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The Palace at Mengo, Hub for Revitalizing Buganda

Buganda is built upon the wisdom of our forefathers from hundreds of years ago. A substantial percentage of its government's assets such as land were acquired through treaties, battles and outright purchase. Unfortunately, much of this land has been lost to several former governments through the darkest years of the history of Uganda. As a tribe, we have been struggling to hold on to the little we have left. Enthusiastic entities are waiting to pounce on the *Lubiri* and wipe it out for good. Can we recover our economic prowess? Yes we can and in so doing we can buy back every inch of our land and our dignity. From the ashes and embers of our treasures looted in 1966, we can build our nation with our hub, *Olubiri Lwe mengo*, then we can build our helm; *Ekitiibwa kya Buganda*.

I often cannot help but wonder what became of all the treasures amassed by the Buganda Kingdom over the 700 year dynasty. The duration of our heritage is irrelevant at this point. However, it is hard to believe that the wisdom of the Baganda had been only in government organization and that we lacked in protecting what we acquired through investments, gifts, taxation, mutual transaction agreements or spoil from the several battles with our neighbors. For argument's sake let us assume that our wealth was primarily land acquisition. As much as that may be true for previous generations, I am sure that during the time of Ssekabaka Muteesa II Buganda had more assets other than land. The pictures I have seen of Buganda, for instance, the coronation, and the *Twekobe*

are evident of glamorous and historical wealth. The question that needs to be asked is where did Obote and Amin store Buganda's assets seen in these pictures? What happened to all the items of wealth after the infamous 1966 invasion? Rumor has it that most of what was stolen from *Twekobe* and *Bulange* was apparently stored in a building in the vicinity of the East Africa Community building which is the area next to the one time Ministry of Finance quarters. It is alleged that all the stolen goods unfortunately perished in a fire that was set on the storage building. For many of us *Olubiri* is our hub and hope, with *this* we also have the most valuable asset, our brains for wisdom. These are the embers (enfuuzi) which are not quenched. From these remnants in the ashes we can rise and re-amass our wealth and our pride once again. Only this time we have to ensure that we don't ever lose it again. Not only are we going to be able to build a magnificent *Lubiri*, we'll build this great Kingdom from the ashes and embers of the burnt treasury back to glory.

It is on this premise that I am reflecting on what we should do to rebuild the *Lubiri* at Mengo. Retrospectively, **If we knew then what we know now, Owen falls Dam and the power there from would be the property of Buganda.** This is a preface that without a doubt will incite furious ferocity and anguish in the enemy among and within us but so does the notion of the *Ttaba Miruka* conference(s). It is critical to consider the Owen falls power plant in respect to how and what we should do with *Olubiri*. Hind sight into how we handled our past investments provides insight and foresight of what we need to do in the future. I was recently told that Ssekabaka Chwa financed the

construction of Owen falls Dam with proceeds from the sale of his land as apportioned to the royal family in the 1900 agreement. Being wisely advise by his regents, his desire was to bring electricity into his kingdom. It is alleged that our then colonial “protector” the British government, did not wish to invest finances into this project so Kabaka Chwa financed it himself and the rest is history. If what is said above is true, then there should be some documentation of this activity. If the Buganda kingdom is the bonafide owner of the Owen falls establishment, we can use it as collateral to finance practically any development we desire in the *Lubiri* and what ever else we deem worthy. I doubt if there is any documents to the effect. However, this scenario gives me a great Idea. We should build several other project similar to the power plant. Only this time let us not sell our land to build an “Owen falls Dam”. Instead, the *Lubiri* should be used for whatever it is worth as collateral (it should be worth several million dollars) to build several projects of equal value and magnitude as Owen falls Dam. From hereon I will call these projects “Owens Dams”. Of course I have a few Ideas of what projects to invest in but in this document I shall refrain from mentioning any lest I empower the enemy among us to come up with counter measures.

An idea I have is a shocker wave. I suggest that Buganda Mortgages the *Lubiri* property. While mortgaging *Lubiri* appears at the fore front to undermine us as a people, foresight indicates that it will strengthen us. I will leave evaluation of this statement to individuals as a point to ponder. Besides the obvious financial strength, there are two advantages in the mortgaging endeavor. First, there will be protection of ownership of *Olubiri* by the financing bank or banks, and insuring

entities for the loans. While it may be possible for the repeat of the 1966 occupation of *Olubiri*, the level of difficulty for possession by the invading entity will be higher and worthless. Secondly, we will be able to divest the mortgage funds into several "Owen dams" which would be income generating to our government, building the nation (Uganda) and economically empowering us, the benefactors. If the beneficiaries of these "Owen dams" were regional or even national, the projects are near invincible more like the original Owens dam is. While present projects are of great value, they are also vulnerable. For example, Central Broadcasting Service (Radio ya Buganda), could easily be shut down because it is a local establishment. It is therefore extremely important not to "put our eggs in one basket" but to go regional or even international both in investing and providing service.

By now you must be wondering how this could rebuild *olubiri lwe Mengo*. If we had four equivalents of the present Owens dam, the financial precedes would enable us to pay back the loan and to build *Olubiri* in any way we choose and at any location we please. There are possibly many brilliant ideas of putting this process in place but I will put forth one which I consider subtle and has proven to be successful for others under somewhat similar circumstances. A committee of members with commitment should be put together to set objectives, mile stones and goals. The committee should write its report to the *Lukiiko* for review only (not to debate) and to ascertain that the project is on course. We should register an off-shore corporation (say Platinum Trust) owned by Buganda, represented by

the *Lukiiko* (not owned by the Lukiiko members as individuals). It will be noticed that the corporate name does not allude to Buganda for obvious reasons.

Obuganda should then submit Owens dams projects to be carefully, scientifically, and economically evaluated for soundness, viability, strengthening potential, fiscal potency and so on, by a capable committee. Several projects should be selected and ranked in order of which should be done when. An overseeing committee should then be put into place.

In my opinion, members of these committees should be compensated for their time as an incentive to perform due diligence.

The corporation Platinum Trust should employ a small team of people to process financing from financial institutions as well as insurance for the purpose of developing the Owens dams. The owner contribution required by banks for the loan should be obtained by aggressively selling shares to every one and everybody especially so, to the enemies within us. This will give us added strength and protection. However, it does not mean that it gives everyone a stake in *Olubiri*. Project development, construction and management committees can then be selected. This will ensure timely implementation of the proposed projects.

Not only will this process enable us to build Olubiri, but it will empower us to redeem all the assets hustled from us over generations. For those who feel that Buganda should not mortgage what it has, “what would you do if you are only left with a house and the property on which it sits? Wouldn’t you mortgage it

in order to revitalize your economic and social status? I know I would mortgage my *Ttemangalo* in heartbeat.

Ekikyo kye kikyo ddala; eviivi likutikka enku.