. On the other hand however, some elders simply attached strong restrictions to a particular totem for protection without giving deeper explanations of their intrinsic intentions, that's why some generations grew up knowing that totems are supposed to be revered and worshipped like gods. Much as totems are often the focus of ritual behavior, it is generally agreed that totemism is not a religion. Therefore, pedagogically information needs to be disseminated properly to avoid mixing totemism with other different kinds of beliefs, such as ancestor worship and animism.

Buganda Kingdom is known to have the most organized clan systems identified and distinct from each other by the use of totemism. 'One day Kabaka Kintu of Buganda Kingdom left his Kanyanya palace and went hunting lions with his son, Sebuganda. During the hunt, the furious lions fought back but the King managed to kill them. The king and son returned home with a lot of meat, which was cooked and eaten. Unfortunately the meat caused sickness to the family and Kintu announced that, from now on, my children shall never eat lion's meat'' [26]. He wore one of the lion skins and instructed his men to place another skin on the floor as his official rug (Kiwu). This marked the beginning of the conservation of the lions (Mpologoma in Buganda). Very few societies if any, are known to be interested in consuming the lion's meat much as modern science has not proved that kind of meat to be causing sickness to people. What lay at the back of Kabaka Kintu's mind was to make sure that lions are protected and should not be hunted down for food. This teaching was disseminated to young generations from time to time to ensure the Lion's safety and protection. This is a pure justification of the clan systems pedagogy and how it was used to conserve wildlife in Buganda Kingdom.

[12] in line with [26] contends that, Kintu as the King on the throne of Buganda Kingdom reigned around 1200 AD and was the first to use the culture of totemism based on clan systems to conserve wildlife. He decreed that each family must have two animals to protect because the population of animals was falling drastically due to an influx of people into Buganda. Each group that came without a totem was assigned one, along with an estate for settlement. "Kintu realized that totems were not mere symbols that represented clans, but were powerful instruments of conservation of animal species and plants for the next generations to come. This positive culture did well to educate mainly the foreigners with clan totems but missed a gap of the continual sensitization to them to grasp the intrinsic meaning and importance of the totems that were geared towards conservation purposes. This study therefore, investigated and came up with ways of sensitization for people mostly the foreigners to understand fully and take responsibility to conserve wild life by giving utmost respect to totemic animals and plants allotted to them as symbolizing their new clans.

According to Daily Monitor Publication (13th April, 2018) Mr. Musinguzi the C.E.O of Uganda Wildlife Education Centre at Entebbe as one of the conservation strategies, uses a community-based approach for plant/animal protection. Individuals are encouraged to donate funds for feeding animals in Uganda Wildlife Education Center; the former zoo. Donations are attached to the donor's totem; such a donation is considered an act of "feeding one's brother" that is unable to feed himself. By taking their cue from such activities, environmental activists can use knowledge of totems and their cultural significances to revitalize environmental awareness, especially where animal protection laws are weak and unimplemented. Uganda wildlife Education Center is located here in Buganda at Entebbe. Using the clan cultural significance based on the Buganda traditions is most likely to create a bias to donors who do not understand the background of the totemic system of Buganda culture. In this study the researcher worked hard to intensify the awareness of the relationship of clan totems and their roles in wildlife conservation process.

[31] investigated much on people's cultures and nature conservation and had this to say 'in Buganda every Muganda belongs to a clan and each clan has a totem and a supporting totem (akabbiro). He gave examples of totem animals like: monkey, lion, leopard, dog, sheep, crested crane, lungfish, elephant, and grasshoppers among many others. The members to each clan are barred from eating both their totem and supporting totem and have a duty of protecting that totem for prosperity. This traditional indigenous knowledge pedagogically, was passed on from one generation to the next through traditional methods like: mythology, taboos, Baganda religion/beliefs and so on. Many Baganda refer to the indigenous knowledge as "hidden wisdom" that's why some never fully revealed some hidden meaning to some conservation aspects, a gap which was addressed by the current study to explore the in-depth information and exposed it for interested parties to know and understand.

2.2.2 Buganda's taboos ideal in nature conservation

Taboos regulate human behavior and can be described as social prohibitions of things regarded holy or unclean, and often connected to rituals. They forbid members of the community from performing certain actions, such as eating some kinds of food, visiting sites that are regarded as sacred, cruelty to animals, and using nature's resources in an unsustainable manner. [31] posits that, during his visit to Ssesse islands discovered that it was a taboo in one of the forests to fetch firewood and at the same time cut poles for whichever reason. If one went against that taboo,

would face undesirable consequences such as losing their way out of Buggo forest, losing their children and sometimes it would even lead to one's death. From Buggo forest it's where the stick of royal authority for the Katikkiro of Buganda commonly known as Ddamula is cut. It's not very often that the Baganda keep on cutting sticks of royal authority from Buggo forest. However, the forest is well known to be a good habitat for a special type of monkeys locally known as Nakabugo. The strict protection given to the royal forest also aimed at conserving wildlife mainly the rear species of those monkeys.

The [1] contains taboos intended for animal/plants conservation. Humans are commanded to rest on the seventh day and to ensure that their animals do the same. On the seventh day you shall cease from labor, in order that your ox and your ass may rest (Deut 5:14). This taboo or law did not protect only domestic animals but also implied for wild animals because hunters were prohibited from hunting on the Sabbath hence giving chance for wild life to thrive without any disturbance. In addition, no animal was to be slaughtered on the same day as its young. An animal's young was not to be boiled in its mother's milk. Furthermore, since parts of animals function as food for humanity God put taboos that led to the limitations on their consumption. An example is the prohibition against eating the limbs of a living animal tamed or from the wild (Deut 12:23). There is another taboo about a bird's nest with eggs or chicks in it (Deut 22:6-7) (<http://scriptura.journals.ac.za>) If you come across a bird's nest beside the road, either in a tree or on the ground, and the mother is hovering over the young or sitting on the eggs, do not take the mother with the young. You may take the young, but be sure to let the mother go, so that it may go well with you and you may have a long life. All these prohibitions and laws served for environmental conservation mainly wildlife. But however, since these were words and commands that came from God's mouth, no body questions God, perhaps that's the reason why many Israelites never understood God's intended purpose of conservation. The researcher dug deeper into the details to find out to what extent the common Israelites as a community really knew and understood what God intended, which is perhaps a gap. For the Israelites might have taken these taboos to be like the Decalogue since were orders from God. After thorough investigations, these were taboos with a divine character embedded on, instituted for nature conservation.

2.2.3 Buganda's traditional spirituality/beliefs a big factor in conservation

The Baganda believed in a supreme God (*Katonda W'ebutonda*) the creator who was assisted by deities (*Balubaale*), to mediate between humans and nature [16]. Hunting was regulated by *Ddungu* deity, who discouraged hunting of young and in-calf animals. Fishermen sought blessings from *Mukasa* before they went fishing; luck was accorded to those who caught mature fish and strong punishments to those who caught premature fish, including a fisher man losing his way back to the shores and drowning. Bush burning was forbidden and punishable by the gods. The Baganda's gods being responsible for human activities, assisted a lot in conservation practices because of the strong faith people had and the fear of punishments in case of wrong doing, hence total submission to the dictates of the gods, which led to conservation of species.

[10] in line with [16]'s views also observe that, there were places with special healing power that were regarded as sacred in Buganda kingdom. These included forests, rivers, lakes bushes and swamps. There were certain tree species that were not supposed to be cut down and animal species that were not supposed to be killed. For example, I grew up knowing that if one killed a

lizard (*omunya*), he or she would not go to heaven. This was communicated in one of the popular traditional songs including (*Alitta omunya taligenda mu ggulu era alifuuka omunyale*). Similarly, the Kings' houses were constructed using timber from tree species of *kirundu*, *enzingu*, *ensalaganyi* and *namukago*. Therefore; it was incumbent upon chiefs to mobilize people to plant these tree species for use during construction. Much as the special trees were preserved for construction of Kings special houses, they in the end built up strong thick forests which were natural habitats for wildlife because they were not supposed to be cut anyhow. The strong beliefs the Baganda had in the protectors and owners of the forests the Misambwa, ended up a reliable mechanism for wildlife conservation. However it is not clear whether some chiefs who protected the sacred areas on behalf of the King of Buganda had no personal interests mainly grabbing land for themselves. This study was keen enough to find out the truth of the matter whereby all land belonged to the King of Buganda distributed on his behalf by the clan heads and chiefs. So the issue of land grabbing never arose in Buganda Kingdom before the coming of foreigners.

[29] contends that, the Baganda believed in "emisambwa" which are in form of humans, animals, trees and water bodies. A "musambwa" can be in form of a beautiful woman, or a snake like python, which may not allow a dirty person to step in the community well to avoid contaminating the water. The musambwa may appear in a form of a leopard, which may feed on goats, sheep and chicken of the community. The owners are not supposed to kill or harm that leopard in order to protect their domestic animals as expressed according to a song, Engo y'ekiggwa by Fred Sebatta of Matendo Promoted Singers. Instead the community protects it because the spirit dwells in it. Buganda's other spirits for example, spirit Namuzinda, dwells in the red ants and bees, Lubaale Walumbe seats in Nkuukuulu (cactus) well known as Ekikkatiro. The community protected such species to avoid punishments from the gods and curses.

3. Methodology

A phenomenological design was adapted because it focused on the commonality of lived experiences (verbatim expressions) within a particular group or individuals. The aim of this approach was to arrive at a description of the nature of the particular phenomenon [6]. Interviews were conducted with individuals who had first-hand knowledge of an event, situation or experience. For example how the Buganda traditional knowledge contributed to wildlife conservation as a phenomenon. Through this process, the researcher was able to construct the universal meaning of the event, situation or experience and arrived at a more profound understanding of the phenomenon.

An interpretivist outlook from which the contextualist worldview was also taken [31]. From the interpretivist approach, 'human actions were seen as a collection of symbols expressing layers of meaning' [4]. This means that people socially interacted and responded based on what they believed to be real than what is objectively real. This enabled the researcher to interpret the understanding of social action in order to arrive at a causal explanation of the action's causes and effects. In this way, a researcher aimed at seeing the world through the eyes of the people being studied, by allowing them multiple perspectives of reality. From the interpretivist outlook, research questions click to one's mind in order to understand more the phenomenon.

- i. How do totems contribute to the natural conservation aspects of the life of the Baganda?
- ii. In which ways do taboos as part of the indigenous knowledge promote the natural conservation aspects of the life of the people of Baganda?
- iii. How does peoples' spirituality contribute to the natural conservation aspects of the life of Baganda?

With such questions in mind, the study's phenomenon is the indigenous knowledge and the natural conservational aspects of the life of Baganda people. For Baganda, a clan represents a group of people who can trace their lineage to a common ancestor in some distant past. In the customs of Buganda, lineage is passed down along patrilineal lines. The clan essentially forms a large extended family and all members of a given clan regard each other as brothers and sisters regardless of how far removed from one another in terms of actual blood ties. A formal introduction of a Muganda includes his/her own names, the names of his/her father and paternal grandfather. The clan has a hierarchical structure with the clan leader at the top (Owaakasolya), followed by successive subdivisions called the masiga, mituba, nnyiriri and finally at the bottom, the individual family unit (enju). The importance of clan system in Buganda is to control inbreeding and avoid incest from close family members of the same clan. Mr. Kisubika from Kitala Busiro says that, the clan system affects also the matrilineal side. *'Mwana wange titutunuulira ludda lwa ba taata lwokka, naye n'olwa ba maama bannakabutuzi. Ekika kya myoko akuzaala olina okukisaamu ekitiibwa era tokkirizibwa kuwasa oba okufumbirwa mu kika eky'omuziro gumu ne ogwa nnyoko'*. He meant that, clan systems affect both patrilineal and matrilineal because in Buganda Kingdom one is not allowed to marry from the same clan with his/her mother. Individuals therefore, are supposed to safe guard and protect the clan totem of the mother's clan which may be an animal, plant or any other object. Baganda like any other human race would have come to extinction if they hadn't controlled inbreeding through the clan system. As a race therefore, is sustained and conserved as part of the environment. (Source: Interview 3)

[15] in line with Mr. Kisubika, confirms it's the duty of clan members to protect their totem for prosperity. In this way, the members would appreciate the flora and fauna around them. In agreement with Lule, Madam Lulika of Kavule Kyaddondo County believes that, killing and eating a totem animal is like eating one's son or daughter's flesh. *'Okulya omuziro oba musezi. Oba olidde mugandawo yennyini.'* Observing her even frowned wrinkled face continued to tell me that, *obwo buba bwewussa bwe nnyini omuntu eyazaalibwa ng'ayitibwa muganda okulya omuziro gwe.* (Its indeed sheer madness for a typical Muganda to land on his totem and eat it). Other tribes and clans that do not subscribe to that particular clan may eat that totem. For example members of the Lugave clan are free to eat the totem that belongs to Engabi (Antelope) clan. However, the argument is that, a responsible and concerned clan may have a population of approximately more than five million people. If the rest of other clans went ahead to hunt, kill and eat certain species of animals or plants minus the number that subscribe to it as real brother or sister, the damage caused to that particular specie will be tremendously reduced. (Source: Interview 7)

Unlike today where written laws form constitutions to guide society, taboos were unwritten rules that harmonized communities in Buganda. The violators of the Buganda moral codes as

contained in taboos invited misfortunes for the community and individuals such as bad luck, diseases, drought, and death. For example, a community water source (a well) where majority of the people fetched water, was not supposed to be stepped in by a girl or a woman in her menstrual periods. It was a taboo, violating it would lead to instant drying of that well and a girl or woman culprit would become barren. The community to lose the only water source available in the area was a threat and childless women were regarded outcasts in community. Water sources were therefore, protected from being contaminated to avoid possible diseases that would affect the community, hence taboos engaging the entire community responsible for protecting nature.

Oluzzi luno Nnaalongo nga terusenwamu mazzi muntu aliko bulimiro, era nga terugoberwako mazzi mu ttuntu.waaliyo omusota Wakalejja, omunene obwaguuga, ate nga muddugavu zzigizigi kagongolo nga gwamerako ebisagazi ku mabega.” [11]. He talked of a well where nobody was supposed to draw water with dirty legs, and it was prohibited also to fetch water from that well during midday because during that time, a very huge black snake with spear grass grown on its back would be at well quenching its thirst. The discussion of taboos instilling fear among the people for compliance, Kawere uses cultural language depicting the Buganda taboos for ensuring cleanness to avoid contaminating communal resources which would result into diseases that would affect the people who are part of the environment and conserving the water source which is as well part of wildlife. Snakes and other animals of the wild normally look for water to quench their thirst during midday when the sun is over head and indeed hot. Using the taboo to restrict people from accessing the water sources during the time when other wild animals were supposed to be drinking water, was intended to give chance to wild animals to drink without interferences for their survival. Human and wildlife conflict from time immemorial had never resulted into any positivity. In case of any encounter between humans and animals at water sources would either call for humans to kill those animals or animals attacking humans resulting into deaths or severe injuries. Humans as part of the environment needed protection for future plans and development and at the same time wildlife had to be conserved for future propagation that’s why Kawere puts a figure of a huge black snake with spear grass grown on its back to instill fear among the rational humans in order to avoid such encounter and conflict so that both human and wildlife species continue to co-exist.

Apart from totemism and taboos, Baganda attached spirituality to wildlife for protection from extinction. Scare animal spirits called amageege, inhabited forests, hills, wetlands, lakes and rivers. They would say “*ekibira ekyo kirimu engo, timba oba ggoonya yaamu*” meaning that, “that forest or hill is inhabited by a punisher leopard, python or crocodile spirit. Ndawula Evarist of Masanafu in Busiro the in-charge of the late King of Buganda Ndawula’s affairs who ruled the kingdom between 1724-1734 narrated that, the palace and the burial place of Ndawula is surrounded by small forests known as ‘*Obubira bwa Ndawula*’ (Small forests of King Ndawula). In one of these forests called Bulamba, there is a cave where a huge python said to be carrying Lubaaale Ndawula’s spirit (the spirit of Ndawula) resides. It’s not a mere python like other snakes, but Ndawula’s spirit highly revered, respected and protected. Observing around, there are fire places belonging to late King Ndawula, Nabuzaana, Kinenebatenda, Kaliisa and Kabandwa clearly seen, depicting traditional spirituality/religion. People come here for spiritual blessings as they jealously protect and ensure prosperity of that python, beautiful trees and other plant species. Nobody is allowed to cut a tree from any of those forests except the servants of

the Ndawula spirit who collect dry wood purposely for lighting and keeping the fire places of the gods/spirits burning all the time. In this way, wildlife is properly conserved because it is a matter of beliefs people have that, any form of abuse to nature around this place is a direct abuse to the gods/spirits, which attracts severe punishments to the offenders. *Source: (Interview 9)*

4. Discussion of findings

Findings revealed that clan's totems plus sub-totems attached to them in Buganda play a vital role first of all to prevent in-breeding among the closest family relatives from both patrilineal and matrilineal sides. This finding is supported by [25] who contends that 'individual or clan totem serves to stratify social relations purposely to avoid social mistakes like in-breeding.' Humans are part of the environment which as well needs to be handled properly. Therefore, the Baganda had to develop first the knowledge of survival to themselves by using totemism to avoid in-breeding, hence take care of the rest of the environment surrounding them.

It is also true that in Buganda apart from the royal clan, each clan is attached to an animal, a plant or an object as a totem and it is imperative to all members to that specific clan to protect and conserve their totem. This result is supported by [19] who referring a totemic animal as a "brother or sister" by asserting that, "if one donates funds for feeding animals in Uganda wildlife Education center, is considered as feeding one's brother or sister who is unable to feed himself /herself." [7] in line with [19] also adds that "Many people from Western Uganda for example look at the chimpanzees as people who run away from the community and are wild. However, they remain our brothers and sisters who should be respected". Nobody causes harm to something related to him or her to the level of being regarded as a brother or sister. Therefore, totemism can reliably be depended on as part of Buganda clan system's pedagogy to conserve wildlife in the original Counties of Buganda Kingdom.

Any animal in the wild or domesticated regarded in Buganda as a totem is highly respected by all clan members because is a symbol of unity among them. This calls for that animal or plant to be treated in high esteem by all the members subscribing to that clan. This thinking and finding is in line with [21] quoting Nabagereka the Queen of Buganda Kingdom on her visit to UWEC Sanctuary to lay a foundation stone for the construction of a home and exhibit for her cultural totem (Omusu) the 'cane rat' along other animals and totemic plants. She asserted that, "totems bring people of different clans together to ensure respect to those particular animals and plants by preventing others from hurting them. "The royal family in Buganda is the fountain and custodian of traditions, culture, values, norms and practices [15]. Now that the royal family is at the center of promoting and teaching the present young generation about conservation of wildlife through totemism, the researcher therefore confirms the findings to be true and conservation targets of wildlife could be achieved.

Further findings showed that in Buganda the members of the clan who subscribe to a certain animal or a plant as a clan's totem do not eat or even touch it. This was a revelation from almost all respondents who participated in the study. The same finding is supported by [28] who wrote "We are looking to the old Buganda cultural beliefs as one of the strategies to supplement the existing protection efforts by adopting Buganda's clan totem system to raise awareness of species in the region. People have just forgotten this but during our old times, the Baganda knew that it was an abomination to kill and eat your totem." [31] shares the same sentiments with [28]

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in support to this finding as he contends, that ‘eating fresh from one’s totem animal is like eating your son’s or daughter’s fresh.’ The researcher found this really correct that, totemism as part of Buganda clan system’s pedagogy plays a vital role in wildlife conservation because people belonging to certain clan whose totem as an animal/plant would jealously protect and conserve it for future propagation, to allow the future generations also to have access to it.

It is also correct that, it was the work of the elders to pass on the knowledge of using totemism as a wildlife conservation strategy to the young generations. This reality was also supported by [31] citing Omuteka Maaso in this book *Inquirer into the Withering Heritage* (page 6) who asserted that “we learnt these things from our parents and other elders in the village since such knowledge featured regularly in their daily narratives and in day to day activities like farming, hunting, fishing and building.” Elders also taught conservation practices through totemism to the young by use of mythology, taboos, religion/beliefs, storytelling and riddles. However, this was referred to by many as “hidden wisdom” that’s why some elders never fully revealed some hidden meaning about conservation aspects of wildlife. The study finds it necessary presently, to explain each and every detail of the indigenous knowledge purposely for integration into the current conservation efforts.

Findings also revealed that, not only totemism helped to protect and conserve wildlife in Buganda. Severally, respondents revealed that all names of animals and plants attributed to the Kabaka of Buganda were supposed as a must to be protected and conserved because such names shared the same substance with the King (the Kabaka) naturally. This finding is supported by [37] in his song.” *Amannya ga Kabaka ensanvu mu abiri* (Seventy two Kabaka’s names) where he portrays the King of Buganda as Mighty and Powerful like some of the wild animals, and some poisonous/itching plants. He shows that, these animals are supposed to be respected and revered because they share something in common with the king of Buganda. Names like Empalabwa (the youthful and powerful lion), Engo (Ssebuufu bwa Ngo tebusaalibirwamu mbwa. (The dog does not follow the same path with a leopard), Ssekkesa (caterpillar), Ssalamba (puff adder), Ttimba (python), Namuswa (Queen Ant) Kalalankoma (wasp) among others. It’s the reason why bush burning was prohibited in Buganda to safe guard certain types of grasses which names were also attributed to the King of Buganda like: Ccuucu and Munnyango, all hairy plants with hairy itching substances on their leaves. It was therefore, imperative upon all the Baganda to strictly respect, protect and conserve any animal and plant of which name was attributed to the Kabaka. These assertions convinced the researcher that, Buganda cultural systems were vital in wildlife conservation, which knowledge is ultimately necessary to be integrated in the present conservation programs.

Leaving alone totems, taboos proved to be essential in wildlife conservation. Findings revealed that, in Buganda Kingdom taboos were the unwritten laws that worked as the present-day constitution that controlled and regulated people’s behavior. They were the main source of guiding principles, motivation, regulating and directing individuals or community for objective thinking. This finding is supported by [8] who contends that “no matter how trivial or absurd taboos may appear to modern minds in details, they contain within them germinant principles of social progress and moral order”. Like in the first discussions on totemism, the Baganda first took care of their own survival before taking care of their surroundings. For example, it’s a taboo to have sex in the bush. The offenders would be punished by the gods with venereal diseases.

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The Baganda ensured that sex must take place only in safe places to avoid dangers from wild animals like snake bites, scorpions and other related health risks. When a human is fully protected for future propagation, he/she will be able to handle the environment around him.

Taboos as moral principles instilled fear among the people which helped to ensure compliance and obedience. For example in order to protect a community well where the majority of people fetched water, it was a taboo for a woman or a girl in her menstruation to step in that well while drawing water or using a source pan full of black suit to do the same. For the case of a woman/girl under her menstruation, majority of respondents especially the females contended that, if one did it she would become barren. Failure to beget children according to Buganda traditions would be looked at as an outcast in the community. The fear of being looked at as an outcast promoted the conservation of that water source clean as part of wild life and preventing the community from diseases that may break out because of drinking contaminated water. The act of a woman/girl stepping in the well while in her monthly periods, would lead also to instant drying up of that well. Losing the only source of water in an area couldn't be tolerated, hence left with no alternative but to abide by the law in form of a taboo. [11] is in support as asserted that *"Oluzzi Nalongo nga terusenwako mazzi mukazi aliko bulimiro, eyeekonye akagere era nga teterugoberwako mazzi mu ttuntu."* (A woman's/girl with dirty legs, one in her menstrual periods was not allowed to fetch water from the well called Nalongo and it was also prohibited by anybody to fetch water from it during the noon time).The researcher therefore confirmed that taboos as part of Buganda clan systems pedagogy played a vital role in protecting both humans and the wild life surrounding them.

Respondents revealed that taboos helped to conserve wildlife by prohibiting hunters from hunting in-calf animals and those found lactating their young ones. The finding is supported by [1] (Deut 5:14) where God commanded that, "no animal was supposed to be slaughtered on the same day together with her young. This implied that if the mother animal is slaughtered, there is no way the young could survive since it totally depended on the mother. Slaughtering both meant the hunter may not have what to hunt the next day because the young would be deprived of a chance to grow to maturity and the mother that reproduces also is deprived of the chance to produce other young ones. [23] supports the Holy Scriptures as she contended that "it was even a worse offence for a hunter to kill the game with its young, pregnant or found fending for its young ones". The researcher therefore, was convinced that, taboos were instrumental as Buganda's traditional ways of conserving wildlife. Relatedely, it was a taboo as well to kill for food a wild bird found incubating her eggs on brooding her young. Deuteronomy 22:6-7 is in support of the research findings as God commanded that "if you come across a bird's nest with eggs or chicks in it besides the road, do not take the mother with young". In His divine wisdom, God created the world and all it contains with rules and regulations intended for conservation purposes. Isaiah 65: 8 also supports wildlife conservation as quoted saying that "let go the mother to breed again, destroy it not, for a blessing is in it".

People's spirituality/beliefs/religion was vital in conservation process. Scare animals known as "Amageege" was a common knowledge in Buganda .These were animal said to have carried special spirits commonly known as Lubaale and would appear in form of a wild animals.This finding is supported by [9] who contends that some humans are re-incarnated into wildlife. Re-incarnated spirits into wildlife, were treated with special care. Animals in that category were

never hunted or harassed in any way in fear of being attacked by the human spirits that dwelt in them. This contributed to the conservation of species in which spirits dwelled. Kawere (1992) Ssebatta (2005) join Hens in supporting the findings above. Animals with a spiritual significance even if they came out of the wild and ate domestic animals from the communities, were never killed, harassed or chased away from the nearby environment. They were instead protected, hence a conservation strategy for such wildlife species.

Findings also showed that, gods/spirits dwelt in some forest trees/vegetative species. It is interesting for example to talk about the “Buddo spirit” which dwells in all the forested tree species surrounding Naggalabi, the coronation site for all the Kings in Buganda. Wildlife at Naggalabi on top of Buddo hill and the surrounding areas are jealously protected and conserved, never to be tampered with. A tree locally known as Enkuukuulu (cactus) is commonly known as Ekitikiro kya Walumbe (the god of death). Omukokoowe is a type of tree where Kiwanuka (the god of thunder) seats, Olufugankande is the seat of Wannema (the god of the lame and hand capped), Omulamula also being the seat of the god of justice. Such trees were never cut down for any reason because people were afraid of being punished by the spirits attached to them.

Nonrenewable resources are supposed to be used sparingly. The gods in charge of forests in Buganda do not allow anybody to harvest more than one item from the forests at a time. For example, from Nteketwe forest still standing up to now in Mawokota Mpigi District, if one’s intention is to look for mushrooms, is supposed to collect only mushrooms and nothing else. If one is to collect firewood, he/she should aim at firewood only at a time. In case one combined and picked more than one items from the forest, could never find his /her way out of Nteketwe forest. This finding is supported by [31] who contends that “it was against the will of the spirits in one of the forests from Ssesse Islands to fetch firewood and at the same time cut poles for which ever reasons.” If individuals went against the dictates from the gods/spirits, would face undesirable consequences such as losing their way from Buggo forest, losing one’s children and it would sometimes lead to death.’ The study confirmed this finding to be true because using resources sparingly would lead to perfect conservation of species of non-renewable resources.

Findings as well showed that, the Baganda believed that Ddungu the god of hunters only blessed those hunters who endeavored to hunt mature animals, unleashed misfortunes to those who hunted pre-mature animals. This finding is supported by [16] who contends that, hunting was regulated by the Ddungu deity who discouraged hunting young animals as well as in- calf ones. The Baganda hunters in fear of annoyance to the deities, whom they believed have supernatural powers of controlling their lives and activities, couldn’t dare go against their dictates, hence conservation of young animals for future propagation.

Sacred places were set aside for the gods who prohibited bush burning. This finding is supported by [11] who contends that “at the top of the hill called Lukende, was a dwelling place for the gods and it was strongly prohibited for anyone to set fire around that place”. Some rare species both plants and animals would easily be brought to extinction after being consumed through wildfires. Therefore, the Baganda forefathers had no option but to attach a spiritual significance to such places regarding them sacred. The Baganda from all generations have always proved to be notoriously religious. In that sense they respected the commands from the gods, hence protecting the sacred forests, hills, lakes, swamps and rivers.

5. Conclusion

The study's findings available were enough to convince the researcher that, Buganda's traditional wildlife conservational strategies and methods were effective and Buganda by then was quite interesting and a better place to live in. Interesting to note also is that, tresses of vivid examples and evidences to show that Buganda traditional knowledge based on totemism, taboos and traditional spirituality is still applicable and relevant in nature conservation today and still available. Take for instance, at Teketwe, a sizable forest still stands intact in Mpigi District, Mawokota County near Buwama, jealously protected because people seriously believe that it is spiritually attached to Nsereko spirit the head of Kkobe Clan. Down the hill adjacent to Teketwe forest is a well attached to the Nakamatte spirit the sister to Nsereko where water for all ritual functions for the Kkobe clan is drawn. Nobody dares to abuse both the forest and the well in any way to date. Still in Mpigi, Kibuuka Omumbaale's tree at a village called Mbaale still stands and nobody can attempt to cut it down up to today because it is believed Kibuuka (spirit) used to fight through the clouds and after defeating the Banyoro would come back and settle in that tree at Mbaale. Nakayima tree is ancient witch tree sited on top of Mubende hills about 4km out of the town. The tree is believed to have lived between 400 – 500 years of age in existence and possess healing powers against infertility, several diseases. This explains why several locals and people from far and wide flock the tree in pursuit of such supernatural powers. Much as many people subscribe to modern religions like Christianity and Islam, elements of fear and respect for traditional spirituality and other norms are still deep in their way of life and some are completely traditional believers. Therefore, the traditional conservational methods are still very effective, only need to be reinforced by sensitizing people about them.

Recommendations

The study recommends that, National Curriculum Development Center (NCDC) should ensure that, the indigenous traditional wildlife conservation knowledge becomes a part and partial of what is supposed to be taught at various levels of education in Uganda. This should apply mainly at the lower level of primary and secondary to allow pupils and students growing up with enough awareness on the value and necessity to conserve wildlife.

At all Buganda's cultural functions like Kabaka's birthday and coronation anniversaries, cultural introductions, weddings, celebrating the twins, initiation of children among many others, people should be encouraged to plant trees in commemoration of such functions. More so at funerals instead of people coming for burial of their beloved ones with wreaths/flowers, they should bring tree plantains, plant them around grave yards and elsewhere in memory of the deceased because wreaths or flowers are not part Buganda's traditions at burial ceremonies, only copied from foreign cultures. If this is done all the time, forest cover in Buganda and Uganda will be rejuvenated for a better natural environment.

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