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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	5
1. INTRODUCTION	5
2. ORIGINS OF THE RWENZURURU MOVEMENT	6
3. THE WALK-OUT FROM THE TORO RUKURATO AND THE RWENZURURU MOVEMENT	8
4. CONTINUATION OF THE RWENZURURU STRUGGLE	10
4.1. THE RWENZURURU MOVEMENT AND ARMED STRUGGLE AFTER 1982	10
4.2. THE OBR AND THE MUSEVENI REGIME	11
4.2.1. THE RWENZURURU VETERANS ASSOCIATION	13
4.2.2. THE OBR RECOGNITION COMMITTEE	14
4.3. THE OBUSINGA AND THE LOCAL POLITICAL STRUGGLE IN KASESE DISTRICT.	15
4.4. CONTINUOUS EFFORTS FOR RECOGNITION	17
4.4.1. KAJURA COMMITTEE; THE INQUIRY PROCESS	18
4.4.2. THE RECOGNITION OF THE KINGDOM	19
CONCLUSIONS	21
REFERENCES	22

ABSTRACT¹

This paper provides a broad introduction to the Rwenzururu protest movement which erupted in the 1960s in western Uganda as well as the subsequent struggle for the recognition of the Rwenzururu kingdom. The struggle for the recognition of the Rwenzururu kingdom had become the defining factor in the politics and security of the Rwenzori region in post-independence Uganda. Underscoring the different perceptions, challenges, and responses to this struggle by successive post-independence governments, the paper describes how the Rwenzururu struggle has taken place on different levels and political contexts, leading to the recognition of the Rwenzururu kingdom (as the Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu) by the NRM government.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the 1990s Africa has witnessed the revival of traditional structures of governance previously banned by the nationalist/post-independence governments (Englebert 2002, Forrest 2004, Mkandawire 2005). In this light, a number of African countries, including Uganda, have revised their national constitutions, recognising the existence of, and un-banning previously banned traditional rulership/governance institutions (Englebert 2002, Doornbos 2001, Tripp 2010) and in different degrees integrating traditional authorities in the post-colonial state governance structures (Economic Commission for Africa 2007: 24). This revival or resurgence of traditional institutions and authority on the African continent is linked to the resilience of African traditionalism and cultures (Apter 1960, Miller and Skinner 1968, Skinner 1998, Sklar 1993, 1999a, 1999b) and the failings of, or the decline of, the post-colonial African States and governments (Young 2004, Bierschenk and de Sardan 1997, Brooks 2005, Milliken and Krause 2002,). These factors have spurred a renewed range of ethnic nationalisms, seeking a role for traditional leaders who are viewed as essential to politics on the continent, in the governance and development of their ethnic communities at the local level (Logan 2008, Wunsch 2000, Lutz and Linder 2004, Atieno Odhiambo, 2002, Ray and van Niewaal 1996, Economic Commission for Africa 2007, Becker 2006). In its pursuit of modernisation, nation-building, development and governance, African nationalism considered these ethnic nationalisms as a negative force, and consequently sought to eliminate it. Any political or economic claims based on these identities were considered as diabolic as imperialism (Mkandawire 2005: 12).

In the post-independence state, the most affected institution was that of chieftaincy and/or kingship because these were seen as the local/indigenous authorities that had 'facilitated' the colonial state system. Many of Africa's nationalist, first generation leaders, such as Houphouet-Boigny, Sekou Toure, Leopold Senghor, and Kwame Nkrumah, saw chiefs as functionaries of the colonial state. Chieftaincy or kingship was seen as an anachronistic vestige of the old Africa that had no place in the post-colonial political landscape. African nationalist leaders, therefore, often pursued policies to Africanize the bureaucracy without indigenizing the institutions of governance. Moreover, these traditional institutions were seen as contending points of power: not only opposition parties were banned, but also chiefs were ousted from the bureaucratic positions they held within the indirect rule system of the colonial state. Burkina Faso, Guinea, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, among others, attempted unsuccessfully to strip chiefs of most of their authority or even abolish chieftaincy and kingship altogether

[1] This paper represents part of on-going research on Rwenzururu Movement by Arthur Syahuka-Muhindo and another colleague; and Kristof Titeca. This paper was finished in February 2014, and published in March 2016.

(Economic Commission of Africa 2007: 8). As Mkandawire asserted, to the nationalist leaders in control of the post-colonial state, development presupposed a strong state running a coherent nation. Ethnicity was considered inimical to this project, since it weakened the state by the conflicts it engendered, and the multiplicity of its claims denied the new countries their 'national image.' Alternative images of nation-states, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural or multiracial, were never seriously considered, and if considered had been so tarnished by apartheid's claims as to be of no lasting or sympathetic interest (Mkandawire 2005: 13).

When the post-colonial state was confronted with a range of difficulties, the ethnic identities it had failed or placed in abeyance arose again to claim and re-occupy their spaces (Mkandawire 2005). It is this that has been called resurgence of traditional authority or traditional power, essentially the re-assertion of the dynamic of pre-colonial (and in some aspects colonial) state formation and state-building, and re-inventing, or re-introducing and revitalising the cultural imperatives in the process (Beall et al 2005). Boone (1998: 130) explains these as "new social forms of mobilisation and new patterns of state-society relations that have emerged" as states have responded to erosion of the old political order (i.e. the nationalist political order)², and owing as well to neo-liberalism, contemporary globalization and the pressures for democracy (Falola 2005). Another possibility is that these traditional authorities are revitalised because their struggles were suppressed or ignored by the post-independence national governments; and various forms of negotiations have revitalised these institutions. The latter point proved to be the case for the Rwenzururu movement and the struggle for the Rwenzururu Kingdom or Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu (OBR), which this paper will discuss.

The roots of the Rwenzururu Movement can be found in the colonial era: the complexity of colonial rule accentuated the problem of tribe and tribal identity, causing political tribalism in Toro Kingdom in Uganda, which led to the violent outbreak of the Rwenzururu movement and the formation of the [attempted] independent state of Rwenzururu organised as a kingdom by the Bakonzo and Baamba tribes who were part of colonial Toro Kingdom. This struggle was simultaneously an ethnic, peasant, and political struggle, adding to the complexity of the Rwenzururu movement (Syahuka-Muhindo 1995: 493). Moreover, the rebel Rwenzururu kingdom was founded in 1963, but was disbanded in 1982. It re-emerged during the NRM government, struggling for recognition, until the Museveni government recognised it as a cultural institution; Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu on 19th October 2009. This paper presents a broad historical introduction to the Rwenzururu movement and its struggle for the Rwenzururu kingdom in post-independence Uganda. In this paper, we will describe how this struggle has taken place on different levels and political contexts, eventually leading to the recognition of the Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu.

2. ORIGINS OF THE RWENZURURU MOVEMENT

As Doornbos (1970: 1069) argues, the Rwenzururu movement was an attempt to redress "inequalities in the distribution of power; in access to the political centre for the allocation of benefits; in wealth and welfare; and in dignity and social status". The movement started in 1962; but its origins started earlier. Instead, it has to be seen as the result of a process which started in the early days of colonisation. This section will explain this process. The concrete

[2] The post-independence African states were affected by successive failures spurred by the introduction of single-party rule in the 1960s, military governments (where these existed) in the 1970s, Structural Adjustment Programs in the 1980s, and globalization and liberalization following the end of the Cold War.

roots have to be seen in the struggle of the Baamba and Bakonzo citizens of the Rwenzori region against the Toro Kingdom Government, the latter being backed by the power of the central state. The Batoro were holding all the key governmental posts and senior chieftainships, herein neglecting all involvement from the Bakonzo in the political system. The Bakonzo and Baamba were treated as second-class citizens, who were neglected in educational and economic opportunities and were referred to in derogatory terms as 'unclean'. In terms of educational opportunities and elementary government services they had been neglected, although their areas formed the economic hub of the Toro kingdom (Ssembeguya Report 1962). This struggle therefore had strong emancipatory characteristics, seeking to redress the minority status which had been imposed on them when the British re-established and enlarged the Toro kingdom³. Within Toro, the Batoro formed a majority at the time of independence with about 350,000 or 55%; while the Bakonzo and Baamba constituted sizeable minorities of about 40% of the population (Doornbos 2004).

In 1919, the British were faced with a first armed rebellion of the Bakonzo against the Toro Kingdom. This struggle, also known as the 'Abayora revolt' (Syahuka-Muhindo 2004), was a reaction to the imposition of colonial rule on the Bakonzo, and more particularly to the forced assimilation of Bakonzo into the Toro culture and the enforced use of the Rutoro language; in addition to forced labour and taxation (Jorgensen 1981). This revolt ended in 1921 with the public hanging of its three main leaders – Nyamutswa, Tibamwenda, and Kapoli (Ssembeguya Report 1962).

Active resistance re-emerged in the 1950s under separate Bakonzo and Baamba organisations. Two factors in the colonial situation explain the formation of the Baamba and Bakonzo organisations in the 1950s. First, beginning in 1955 the colonial government initiated a constitutional process that had the effect of creating a sense of national identity and solidarity among the elite leadership of the Baamba and Bakonzo who increasingly came to be dedicated to equal participation in government. Secondly, following the end of the Second World War, economic change in the region along with, albeit limited, educational opportunities yielded among the Baamba and Bakonzo a social class whose members, by virtue of their education and wealth, had come in contact with the ideology of "development" and "modernization" which they found to be incompatible with their continued domination by the Toro monarchy. They became increasingly less willing to tolerate the continued social inferiority ascribed to them on the basis of 'tribe' (Syahuka-Muhindo, 2004: 206). Thus in the 1950s separate organisations were formed by Baamba and Bakonzo groups and focused on fighting their marginalisation by the Toro government and its governing elite. In 1954 the Bakonzo had formed the Bakonzo Life History Research Society (BLHRS), which researched the traditions and customs of the Bakonzo of Uganda and the Banande of DRC between 1954 and 1962). This BLHRS played an important role in the formation of the Rwenzururu Movement. In 1955 and 1956 the BLHRS leadership presented the Toro Government with memoranda demanding direct and equality of representation in the Toro Kingdom Rukurato (Toro Council or Parliament), recognition of the marginalized Baamba and Bakonzo tribes in the Toro constitution, and the right to be present during the coronation of the Toro King. During the same period, the Musana Society, the Baamba organisation, specifically demanded the appointment of Baamba to administrative positions. Lack of response to these and other demands showed the Baamba and Bakonzo that they required organisational activity. As such the Baamba Progressive Students Association (BPSA) and the Balyebulya were formed

[3] The kingdom, which Kabalega, king of Bunyoro-Kitara had destroyed in 1899, one year before the arrival of Captain F. Lugard in the area.

as splinter groups from the Musana Society, while in Busongora the Busongora Atlas was born in 1957 as a student organisation.⁴

As independence approached, the Bakonzo and Baamba collaborated in a movement of protest, the Rwenzururu movement, which first sought recognition of equal status within Toro. When this was refused they demanded a separate district. As these demands received negative and rather high-handed responses from the Toro governments (the district and the kingdom) and the central Uganda government, protest soon gained momentum, and in subsequent years led to numerous violent encounters with Batoro militias and Uganda government troops (Syahuka-Muhindo 1989, 1995, 2005, Stacey, 1965; 2003, Doornbos 1970, Kasfir 1970). One wing of the movement, consisting of Bakonzo with a base on the higher spurs of the Rwenzori Mountains, took the more radical step to secede from Uganda and set up its own, albeit rudimentary 'independent' state and government organised as a kingdom. While it is not our intention here to discuss the details of how a liberation movement ended up forming a kingdom, it suffices to note that the influence on it came from the strong traditional element in the movement; mainly the influence of the traditional chiefs based in the mountains. The highland traditional chiefs, including some on the Congolese side of the border, influenced and supported Isaya Mukirane's decision to start the Rwenzururu kingdom on June 30, 1963 (Syahuka-Muhindo, 2004, 2005).

3- THE WALK-OUT FROM THE TORO RUKURATO AND THE RWENZURURU MOVEMENT

In February 1962, Isaya Mukirane and others presented the 'Baamba and Bakonzo Memorandum' to the Governor in Entebbe, in which they complained about their suppression and marginalisation, and demanded for a separate district. The concrete beginning of the movement is considered when the Bakonzo and Baamba delegates walked out of the Toro Rukurato⁵ on March 13, 1962 after the Toro members had rebuffed the Baamba/Bakonzo demands for constitutional recognition as ethnicities, and a system of equal distribution of posts. Immediately hereafter, the Rwenzururu Movement was declared, and the leaders returned to their constituencies, mobilizing for total resistance in order to demand for a separate district. The movement was however being divided between a more moderate negotiation approach and a militant confrontational approach. Soon, Isaya Mukirane and two other Rwenzururu movement leaders – Mr. Yere miya Kawamara and Mr. Petero Mupalya - were being arrested and thrown in Luzira prison in Kampala. When released on bail, Isaya Mukirane returned to the Rwenzori Mountains and declared himself the first king of Rwenzururu on the 30th of June 1963, after the blessing of the different traditional leaders (Kajura Report 2005, Syahuka-Muhindo, 2005). He went on to establish a Rwenzururu kingdom government, with a complete administrative structure parallel to that of the Toro kingdom: a Prime Minister, ministries, counties and so on. The Rwenzururu government was collecting taxes and operating schools among other things. Royal symbols

[4] By 1957, owing to pressure from mainly the Balyebulya Association and the initiative of the colonial government, the Toro government reluctantly appointed a few Bakonzo and Baamba to the lowest offices as parish chiefs and clerks in the Toro Kingdom government administration. Two Bakonzo, Mr. Lazaro Makoma from Busongora and Mr. Yofesi Muliwabyo from Bwamba, both primary school teachers, became sub-county chiefs. Appointments in the following years saw Mr. Eriya Kambere and Mr. Yositasi Mukirane become sub-county chiefs. Curiously, all except Yositasi Mukirane had pre-colonial chiefly heritage. Muliwabyo not only came from chiefly background but he was also the son-in-law of Samwiri Bukambi, son of Chief Ruhandika of Harugali, Bwamba. Mr. Makoma was the son of Tibamwenda, one of the Abayora leaders publicly hung in 1921, and Mr. Eriya Kambere was the son of Kyoghero of the borderland Muramba chieftaincy.

[5] Until that time, the Bakonzo and Baamba had lacked effective means to express themselves, which the Rukurato had the potential to offer them, but quickly denied them.

were created, and appeal was done to the general secretary of the United Nations to be given a separate state, called the Rwenzururu United Kingdom, which would include the Bakonzo of Uganda and the Banande of Congo. As Doornbos states, in this sense the Rwenzururu kingdom “represents a virtually complete rupture from the state of Uganda” (Doornbos 1970: 110).

The Obote I government, had opened a Commission of enquiry (the Ssembeguya Commission) into the disturbances among the Bamba and Bakonzo in September 1962. The report placed the responsibility firmly on the Toro government, which had handled the complaints of Bakonzo and Bamba without tact, but rejected their demand for a separate district, which, according to Pasteur (1967: 9) was not ruled out on constitutional grounds. Following the failure of the government to address these grievances, there were further outbreaks of violence in the region. In April 1964, hundreds of Bakonzo and Baamba were killed mainly in the counties of Burahya and Bunyangabu by the Batoro in a ten-day onslaught. As the Bakonzo fled into the Rwenzori mountains and forced the Batoro chiefs out of the Rwenzori Mountains, this meant the real start of the guerrilla war. After the death of King Isaya Mukirane in September of the year 1966, he was succeeded by his teenage son, Charles Wesley Kisémbó (Pasteur 1967: 2-3), who, because he was a minor when he became king, ruled with the help of a regent until he attained majority age. King Charles Kisémbó was renamed Omusinga Charles Wesley Mumbere Irema-Ngoma of the ruling Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu.

In 1967 the Uganda government of Milton Obote had abolished the neo-traditional kingdoms within Uganda, thus removing the Toro kingship which had been one of the sources of discontent to Rwenzururians. The next Ugandan government of Idi Amin, resolved another key source of frustration by granting the Baamba and Bakonzo a separate district each. In 1971, Amin had established two commissions of enquiry - the Ovonji commission and the Musa committee⁶ - before creating the two districts, and naming them the Semliki (now Bundibugyo) and Rwenzori (now Kasese) districts.⁷ In doing so, President Idi Amin answered to the Rwenzururu moderate⁸ or lowland leaders’ numerous petitions and deputations to him. However, the Rwenzururu Kingdom leadership considering their kingdom an independent state did not recognize the two districts. Amin also did not consider the Rwenzururu leaders – moderate or militant - in the leadership structure of the two districts (Kajura 2005: 16), which left a continuing and deep sense of exclusion in the moderate section of the leadership of the Rwenzururu movement. The moderate (and generally better educated) leaders in the Rwenzururu movement who lived on the lowlands had continued to struggle for a separate district status, while the Mukirane faction controlling the Rwenzururu kingdom and its government operating in the mountains insisted on complete independence.

After the toppling of the Idi Amin regime in 1979 and the (controversial) return of Obote as president in the 1980s, the secessionist Rwenzururu kingdom showed itself responsive to overtures for reconciliation and agreed to a settlement in 1982. Intensive negotiations through intermediaries had preceded this settlement (Stacey 2003, Kambere 2010), which entailed the ceremonial laying down of arms by Rwenzururians in return for “a degree of local autonomy” and the integration of the Rwenzururu leaders in the Kasese administration (Forrest

[6] The eleven-member ministerial Ovonji commission was appointed by President Iddi Amin Dada to investigate the Rwenzururu claim for a separate district. The Musa committee was set up to investigate and present a security recommendation. This one comprised senior army and air force officers under the chairmanship of Lt. Col. Musa.

[7] In 1979, President Binaisa of the short-lived UNLF government changed their names to Kasese and Bundibugyo respectively, which did however not stop the Rwenzururu struggle.

[8] In the Rwenzururu movement, there were in fact two tendencies. One tendency wanted to remain within Uganda, but outside of Toro; while another tendency wanted to create a separate state, the Rwenzururu kingdom.

2004: 222). They were also given a range of economic benefits. For example, Charles Wesley resigned as 'king', in return for promises of development funds for social welfare and education; as well as material incentives including a bus, a car, a pickup truck, two shops, a residential house, and a government scholarship for study abroad, which was to materialize in the US.

4. CONTINUATION OF THE RWENZURURU STRUGGLE

The Rwenzururu struggle continued in various forms for two reasons: some secessionist Rwenzururians had continued the armed struggle, rejecting the 1982 reconciliation; and the restoration of a number of kingdoms by the Museveni government in the early 1990s induced the demand for Rwenzururu's recognition as well – as the cultural institution of Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu with its Omusinga or king.

4.1. The Rwenzururu movement and armed struggle after 1982

First, not all secessionist Rwenzururians had accepted the idea of reconciliation; some took up arms again, tempted by financial and material incentives in a general environment which is the perfect terrain for rebel activities (the Rwenzori Mountains). A regiment of disgruntled former Rwenzururu fighters, who had remained in the bush and led by former Rwenzururu Chief of Staff, Richard Kinyamusitu, formed a new movement which they named 'Rwenzururu Freedom Movement' (RFM). Some of its fighters, who included some who had served in the Uganda Army during Amin's military government, joined the National Resistance Army (NRA) for its guerrilla war⁹. When the NRA had taken over Kampala, the Rwenzururu Freedom Movement therefore felt it had a major stake in Museveni's victory, and expected to benefit from this. Although their leader, Kinyamusithu, received some material benefits (land and a bus) he nevertheless did not surrender to the NRM government: he insisted that he would surrender only if the NRM instituted a federal system of governance, in which the head of RFM (i.e. Kinyamusitu himself) would be the overall political leader (Musangasangania) of a revised Kasese district. The NRM government rejected this RFM demand for self-government¹⁰ and relations between Kinyamusitu and NRM soured. By the end of 1987 Kinyamusitu relocated his camp in the hills on the Congo side of the border, from where his militia forayed into occupied highland territory on the Ugandan side and repeatedly committed atrocities against the citizens. Kinyamusitu occasionally crossed back into Uganda, but his movements were restricted to the mountainous areas.

Meanwhile Amon Bazira, a native of Kasese and former deputy minister in the Obote government, was released from Luzira Prison in January 1988 (Kambere 2010, Stacey 2003) and quickly fled to the Congo, where he started the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda or NALU. This movement attracted a number of former Rwenzururu leaders, including some who had previously joined Kinyamusitu's RFM. In 1989 Bazira announced his NALU to be in business, that is, "the business of civil war" (Stacey, 2003: 368). In the same year Kinyamusitu was killed by Uganda government operatives and the remnants of Kinyamusitu's RFM joined NALU. While the RFM fought a local struggle for a specific (Rwenzururu) cause; NALU was fighting a national struggle: it was fighting the Museveni regime which, among other things, did not want to recognise the rights and the political role of the local customary chiefs. When the Kasese administration in 1987 expelled all former Rwenzururu leaders who had been integrated in the

[9] The number of Rwezururu joining the NRA ranges between 100 and 400.

[10] This rejection of political role for a local leader was similarly applied to kings and other cultural leaders when kingships were restored in the 1990s. See Uganda Government (2011), 'The Institution of Traditional or Cultural Leaders Act, 2011.'

local government administration according to the 1982 settlement, some of them also joined NALU when it was formed. The movement (NALU) did not get the same level of popular support as the Rwenzururu movement, but did get support from Kenya, Sudan and Zaire. In 1989, NALU fighters carried out attacks on government officials in Kasese, killing some local council leaders in inhabited highland areas of the Rwenzori Mountains. In 1993, NALU was defeated after a failed attack on Kasese in 1992 and its leader Amon Bazira was killed in Nairobi in August 1993 (Kambere, 2010: 115; Stacey, 2003:375).¹¹

In 1995, the NALU remnants in Zaire (renamed DRC) joined forces with members of the Tabliq sect (a radical Muslim group which wanted to establish an Islamic state and was supported by Sudan). Together, they started the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) to fight the Ugandan government.¹² The ADF conflict began after it entered Kasese district through Mpondwe border point in November 1996. By late 1997, its attacks on civilians intensified, characterised by indiscriminate killing, abduction and looting. From 1997 until 2000, the ADF strongly destabilised the entire Rwenzori region of Western Uganda. Many people (especially from higher spurs) were driven out of their homes into Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps; in Kasese district alone, a dramatic 234.000 people were displaced¹³; by May 1997, seventy thousand (70,000) had been displaced in Bundibugyo alone (Stacey 2003: 413). The ADF was supported by Sudan in order to fight Museveni's regime, which was supporting the SPLA rebellion in Southern Sudan. It is widely believed the ADF also received funding from Mobutu's Zaire (Hovil and Werker 2005).

However, by 2003, the remnants of the ADF were forced back in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), from where it tried to reorganise¹⁴ (Titeca and Vlassenroot 2012).The rebel movement had no clear political objectives, but through its indiscriminate and random terror, it did put the Ugandan government under strong pressure. It never advocated for the Rwenzururu cause (at the time the recognition of Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu), but since it operated from mountainous area inhabited by Bakonzo and some former Rwenzururu officials had joined its ranks via NALU, ADF became a difficult issue for the Rwenzururu movement – as will be explained below.

4.2. The OBR and the Museveni regime

Parallel to the above struggle, there were particular tensions between the Rwenzururu movement and the Museveni regime, which came to power in 1986. One problem was that Museveni's National Resistance Movement cancelled Charles Wesley Mumbere's scholarship upon coming to power. The major difficulty however resulted from the regime's relation with kingships: having its power base in the National Resistance Army, Museveni's new government in due course felt it had to accommodate pressures from Buganda pleading for restoration of its kingship. As it was legally difficult to restore a single kingship where four had been 'banned', parliament in 1993 passed a 'un-banning' order allowing the restoration of 'cultural leaders', provided 'the people so wish'¹⁵. On that basis Buganda's kingship was restored (Englebert 2000, Tripp 2010), followed by those of Bunyoro and Toro, but not in the fourth ex-

[11] For more information on NALU, see Titeca and Vlassenroot, 2012.

[12] For more details on the genesis of the ADF, see Titeca and Vlassenroot, 2012: 158-159.

[13] Official figures Kasese district. Kasese district Local Government, Production Department, Labour section. Document provided by Secretary for Disaster Preparedness on 22 November 2006.

[14] Cf. Karugaba, M. '4 ADF rebel suspects held in DR Congo', *The Monitor*, 4 July 2007; Basiime, F., 'VCCU arrests three armed ADF suspects', *The Monitor*, 8 January 2007; Thawite, J., 'Uganda, DRC, Sudan unite to fight rebels', *The New Vision*, 10 February 2007; Allio, E., Kasooha, I., Tumusiime, A., 'Army, ADF rebels clash in Hoima', *The New Vision*, 27 April 2006; Wasike, A., 'Uganda protests to Congo over ADF', *The New Vision*, 29 March 2007.

[15] See Article 246, Uganda Constitution, 1995; Doornbos 2001: 98.

kingdom of Ankole. In Ankole, fierce resistance was mobilized against the possible restoration of the monarchy: large numbers of Bairu, forming the majority of the population, regarded the institution as a symbol of historical ethnic subordination (Doornbos, 2001).

In the wake of the revival of kingship in Uganda, the Rwenzururians declared that they would also revive their own kingship. This also had implications for their relations with the Toro kingdom: the clause in the monarchical restoration bill (or 'Ebyaffe' bill) made no reference to territorial limits, and since the Toro Kingdom at the time of its abolition theoretically included Kasese and Bundibugyo, the restoration of Toro kingship could indeed have referred to the boundaries of the former Toro kingdom - thus again comprising Bakonzo, Baamba and other non-Batoro. A hint of such a claim was evident in the Omukama's reported intention to appoint some selected Bakonzo and Baamba among his new ministers and the claim of ownership of land and the salt lakes in Kasese District. As Doornbos (2001: 95) argued, any attempt at territorial restoration, however, was bound to provoke serious trouble in Kasese and Bundibugyo districts. Indeed, during the 14 July 1993 National Resistance Council (NRC) meeting, the members from Kasese district warned the government that it should not become responsible for 'another Rwenzururu rebellion'. This was followed by agitation in the Kasese area against tentative claims over the salt-rich Lake Katwe and the Kasenyi salt deposits on the shores of Lake George by the reinstated Omukama of Toro, which traditionally had constituted an important source of revenue for his government. This agitation, which was echoed in the NRC sessions by Kasese representatives, opposed the provisions of the *Ebyaffe* bill returning all the cultural sites and other assets belonging to traditional rulers. Since then the salt lakes have been under the authority of Kasese administration. Thus although the Toro kingship was reinstated, it had lost much of its former significance and appeal as a result of the 'secession' of Bundibugyo and Kasese districts (Doornbos 2001: 95).

However, Rwenzururians, in emulation of the restoration of Toro's kingship and out of a strong wish to be at par with the latter, claimed that their own kingship, albeit a novel institution, should also be restored (Forrest 2004: 221-222, Rothchild 1997: 91-92). Consequently, a popular movement swelled to have Rwenzururu's ex-king, Charles Wesley Mumbere Iremangoma, return from the United States where he still lived and be recognized by Museveni's government. However, such agitation or movement was curtailed by persistent allegations of Charles' and his Rwenzururians' involvement in rebellions fighting the Museveni government - NALU (1989-1993) and ADF from 1996. In August 1998, operating on Congo-side, the UPDF overran an ADF encampment and captured documents associating Charles with the rebellion. The documents comprised letters indicating Charles Mumbere's acceptance of titular leadership of NALU following the assassination of Amon Bazira in Kenya in 1993 (Stacey 2003: 442). Consequently, Dr. Kiyonga (then Uganda's Health Minister) and the vice-chairman of the National Resistance Movement (Al Hajj Moses Kigongo) convened a meeting of the Bakonzo tribal elders on August 27, 1998 to discuss this issue (Stacey 2003: 442). Among them were former Rwenzururu Kingdom ministers, NRM political cadres and parliamentarians including the brother of Charles Mumbere, Hon. Christopher Kibananga. The letters and photographs were identified by Christopher Kibananga as being truly of his brother. The press media were assembled, to record and publish this revelation (Stacey 2003: 442-443).

The Mweya meeting did change the dynamics of politics in Rwenzururu. Not only was at the Mweya meeting alleged Charles Mumbere's involvement in ADF activities¹⁶, but it

[16] Thawite, J. (1998) 'Bakonzo king attacked for backing ADF' *New Vision*, 28 August 1998. Thawite, J. (1998) 'Mumbere attacked by brother' *New Vision*, 31 August 1998.

was also proposed to strip him of his kingship or 'Irema-Ngoma' ('Keeper of the Drum') title. The latter aspect - more than the allegation that Charles Mumbere was a suspected rebel - incensed the Rwenzururians: they viewed the Mweya meeting as an attempt at framing the leaders and supporters of the Rwenzururu movement and taking advantage of the ADF turmoil to stop the existence of the Rwenzururu kingdom. A popular sentiment emerged in Kasese demanding Charles Mumbere Irema-Ngoma's immediate return home so that he could explain his alleged involvement in ADF insurgency to his Rwenzururu followers.

The crucial point for the Rwenzururu kingdom was that the Toro kingship (whose kingdom until its 1967 termination incorporated the Bakonzo and Baamba) had already been reinstated in 1994. Since nothing was said about its boundaries, the restoration of Toro Kingdom could indeed have referred to the boundaries of the former Toro kingdom- thus again comprising Bakonzo, Baamba and other non-Batoro (Doornbos, 2001: 95). In this context, the combination of the threat to obliterate the Rwenzururu kingship, and the feared threat of being re-incorporated into the revived Toro kingdom, was what caused the Rwenzururians to threaten to rebel again.

Following the Mweya meeting, a series of consultative meetings followed at various levels both in Kasese and in Kampalato consider the precarious situation that had arisen. At one of such meetings in Kampala, on September 4, 1998 it was resolved that the way forward was to allow Charles Wesley Mumbere to come home¹⁷ within a period not exceeding three months from the month of September 1998. It was further resolved that the office of the National Political Commissar along with members of parliament from Kasese District should carry out a mobilisation exercise which entailed addressing mass rallies with the aim of cooling down the heightened emotions of Rwenzururians at all levels and such rallies were held in Kasese district before the end of September 1998.

Charles Mumbere arrived in November 1998 and stayed in the country until January 1999. In this visit, Charles Mumbere toured the districts of Kasese and Bundibugyo. Before heading for the Rwenzori region, Charles Mumbere addressed a meeting with President Museveni in Kampala¹⁸ at which he explained his titular leadership of the NALU following Bazira's death, but categorically denied any involvement in ADF. Although he did return to the USA at the beginning of 1999, his visit facilitated the formation of two Rwenzururu committees, both of which would play important roles in the struggle for the recognition of the kingship of Rwenzururu. These were the Rwenzururu Veterans Association (RVA) committee, formed on November 25, 1998¹⁹ and the Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu Restoration committee, which was constituted in March 1999.

4.2.1. The Rwenzururu Veterans Association

In his report to the President, Omusinga Charles Mumbere said that on November 25, 1998 when he arrived in Kasese, the representatives of the Rwenzururu veterans requested the formation of the Rwenzururu Veterans Association, which would participate in fostering security in the Rwenzori region. At a meeting also attended by central government officials (such as the Minister of Security, army officers and a representative of the National Political Commissar), the veterans protested the allegation that they supported rebel activities such as the ADF.

[17] The dignitaries attending that meeting included all members of parliament from Kasese, the (local government) district chairman of Kasese, the Kasese District NRM chairman, some elders and a host of others.

[18] New Vision (1998) 'Mumbere meets Museveni' *New Vision*, 25 November 1998.

[19] See 'Report of Omusinga Charles Wesley Mumbere Irema-Ngoma's Tour of the Districts of Kasese and Bundibugyo from December 25, 1998 to December 2, 1998.' (Rwenzururu documents)

The veterans therefore requested government permission to form the Rwenzururu Veterans Association. The security minister consented, advising the Omusinga to set up the Rwenzururu veteran's committee and name its leadership. The importance of the RVA was particularly in the following: although Charles was already acknowledged as the leader of Rwenzururu and Omusinga-in-waiting, the RVA was the first formal entity with ties to OBR.

4.2.2. The OBR Recognition Committee

While the Veterans Association consisted of members with long-standing links with the Rwenzururu struggle – hence the name ‘Veterans’ – this was different for the OBR recognition committee, which largely consisted of relatively newcomers in the area. The Rwenzururu veterans were by-passed in the selection of the restoration committee, which nonetheless drew its legitimacy from its association with the RVA. The main challenge of the committee was how it was going to mobilise the people who were already organised in the ruling National Resistance Movement's local councils without appearing to undermine the NRM system.

From 1999 onwards, the OBR Recognition Committee was setting up its activities and establishing alliances with the pro-Obusinga members of parliament. In order to build organisational capacity, the committee was working closely with the pro-OBR members of parliament who did more pressuring on behalf of Rwenzururu. The committee also required the support of the Rwenzururu Veterans Association whose members would help it organise Obusinga recognition regional committees.²⁰ By the beginning of 2000, the OBR Recognition committee formally petitioned government to recognise the existence of OBR. On March 25, 2000 the committee's chairman wrote a letter to President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, by which was made a “formal request to the government to recognise the existence of Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu and to create a favourable atmosphere for the Rwenzururians to realise the values of their cultural orientations.”²¹ Also in the letter, the Rwenzururu community was explained as being multi-ethnic –“comprising Baamba, Bakonzo, Basongora, Banyabindi, and other people who may subscribe to the spirit of Rwenzururu (such as amongst recent immigrants).”²² The letter concluded with a specific request:

The Rwenzururu Kingdom Recognition Committee hereby submits this document as formal request to H.E. the President and Government of Uganda to consider embarking on a process of negotiations and deliberations with the leadership of Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu, aiming at recognising the cultural institution so cherished by the people of Rwenzururu.²³

Although the letter was sent to the President through official channels – it was delivered to Minister for the Presidency's office on March 30, 2000 by a team that included Rwenzururu elders and the members of parliament from Kasese – the President claimed at a meeting with Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu Elders' on March 8, 2001 that he had not received the letter.

More letters also explaining the Rwenzururu problems and asking for their support to the process of the recognition of Obusinga were written by pro-Obusinga members of parlia-

[20] These committees were regionally installed up to the sub-county level.

[21] Chairman of Rwenzururu Kingdom Recognition Committee, to His Excellency the President of the Republic of Uganda, Lt. General Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, 25 March 2000. Ref. RKRC/DIALOGUE/1 (Rwenzururu documents).

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

ment to the president and selected ministers.²⁴ In the meantime, the Obusinga issue became an important political issue and Museveni could not continue to ignore it. The next section explains how this struggle became part of local political struggles in the Rwenzori region, and particularly in Kasese district.

4.3- The Obusinga and the local political struggle in Kasese District.

The struggle for the recognition of the Obusinga was not only fought directly with the national government, but also on a local level: the OBR had become part of a very heated debate in the Rwenzori region, and more particularly in the heartland of the Rwenzori region – Kasese district – where it defined local politics, with a continuing struggle between the pro- and anti-Obusinga camps (or persuasions). On the one hand, there was the ‘anti-Obusinga camp’ led by Dr. Crispus Kiyonga, at that time the Minister of Defence and close ally of President Museveni.²⁵ During the disputed 1980 elections, Kiyonga was the only UPM member elected to the Ugandan Parliament, but he joined President Museveni in the liberation war. Kiyonga, who is also a close ally of President Museveni, opposed the existence and recognition of the Rwenzururu kingdom for a long time; while the majority of Kasese MPs and other local politicians supported it²⁶ (Titeca 2007). Overall, the pro-Obusinga camp was the majority in the district, given the popularity of the Obusinga among the population. According to Stacey (2003: 493-494), a study undertaken by social anthropologist and Makerere lecturer Kabann Kabanukye found that 85 % of the Bakonzo and Baamba favoured the idea of the kingship in the person of Charles Wesley Mumbere. This figure of 85% of support for the Obusinga was widely accepted in the district, as well by people of the anti-camp. The pro-Obusinga camp supported the Obusinga for two main reasons: first, people were convinced the cultural institution would bring more development to the district, in particular through Charles Mumbere’s contacts in the USA. The Obusinga, after having spent many years in the US pursuing ‘kingship studies’ was widely expected and believed to have developed many contacts to provide this service in the same manner the Buganda Kingdom has been able to provide. Second, it was believed how the Obusinga would give the Bakonzo their culture and dignity: “to enhance cultural identity, unity and development which had been overshadowed by defensive and counter defensive wars”, “to promote, teach, preserve and compile socio-cultural values that are not repugnant to development and natural justice” and “to enhance economic, educational and health programmes through mobilization of the local people” (Kajura 2005: 29).

The anti-Obusinga camp opposed the Obusinga because they feared that it would suppress the minorities in the district and region, i.e. the other ethnic groups (Banyabindi, Basongora, Baamba, Babwisi, Batuku, Batoro and Batwa) which also have their distinct cultural identity. It was argued how these ethnic groups cannot be submitted under one supra-cultural institution; and the kingdom would therefore divide the people. They contended, moreover, that there had never existed an indigenous kingdom in the region, and neither has any law ever recognised the institution in the region (cf. Kiyonga et al 2005). Also the leadership of the kingdom had been contested. For example, Mr. Lazaro Makoma claimed that he and not Isaya Mukirania was the founder of the Rwenzururu movement and Bamusede Bwambale and

[24] Loice Bwambale and Kule Muranga to Minister of State Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, November 11, 2000; Loice Biira Bwambale, Kule Muranga Joseph, Christopher Mbalibulha Kibanzanga and Kalibogha Kithende to H.E the President Lt. Gen. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, Re: Obusinga, May 14, 2001; Loice Biira Bwambale to Minister of Constitutional Affairs, Request to Meet you over Obusinga cultural institution of Kasese, September 17, 2001

[25] Kiyonga became the minister of defence from 2006. He previously was Minister of Cooperatives and Marketing, Minister of Finance, Minister of Health, Minister of Internal Affairs and National Political Commissar for the National Resistance Movement.

[26] In the 6th parliament 3 out of 5 supported OBR; in the 7th parliament 4 out of 5 supported OBR.

Augustine Kyaminyawandi published Makoma's claim.²⁷ There was also the fear the Rwenzururu Kingdom wanted to establish a separate ethnic state, aiming to take in the Nande ethnic group of the DRC, as was the case at its founding. In doing so, it would claim parts of the Northern Kivu Province in the DRC, and heighten tensions in the region, and rekindle violence in the area (Kajura et al. 2005: 26).

As already introduced above, the potential connection with rebel forces constituted a major issue in the 'political camps' struggle: the anti-Obusinga camp continuously branding the pro-Obusinga camp as being 'rebels'. For example, the anti-Obusinga 'Memorandum against the establishment of a kingdom in the districts of Bundibugyo and Kasese' for the Kajura report, tried to demonstrate throughout the report the rebel connections of the pro-Obusinga camp. It concluded with,

And so it is clear that there has been a chain connection between the Rwenzururu faction of Mumbere, NALU, ADF and now PRA. The cyclic rebellions that have taken place in the Rwenzoris is thus well explained. Besides the atrocities that people have suffered under these rebels, which have left bitter memories, there is concern and anxiety that if Mumbere and his group are installed into a cultural institution, there is every likelihood that their programme to resume fighting to form a separate state will be resumed and our people will therefore undergo another cycle of terror. (Kiyonga et al. 2005: 12)

In this context, there were strong allegations of the anti-OBR camp that the Rwenzururu members were working with the rebels. Immediately after the 2001 elections, on 17 March 2001, there was an ADF attack on Kasese town. The anti-Obusinga camp immediately blamed the pro-Obusinga camp of having collaborated with the ADF for the attack. Also Member of Parliament Kibanzanga, who is the younger brother to Omusinga Charles Mumbere was being accused and some pro-Obusinga supporters were arrested (and consequently released).

Evidently, in this context politics had - in the words of a local politician - become a "matter of life and death"²⁸. Elections were strongly defined along pro- and anti-Obusinga lines; and had accusations going in both directions. Particularly the 2001 and 2006 elections were characterised by intimidation and arrests by the government forces.

Before the 2006 elections, Uganda was characterised by the Movement 'no-party' system, in which everyone was a member of the 'overarching, all-inclusive umbrella' of the Movement and in which candidates were elected on their own merit. In Kasese district, those NRM politicians and supporters who were in the pro-Obusinga camp were being described as the 'dilute NRM', whereas the anti-Obusinga camp were being considered the 'cream NRM'. When Uganda (under strong donor pressure) made a shift towards multiparty politics after the 2005 referendum, this did not have much impact on local politics of Kasese, as most of the pro-Obusinga supporters joined the opposition party FDC, whereas the anti-Obusinga camp rallied around government party NRM-O.

Also district politics was very much affected by the struggle. From 1990 to 1996, the district chairperson was against the Obusinga; while the 1996 to 2006 district chairperson was very much on the pro-Obusinga side. A leading pro-Obusinga politician summarized this as "In

[27] Bwambale, Bamusede and Augustine Kyaminyawandi, *The Faces of the Rwenzururu Movement* (Monograph. No date, but circulated in 2002)

[28] Interview with local politician, 08-11-2006.

1996, we got the LCV, the LCIII's, up to the LCI. In that way, our regime took over power.”²⁹ Both sides argued how jobs, tenders and projects were being distributed along the ‘political camps’ lines at every level of the local government. For example, the anti-Obusinga ‘Memorandum against the establishment of a kingdom in the districts of Bundibugyo and Kasese’ argued how “In Kasese District is a District Tender Board and District Service Commission which are composed of the Rwenzururu Kingdom agitators who are dishing out contracts and jobs depending on support for the kingdom. They say ‘more will follow when a kingdom is in place’”(Kiyonga 2005: 14).³⁰ Similar claims were made by the pro-Obusinga camp. For example, “If the majority of the people in the sub-county support one camp, the chairperson will be of that camp. All activities will be affected in the sub-county: tenders, the allocation of health units and schools; the support to them; the national visitors to the sub-county. Also the civil servants have to choose side. It is nasty!”³¹

Locally, it was perceived how the struggle was more than a struggle for cultural recognition, but how political strategy also played an important role in this conflict. Throughout the years, the Obusinga issue had become strongly politically instrumentalised by both sides in order to construct and cement their support, something which was admitted by the political big-wigs. A leading MP for example argued how “The Obusinga issue is used by either side. It is used to protect their position: you get 200 voters there get 200 voters there; and you go to another village, where you keep 200 voters, this is how you stay in power! You don’t let people hesitate to cross. You keep the divide! The kingdom issue became instrumental for both sides!”³². Also the spokesperson of the Obusinga institution argued how the Obusinga has become a “catchword for mobilisation”³³.

In other words, the Obusinga became the defining factor of local politics, as it was an easily instrumentalised issue which allows rallying support behind a certain cause. The support of opposition party FDC for the Obusinga for example explains the major success of FDC in Kasese.

4.4- Continuous efforts for recognition

Through the above struggle, efforts had continued to recognise the kingdom – also on a national level. These efforts proved to be gradually successful: On March 8, 2001 President Museveni invited a meeting of OBR elders at the parliamentary buildings in Kampala to discuss Rwenzururu concerns affecting his re-election. That meeting provided the first opportunity to the Obusinga supporters to clarify the problems that had been attributed to them and the cultural imperatives of the Obusinga. Contrary to the view of Balyage (2005) that President Museveni lifted the ban on the Rwenzururu kingdom during Charles Mumbere’s 1998 visit, it is reasonable to say that the un-banning of the kingdom took place during the meeting on March 8, 2001,

[29] Interview with leading pro-Obusinga politician, Kasese, 11-09-2000

[30] Similar claims are made in the Kajura (2005: 27) report, where it is argued how “They [the anti-Obusinga camp] also complained of segregation and sectarianism by the Kasese District Local Administration in respect to the tendering processes, employment opportunities and the development of local language by the local leadership, along ethnic lines. They contend that the situation was bound to be exacerbated if one ethnic group was made head of a cultural institution. With such temptations, they fear for more subjugation of the minority tribes.” To some extent, this was confirmed in an interview with a leading pro-Obusinga politician who argued that “It affected mainly the allocation of jobs at the district and the sub-county. The way it works: jobs are few; many people are equally qualified. And the one with the best recommendation gets it. So if the Minister-camp is in power, he will write a recommendation, the person will get it! The same holds for my camp.” (Interview with leading pro-Obusinga politician, Kampala, 20-12-2005)

[31] Interview with a pro-Obusinga representative, Kasese, 06-04-2005.

[32] Interview with leading MP Kasese district, 11-09-2006.

[33] Interview with spokesperson, Obusinga institution, Kasese, 13-09-2006.

as the pro-Obusinga achieved a formal (written) commitment of the President towards solving the issue of the recognition and restoration of OBR. The president wrote the letter in which he promised to attend to the OBR issue as soon as possible as long as the people of Kasese voted to return him to power. The elders returned to Kasese with the letter which was broadcasted on the local FM radio station. It also played a role in the electoral results, as President Museveni gained 69% of the vote in the district during the 2001 presidential elections, in anticipation of the recognition of OBR.³⁴

In the same vein, President Museveni had advised the formation of a committee of 10 people with five members from each side, to iron out areas of disagreement between the anti- and pro-Obusinga groups. This did however not materialise. Instead the two groups continued to operate separately and the Rwenzururu situation became even more complicated after the 2001 elections. As well following the March 8th meeting, the pro-Obusinga parliamentarians had intensified their contacts with various government ministers through memoranda and meetings. On December 8, 2004, the OBR Recognition Committee had written to president Museveni a letter proposing the next necessary step towards formal OBR-government negotiations.³⁵ It was considered in certain government circles that the OBR organisation had become adept at negotiating; rather than continuing to ignore it, government would have to find a peaceful way of 'containing' it; by directly engaging with its negotiators, and perhaps arriving at some form of arrangement. The Rwenzururu king did arrive in the country on December 24, 2004 and met the president on January 3, 2005, together with OBR elders. That meeting resulted in the president, on 2nd April 2005, appointing a four-member Ministerial Committee chaired by second deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Service, Henry Muganwa Kajura, to make deeper investigations into the disagreement around the Obusinga, and to make recommendations to the Government (Kajura Report, 2005).

4.4.1. Kajura Committee; the inquiry process

The Kajura Committee played a crucial role in this process. The Committee collected data (or evidence) through discussions with the seven members from each of the Anti- and Pro-OBR teams, twenty five members of both teams from each of the constituencies in Kasese and Bundibugyo Districts (Kajura 2005: 35-36). The committee also received and analysed memoranda from the public, members of the academia, researchers and other interested persons (Kajura Report 2005: ix).

Accordingly, from the data collected the Kajura Committee established that there was no legally recognized centralized cultural institution in the Rwenzori Region; that there were many atrocities committed during the Rwenzururu movement struggle, by all parties involved in the struggles (Rwenzururians, Toro kingdom, and the central government forces). It also recognised that the OBR is not only a cultural issue but also a big determinant in the politics, security and economics of the region; and particularly that the OBR question is popular among the Bakonzo who form the majority of the total population in Kasese and Bundibugyo districts (Kajura 2005: ix-x). In relation with these findings, the committee recommended that a cultural institution for the Bakonzo be allowed to exist within the region in accordance with the Article 246(1) of the constitution, 1995, citing already in existence similar cultural institu-

[34] By the 2006 presidential election Museveni had not fulfilled his promise of solving the Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu issue, Kasese electorate voted him down to 44.72%, losing to Kizza Besigye of the FDC who scored 52.51%. Other presidential candidates were DP's Sebana Kizito (1.19%), UPC's Miria Obote (0.37%) and Abed Bwanika (1.12%). Source: Electoral Commission of Uganda.

[35] See Chairman Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu Recognition Committee, to President Museveni, 'Recognition of Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu', December 8, 2004, Kasese, Uganda. Ref. CWMI/HC/04.

tions among the Acholi, Bakooki, Baruli, Japadhola and Itesots. It also recommended that the Bakonzo should determine their cultural leader in accordance with the customs, wishes, culture, traditions and aspirations (Kajura2005:43). However, the Report was silent on other conditions of the recognition; it did not specify, for example, how a cultural institution could be established, i.e.who would take the initiative to establish the cultural institution – the central government or, the Rwenzururu.

Most critical was the requirement of the committee “to make appropriate recommendations to H. E the President on how to solve the controversy of the cultural leadership of the Rwenzururu (Rwenzori) Region in accordance with the provisions of the Articles 37 and 246 of the constitution of Uganda” (Kajura 2005). The relevant clause in the constitution states “the institution of traditional leader or cultural leader may exist in any area of Uganda in accordance with the culture, customs and traditions or wishes and aspirations of the people to whom it applies” (Article 246 (2). It also stipulates, “in any community where the issue of traditional or cultural leader has not been resolved, the issue shall be resolved by the community concerned using a method prescribed by Parliament” (Article 246 (2). However, the Uganda parliament had not yet laid down this procedure whilst the Kajura committee was appointed.³⁶ It was presumed that the Kajura report would be sent to the Cabinet, and then to the Parliament to be enacted in law. Because of the lack of procedures, this was however not possible. Instead, after the Kajura report was presented to the President he decided to appoint an NRM-O task-force in Kasese district, led by retired Bishop Masereka to find out people’s responses on the report and to bring the two sides closer together. As an NRM supporter and Kiyonga ally, the Bishop was however considered to be opposing the institution. The whole task force was perceived as another manoeuvre by the anti-Obusinga camp to delay the recognition of the kingdom.³⁷ However, instead, a major change happened on the ground when in 2007, Minister Kiyonga, the strongest and most influential opponent of the kingdom, dropped his opposition to the Obusinga, “he had ‘dropped his guns’ and urged his former followers to follow suit”³⁸.

4.4.2. The recognition of the kingdom

All of these factors together – the Kajura report, the additional task force, the fact that Minister Kiyonga dropped his opposition, and the consistent lobbying of the pro-Obusinga camp – had created a significant momentum. On a visit to Kasese district on the 30th of August 2009, President Museveni announced and confirmed his position/decision to recognize the Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu and on the 19th of October 2009, the coronation ceremony takes place.³⁹ On that day President Museveni, alongside the local clan leaders and the chieftains, at Buhikira Royal Palace officially installed Charles Mumbere as the Omusinga (king) of Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu, and declared Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu officially recognized by the govern-

[36] Consequently, a) the Kajura Report emphasized that the objective of the assignment, its mandate, was to carry out a thorough investigation into the controversy surrounding the recognition of the cultural institution of the OBR and to advise the government on the way forward (Kajura Report, 2005: 3) and, b) once the committee produced its report and submitted it to the president, it turned out that there were no formal procedure(s) to follow regarding the implementation of the report’s recommendations.

[37] Cf. Karugaba, M. ‘Delayed recognition angers Mumbere’, *The Monitor*, January 15, 2007. According to the Bishop, people have been threatening his life for his perceived non-support of the Obusinga. (Interview Bishop Masereka, Kasese, 14-09-2006)

[38] Wandera, S. ‘Mumbere to return today for wedding’, *The Monitor*, September 21 2007. When Charles Wesley Mumbere weds in October 2007 in Kasese, this ceremony was attended by Dr.Kiyonga.

[39] Mafaranga, Hope & John Thawite (2009) ‘Govt recognizes Obusinga’ *New Vision*, 1 September 2009. This move had been preceded by some confusion: on 17 March 2008, the Ugandan Prime Minister Apolo Nsibambi, writes a letter to the Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development which states that, after studying the Kajura report, the Cabinet has recognized the Obusinga. However, less than 2 weeks later, Prime Minister Nsibambi clarified how this was a mistake, but that the issue is on the cabinet agenda, ready to be discussed. (New Vision ‘Nsibambi clarifies on Rwenzururu kingdom’ *New Vision*, 31 March 2008.) What probably played a role was the ongoing political confusion on the issues; and the fact that no proper procedures were in place.

ment of the Republic of Uganda.

This sudden recognition of Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu followed a number of pragmatic moves by President Museveni. Museveni had already declared, at least, on several occasions – March 8, 2001 and January 3, 2005 – that he was not entirely opposed to the existence of the Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu. At the March 8, 2001 meeting with the OBR elders, Museveni clarified that he did not stop the Obusinga; he had not worked for it, neither had he opposed it.

Most importantly, strategizing for the 2011 general elections seems to be the main explanation for the Museveni government's sudden decision to grant formal recognition of the Rwenzururu Kingdom: given the large popularity of the Obusinga issue in Kasese, and the approaching elections, seem to have inspired this decision.⁴⁰

[40] Mubatsi, Asinja Habati (2009) 'Can King Mumbere rally votes for Museveni in 2011?' *The Independent*, 06 October 2009.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we have provided a broad introduction to the Rwenzururu movement and the Rwenzururu kingdom's struggles for recognition. We have shown that soon after the Rwenzururu movement emerged in the early 1960s, it gave rise to a highly complex situation which would endure for decades to come and show marked shifts in its major aims and targets. The Rwenzururu movement itself had different perceptions; and there emerged competing claims to the Rwenzururu kingdom. This paper has underscored the different political contexts in which the struggles occurred as well as the manifestations of these diverse perceptions.

The post-independence Ugandan government in the 1960s proscribed the Rwenzururu movement once it became violent; thus the Rwenzururu kingdom could exist only as a rebel organisation (Mampilly 2007: 1; Kasfir 2004). The nationalist (post-independence) government soon also banned kingship in Uganda (in 1967) thus denying the Rwenzururu kingdom even the remotest possibility to re-negotiate with both the Toro and the Ugandan central government authorities its terms of existence. Such renegotiation became possible only following the un-banning of kingship institutions in Uganda in 1993, which were however revived only as non-political, cultural institutions. But Rwenzururu's could not be included among the traditional kingships; it was not legally recognized among the kingdoms that were abolished in 1967. This led to long-standing lobbying, and attempts at negotiation, which were often conducted in difficult circumstances. Whereas other kingships were revived without their claims being investigated, this was not the case for the OBR claim, which, moreover, had been subjected to a total of four commissions of inquiry in the pre-Museveni era: two during the Obote I regime and two during the Amin regime, each aiming to aid government decision on Rwenzururu. The first two (the Sembeguya commission and the Lubowa commission) resulted in the government introducing a central administration in Bwamba and Busongora - thus yielding a semi-autonomous status of Baamba/Bakonzo areas within Toro Kingdom.⁴¹ The two commissions of the Amin regime (the Ovonji commission and the Musa committee) resulted in the creation of two separate districts. The most important inquiry was conducted by the Kajura Committee, which eventually led to the recognition of the kingdom, the Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu, in 2009. Overall, the paper has shown the intense negotiations, and the particular context leading to the recognition of the kingdom.

[41] These areas would remain under the jurisdiction of the District Commissioner for Toro exercising his powers over Bwamba and Busongora.

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