



Kooki Chiefdom

# **The Cultural Heritage Treasures of Kooki**



**A Catalogue for the Kooki Cultural Museum, 2017**



## INSIDE

- A. About the Kooki Cultural Museum
- B. Cultural heritage objects at the Kooki Cultural Museum
- C. Cultural heritage resources linked to the Kamuswaga Cultural Institution

## A. The Kooki Cultural Museum

The Kooki Cultural Museum was officially launched in May 2015 and is located next to Rakai District local government Headquarters in Rakai town.

The Museum promotes the conservation of the cultural heritage of the people of Rakai district including the Bakooki and other cultural communities.

It contains ethnographic collection - traditional attire, hunting and agricultural tools, music and dance instruments, crafts and materials used for spiritual healing.

The information in this catalogue was provided by Owek. Ssebyala Amos Dickson (Ministry of Culture, Kooki Chiefdom) and Owek. Kimbugwe Godfrey (Deputy Prime Minister from the same institution).

*For further information contact  
Rakai District Heritage Development Project  
P.O.Box 8 Rakai  
Tel: +256 (0) 772643460  
Email: ssalongolulef@yahoo.com*



*The Kamuswaga and the Minister for Gender inside the museum craftshop*

## B. Cultural heritage objects at the Kooki Cultural Museum

### 1. Nyamurondo (*Rukooki*) – the royal throne

This throne was used by Kamuswaga Joje Sefasi Kabumbuli Isansa II from 1907 to 1954. It was brought to the Museum by the current Kamuswaga, Apollo Sansa Kabumbuli II when it was established in 2014. The throne was earlier kept at the Kamuswaga's residence.





## 2. Ekijwaro (*Rukooki*) - The Kamuswaga's royal robe

The official traditional robe for the Kamuswaga of Kooki. This particular robe was used by Joje Sefasi Kabumbuli II between 1920 and 1954. Usually black in colour with a golden embroidery around the neck, the robe is regarded as sacred.



### 3. Ekitanda kya Kamuswaga Kezekia Ndaula (*Luganda*)- Kamuswaga Kezekia Ndaula's bed



Made of wood and cow hide, this bed was used by Kamuswaga Edward Kezekia Ndaula II between 1897 and 1907. Kamuswaga Kezekia was a Munyoro and descendant of Omukama Bwohe, who is said to have founded the kingdom around 1696.

Ndaula died in 1907 and was succeeded by his son George Sefasi Kambumbuli Isansa II who reigned until his death on October 5, 1954. He was succeeded by his son Yoweri Kayemba, the father of the current Kamuswaga.

#### 4. Omuhesho (*Rukooki*) - Board game



*Omuhesho* is one of the well known traditional games of the Bakooki. It is usually played by two people at a time. *Omuhesho* requires a board of 32 pits, arranged with eight pits lengthwise towards the players, and four pits deep. Each player's territory is the 16 pits on their side of the board. In addition, 64 undifferentiated seeds are needed. This game is believed to have been introduced by the legendary dynasty of the Bachwezi, as early as the 14th century. People of the lower classes rarely played the game and women were discouraged by being told that they would not develop breasts if they played it. It was also forbidden to play the game at night. *Omuhesho* is still played today for companionship, recreational purposes, to exercise the mind and for developing arithmetic skills.

## 5. Eshaamo (*Rukooki*) - Mallet

This wooden mallet is used for making barkcloth. Different sizes of the mallet are used at different stages in the process. The 'head' of the mallet is usually incised into shallow longitudinal grooves, which serve to break up and flatten the bark fibre. In most cases, the mallets are made from the *nzo* tree.





## 6. Erino ly'envubu (*Rukooki*) – Hippopotamus tooth

The average hippopotamus grows to a length of 14 feet, stands 5 feet high and can weigh as much as 3.6 tons.

This hippopotamus tooth which was found in the Kamuswaga's Palace illustrates hunting activities by the Kamuswaga and his men. It is also a symbol that shows that the Bakooki were brave fighters and great hunters to kill animals as large and strong as a hippopotamus.



### 7. Obukarabanda (*Rukooki*) - Clogs

Clogs made from the *musambya* tree and used by the Bakooki who were financially well off during the 1940s. Clogs are still used by family heirs as a sign of social status.



### 8. Endere/Omurere (*Rukooki*) - Flute

This is a music instrument made with a small calabash at its base connected to a plastic pipe with three small holes. It is supported by two papyrus reeds.

It is still played today as a music instrument by the royal guards especially when the Kamuswaga is entering or coming out of his palace.





### 9. Enkinga (*Rukooki*) – A rod

This wooden rod made from *nzo* tree was used by Joje Cephas Kabumbuli, the 10th Kamuswaga of Kooki between 1907 and 1954 to wave to his subjects and to announce his presence in an area. The rod is fastened by a metallic ring in the middle.



#### 10. Ekihubiro (*Rukooki*)- Blood cleansing instrument

The *ekihubiro* was used to draw “bad blood” from a patient by an experienced traditional doctor. This was also used to cure persistent headaches and to clear blocked blood vessels.

A small incision was made where pain was felt. The *ekihubiro* was placed on top of the incision and blood drawn out through the small hole (on the *sekihibiro*) until the pain subsided.



### 11. Engure (*Rukooki*) - Crown

This is the royal crown for the Kamuswagas of Kooki. It is made of beads, twigs and colubus monkey hide, and was used between 1740 – 2004.

It is believed by the Bakooki that women who are menstruating are not supposed to touch the crown as this may cause misfortunes.





## 12. Amacumu (*Rukooki*) - Spears

Made of iron and wood, the spears belong to the Kamuswaga cultural institution. They are in three different categories: those on the left are used for defence; the ones in the middle are used for hunting, those on the right for cultural purposes.



### 13. Enyungu z'etabe (*Rukooki*) - Tobacco smoking pipes

Mainly made out of the *ekisekeseke* tree, clay and metallic rings, such pipes are used by the Bakooki, both women and men, to smoke tobacco, pass time and relax.

A pipe is also regarded as sacred and used for burning incense to invoke spirits and smoking traditional herbs to appease gods or to cause bad luck to someone among some communities of the Bakooki.

#### 14. Obushare ashare (*Rukooki*) - Arrow



These arrows are made out of bamboo with spiked metal heads and kept in a bag made from a cow's hide. They are used by the Bakooki and in the palace of Kamuswaga for defence, mostly by the royal guards. Other uses include hunting. Men and boys usually had to be trained and equipped with specialized skills to aim and shoot.

## C. Cultural heritage resources/sites linked to Kooki Cultural Institution

### 1. The royal drums (left to right: Mayange, Butentwe, Ruhanga, Kababembe and Kikindu)



These drums are made of wood (from the *Mubajjangoma* tree) and cow hides.

Whenever the Kamuswaga leaves his Palace on an official visit, he must sound the *butentwe* drum and does the same after coming back. The practice is called opening and closing *butentwe*. The *butentwe* is also sounded when the Kamuswaga invites his subjects to the Palace for an event or a task.

Whenever the Kamuswaga appears before his subjects on official functions, he sounds the *mayange* drum followed by *butentwe* and then others.



## 2. Lake Kijanebalora (*it came while they were seeing*)

This is the only lake in Kooki. It covers the five sub-counties of *Lwanda*, *Byakabanda*, *Kibanda*, *Buyamba* and *Lwamaggwa*. The former Kamuswagas used to sail on this lake while touring their land or visiting subjects.

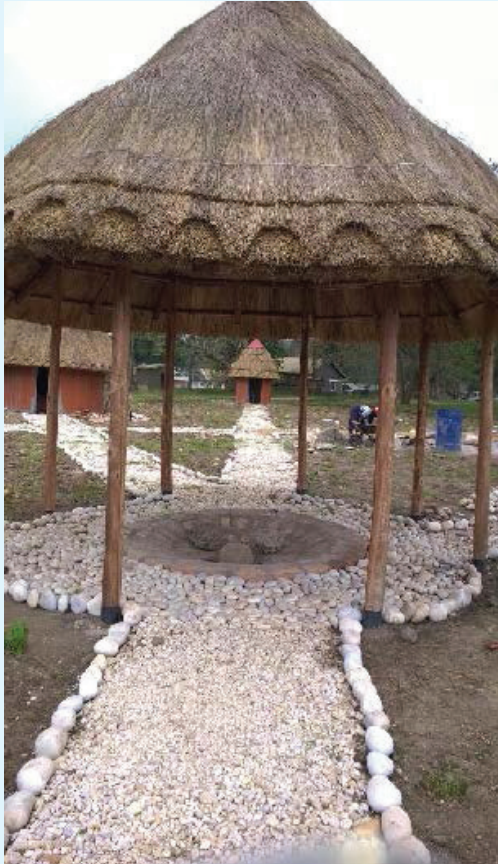
The lake has several types of fish including *obuyamba* (hypochromines) and *emmamba* (Lungfish)



### 3. Kigera Cave

Located in Byakanda sub-country, Kigera has a 3km tunnel which connects the cave in Byakabanda to a cave in Kitente village in Kifamba sub-county through Nabbunga hills. The cave and other features in its vicinity are used as places for healing and seeking blessings by individuals with political ambitions!





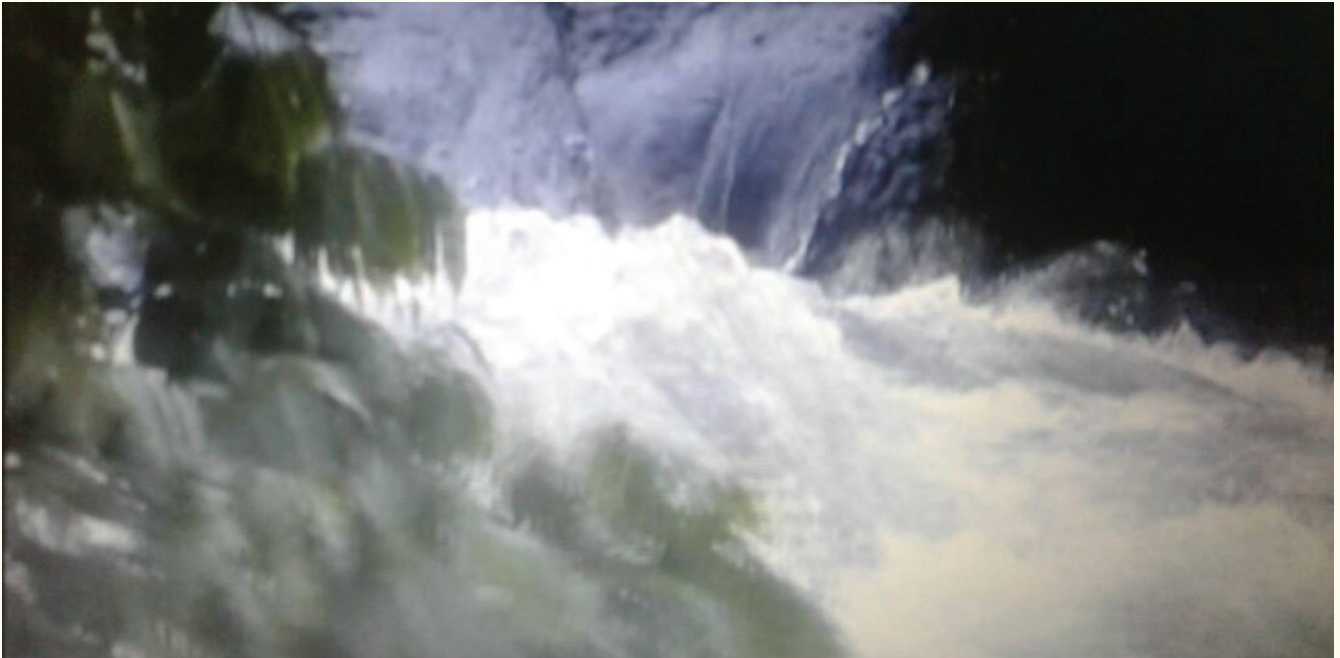
#### 4. Orukurato/Ekyoto - Parliament

Located in the middle of traditional Palace, *orukurato/ekyoto* is neatly constructed under a grass thatched shed and decorated with fine marble stones. Used as a 'Parliament', the *orukurato* classifies four the groups of the Bakooki; the Babiito, the common Bakooki, the youth and children. Problems affecting these categories are identified and resolved. The responsibilities of various leaders such as the Sababiito, the Katikkiro and ministers are assigned here as well.



## 5. Kijunde falls

The falls are found on River Kibaale which originates in the Rwenzori Mountains. The river appears in Fort Portal town as River Mpanga, in Mbarara town as River Rwiizi, in Namungo and Kanagisa in Kacheera and Kagamba sub-counties as River Bokoola. It continues through Kakuuto and Kyebe sub counties and then on to Lake Victoria. Currently some people go to the falls to call on ancestral spirits for special blessings and favours.



## Appreciation

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Throughout Uganda, inspired individuals, families and groups of people have established community museums open to the public to preserve and promote elements of the local cultural heritage. These museums are making great strides in linking the past and future through their collections, which are accessible to young people, researchers, local residents and foreign tourists. In 2011, some museums came together to form the Uganda Community Museums Association (UCOMA) whose aim is to bring together member museums to enhance their professionalism and collectively advocate for their common interests.

The Kooki Cultural Museum (which is a member of UCOMA), preserves and promotes the most important cultural heritage resources in Rakai district as highlighted in this catalogue.

The catalogue was produced under the Rakai District Heritage Development Project with technical support from the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda, an organisation dedicated to promoting the recognition of culture as vital for human development that responds to Uganda's national identity and diversity. As part of its Cultural Rights Programme, the Foundation supports access, expression and enjoyment of culture through different avenues, including community museums.

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