

ERADICATING POVERTY IN BUGANDA BY REVITALIZING THE BAGANDA CLAN SYSTEM

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INTRODUCTION

By 1900 Buganda was a sovereign state with well-established leadership structures and cultural settings rooted through the clan systems. There are over 52 clans in Buganda and every Muganda descends from one of the clans. The traditional Kiganda culture had established traditions, and norms exercised through the clan systems to guide behaviours, attitudes, property ownership (land), burial and funeral rites rituals, inheritance, marriage ceremonies, beliefs and service to the kingdom. In part, clans serve to identify the ancestry of every Muganda, which constitutes strong family bond that unites people. Family names normally identify people's clans and it is a pride to be associated with one's clan.

During the 1966 crisis when the Kabaka of Buganda was forced to flee the country to seek sanctuary in England, all Buganda institutions were disenfranchised and outlawed except the clan system. It is the resilience of the clan systems that shouldered the semblance of the Buganda Kingdom and indeed the fountain and foundation on which it was re-established in 1993. The National Resistance Movement (NRM) government that established the parallel local government structures (local councils) which weakened and overshadowed the traditional local government structures (*Ssaza, Gombolola, Miruka and Ekyalo*), in the event of which Buganda's local administration systems were distorted. It is apparent now that revival of Buganda's political, economic, and socio-cultural strength and pride can only be rooted through the clan systems as a quasi institution hence the need to revitalize them.

THE BAGANDA CLAN SYSTEM

The Baganda clan system is unique and different from other types, which are found elsewhere in Africa or other parts of the world. A clan is a group of people who have a common ancestral origin. In other words, it is an extended family with all descendants of a common ancestor getting together. For each clan, there are different levels or a hierarchy of hereditary clan leaders with councils for example (*Akasolya, Amasiga, Emituba, Enyiriri, Empya*). At the top, "*Abataka ab'Obusolya*" of different clans form a council "*Olukiiko lw'Abataka ab'Obusolya*" chaired by '*Ssabataka*', the reigning Kabaka of Buganda. A totem '*Omuziro*' which may be an animal, bird, insect, fruit or some other object identifies each clan.

The clan system is the foundation and backbone of the Baganda. It was once said that '*Nnyoko abanga Omunyolo nga akuzadde mu kika*'. Any true Muganda must be

identified with a certain clan. Members of a clan '*abazzukulu*' belong to their fathers' clans and are always proud of their clans, to which they have a strong allegiance. On the other hand, a person may have some allegiance to several other clans; that of the mother, grand mothers both paternal and maternal, his wife's or her husband's and so on.

THE ROLE OF CLAN SYSTEMS

The clan system plays a big role to unite and bring people together in a friendly and brotherly atmosphere, disregarding political and religious beliefs. It helps to make people have a sense of collective responsibility as the saying goes '*Omulya Mmamba aba omu navumaganya ekika*'. It also safeguards, protects, and preserves our social and cultural values, traditions, and customs. Through the social hierarchy of the clan system it is an easy and effective way of mobilizing people as well as dissemination of information.

THE PRESENT STATUS OF THE BAGANDA CLAN SYSTEM

However, there is apathy among '*abazzukulu*' to participate fully in clan activities these days, because of wrong information, misconception and sometimes being misguided. In some clans, there are leadership disputes and wrangles at various levels, due to improper recording and storage of clan matters and information. On the other hand, because of the economic pressure most clans do not have proper funding. Thus most clan leaders through the hierarchy find it difficult to execute their duties efficiently. All these have resulted in the current deterioration of the performance and effectiveness of the clans' leadership.

THE NEED TO REVITALISE THE BAGANDA CLAN SYSTEM

Since clans are the blood stream of Baganda tribe, we must invigorate and revitalize our clans in order to protect, preserve, and maintain our culture. We can achieve a lot of things if we work through a strong united clan system. In the campaign to reinvigorate and revitalize our clan system, the clan leaders should write relevant detailed information about their clans '*Enkuluze y'Ekika*' and make those documents readily available to clan members.

In addition to informing the members, such documents can generate some income for the clan. When *Abazzukulu* are well informed and knowledgeable, they may be inspired to participate more in clan activities. Clan leadership at various levels should have some training through seminars, workshops and publications, and in all those things, which make a good and effective leader. This will enable efficient and effective clan management.

The registration of clan members, *Abazzukulu* also need to be streamlined and standardized in all clans. It should start from '*Amaka*' level and go all the way up

to “*Kasolya*’ and Mmengo in the office of the “*Abataka ab’Obusolya*” with a central registry of all clans. With the modern computer system, it should be possible.

To improve the mobilization of people and dissemination of information, clans should be represented at *Ssaza*, *Gombolola*, and *Miruka* councils.

The other thing is to encourage each clan, down the hierarchy to develop money generating projects and trust fund schemes. Money thus generated would be beneficial for further development not only at the clan level but also for the whole Baganda tribe. Our forefathers made the Baganda nation a formidable force, which was and is still envied by many because they were united on the strong foundation of the clan system and we should do the same.

CONCLUSION

The clan systems, once revitalized, will serve as a vanguard upon which development, political, and cultural aspects of the Buganda Kingdom could be re-organized and rejuvenated. It is therefore imperative for us to understand the historical problems that weakened the clan systems, define the new mandates of the clan systems, commit ourselves, and mobilize resources to operationalise the functioning of the respective clan structures and the Buganda Cultural Council (*Olukiko lw’aBataka*). This is a noble responsibility for every Muganda both residents and those in the Diaspora to contribute ideas, information, resources and human efforts to resuscitate the sanctity of our roots and historical pride.