

KISOGA VALUE SYSTEM

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The Chairman of the Elders' Forum of Uganda, Canon Justice (Rtd) James Ogoola, while addressing participants, commented that whereas the Constitution of Uganda talks of "National Values", it does not outline them and no Ugandan whomsoever, can tell you what those National Values are. And yet values play an important role in shaping people's conduct and eventually character. Canon Justice (Rtd) had therefore, convened the conference to see that as elders, they could guide the country through its leaders to spell out what they deem to be "Our National Values".

It was this address that opened my mind to think twice and question myself if there were Kisoga Values commonly known by all Basoga, or at least the majority of them. I was therefore, intrigued and moved to share the message with a couple of my people at home in Busoga. It is on account of the above, that I would like to sincerely thank Hon. Henry Kyemba whose invitation to The Elders' Forum of Uganda (TEFU), stirred the idea of coming up with this research. Hon. Kiyemba also accepted to read through the book before having it published. In addition, I would like to recognize and appreciate Canon Justice (Rtd) James Ogoola, whose words, inspired by the Holy Spirit, revealed to us the need to have a National Value System; and in turn led me to affirm the need to document and come up with a Kisoga Value System for

the people of Busoga. And so, moved by that, I came back to share with others who equally appreciated the move.

On behalf of the Staff at Cultural Research Centre, I take this opportunity to thank all who have contributed, in one way or another towards the success of this project. In particular, I am grateful to the participants in the inception meeting cum workshop whose membership included some Clan heads, Teachers, Community Development Officers, Religious leaders, Members of the Royal fraternity of whom were: HRH Patrick Izimba Gologolo, Omulangira Henry Woirra Kitimbo, and Omulangira Yasin Waguma.

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Busoga Okwisania n'Amaani.

Fr. Richard Kayaga Gonza

March 2021

PREFACE

The Kisoga Value System Manual, is coming out at a time when a lot has been compromised in the name of modernization, liberalism, and promotion of human rights. In so doing, parents have conceded defeat and abandoned their God-given parental responsibility of raising responsible citizens of both the present world and the world to come. The moral decadence is being witnessed both in the young and the old. While the old blame the young for misbehaving and immoral practices, the young blame the old for not giving them an example; the young are looking for role models. Yet because discipline is demanding, the “role models”, often mislead them.

This book has been written to consolidate those lost values, to help Busoga recover from shame, and get back to her God-given glory. The objectives of the writers of this book in a way are similar to what we read in the book of Proverbs: ***“that men may appreciate wisdom and discipline, may understand words of intelligence; may receive training in wise conduct, in what is right, just and honest; that resourcefulness may be imparted to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man by hearing them will advance in learning, an intelligent man will gain sound guidance, that he may comprehend proverb and parable, the words of the wise and their riddles”*** (Proverbs 1:2-6).

And to those who will get a chance to read this book or have it read for them, I counsel you by borrowing the words of St.

Paul, although in a paraphrased manner: *“As for yourself, you must say what is consistent with sound doctrine (culture), namely that older men should be temperate, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, love and endurance. Similarly, older women should be reverent in their behaviour, not slanderers, not addicted to drink, teaching what is good, so that they may train younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, chaste, good homemakers, under the control of their husbands..... urge young men, similarly to control themselves, showing yourself as a model of good deeds in every respect, with integrity in your teaching, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be criticized...”* (Titus 2:1-8).

Finally, I urge all Basoga that: *“For this very reason make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, virtue with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with devotion, devotion with mutual affection, mutual affection with love. If these are yours and increase in abundance, they will keep you from being idle or unfruitful...”* (2 Peter 1:3-8). May this book go miles in helping us revive our cultural heritage through the re-establishment of our value system(s).

Ow’ek Richard Mafumo
Head of the Baise Kabambwe Clan
And Minister for Culture.
March 2021

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Cultural Research Centre - Diocese of Jinja (CRC), was established as a research arm of the Diocese, to help study the culture of its native people for integration in the Church's mission of evangelization. The Centre is mandated to research, document, preserve and disseminate information about the culture of the Basoga for purposes of promoting the Church's mission in Busoga through Inculturation and integration in development programmes. The mission of the Cultural Research Centre, is: ***“To promote the culture of the peoples of Busoga for sustainable development through research, documentation, preservation and information dissemination.”***

Whereas every people, through their culture, are sustained by principles and values embedded in that particular culture, notwithstanding the fact that such may not have been documented.

Aware that the Basoga have always had and cherished such principles and values that have helped to bond them together, and been pivotal in the upbringing of their children as responsible citizens as per those standards.

Cognizant that with the principle of globalization, backed by the high level “receptability/receptiveness” on the part of the Basoga (in the sense of being accommodative), those long cherished values are slowing but surely disappearing.

That the effects of social media which have engulfed all peoples by sharing both value and vice, and at sometimes at the expense of those that were traditionally held;

And quoting from the preface of Clemency Justin Nabushawo's book entitled: *Restoring Moral Formation in Africa*, "the degeneration of African traditional moral values and the negligence of African moral formation have gravely wounded the continent in terms of morality;"¹

Following its mission of promoting the culture of the peoples of Busoga for sustainable development through research, documentation, preservation and information dissemination, Cultural Research Centre – Diocese of Jinja, has observed a missing link in the moral formation of Basoga of today due to lack of a documented value system as a point of reference.

It is common knowledge that with the ease of movement of information from one end of the world to another, people are bombarded with a lot of it, so much so that they miss out on important pieces of information meant to help them in their day to day living. Moreover, there is also a temptation of trusting as gospel truth only that which is published through the various media, and relegating that which is orally transmitted. This has created a gap between the life of the people of today and that of our ancestors. Unfortunately, this situation keeps widening, day in and day out, something that challenges Cultural Research Centre's claim of "*preserving and promoting the culture of the peoples of Busoga*". Meanwhile the National Constitution of Uganda 1995, puts it clearly that "*cultural and customary values which are consistent with the fundamental rights and freedoms, human dignity, democracy and with the Constitution may be developed and incorporated in aspects of Uganda life*" (*National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy XXIV, Cultural objectives*). The objective further states that the State shall:

¹ Banikiza Constance, (2001) *Restoring Moral Formation in Africa*; AME-CEA Gaba Publications, Eldoret, Kenya P. ix.

- a) Promote and preserve those cultural values and practices which enhance the dignity and well-being of Ugandans.
- b) Encourage the development, preservation and enrichment of all Uganda languages.
- c) Promote the development of a sign language for the deaf and
- d) Encourage the development of a national language or languages.

Since Kisoga values have always formed the backbone of the existence of the Basoga, and now that the backbone is being eaten away by a cancer of “permissiveness”, the need to have these values documented, for purposes of coming up with a reference point in the moral formation of the young Basoga, should have been filled yesterday. Yet there is no intention by the authors, in so doing, to keep the Basoga locked up in their parochial understanding of values; rather, the object is to reinforce their self-esteem, and respect for other peoples and their values as enshrined in the Constitution of Uganda. Indeed, the values being proposed herein, are consistent with the fundamental rights and freedoms, human dignity, as well as fit for incorporation in the various aspects of Uganda life.

“Now, Israel, hear the statutes and decrees which I am teaching you to observe, that you may live, and may enter in and take possession of the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you. In your observance of the commandments of the Lord, your God, which I enjoin upon you, you shall not add to what I command you nor subtract from it. You have seen with your own eyes what the Lord did.... I teach you statutes and decrees as the Lord, my God, has commanded me, that

you may observe them in the land you are entering to occupy. Observe them carefully, for thus you will give evidence of your wisdom and intelligence to the nations, who will hear of all these statutes and say, ‘This great nation is truly a wise and intelligent people.’ For what great nation is there that has gods so close to it as the Lord, our God is to us whenever we call upon him? Or what great nation has statutes and decrees that are just as this whole law which I am setting before you today?... but teach them to your children and to your children’s children” (Deuteronomy 4: 1-9)

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this book we have called a “Kisoga Cultural Value System Manual” is to preserve the cherished Kisoga traditional values, that held society together, and as well show their importance and relevance to society today. The book identifies those values that are still observed today, as well as those that have been abandoned, with the corresponding consequences to the current Soga society on account of the abandonment of some of those values.

The content found herein, has been researched from a cross-section of people in Busoga deemed to be knowledgeable in matters of morality and culture who share a feeling of a moral void in today’s society and believe something should be done. The authors have made suggestions on what can be done to preserve and uphold these values in this ever-changing world.

Documenting this value system has been guided by the following research questions:

- i. Were there commonly accepted values among the Basoga?
If yes which are they?

- ii. Are they relevant in today's society?
- iii. How can they be best passed on to the Basoga of tomorrow?
- iv. How can they be integrated and harmonized with values learnt from elsewhere that are helpful today?

Justification of the need for a Kisoga Value System Manual

The society of the Basoga, like any other society, has had long cherished values, that are important and have been passed on from one generation to another. Regrettably, with the passage of time and in the name of development, a good number have been discarded, as if to fulfill the Kisoga expression: *“Ebirwagho byerabirwa, olwa eira waabita ku magombe ga inhoko ng’ofuugha oluluzi”* i.e. ‘when time passes, forgetfulness creeps in, for you even bypass your mother’s grave whistling (as though celebrating her demise). Busoga is not alien to a world that is greatly affected by globalization and consequently, her children have kept on adopting foreign values and practices which may not necessarily be palatable to the traditions of the Basoga. While acknowledging that, there already exists a feeling of wanting to return to what is ours. Hence the need for a documented manual to guide those responsible for the moral formation of those who form the future of our region Busoga.

Objectives of this study

The objective of documenting the Kisoga values were basically three namely:

1. To establish the values in Busoga’s traditional society.
2. To identify values which are still relevant in today’s society.
3. To disseminate the findings through a publication to contribute towards fostering cohesion in communities and sustainable integral development in Busoga.

Methodology

After coming up with the idea of documenting a Kisoga Value System, the authors of the book, envisioned yet another idea of sharing their vision. Thus they conducted a workshop for some selected stakeholders who included: Clan heads, Community Development Officers, Ministers in the Government of the Kyabazinga, two Royal Chiefs, CBOs and NGO representatives, religious leaders, and Teachers of both primary and secondary levels were also represented. The objective of this initial workshop was to bring on board major stakeholders to the appreciation of the gap created by an absence of common and documented set of values that Basoga can refer to objectively even when approached individually.

The reaction of participants to what had been presented to them, indicated that this book, which is to act as a point of reference, is long overdue; and committed themselves not only to collect more information needed, but also to propagate the Kisoga Value System.

It was after the workshop that a tool was developed to be used in collecting information on the subject matter. While collecting data for this documentation, two key methods were adopted, namely Literature review and oral interviews.

Literature review

This involved the study of documented material pertaining to different communities in relation to the cultural behavior and their perception of values. This enabled an understanding of how values are perceived by different people.

Field Interviews

This method involved the researchers talking to key informants. These were people that the researchers considered to possess special knowledge and are the traditional carriers in their communities. Traditional cultural heads were consulted and actively involved to identify members of the community that are knowledgeable on traditional cultural matters and values. Through this method, one comes to the realization that the Kisoga society, and the African society as a whole, is characterized by a great wealth of non-written historical sources such as oral traditions, anthropological information, linguistic documents and archaeological material.

To respond to the above questions and others not outlined here, calls were made for the participation of the various stakeholders in Busoga. A shared vision will not only propagate that anticipated value system, but also help in the building of the much needed internal cohesion among the people of Busoga. It is hoped that the desired sustainable development will be guaranteed.

Secondly, by sharing the findings in a documented format, Cultural Research Centre will have contributed to increasing cultural awareness, its appreciation, appropriation and assimilation among the Basoga. Cultural Research Centre concurs with Satoshi Ishii and Donald W. Klopf, who wrote: “Values are the evaluative and judgmental facets of a culture’s personal orientation system, helping its members determine what is right or wrong, good or bad, important or unimportant.” Yet, they continue to say, “the values which are of primary importance to citizens of a particular country (community), may be only of secondary or tertiary importance to citizens of another country (community), a difference which can lead to problems in international communication.”²

² Cfr. Satoshi Ishii and Donald W. Klopf (<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=E D286236>) visit-

CHAPTER I

What is a value?

A value is quality of the goodness of something, that which makes it likeable, marketable, or regarded as important to a certain degree as compared to others. It is the worth of something, an intrinsic worthiness or goodness, as recognized by those who attach such importance to that particular thing in question. Sometimes, a cost may be attached to a specific value, while some values cannot be translated into monetary terms. When a cost is placed on a value, its usefulness is estimated in terms of money for purposes of transacting business. Thus in that way, the value attached to a thing, becomes reflected in the amount of money, as its worth.

While money is only a means to measure the value of something, in the world today, lots of people tend to think that money is the value itself. Consequently, that which is of value is disregarded, and money is exalted high above the intended value.

Generally speaking, value is intrinsic, and abstract, in the sense that it is independent of its embodiment. However, in this particular context, the authors want to deal specifically with the cultural values of a Kisoga culture.

Having defined value as above, we can therefore comfortably say that value can be moral, economic, religious, intellectual etc. In this book, the authors are concerned with the *“moral values”*. The term *“moral”* is applied to refer to the judgement of a human act as good or bad/evil. It relates to character or conduct of human beings as far as they can be said to be good, or evil.

ed on 14th February 2020

Since moral values have to do with people, by living together in a particular society, they form a system of governance by setting up a system of standards, call them norms, or values that can be used to judge objectively, a person's conduct. This system of governance will be tailored according to their needs as a society and so will differentiate them from other societies or communities. By handing down these set-standards, these become a tradition taught through socialization, from one generation to the next, and thereby creating that society's culture which is simply a people's way of life.

Now therefore, to understand a given value system, one first ought to understand what culture is in general, and what that particular society's culture is, whose value system one wants to understand or study. This is so because values not only form the embodiment of culture, but also shape a given culture since culture in simple terms is "a people's way of life" that differentiates them from others. Culture can be defined in many ways, and one could say that there are as many definitions of 'culture' as there are people trying to define it. Nevertheless, in this context, the working definition of culture is: ***"a complex whole and elaborate system of signs, symbols, their meaning, laws that govern a people's behavior, which define the way of life of a group or society, not only uniting them in the bond of belonging, but also making them unique as compared to others."***

Culture embodies a number of aspects including but not limited to, the belief system (rituals, ceremonies), philosophy of life, language, dress code, aesthetics, leadership style, relatedness/kinship, technology, medicine, norms and values. All these give identity to the individual and his/her society, as different from others. They form a pattern that becomes part and parcel of that people's life, to the extent that to some degree, a person's conduct

in certain conditions is somehow predictable. For example, given the custom of Basoga women to kneel while greeting, one can predict that that lady who is coming is going to kneel when it comes to greeting us. Indeed it happens, to the amazement of a foreigner who is naïve about those people's culture. Another example we can give is that of Pentecostals, one can tell that when addressing them, as one makes a point that appeals to them, they are likely to acclaim: **'AMEN!'**; when the scouts say: "The scouts be prepared", the response is "Zimzim Bombo". There are many more other examples that could be given.

These repeatedly acceptable practices, are usually referred to as "Norms", and they are repeated on account of their worth, their appealing to society, and are valued and rated highly. Norms regulate people's interaction within their society, and form a benchmark when it comes to deciding whether a person has acted well or not. A norm is hence thus, an authoritative standard of accepted behaviour within a particular society or community; a most frequent value in people's behaviour that is taken seriously and handed on from generation to generation. The term "norm" is derived from the Latin word: "norma" for standard or rule, which on account of being applied a standard way of operating, becomes usual, and thus to be known as "*normal*".

A norm is taken to be one, because of its value. We have already defined value as the worth of something, that which makes an object, behaviour, character or person treasured. Values then are important in the sense that they help to determine objectively, according to a particular culture, what is important, and therefore worth chasing after, and whose pursuance will not lead to regrets on account of reprimand by society. Having a set of approved values, and having knowledge of what they are (values), enables a person to cultivate those qualities that will be detectable through the decisions, actions and conduct of that person; and basing on

that, that person's value in society vis-a-vis others, shall be gauged. In other words, they guide the manner in which we behave, treat and interact with the world around us. In a nutshell, values are fundamental beliefs that guide or motivate people's attitudes and actions in a given society. Observance of one's society's values leads to being rewarded; and failure to observe them, punishment is the inevitable result. It is due to the cognizance of the pending judgement of a person's character, conduct or deeds as good or bad, and therefore deserving reward or punishment that makes people comply with the set regulations. This is so because, human nature always demands that one seeks reward and dreads punishment.

Whereas we are talking of values defining a particular culture, it does not however mean that values cannot be shared across cultures. That is to say, that the values in one culture, can be found in another. Cultures keep growing by admitting new ideas, philosophies and beliefs, while shedding off that which is no longer relevant. Consequently, we can affirm that a particular value is no preserve to a particular culture. With the ease of mobility, cross-cultural fertilization has taken place involving morality as well; i.e. perspective of judging a conduct as good or evil.

Values are pivotal in a social system, for they play a predominant role in running and maintaining order in a given social setting. They provide not mere general guidelines for social conduct or interaction, but more importantly establish standards in society, and indeed objective standards according to a particular social setting.

Proverbs, the Conveyors of Moral Values and Ethical Teaching

It has been shown that moral values are important aspects of living, that they are regarded as 'standards' for measuring human

acts as either good or bad, right or wrong. Moral values manifest a particular people's philosophy of life. A people's philosophy of life is in turn made manifest to us through the proverbs of that people. The African Bible defines a proverb as: "...a statement that brings out the inner meaning or value of something."³ Proverbs reflect a people's worldview in transmitting the fundamental values of life. A proverb is summation of the moral perspective of a situation. Primarily, proverbs aim at giving instruction to young people, counselling them to live a morally upright life, but also to anyone interested in learning. They are a result of a wealth of wisdom based on the experience of numerous past generations of that particular society to which a given set of proverbs belong. Proverbs are a summation of people's observation(s), condensed into phrases for generations to come, as guiding principles. They teach one to be a good citizen, parent, worker, and artist, name it. For example, when one says: "A word to a wise, is enough", without going any further to explain, the audience for whom the proverb is intended, will understand immediately the message and act accordingly for the sake of harmony with the utterer. Among the Basoga, the equivalent of the above English proverb are: "Bw'okobera aidhi tomalayo" and "Nantagalagirwa, yagya nago ku magulu" inadvisable person went with the faeces on his calves or shank. In addition to moral counselling, proverbs are an expression of a people's sense of humor.

The greatest world moral principle is: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you". It is found in virtually all of the world religions, as a basis for human interaction taught from early childhood.

³ The African Bible – Biblical Text of the New American Bible; Pauline Publications Africa, pg.1007.

General importance of Moral Values

Moral values are important to society because they help to regulate the interaction between members in a society, leading to respect of one another, and challenging the individual to fulfill one's obligation to society, before they can demand their rights. In the end, on account of the moral code, that society not only grows, but also develops. While moral values that form a moral code, may seem to others as an infringement on people's rights, liberty and the like, the Basoga see it a measure of checks and balances. Hence the Kisoga proverb: "Ekiziraku muze, ti kyala" which can be translated as 'that with no restrictions, cannot grow, expand, or develop.' To put it differently, discipline is necessary for any progress to occur.

Proverbs help to assure of a future we want to experience. It is common knowledge that individually, each person has his/her choices which may not necessarily go well with the rest of society. Given that society has many people, they could be as many choices as there are members of that particular society; moreover, each is inclined to think his or her choice of conduct or behaviour is the right one. It is because of this that standard operating procedures, call them a moral code or code of ethics are necessary. With an agreed-on set of moral code, or values, it becomes possible to move from subjective judgement of a person's conduct, to an objective one. It should be remembered that the choices or decisions made in relation to the conduct of the members of a particular society, reflect those people's values and beliefs.

When moral values form the basis of making decisions, both at individual and community levels, there is not only shared responsibility, but also harmony prevails. The moral values then help to build cohesion, as members of a society will fight for what they value, what they think is worth promoting and fighting for.

The above argument rhymes well with that of sociologists when they argue that shared values form a basis for social unity of a particular society. This gives that people a sense of belonging, a feeling of being a part of a wider society, and the assurance of social security on the individual's part.

CHAPTER II

The Traditional Kisoga Moral Values

The Basoga have for long shared and cherished core values that formed the morality of their day- to-day living. These values formed the foundation of the administration of a Kisoga society, and guided people's behavioral practices when interacting with others.

Human beings are by nature social; they seek interaction with others either to offer the other(s) support or to seek support from them. On the other hand, there lies buried within the human person an instinct of self-preservation, which is manifested in a person's striving to survive all odds, even at the expense of the others. In psychology, the self-preservation instinct, an inbuilt mechanism, is presented as the "ego" which makes a human person see himself as an entity, different from others, exemplified in the "I", which makes him or her to claim everything for himself or herself. This is reflected in people's talking "I would rather", "I think the best way is" and the like. An excessive ego, can make the human person blind to the needs of others, sometimes even to those present. This calls for curbing, in order to allow a smooth interaction with others. It is also necessary to recall that in a community of say ten people, they are ten egos, each

presenting its opinion from its own perspective. This can make life difficult, hence the need for some standard measures to help measure or judge an individual's opinion, or behaviour as right or wrong, as good or bad.

The Basoga, had those standard rules raw as they may be thought to have been; yet these enabled them to live together, to curb selfishness, to align a person's wills to the wish of the community for the benefit of all. These standards are what we have already defined above as moral values.

Below is a detailed explanation of some of the traditionally accepted moral values among the Basoga.

Faith

According to Professor Mbiti, *"..... in their traditional life African peoples are deeply religious. It is religion, more than anything else, which colours their understanding of the universe and their empirical participation in that universe, making life a profoundly religious phenomenon. To be is to be religious in a religious universe. That is the philosophical understanding behind African myths, customs, traditions, beliefs, morals, actions and social relationships."*⁴ The Basoga being Africans, certainly subscribe to the above philosophy of life. They take matters of faith seriously. Mbiti further observes that "Religion is a universal part of human life. It must, therefore, have a great and important value, otherwise by now most people in the world would have abandoned it completely..... it is as if African peoples do not know how to live without religion."⁵

Faith in general terms is defined as trust or confidence in something or someone. In our context, faith is to be understood as confidence

⁴ Mbiti John (1969); African Religion and Philosophy, East African Educational Publishers Ltd, Nairobi, p.262.

⁵ Mbiti, John 2nd Ed. (1991); Introduction to African Religion, East African Educational Publishers, Nairobi p. 194.

and trust in God, or some other supernatural reality. The Basoga, endowed with reason, perception and a sense of beauty, wonder and appreciation, looking at the reality in the universe, and recognizing their limitations deduce that some superior being must be responsible for that which exists. This acknowledgment is such an awesome complexity that fear grips any sensible beholder of the universe. Understanding one's limitation leaves the human person no option but to surrender to that being that is responsible for that awesome complexity. This "being" is given different names and attributes, but the bottom line is acknowledgement of the might of this "mighty being". The fact that the Basoga found those names and attributes, is proof enough to show that their religiosity is factual.

Thus the Basoga call God: "**Kibbumba**" which means "the moulder," from the verb **wumba(oku)**. He is also known as "**Katonda**" for Creator, from **tonda(oku)**. The Basoga also refer to God as "**Lubaale**" (rock), to imply one who is as strong as a rock, and in whom refuge can be sought. When addressing God, the Basoga add a title: "**Musengwa**", a noun which is derived from the verb **senga(oku)** i.e. to take refuge in or to seek refuge from.

Like other African peoples, the Basoga believe that the universe is made up of two realities namely the physical universe and the Spiritual universe. While the physical universe is the one on which human beings live with physical beings such as trees, rocks, swamps and the like, the spiritual universe is invisible and superior to the physical one. However, within the Spiritual universe, there is a hierarchy of beings, the Spiritual beings with God at the apex and below Him are subordinate spiritual beings who are at the service of God. Understanding this reality anthropomorphically, the Basoga rarely approach God directly; hence they send their requests through these subordinate spiritual beings. Besides,

matters that can be handled by the lower cadres do not have to be addressed to God the epitome of “being”.

Kinship

When commenting on kinship, Professor John Mbiti says: “The deep sense of kinship, with all it implies, has been one of the strongest forces in traditional life. Kinship is reckoned through blood and betrothal (engagement and marriage). It is kinship which controls social relationships between people in a given community; it governs marital customs, regulations, it determines the behaviour of one individual towards another. Indeed kinship binds together the entire life of the ‘tribe’ and is even extended to cover animals, plants and non-living objects through the totemic system.”⁶

A deeper reflection on the above analysis by Mbiti, leaves us to strongly believe that “kinship” is a value in African and Kisoga societies. If it controls social relationships among peoples in a given community, governing even marital customs, bearing in mind that marriage is a crucial institution in any human society, there is no doubt “kinship” is a value to reckon with in our present context. Kinship is the relatedness of a person with others, what the Basoga call “*Oluzi*” literally referring to “root”; in other words, kinship is the rootedness of a person in his or her community. “*Oluzi*” is akin to the “taproot” for those plants that have it, which when cut, the tree or plant dries up. Yet even in the fibrous root plant family, still the meaning in terms of importance, remains. Thus Mbiti says: “The kinship system is like a vast network stretching laterally (horizontally) in every direction, to embrace everybody in any given local group. This means that each individual is brother or sister, father or mother, grandmother or grandfather, or cousin, or brother-in-law or uncle, or aunt or something else. It implies that every

⁶ Mbiti John (1969) p. 104.

body is related to everybody else, and there are many kinship terms to express the precise kind of relationship pertaining between two individuals.”⁷ This network becomes a source of social security for the individual, but of course not without responsibilities and obligations to the network. In the book: “The Basoga Traditional Concept of Marriage” by Cultural Research Centre, one finds a similar explanation of the same under the heading ‘The African Kinship Web’⁸ where “marriage” is the fulcrum. Kinship is important in the Kisoga society, that to a greater extent, authority is structured around it.

Prince Ibula Kitaulwa⁹, says that the extended family system, is where people trace how they are related to one another. It promotes respect of each other and a call for collective responsibility. In his view, kinship which he prefers to call ‘extended family’, increases the security of a member as all to whom one is related in some way, come to the aid, both in joy and in sorrow. Ibula augments his view by quoting a Kisoga proverb: *“Ekigema ku Waliso, kirekera Wanhindo kufeesa oba kulira”* i.e. what affects the eye, affects the nose as well.

Marriage and Family

Aylward Shorter defines marriage as “an intimate union between man and woman of which mating is an essential expression”.¹⁰ Magesa notes that “...marriage involves not only interpersonal

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Cultural Research Centre – Diocese of Jinja (2012); The Basoga Traditional Concept of Marriage, Marianum Press Ltd, p. 15.

⁹ Ibula Kitaulwa Lubombo is the head of Kigulu Chiefdom Museum and current President of Uganda Community Museums’ Association (UCO-MA).

¹⁰ Aylward Shorter, 1998, African Christian Marriage, Pauline Publications; Africa, Daughters of St. Paul, Nairobi, p.83

relations but also in the final analysis inter-community relations. In marriage, the communities involved share their very existence; in reality they become one people, one ‘thing’ as Africans themselves would put it.”¹¹ While Mbiti recognizes it as “... a complex affair with economic, social and religious aspects which often overlap so firmly that they cannot be separated from one another.... For African peoples, marriage is the focus of existence. It is the point where all the members of a given community meet: the departed, the living and those yet to be born”.¹² For that matter, marriage among the Basoga, is a sacred institution.

The marriage union lays socio-moral, religious and economic responsibilities not only on the individual partners involved, but indeed society at large. For the Basoga, just like any other African society, marriage and procreation were one unit, never at the point to be thought of as divorced from each other, hence the value of **“marriage and family”**. Without procreation, marriage is viewed as incomplete. This is because the future of society lay in the posterity. The Kisoga proverb **“ekiteezaala kizika”** (what fails to reproduce, is doomed for extinction) best explains the Basoga’s understanding of marriage and the great importance they attach to it. For marriage is seen to be pivotal to the existence of all human relationships. It not only unites but also strengthens relationships, and calms hostilities (cf. Kisoga proverb: **“Ekigabwa owuwo, izimya muliro”** i.e. something given out by one of your very own leads you to extinguish the fire). The relationships are established, and in turn create something else very much cherished by the Basoga, called “kinship”.

¹¹ Magesa, Laurenti (1997); African Religion – The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life, Paulines Publications Africa, Nairobi p.110.

¹² Mbiti, John (1969), p.133.

Parenting

Is the upbringing of and care for a child. The Kisoga proverb or adage that *“okubazaala kindi n’okubakuza kindi”* says it all about parenting. The message in that Kisoga adage is that: ‘it is one thing to give birth to a child/children and another to bring them up as responsible children.’ According to the Basoga, as expressed in that adage, it is easier to give birth to children and as many as one may have, than to form them into good, responsible and caring people. Irresponsible parents, are often referred to as *“abazaala eky’omusota”* that is to say giving birth to children like a snake which will not take care of its young.

Hon. Victoria Sekitoleko Balyeidhusa, while addressing a Private Sector Foundation of Uganda Conference, as Chairperson, on the effects of Covid-19, gave a pertinent message relevant for parenting. The authors of this book, having asked for her permission to reproduce her speech on the theme or value of “Parenting”, would like to transcribe her virtual conferencing message verbatim to help augment the fact that the role of parents in parenting is irreplaceable, and involves career guidance.

Sekitoleko says: “Fellow Ugandans, we know that whenever a baby is born, there is a lot of excitement in the family, especially for us grandmothers we keep calling the mother to ask how the baby is. And the mother will always tell you, let us say, when I called, when my granddaughter was six months, she is great, she is now sitting up, she can sit-up? Yes, that is quick! Then a year later I wish to wish her a happy birthday and I ask how the baby is doing now, can she walk? Can walk, she can run, it like woow! That is quite quick! Now fours later, this girl is in Nursery school and I go there, and she is in the middle of circle of other children and they are singing that song which most Nursery Schools sing: *‘What can you do?’* So she is asked, what can you do? And she is like, ooh! I

can run, I can jump, I can sing. And whatever she says, the rest of the circle sings, I can run, I can sing, I can jump. That is Nursery school. Now ten years later, I meet her and ask: what is happening now? ‘Ooh I have just finished P.7’. Am like Great! So what can you do? And the mother is like, ‘she has just finished P.7!’ I am like okay, the question was ‘what can you do?’, the mother is telling me she has just finished P. 7. And I let it go.

Then seven years later this same child will have finished Senior Six and they will bring her to your office to tell you that you see... Junior has just finished Senior Six, and is looking for something to do while waiting to join University.

And of course you ask that Nursery School question: ***‘What can Junior do?’*** This questions normally goes to mothers because they are the ones who normally go round looking for jobs for their sons. ‘What can Junior do?’ The mother looks at and says: ‘he has just finished Senior Six!’ The question was ‘what can Junior do?’ and the answer is ‘he has just finished Senior Six’. And looks at you with those eyes which like tell you, ‘what do you expect him to do? He has just finished Senior Six!’ So of course just to make life easy, you ask the mother, what does Junior want to do when he goes to University? ‘I do not know.’

He is waiting to go to University, but you the mother don’t know what Junior wants to do at University? Of course you want to make life easier and you ask what is Junior’s dream? Where does he see himself five years from now? Because if you get an honest answer to these questions, it will help you to place Junior in your organization. Then the shocking reply comes ‘I do not know’. You do not know what your son is going to study at University? That means you do not know your child’s dream. So of course questions start running around my head. If the mother does not know what Junior’s dream is, who knows? If the mother does not know what junior’s dream is, who is helping Junior nurture this dream, mature this dream, and actually celebrate with him when he achieves this

dream? or God forbid, should he fail, be there for him when things fall apart.

Fellow Ugandans, Uganda has not been easy before Covid-19 after Covid-19 it is not going to be any easier. We are all going to need somebody to hold our hand. And what I want you to keep asking yourself, whether you are a young person, old person, as long as you are listening to me, I want you to keep asking yourself, what can I do? Then two, what can Junior do? We all need a helping hand, because when there is a helping hand, when there is somebody to listen to you: one it gives hope and with hope there is always a possibility, with hope, you see alternatives, and definitely with hope you can never give up.

Fellow Ugandans, the one thing I want you to remember after this conference is just that question ‘what can I do? what can Junior do?’. I thank you”¹³.

The Hindi proverb cum expression that “Parenting is a key aspect in rearing a child since through it, the parents create a personality of their child, says it all on the role of parents in the upbringing of their children. Parenting and indeed good parenting was emphasized for purposes of continuity since the Basoga say: ***Emiti emito: n’ekibira (young trees make a forest)***. To ensure that young generations are given proper moral formation, the entire community was responsible, in the sense that a neighbour could discipline an undisciplined child or youth as if he/she was the biological parent. This is what we are calling “collective responsibility”.

¹³ Virtual conference held by the Private Sector Foundation of Uganda in partnership with UN Women on mitigating the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the Ugandan economy which took place on 3rd May 2020.

Hospitality

Etymologically, the word hospitality comes from the Latin word *hospitalitas* which means *friendliness* or a quality of being welcoming. The Basoga are known for being a welcoming tribe, they welcome in their homes and all communities, those coming from out. In Busoga, hospitality is a social expression of openness to a guest or stranger, regarding them as innocent, unless or until they themselves prove otherwise. This fact is expressed in the Basoga's understanding that whoever calls at one's home is a visitor and cannot be presumed to be a passerby. The Kisoga expression for this is: "*Mu luya ti muba ngira*" literally translated as "do not presume that the person is just passing through your courtyard". Yet far from the understanding of the statement from an English legalistic and apprehensive point of view, the expression presumes that whoever shows up, is a visitor, and should therefore be welcomed, made to feel at home. Hospitality involves a number of issues, and unlike in the western world, where a visitor must have made an appointment, the African and indeed Kisoga hospitality includes providing food, drinks and shelter to the guest.

Hospitality among is therefore founded on the understanding and belief that a person being welcomed, is fellow human being, albeit coming from outside one's community. Besides, friendliness is a two-way, and it is normal for the visitor to carry something for the host. Sensing a kind of unwelcome, would make the visitor not deliver the gift he/she intended for the host. Hence the expression: *Enamusa embi, egiisa omugeni n'eitu mu nkwagha* (i.e. a poor welcome/reception, may send away a visitor with his/her gift).

The hospitable nature of the Basoga was so evidenced/reflected by not only putting aside all that the host was doing in order to attend to the visitor, but also in the careful listening to what the visitor had to say. The Kisoga greeting itself is so detailed for purposes of

showing interest in the visit, and wanting to know all that they have gone through. Whereas some people have downgraded the way Basoga greet one another, the greeting is both rich in meaning, and in showing that one is interested in the other. The humming sound made while listening to a narration the other is indicative of the care and interest by the one being talked to.

The Basoga of old were known to have given away land to strangers to help them settle and integrate themselves in the community. The practice of hospitality in Basoga is therefore a value that was inculcated among the young, and wide topic of induction when giving away a daughter in marriage.

Gratitude/Gratefulness

The word “gratitude” is from Latin “*gratus*” which expresses thankfulness. It is a value and perhaps the first value taught to little children by mothers at a tender age. The fact that mothers teach their children from childhood to be grateful, is indicative of how the Basoga value being thankful. To express appreciation is said to be ‘a warm and friendly feeling towards the giver’, and this in turn motivates the giver to become more benevolent. It may be a body language, a simple word (thank you, in Lusoga “*weebale*”/ “*nsiimye*”/ “*neeyanziiza*”), but cheers the heart and builds good working relationship. In Kisoga culture, when a child is given something and it fails to say thank you, what has been given is removed from the child as a lesson to demonstrate to be always grateful to those who do something good for one. Interestingly, among the Basoga, a word of gratitude is not extended on account of receiving alone; rather whatever a person does that is worthwhile, is appreciated. For example, a person who has been working in his own garden, when he comes back, he is thanked for the work he has been doing even without direct benefit to the one thanking.

Respect

According to the Chambers Dictionary, respect as a verb, “is to treat with consideration, refrain from violating, ... to show esteem, ...or honour, to look to, regard, ...have reference to; to value (a thing)”¹⁴. The Kisoga word for respect is “*akanhagansi*” or at times “*ekinhagansi*” or “*ekitiisa*”. Respect is essential for harmony to prevail in society and if human beings are to enjoy happiness. Given the above definition of “respect” by the Chambers Dictionary, is to respect, is to give something or someone particular attention or consideration. To respect a person means you recognize him or her as important and deserving to be treated well.

According to Mary Twamulala Kibuule, respect begins with self. Twamulala says: “if you want to command respect from others, first portray yourself as one worth the respect you want to be accorded. In addition, respect is reciprocal, in the sense that if you do not respect others, people will not respect you either. They may pretend to respect you when you are present, but in your absence, they will disregard you”¹⁵.

Receiving respect from others is important because it helps us to feel safe and to express ourselves. Being respected teaches us how to be respectful toward others. Respect means that you accept the other person as he/she is, even when they may hold divergent ideas from yours. It builds feelings of acceptance, trust, and safety, which will in turn lead the respected person to open up, to offer one’s service to the “respector” and in that way, integral and sustainable development comes in. Respect is not a natural

¹⁴ The Chambers Dictionary (2006).

¹⁵ Mary Twamualala Kibuule is a mwise Iruba and Mulamoogi from the chiefdom of Zibondo and a Social Worker; interviewed on 13th August 2020

instinct that naturally comes, rather respect is learnt through moral formation.

While the juniors are under serious obligation to respect the seniors, by treating well the juniors, the senior will be portraying his/her respect for the junior or his subjects. There are generally accepted body postures, signs and symbols, which when applied, indicate respect/salutation to those before whom one is, without uttering a word. By a type of posture, sign or symbol, one will understand that he/she is respected. Unfortunately, to some, without studying these signs and symbols, condemn some as dehumanizing, degrading.

Among the Basoga, the living accord respect to the dead as well, since, in the first placed, they lived before those currently living, and by their death, so to say entered the spiritual realm. That itself makes them to be in a superior state of life. Ancestors, according to Laurent Magesa, are the custodians of the moral code in Africa.

Leadership

Human beings are said to be social beings, and each time they are amalgamate themselves into some sort of group the need for some kind of leadership emerges. Leadership is the art of leading, an office that one who leads holds, the capacity to lead, or a body of leaders. According to Prentice, “Leadership is the accomplishment of a goal through the direction of human assistants. The man who successfully marshals his human collaborators to achieve particular ends is a leader. A great leader is one who can do so day after day, and year after year, in a wide variety of circumstances. He may not possess or display power; force or the threat of harm may never enter into his dealings. He may not be popular; his followers may never do what he wishes out of love or admiration for him. He may not ever be a colorful person; he may never use memorable devices

to dramatize the purposes of his group or to focus attention on his leadership. As for the important matter of setting goals, he may actually be a man of little influence, or even of little skill; as a leader he may merely carry out the plans of others. His unique achievement is a human and social one which stems from his understanding of his fellow workers and the relationship of their individual goals to the group goal that he must carry out”¹⁶.

As people come together, the need for some kind of leadership emerges, so as to have a campus to direct the rest towards a desired goal. With leadership, individual persons may have their own goals where they want to score. Some people think leadership skills are learnt formerly, while others believe leaders are born. Whatever the case, the fact is that leadership is crucial in any society and the absence of leadership or a leader, leads to lots of regret, and wastage of resources. For the Basoga, a leader is important in the struggles of any given society. The expression “*Olusala ekyayi lulekera busimizi kutaagha*” (whoever cuts a banana fibre, leaves ants that live or hide there to scatter) reflects well this fact. This expression is commonly used when people have lost a leader without whom they feel lost.

According to Mugoya, leaders are an embodiment of spiritual powers though a good number of them were not diviners. Traditionally, leaders not only governed their people, mobilized them for a cause of the good of society, but also judged between people in case of a conflict¹⁷.” For one to be allowed to ascend to the helm of leadership, he must have played a critical role in the livelihoods of those that he led. He was meant to inspire and motivate his subjects towards development. Be it cleaning of the

¹⁶ www.hbr.org/2004/01/understanding-leadership article by W.C.H Prentice; search on 4th November 2020.

¹⁷ Phone interview with Mugoya Tenhwa Abdulrahman on 24th September 2020.

community, collecting a share of the harvest for the granaries, looking for market for the produce, lobbying for opportunities for his people and above all being representative of their views.¹⁸ A leader ensured that all his subjects were involved or played a part in all communal activities. There are a couple of proverbs and expressions that depict the importance of leadership in a Kisoga culture, such as: *“Dheemererwa bakulu me dhaanhwa”* i.e. cattle are watched by elders while drinking water.

Integrity

According to the Chambers Dictionary, integrity means uprightness, honesty, purity, entireness, wholeness. “Integrity is doing the right thing even when no one is watching.” The Lusoga word for integrity is *“obwesimbu”* which connotes uprightness, being straight from the active verb *“simba(okwe)”* to stand (alone); while the passive verb is *“simba(oku)”* - to plant. For a person to be referred to as *“omwesimbu”* or as a person of integrity, means that he/she stands by his or her moral principles and cannot ever get compromised on what is true and morally acceptable. Such a person is highly respected in society and in Kisoga traditional society, is one whom everybody would wish to be a leader. A clear witness to this, is when choosing a successor of a deceased person, say father, the concerned would look for this quality from all possible candidates in order to get one who can fit in the shoes of the deceased. To be a person of integrity therefore, is to be trustworthy, which means to reliably do what is right even when it is sincerely difficult to do, and you keep remaining true to your word.

Integrity has nothing to do with having much or enough, but being satisfied with what one has, and in that way, making it difficult for those who would like to compromise your values.

¹⁸ Mukunya Milton is the Isaabalangira (chief prince) of Bukono Chiefdom, one of the eleven chiefdoms in Busoga - interview on Thursday June 18th 2020

Justice

Merriam Webster defines justice as the maintenance or administration of what is just especially by the impartial adjustment of conflicting claims or the assignment of merited reward or punishment. It is the quality of being just and connotes integrity, impartiality and rightness.

The Basoga's experience is that people who come together, at some moment will find themselves conflicting over some issue or issues. This is manifested in a Kisoga expression that: "***abali aghalala birandi, tibiropa kukontagana***" meaning people living together are like gourds that cannot fail to knock at each other. The expression is applied to conflicting parties, but with the intention that a conflict should not be taken too far; life can continue; and somehow it is an acknowledgement that conflicts are normal and part and parcel of life.

Nevertheless, it is also common knowledge that where a conflict arises, harmony is eroded, yet harmony is one of the most cherished virtue in society. Consequently, the Basoga devised means or mechanism of resettling matters each time they arose. This meant to establish some kind of fairness on either party, and this was one of the qualities people ranked high in a leader.

The Kisoga outlook on justice has always been one free of seeking revenge (vindictiveness), but rather one built around retribution. Retribution in the sense of giving "a just" punishment with a corrective mind. This is what the Basoga call: "***obwenkania***" meaning just or fairness with an element of equaling the weight of grief of either party. It was in the nature of the justice system to administer punishment having heard from both parties, and weighing the matter at stake within a relatively good timeframe. It is common to hear a Kisoga expression: "***ogusula gukugha empoza***" i.e. an adjourned case gives you ample time to prepare

one's defense. It indicates a practice of not hurrying judgement, while still remaining sensitive of the fact that justice delayed could as well be *justice denied*.

The traditional Kisoga system of administering justice was to a big extent well spelt-out. In the family, the father was the judge, deputized by the mother. In the absence of the two, the eldest child adjudicated conflicts among the young siblings. At the family level, the father and head of the family served as the Court of Appeal. Matters involving members of the same clan, the head of the clan administered justice between his clan members. To do this, he was free to enlist some elders with whom he would sit for a discussion, in case of a complainant, summon the defendant and after listening to the parties, a judgement would be past. The Kisoga proverb: *“Otasalanga gwa Kaghala ng’okaali kuwulira gwa Kalenzi”* that is to say, *“never judge a case ex parte”*, is a clear manifestation of how the Basoga cherished the value of justice.

On the other hand, where a dispute is an inter-clan affair, or one between parties belonging to different clans, still there existed a clear and well-spelt-out formal procedure for handling situations that would arise. There was a line of levels or hierarchy of reporting one's grievance, with an option for appealing in the event of dissatisfaction with the judgment at a lower Court. The first Court was *“Ekisoko”*, headed by chief referred to as *“Ow’Ekisoko”*. A *Kisoko* by definition is a zone within a village. In the traditional Kisoga setting, a village known as Omutala, was headed by a *Mutala* chief called *Ow’Omutala*. The whole village was composed of members of a particular clan, a member of that clan having found uninhabited village and established himself there, taking charge of its administration. If there were some residents, probably who were less organized while the new entrant being charismatic, the latter prevailed over them and became the owner

of the *Mutala*. The village head, *Ow'omutala*, would subdivide his '*Mutala*' into smaller administrative units called "*Ebisoko*". These he would distribute among his sons. With time the village accommodated members of other clans, most probably from in-laws who gave their sisters to members of the dominant clan.

The above explanation then gives a picture of how an inter-clan conflict would arise. And when it happened within the *Kisoko*, the head of the *Kisoko* would adjudicate, bearing in mind that all were his subjects. Where the matter was not solved satisfactorily at the *Kisoko* level, it would be referred to the *Mutala* Chief. A couple of *Mitala* (plural for *Mutala*), would form "*Muluka*" the equivalent of a civic parish. The *Muluka*, headed by *Ow'Omuluka*, was the next level of appeal; while a number of *Miruka* (plural for *Muluka*), would form "*Eigoloza*" also known as "*Igombolola*". Thus whoever felt the judgement at the *Muluka* level was biased, he or she was free to appeal to the *Igoloza*. Literally "*igoloza*" is derived from the verb *goloza(oku)* which means to straighten, or to correct. Thus "*Igoloza*" was seen as a place for correcting errors. On the other hand, "*Igombolola*" derives its name from the verb *gombolola(oku)* a term for correcting a bend or straightening something that got bent, usually applied to setting a bicycle wheel. Before the establishment of colonial rule here, the highest administrative unit was "*Eisaza*". It is necessary to point out here that that was prior to the time of the colonial administration, *Busoga* was made up of eleven hereditary chiefdoms. Each of these was independent of the other. Therefore, at that time the Supreme Court was that of *Eisaza*. Thus if at any of the lower levels of judicature, a person still felt he/she had not been served, they sought the audience of the *Isaza* Chief himself also known as "*Ow'eisaza*".

When the Colonial administration was established, it proposed a unitary administration for *Busoga*, with the establishment of a

Busoga Lukiiko, under the headship of a President. This made the Isaza to become a Court of Appeal, and the Busoga Lukiiko set up a Court that would address cases from the chiefdoms. When the headquarters were established at Bugembe, the Supreme Court headquarters were set up there too. Hence the expression “*guligheera Bugembe*”, an expression that was used to describe a complicated case. “*Guligheera Bugembe*” literally translates as: “such and such a case will only be settled from Bugembe”; (sometimes “*guligheera Idhindha*”).

The structure described above notwithstanding, the concept of “crime” as an anti-social behaviour certainly existed; and it was therefore not only the concern of the authorities, but also their responsibility to restore and promote harmony in society. Reconciliation was seen as primary concern in the restoration of social harmony. So apart from executing justice, in the sense of awarding the aggrieved party and punishing the errant one, reconciliation rituals to ensure that total peace and harmony prevails, were part of the judicial proceedings. This was based on the belief that they who aggrieved a neighbour, did so as well to the ancestors. Therefore, it were the reconciliation ceremonies that ensured that even the ancestors, who are the custodians of the moral code, too, are appeased by the culprit.

Unity

The term ‘unity’ means oneness, or the arrangement of all the parts to a one single purpose. The Basoga understood the essence of the expression: “*Unity is strength*”. The value of unity connotes collaboration, mutual agreement, mutual support and the like. The motto of the cultural institution of Busoga, known as “Obwakyabazinga bwa Busoga”, is “*Busoga okwisania n’amaani*” which means exactly as unity is strength.

There are a number of Kisoga proverbs that promote a spirit of unity, and which show that on one’s own, little can be achieved.

When counselling people to work together, to understand the value of being united, the Basoga commonly use the proverb: “**Agali aghalala n’agaluma emamba/eigumba**” that is to say, only when the teeth cooperate, can they bite meat/bone.

While admittedly, a person may be gifted in many ways, but even then, without others, that person remains limited. The expression: “**omukono omulala gugheza kulya, aye tigugheza mirimu**” i.e. one hand is only good at eating but not working, portrays well this fact of the need of others if some reasonable accomplishment is to be achieved.

A story is told of a stranger who appeared one day in a village and found children playing. He had a basket full of fruits, which he placed under a tree and told the children that whoever ran faster and reached the basket first, would have all the fruits. After giving the instructions, he set them off. To his amazement, the children grabbed each other’s hand, and ran together so as to reach the basket together. That way, they could share the fruits. While still shrouded in his amazement and wonder, the stranger asked the children why they had to run holding each other’s hand, instead of one running faster than the rest and have all the fruits for himself. Then one of them said: “how can one of us be happy if all the others are sad? I am because we are.”

This story encapsulates not only the Kisoga understanding of oneness, but indeed the entire Bantu speaking people. This, in many circles, is universally referred to as **UBUNTU** - “often used in a more philosophical sense to mean ‘the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity’”¹⁹.

¹⁹ Wikipedia: Ubuntu philosophy page visited on 9th November 2020.

Hard work

“Aboriginal Soga agriculture like its present-day counterpart, was of the sedentary variety. In contrast to much of central and southern African, where rapid depletion of soil fertility requires frequent movement in search of new land, Busoga is endowed with soil of sufficient fertility and with a sufficiently beneficent climate to allow a more or less complete and permanent appropriation of cultivable land and the permanent occupation of dwelling sites. Crop rotation and short-term furloughing, both of which were established in traditional Soga agricultural practice, sufficed to rejuvenate soil fertility.”²⁰ The above description of a Kisoga traditional Society by Fallers, is indicative of a people who value hard work. Being an Agrarian economy which uses rudimentary tools, it called for hard-work and parents emphasized this in the upbringing of their children. Expressions like: **“Akateerimire tikaalye”** :he who refused to work shall not eat, is enough to bring to the limelight the importance of working hard which is required of a citizen in his society.

Among the qualities sought for when looking for a marriage partner, was hard-work. A hard working wife was preferred to a beautiful but lazy wife. Since moral formation in traditional society was also done through songs and drama, there was a traditional folk song that went: **“Ofunda n’omubi, kasita n’aba ng’azaala, ng’alima, ayaniriza n’abageni”**. The translation of the words in the song go like this: You rather put up with an ugly wife, provided she begets children, she is hardworking and is hospitable to visitors. It shows that work was and remains an ideal held in high esteem among the Basoga.

²⁰ Fallers, Llyod A. *Bantu Bureaucracy: A century of political evolution among the Basoga of Uganda*; University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, pp.49-50.

Whatever profession one got engaged in, one was expected to exhibit being a hard working person. Laziness was never tolerated and people who exhibited lazy tendencies were scorned. The Kisoga proverb: ***“Lubaale mbeera, nga weena embiro kw’otaire”*** i.e. seek divine intervention while putting in personal efforts, best explains this.

Goodness

“Goodness” is the quality of being good. The Chambers Dictionary defines the adjective ‘good’ as “having suitable or desirable qualities; promoting health, welfare or happiness; virtuous, pious, kind; benevolent, well-behaved; not troublesome.....; that which is morally or ethically right”²¹.

A moral story is told of a young man who went to a wise old man and asked him: ***“Tell me Sir, in which field could I make a great career?”*** *The wise old man said with a smile, in response: “Be a good human being. There is a huge opportunity in this area and very little competition.”* There exists an inbuilt search for what is good in every human person. The unfortunate thing is that many things present themselves as good, and subjectively, what is good for one person may not be for the other. Hence the reason moral goodness, being the good worth pursuing since it is regarded to be objective, given the maze of what good and, or goodness is.

The Basoga treasured people having desirable qualities which promote the common welfare and happiness of all. This was emphasized by parents when parenting. It is common to hear a parent commenting about an uncooperative child as a difficult one, the parent getting wearied of the behaviour of that child. All efforts were to be done to ensure people grew up cultivating the quality of being good. In traditional Kisoga society, like many other traditional

²¹ The Chambers Dictionary (10th Ed.), Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd, 2006.

African society, given the sensitivity of this value, it took a whole village to raise a child. The idea behind this, was to raise a good citizen of society who would not turn out to be troublesome to the community. Proverbs like: **“omuliinaano gwokya dhoona (ibiri)”** i.e. a fire at a neighbour’s, ends up burning the entire neighbourhood, challenged members to take social responsibility seriously. Good neighborliness was highly treasured, since those in the neighbourhood would be the immediate responders to one’s grief or alarm. This is augmented by the Kisoga proverb **“Omwigo ogw’eghala ti gwita musota”** (translated as ‘a faraway stick cannot help you to kill a snake that is molesting you’). The moral counsel here, is that a person should not at any rate neglect one’s neighbour simply because one had friends elsewhere. Cultivating good interpersonal relationship with neighbour was a personal security measure. The expression: **“Eriina eirungi, liwula obugaiga”** meaning to say that a good name is better than wealth” is something that motivated people’s conduct.

The Kisoga village settlement represented a convergence of loyalties that made sense of community life strong. Neighbors co-operated in many ways, from the raising of their children to working communally on each other’s farms, taking part in each other’s expeditions for hunting or fishing, in joys and in sorrows. The African philosophy of being as stated by Prof. John Mbiti that: “I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am”²², was the principle of life in the community. For many Basoga, the ideal of a good life meant sharing.

Humaneness

Humaneness is defined as the quality of compassion or consideration of others particularly those in situations that are uncomfortable. Psychologists may refer to this quality as empathy, where

²² Mbiti John (1969), African Religions and Philosophy. East African Educational Publishers, Nairobi p. 106

empathy means being able to place oneself in the situation of the other, and try to feel their pain whether physical or emotional. The ability to understand and relate to the stressing feelings, thoughts and emotional experiences of others, even when pain is said to be incommunicable, is what we are calling humaneness. This quality which is supposed to be innate, is what the Basoga call “*Obuntubulamu*”. As a reader, just **Imagine** how cold the world would be, where nobody cares about others’ pains with no one to listen to them! Given the African understanding of being, it would not make sense for a people whose philosophy is: “I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am”.

“*Obuntubulamu*” is at the centre of the moral understanding of the Basoga. It is under this pretext that the Basoga excel at having each other’s back scratched. From empathizing with those that have lost dear ones to celebrating achievements of near and far neighbors, the Basoga understand that being compassionate makes it possible for one to connect with others on a deeper level and in the process make the world a better place to live in. therefore, empathy and compassion are part and parcel of the very fabric of the Kisoga society.

This value of being humane encompasses a number of other values or sub-sets of values like kindness which means being considerate and treating others fairly. Humaneness calls for one to be generous, since only a generous person can be kind or benevolent towards others. It is also exemplified in the act of being polite to others, respecting others, accepting one’s responsibilities and obligations, being tolerant in the sense of having a fair and objective attitude towards different opinions, beliefs or practices; and being self-controlled among others. It is a summation of all values.

CHAPTER III

Other Values other than Moral Values

In the foregoing chapter, the authors have extensively expounded on the traditional Kisoga moral value system. While the discussion may not be exhaustive, it is hoped that it gives the reader a strong starting point. When defining a value broadly, it was stated that “A value is a quality of goodness of something, that which makes it likeable, marketable or regarded as important to a certain degree as compared to others. It is the worth of something, an intrinsic worthiness which is recognized by those who attach such importance to that something in question.” That definition therefore, covers value beyond simply moral values.

This Chapter, albeit in a brief presentation, will look at other values that Basoga take seriously, other than the moral values. To begin with, there is a common expression by Basoga “*Bw’ogema ku mukazi n’eitaka Oluganda lufa*” meaning that ‘if you want the brotherhood to end, tamper with my wife or my land’. In Chapter II, one of the key values Abasoga take seriously is ‘kinship’, the concept of “*oluganda*” connotes kinship, therefore, while a ‘wife’ and ‘land’ are not moral values, the fact that by tampering with them one risks losing ‘kinship’ or the relatedness, manifests the value that the Basoga attach to one’s wife and one’s land. While the Basoga may not state categorically that the two are values, the importance attached to them, when analyzed well, is indicative of their being values among the Basoga. It is on account of strength that we would like to discuss a couple of these.

Language

Is defined as “human speech, or a variety of speech or body of words and idioms, a mode of expression, diction; any manner of expressing thought or feeling; an artificial system of signs and symbols, with rules forming intelligible communication...”²³

According to Wikipedia, language is “the principal method of human communication consisting of words used in a structured and conventional way, and conveyed by speech, writing or gesture.” Wikipedia further explains the functions of a language as being seven. These are: 1) instructional, 2) regulatory, 3) interactional, 4) personal, 5) imaginative, 6) heuristic and 7) informative. For purposes of throwing more light on these functions, let us give a brief explanation on each of them, with the intention of making the reader realize that indeed a language is a value.

- a) A language is instructional in the sense that it is a means or aid in communicating an idea which is in a person’s mind that the other cannot enter into, in order to understand the mind of the other person.
- b) Secondly, a language is regulatory in the sense that it has its own rules and regulates or restricts the user to operate within that particular area, or field or angle. By restriction here, we are referring to how conventionally particular words are meant to have particular meanings, which when applied wrongly, the hearer or receiver may not be amused.
- c) It is interactional in that it facilitates parties to interact, with ability to influence each other. The interactional function therefore connotes persuasion; to buy the other on your side, so that you share the mind or idea.
- d) The personal function of a language lies in the fact that it is particular.
- e) A language is said to have an imaginative function in that it

²³ The Chambers Dictionary (10th edit.)

helps or allows the expression of creativity. The proverbs, idioms and the like, makes the speaker creative in speech, and leaves the hearer wondering at that creativity; but all aided by the language.

- f) The heuristic function of a language implies that a language guides in investigating a problem. It concerns or relates with problem solving.
- g) Finally, the seventh function of a language is that of being informative. It is through some form of a language that information is passed on, that people get informed.

Given the foregoing explanation on what a language is and does, it comes out clearly that indeed a people's language is a treasure, a value. In addition to the above seven functions, a language also functions, to a big extent, as an identity, particularly in the African context. To hear a person, speak a certain language, the first thing that comes to mind is connecting that person with the people who speak that language. For example, if one spoke Lusoga, the immediate conclusion is that he/she is a Musoga.

Wikipedia further explains that there are “Five fundamental characteristics of a language which include: cultural relevance, symbolism, flexibility, variation, and social importance.

The expression of the Basoga that “*Olulimi iriidho*”, that is to say, a language is that something which can bail out, is indicative of how the Basoga value their language. On the other hand, the term “*iriidho*” is an adjective derived from the verb “*liidha (oku)*”, the act of tying the hind legs of a cow when milking. Given that connotation, *iriidho*, connotes tying together which implies that a language unites people.

In his foreword to the Constitution of the Lusoga Language Authority (LULA), His Royal Highness, Isebantu Henry Wako Muloki, wrote: “A language unspoken and unwritten is a dead

language. The fact that the seven different groups who at different times, attempted to write Lusoga agreed to combine their efforts together for the current and undisputed version of our language is a clear testimony that Lusoga is vibrant and authentic.”²⁴ A language, is a conveyor belt of a people’s heritage, whose loss, implicitly leads to loss of that heritage.

Land

According the disciplines of Entrepreneurship and Commerce, “land” is among the major factors of production. From the biblical point of view, land has a spiritual connotation in the sense that man was made from the soil. On Ash Wednesday, Christians and particularly Catholics are reminded when receiving the ashes on the forehead that they are dust and unto dust they shall return.

The Basoga have always understood land to be a value, and belonging to them all. Traditionally, land belongs to a person’s clan, and the individual is only a custodian, entrusted with a portion to keep for the future posterity. Like the Olden Red Indian proverb which states: “We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our posterity”, the Basoga do everything possible to protect the land they occupy in order to hand it over to their children, who in turn are charged with the responsibility of dealing with it diligently. It is in land that they bury their dead, and having graves of one’s ancestors in a piece of land, gives a person a strong attachment to that piece of land. Thus if you want trouble with a Musoga, tamper with his land; hence a Kisoga expression: ***“Bw’oyenda ebizibu, gema ku itaka na mukazi”*** meaning, if you want trouble tamper with my land or my wife.

²⁴ Constitution of the Lusoga Language Authority (LULA), unpublished, 2003.

The current and future generations of Basoga need to be conscientious of the fact that their land is a resource, a value which is irreplaceable which they need to guard jealously.

Friendship

Friendship is defined as a state of attachment from mutual esteem. Having been created as social beings, human beings generally have an in-built desire to associate. This degree of association defers with those around an individual. While one may associate with everyone in the community, there are a few who become more intimate with the individual and this intimate association is what we call friendship.

The Basoga valued friendship, and a number of Kisoga proverbs point to this fact. As the English saying goes, “A friend in need, is a friend indeed”, so the Basoga have an equivalent expression: *“Mwino mu kabi ni mwino mwenemwene”*. What is implied here is that while all may be one’s friends, among friends there are those with a much deeper friendship, who will be there at all times, rain or shine.

Among the Basoga, friendship could go to a higher level that would translate into ‘brotherhood’ through a ‘blood pact’, locally known as *‘omukago’*. While those who enter into a blood pact belong to different clans with originally no kinship ties, the blood pact itself creates a relationship of brotherhood, that none of the parties, their descendants or assignees can break the covenant entered into. According to Malagala Tenywa Aloysius, “Blood pact (omukago) was the highest and most important way of expressing and showing friendship.... it is the coronation of a friendship that has been going on for a long time. So we can say that ‘omukago’ by virtue of sharing blood during the ritual, is a friendship that has become a brotherhood. Omukago reinforces the bond of friendship giving it more weight... mukago is indeed a covenant

sealed by the members concerned.”²⁵ It therefore means that the blood pact or covenant entered into by the parties, is never to be broken or bleached by either party, their descendants or assignees. For a Musoga to say that: “***Mu mukwano mufiira bingi, omugeni tabuza mani ga nkoko ye bamwitiire***” i.e. in friendship, there is a lot of compromise, for a visitor will never question as to where the liver in the chicken slaughtered for him, as a sign of hospitality, could have gone, implies that for the sake of the value of friendship, you rather forego a few privileges and sometimes one’s rights.

It means that with friendship, one has to have the courage to walk through the fear of emotional intimacy, to let the other person know who you really are, it is exposing oneself to the other. On a practical level, one must be willing to invest one’s time and efforts to nurture and maintain the bonds or else, it won’t last. There is a lot of letting go, just for the sake of friendship, as one way of nurturing it. This is best summed up in the Kisoga proverb: ***Omukwano butiko, bw’onoga tosiinhira*** loosely translated as friendship is like mushrooms, as you harvest them putting them in a basket, you do not have to press hard. By the way, mushrooms are one of the delicacy of the Basoga, and so by the time they compared friendship to mushrooms, is indicative of how friendship is valued. The tenderness of the mushroom is reflected in the friendship and the other way round.

A really good and genuine friendship is even visible to the onlookers, it is a public pronouncement, and making a clear statement. Hence those who observe the friends, will once in a while get heard saying: “***Abo omukwano gubasazai ni mu nswa***” i.e. their friendship can make them share even the minutest edible thing.

²⁵ Malagala Tenywa Aloysius (1992); Meaning and Practice of Friendship in the Soga Culture: Research paper for the Award of a Diploma in Philosophy and Religious Studies; Katigondo National Major Seminary, p.22.

In today's society, it is hard to find people who are really friendly as has been expressed in the above discussion. Many people in Busoga and indeed elsewhere no longer value friendship. The type of friendship people see is exploitative. It is for this reason that the authors of this book find it pertinent to include 'friendship' as a value so that it can be inculcated in the moral formation of the young. Maintaining true friendships is important for one's physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. A true friend is one that can be relied on in all seasons. This is what one poet, Kazakh, meant when he stated that friendship is not simply all about enjoying the good times together, it is also sharing and supporting one another during the tough times. Another writer, Abai Qunanbaiuly put it otherwise: "You can distinguish a good friend from a fake one. Fake friends are like a shadow. On a sunny day you cannot get rid of them. When it is cloudy you cannot find them, no matter how much effort you make."

CHAPTER IV

The decline of Moral values in Busoga

The future of a society depends on its posterity, as exemplified in the Kisoga proverb: “*emiti emito n’ekibira*” as earlier quoted. The formation of young people’s character is pertinent, if the future of society is to be bright. Those values, that a particular society deems important, are crucial and play an important role in shaping the personality of young people, who are the future of that society in question. Important in the sense that it is that heritage passed onto a future generation that will define that society and make them different from others. According to Ssajabi, “to ensure that the Basoga as a group of people lives and exists according to an established pattern which is adopted and used in order to build well-balanced structures, the imparting of those desired values must be continuous.”²⁶ Thus to relegate that society’s values, is to make a society doomed.

There is a general persuasion in today’s society that there is a vacuum in the realm of societal values. The Basoga society or community is not exempted from this situation. The decline of values in today’s Kisoga society is not a recent phenomenon. It is to be traced as something which has been gradual over a period of time. Its magnitude is only being made manifest today through common undesirable way of life of the people of Busoga.

²⁶ Ssajabi Sophronius is a priest of Jinja Diocese and former lecturer at the Philosophicum in Jinja known as Queen of Apostles Philosophy Centre – Jinja. He was the Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the first Jinja Diocesan Synod which took place in 1995, and where among the resolutions made, the Cultural Research Centre came to be born.

Kayongo Male Diane and Onyango Philista (1994), have suggested that the decline of the moral fibre in African societies, started with the advent of colonial rule. *“The imposition of colonial rule led to a variety of changes in the division of family labour. Although the impact was not uniform for all ethnic groups, even in one country, changes were quite similar for many ethnic groups on the continent. The introduction of forced labour and a cash economy were perhaps the most disruptive types of changes. As a result of forced labour, men were often withdrawn from the villages for long periods of time, during which the women and children attempted to fulfil the father’s roles. In later periods, there were cases of women and children being forced into labour, leaving the village homesteads largely unattended for much of the year. Migration of men outside the village led to similar results. Even when men did return home, their overall authority over the division of labour must have been weakened considerably because of the wife’s experience in running the household independently”*²⁷

While Kayongo and Onyango focus on the socio-economic transformation of the family unit and not the entire society, it is necessary not to forget that the family is the basic cell of society. The family being the first school where parents’ role is crucial, their absence in search for cash affects heavily the upbringing of the children. Kayongo and Onyango observe well that ‘the introduction of the forced labour and cash economy were perhaps the most disruptive types of changes and that the withdrawal of men from their villages for long periods, leaves women to shoulder the entire burden but not without gaps. It may not be forced labour, but even when it is voluntary, the vacuum left behind remains, and its effects are the same.

On the other hand, while education brought in a positive and liberating element in the lives of people, the Kisoga expression: **“Omulungi tabulaku kamogo”**, ie even the best has some

²⁷ Kayongo, Male Diane & Onyango Philista (1994); *The Sociology of the African Family*, Longman, London, p.25.

short comings for one who is good/nice, may not be so in all things, reminds us of the fact that education too has had its toll on the moral and social nature of the life of the Basoga. The introduction of boarding schools caused children to be away from their parents for long periods. The post – independence education system introduced Early Childhood Development Education, where as early as three years children leave their parents to begin school in the name of nursery education. Looked at from another point, the education system became one for paying and parents therefore have to work long hours to get the needed money at the expense of the moral formation of their children. Besides, individualism cropped in, leaving each, with the sole responsibility of the upbringing of one’s children. Community responsibility left the scene, and even some parents started blaming those who try to discipline their children (disciplining another’s child). They are busy pampering their children in the name of loving them and giving them “everything” they (children) crave for and not wanting to disappoint them. Those who blame others that help in raising of children by disciplining them for the wrong done, seem not to be aware of an observation by Bruce Lee, who once said: ***“instead of buying your children all the things you never had, you should teach them all the things you were never taught. Materials wear out but knowledge stays”.***

In the olden society, people were eager to follow and pass on their society’s moral values. Culture was the driving force of people’s behaviour guided by the established moral values, customs and traditions. With modernization, westernization, industrialization and urbanization in the nature of development, people’s lives in some way have been impacted negatively and the once-upon-a-time cherished values have since dwindled. These have been replaced by selfishness, individualism egoism to the extent that the “humaneness” is almost non-existent. In the Uganda of the twenty first century, a new “value” has been introduced, which people are

pursuing at the expense of all that for long held society together. Whereas this “new value” is meant to be simply a measure or a means to attain something of value, a good number of Ugandans with Basoga inclusive, is what they focus on as “the value”. Coupled with bad politics, the moral fibre is completely eroded. This “new value” is **“MONEY”**. Some people do not even value life, provided they receive money.

With this new trend, the young generation in Busoga does not have faith in the traditional and old established moral code of ethics, call it cultural value system. With the globalization of the world, they adapt whatever is from the west, or foreign, as that which is of value. Sadly, responsible parenting has also been lost, with parents crying to and being unable to reprimand their children for wrongdoing. Instead they appeal to teachers who are handling more than 45 students, and religious leaders who only meet the youth once a week either on Friday, Saturday or Sunday, for intervention. Ssajabi contends that what parents are doing is wrong, and in his view, “the wider elder community should add to what teachers and religious leaders are doing in the moral formation of society, by inculcating the general group of the youth with the desired values”²⁸.

In 1962, Uganda got its independence, but soon after, the country experienced turbulent times. The infamous 1966 crisis, ushered in Uganda a cultural erosion when the Government under the presidency of Dr. Apolo Milton Obote abolished cultural institutions in Uganda. It is important to note here, that an institution, is an organization founded and united for a specific purpose. Cultural institutions were founded by ancestors to be a uniting and guiding compass of their people for a bright future. An institution is also defined as a custom that for a long time has been an important feature of some group of people or society.

²⁸ Cfr. Ssajabi Sophronius

With the understanding of what an institution is from the above definitions, it makes sense to understand that abolishing an institution makes its subscribers lose compass and ultimately the future. While other people continued to live a life of their clan here in Busoga by performing certain rituals such as naming, burial ceremonies and the like, to some degree, others relegated their cultural responsibilities, including the compromising of parenting. A similar misinterpretation happened also in 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic struck, and governments including the one of Uganda announced social distancing and closure of public institutions among which were Churches. People misinterpreted the presidential directive on social distancing to stopping people from praying yet as long as the Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) were observed, there would be no hindrance to prayer.

Thus even what we currently regard as older generation, owing to the relegation, following the abolition of cultural institutions in Uganda, coupled with formal education, their mind-set was also culturally derailed or “westernized”. Today some people who subscribe to the Pentecostal movement, are against matters concerning culture and do not see any positive thing there. Given the technological advancement particularly in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) area, many of the young generation is far removed from its cultural heritage, and is busy copying everything from outside in the name of (it being exotic) and appealing. Moral values have nothing appealing to sense; they instead pertain to behaviour or discipline, bearing in mind that “discipline” is postponed gratification of a person’s desire or emotion.

Apparently, no one can deny the fact that society has been drastically transformed with both positive and negative elements. The failure to harmonize the modern and the ancient cultural heritage, has created some confusion. This confusion is being reflected in the

common vices today such as violence, sexual harassment, injustice, corruption, individualism, excessive love for money and riches have become an everyday occurrence. While all is not lost, it leaves only a small number of people to struggle to imbue in their young the appreciation of the importance of the Kisoga values.

CHAPTER V

Relevancy of Kisoga Moral Values in today's society

In the foregoing chapter, we have endeavoured to establish the reality of some kind of moral values and value system in Kisoga traditional society. These were handed on from one generation to the next through a process of socialization of children into their cultural norms and customs. It has been hinted that the ancestors were seen as the custodians of the moral code, and had the mandate to punish errant characters who violated the code. Because of this, ancestors were revered and venerated.

Somehow some generation “let down” the ancestors by not passing onto those following them (the elders or **sinors** in society), that rich heritage, and thus a good number of the long cherished values either disappeared from the scene or were simply relegated in the name of social change. Is it then surprising that a society whose moral fibre has been disintegrated, is undergoing such challenges we face today?

This chapter then is to look into what actually led to this, and which moral values can be deemed relevant in today's society. Perhaps the

question to ask ourselves is: “Can a value diminish?” Or “does relegating its (a value) make it lose its value?” The authors of this book, believe that a value and above all a moral value, remains a value regardless the times or social transformation a society may undergo. They are convinced that a value remains a value; like in the case of marriage, someone said: ‘a marriage does not fail, it only shows that they have failed (those married/marriage partners). Failure to recognize a value does not mean that it does not exist. The best example we can give is of one who denies God’s existence, which does not really make God non-existent. And so we can talk of relegating them, and giving the assurance that they can be revisited for the moral good of society.

During the inception workshop on this topic, some of the above moral values were pointed out as a rich heritage. When participants were asked whether the values discussed above were still relevant, the response was that: “the values were still very relevant to society’s living today because these values play a key role in the propagation and maintenance of order and discipline in any given society”²⁹. The participants’ affirmation motivated Cultural Research Centre to go ahead and research in the topic.

²⁹ Report on the inception workshop to major stakeholders on the need to document a Kisoga value system. The workshop took place on 28th February 2020 at Mother Kevina Generalate Centre in Jinja. Participants included: hereditary chiefs, clan leaders, religious leaders, youth, community development officers and development partners.

CHAPTER VI

Reviving the Kisoga Moral Values for tomorrow's better Busoga

It does not serve any purpose to keep singing the song of lamentation about the lost glory of Busoga due to the relegated moral values, while doing nothing about it. A number of people and particularly parents seem to be resigned in matters of moral formation of their children according to the traditional cultural heritage. The young are busy copying whatever is foreign, in the name of modernization. When discussing the virtue of parenting, parents to a big extent are to blame, since things started going wrong from the moment they themselves abandoned their responsibility and pushed it to the classroom teacher. Yet, in addition to that abandonment, they went ahead to blame whoever tried to penalize an erring child, citing human rights observation. The Kisoga saying: *“Munda munuma, yeerabira by’aliire”*, sums it all. The proverb simply means that he who complains of a stomachache, while doing so, forgets to take into account what he was eating; implying an act which recoils upon the agent. The “boomerang theory” brings out best the message being communicated here.

As the Kisoga sayings goes: *“Aghabi gheetoolwa na maani”*, that is to say: ‘a bad situation can only be surmounted by self-motivation and hard work’, so should the Basoga re-think strategies to push Busoga higher. No society, that has no values or principals, has ever developed. A society that welcomes anything without restraint, at the expense of its own values, traditions, and customs, is referred to as a *“permissive society”*. The term originates from

the verb “*permit*” and the adjective “*permissive*” meaning it is permissible, it is acceptable. The Basoga themselves should not forget their ancestral proverb that “*Ekiziraku muze ti kyala*” i.e. ‘anything without restrictions is deemed to extinction’. Hence society with no effort to preserve its cultural heritage, that society’s culture is likely to be no more; it becomes an uprooted society and will sooner or later lose its self-esteem.

Notwithstanding the preservation aspect, it is also important to note that culture has never been static. Rather it keeps borrowing, depending on the intermingling, and the prevailing circumstances that may render some practices obsolete, leading to their abandonment. It goes without saying that “For a value system and indeed any culture to stand the test of time, it should have the ability to be flexible and not stagnant lest it runs the risk of being overtaken by the times”³⁰. A critical analysis of the recent times reveals that a lot of technological inventions due to scientific breakthrough, has occurred, easing mobility and media accessibility thereby making what people are calling the world becoming a “global village”. These changes have at times challenged the culture of the Basoga, never to remain as it was; hence has the Kisoga culture **has** in many aspects adapted to changes, shading off some traits and adopting new ones. One clear example, of copying from outside, could be that pre-colonial houses were made of mud and wattle with a grass thatched roof; but with the coming of Europeans, housing evolved from grass thatched structures to brick housing with iron sheets.

The dress code also evolved, from a sleeveless sheet rapped round ones’ armpits for women, to what is now called “*Gomesi*”, without mentioning the transition from a bark-cloth to cotton fabric; and now to mostly synthetic fabric. The transaction mode also

³⁰ Kiirya Pafula 66 yrs, a resident of Budondo village, Budondo sub-county interviewed on 16th September 2020.

changed. In the pre-colonial-Kisoga society, the mode of trade-exchange was mainly by barter. The trade by barter, without standardized weights and measures as well as the non-contractual pattern of exchange, went a long way to facilitate natives access social needs. However, the Kisoga cultural trade exchange evolved with the introduction of paper and coin currency, and soon it will be “cryptocurrency”. While it eased the transaction of business, it accentuated the propensity to consume and profitability, thereby creating a consumerism culture. It gradually brought about social inequality and an exploitative tendency thus eroding the long-cherished value of honesty.

The need to safeguard the traditional Kisoga values while adapting new ones of importance cannot be overemphasized. It is all about transferring of knowledge, skills and meaning, long cherished by our ancestors, by focusing on processes that will help transmit, and/or communicate these values from one generation to the next. According to Rev. Canon David Kaluya, “it is only through preservation of our values that a new generation shall understand, appreciate, appropriate and live according to the standards set out by our forefathers”³¹.

Luckily, the education curriculum in Uganda has embraced the promotion of people’s culture. The Government White Paper on Education which advocate the promotion of use of mother tongue, is a providential step in the right direction of promoting a language as a value. This is so because a language, is itself a vehicle or conveyor belt of the cultural heritage. It is up-to the cultural stakeholders and book authors, to identify key components of culture and now more importantly the Kisoga Value system,

³¹ Rev. Canon David Kaluya Oral interview, a resident of Namutumba district, and advisor to Kisiki – chief of Busiki. Interview conducted on 17th July 2020

and incorporate it in classroom syllabus. There is need to approach this issue on a two or three-pronged front namely using both the formal and informal education styles, as well as integration in the Church's mission of evangelization and where possible in mosques as well.

Through the Busoga Clan System, parents should be awakened to their parental obligations they have long abdicated. It is important to reiterate that the family is the basic cell and first school and church where young ones are introduced to subtle components of social life. Naiwumbwe concurs with the foregoing statement when she says: "We have to learn as parents to pass on information to our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, by first of all practising these values ourselves since a child learns faster by observing what the elder does; and continuously talk to them about these values. However, it is not enough to simply talk to them about our heritage, but also more importantly to explain to them why it is important for them to uphold our values and urge them too, to practice them, preserve them and in turn pass these values onto their posterity³².

Magoma Henry Stephenson notes that as much as there are elements within the school curriculum that tackle value related issues, these elements are either wholly neglected or not sufficiently expounded upon during the actual teaching. He further comments that "the traditional class system, a teacher comes into class unprepared and starts off with a fault finding mission with questions like: who was meant to sweep, where did we end; and then punishments are issued." This state of affairs makes it impossible for the teacher and the learners to develop any rapport that is actually necessary for education and more importantly for imparting values.

³² Naiwumbwe Annet of Mayuge District, during an Oral interview on 25th July 2020

He suggests that there is need to adopt some facets of the Nursery School teaching where teachers make it a point to know their learners personally, this, he notes, makes it easy for the learners to follow what their teachers tell them. It is a huge mistake and worrying trend, Magoma further notes, that schools today are discarding sports and physical education (PE) from the school routine. Sports is an important element of education and imparting values into students because sports and PE promote socialization which is key to training young people in the skill sets of team work, caring for one another, discipline and commitment as well as giving them a sense of belonging. He further notes that there should be re-introduction of indigenous sports like omweso, ekigwo e.t.c, to enable the participants relate sports to culture³³.

In the view of Nakayima Ruth, for values to be successfully incorporated in the school system, there is need for teachers not only to be conveyor belts of knowledge but more importantly to be parents away from home. She notes that if the youth are to be taught values, it has to be done with love, they have to feel that it is love and on account of love rather than infringing on their freedom, that values are being transmitted.³⁴ While Nakayima Ruth makes important points, parents are in no way to avoid or neglect their responsibility at home, thinking they have a parent-away-from-home, in the person of a teacher. Teachers have abandoned the duty of disciplining children because some parents in the name of fighting for the rights of children, reprimand teachers in front of the very children teachers were disciplining. If values are to be properly

³³ Magoma Henry Stephenson is a retired teacher, former District inspector of Schools Mayuge District and former District Education officer Namuntumba – Interview on Thursday 6th Aug 2020

³⁴ Nakayima Ruth is a Princess from Kigulu Chiefdom, a teacher and Social Anthropologist who at the time of the interviews, was representing the Chiefdom on the Busoga Lukiiko (Cultural Parliament of Obwakyabazinga bwa Busoga).

imparted, then mutual support, like it was in the traditional Kisoga society, is needed from either party.

Nakayiza Safina compliments Nakayima's submission on the role of the family and says that "there is no way Kisoga cultural values shall be preserved if families keep moving further apart. Spending time together as a family, that is, the old and young, is the best way to preserve what is dear to us. In the past, the evenings presented a perfect time for older generations to share their wisdom with the young ones, explaining Kisoga cultural facets like proverbs, riddles, fables and tales of the ancestors. Spending time together is also known to breed familiarity and spurs learning especially through observation of things like etiquette, body language/sign language, all this through cultural based conversations. Such information gained from these moments is not a thing to be kept in museums nor by writing them on paper; rather they are written in the heart to be memorized by the brains and passed onto future generations in turn. It is the core of a cultural experience".³⁵

For Bireego Saad, many parents these days do not spend enough time with their children; they would use to teach the latter topics relating to culture in general and our values in particular. He further disclaims, appearing to be blaming the parents, since they themselves do not know much about their culture. He notes with concern that one finds a parent who does not have much information about own clan save for the totem. Such persons cannot even give their genealogy extending to fourth generation. Bireego suggests that the imparting of Kisoga values should not be left to homes and schools, but also to the religious sphere since the needed values are equally religious in nature. His concern that it was actually the advent of Christianity and Islam that preached against anything indigenous as devilish, thereby leading to the

³⁵ Resident of Nabwigulu village of Kamuli Municipal Council during a telephone interview Saturday 15th August 2020 at 14:30 hrs.

decline of the Kisoga values.³⁶ Bireego concludes that religious leaders should become leading advocates for the preservation and promotion of our cultural values by integrating cultural affairs in their religious instruction(s).

The Cultural Research Centre strongly believes that without documenting these facets of our Kisoga culture in general and a value system in particular, Busoga risks its future, as she will have a generation that does not know its cultural heritage and consequently without a value system. Since the Basoga say: *Emiti emito: n'ekibira* (**Young trees form a forest**), a proper moral formation of the young in the core values of our society, bearing in mind the globalization of the world, is of paramount importance. As the saying goes, “*ekiteezaala kizika*” i.e ‘anything that fails to reproduce itself is doomed for extinction’, to fail to inculcate those values deemed necessary for the upbringing of a good citizen, is necessarily losing our very selves. The young are the future leaders not only of nuclear families, clan or tribe, but also a country. The onus of forming the young in moral values for their future roles to humanity, is on parents, elders in communities and cultural institutions (Clan, Chieftdom and ultimately Obwakyabazinga bwa Busoga).

This manual therefore, is coming out at a time when gathering pertinent information pertaining to our culture and having it documented, is needed as late as yesterday. Such documented information can be easily accessed by the general public in order to promote the understanding, appreciation and appropriation of the cultural heritage of the Basoga.

³⁶ Bireego Saad is a resident of Kaliro in Bulamoogi Chieftdom, interviewed on 6th August 2020.

CONCLUSION

As we conclude, it is important to quote the inspired Word of God: “He who keeps the precepts keeps his life, but the despiser of the word will die... Chastise your son, for in this there is hope; but do not desire death... for if a son ceases to hear instruction, he wanders from words of knowledge... since an unprincipled witness perverts justice and the mouth of the wicked pours out iniquity” (Proverbs 19:16,18,27-28). Bearing in mind that the Basoga say, “*ndi mugezi nga n’omukobere*” loosely translated as: he who is wise is one who is informed (a word to awise is enough), this book has exposed the moral challenge Busoga, Uganda and the world is facing and proposed a way forward. As authors of the book, we at Cultural Research Centre have provided information, and since the English expression goes that information is power, this book empowers all those who would like to see a change for the better in Busoga’s present and future generations. Those who have gotten a chance to read this book, bright to light.

Every opportunity therefore, needs to be grabbed and utilized for the purpose of propagating our rich cultural value heritage. Now that the Lusoga language is being taught and examined in schools both at Primary and Secondary school levels, the content of this book, needs to be adopted by the Lusoga school curriculum and be used to inculcate among the young these outlined values which apparently cut across domains.

When propagating our rich cultural heritage, we should never forget what Dr. Chuba Okadigbo once said: “*If you are emotionally attached to your tribe, religious or political leaning to the point that truth and justice become sec-*

*ondary considerations, your education is useless. Your exposure is useless. If you cannot reason beyond petty sentiments, you are a liability to mankind.*³⁷. Far be it that the object of writing this book is to promote tribalism, or self-centeredness, this Kisoga Value System **Manual** is meant to help the Basoga know their heritage, love it, and use it to live in harmony with their neighbours and whoever will find themselves being neighbours to a Musoga. These are premised on the understanding that “culture” notwithstanding its being misunderstood, and albeit its limitations, is a God-given gift through their ancestors who, under the inspiration of God’s Spirit, came up with the moral code of ethics as a means to live in harmony with one another.

³⁷ A quotation from whatsapp social media

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