

Kabalega Museum would be great

The soul of a place often lives in its stories, the memories preserved, and the moments that shaped its people. South Africa offers a vivid example in Soweto, where history breathes through every street. It was here, on June 16, 1976, that students protesting the introduction of Afrikaans as a language of instruction were met with deadly force.

The image captured by journalist Sam Nzima of 13-year-old Hector Pieterse being carried by a fellow student, with his sister running beside them in anguish, became an enduring symbol of resistance. His memory is preserved through the Hector Pieterse Museum, a cultural attraction in Orlando West, Soweto, in Nelson Mandela's hometown.

Just as Soweto holds the emotional heart of South Africa's struggle, Bunyoro Kitara holds its own rich reservoir of history whose full story has yet to be curated. At the centre of this legacy is Omukama Chwa II Yohana Kabalega, a leader whose life is inseparable from the identity of Bunyoro. As Uganda prepares for transformational growth

graph. Very little is known about his personality, his interests, his lighter moments, or the philosophies that guided him.

The story of the 'Abanisiira', Kabalega's elite fighters, is equally compelling. How did a kingdom armed with rudimentary weapons manage to resist the British for eight years? How were the forces organised? Who are the descendants of these warriors today? The Nyangire Rebellion, which Kabalega championed, remains one of the most powerful examples of defiance against colonial domination in East Africa. These are stories that, if properly researched and presented, could draw historians, tourists, students, and cultural enthusiasts from far beyond Uganda.

The creation of historical sites linked to Kabalega's life would offer both economic and cultural benefits. His birthplace, the locations of significant battles, escape routes, and meeting points could form a heritage trail, as in countries that have invested in documenting their historical figures. Even long-standing rumours, such as whether Kabalega fathered the founding father of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, present opportunities for scholarly inquiry and public interest.

The Bunyoro Kingdom is already working to repatriate significant artefacts, including the Nyamyaro throne, from museums in the United Kingdom. Scholars like Dr Samuel Kahunde have dedicated years to researching Bunyoro's royal music and dance traditions. Many recordings made in the late 1940s and 1950s by Klaus Wachsmann remain preserved at Makerere University, including *amakondere* trumpet melodies, *entimbodrum* rhythms, children's play songs from Buseruka, and sounds from instruments such as the *engwaara*, *enseegu*, and *entimbo*.

As the oil and gas sector reshapes Uganda's economic future, especially in Bunyoro, it is essential that the region's cultural identity grows alongside its economic prospects. Kabalega's legacy offers a powerful narrative that can enrich tourism, unite communities, and instil pride in the generations that will inherit this new chapter of prosperity. A Kabalega museum, as a legacy project from the revenues, would not only preserve history but also reconnect visitors to a time when courage, resilience, and leadership defined the kingdom's response to colonial pressure.

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Susan Kamugasa
Legacy

through the oil and gas sector, much of which is rooted in the region, this is an opportune moment to ensure Kabalega's legacy becomes something tangible and enduring for generations to come.

World leaders like Winston Churchill have been immortalised through museums, films, biographies, heritage trails, and international partnerships. Kabalega deserves similar recognition. Although the Kabalega Foundation has begun this work through a published biography, there remains an urgent need for deeper documentation. Most Ugandans know Kabalega only from a single stoic photo-

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