

Bruno Bwambale, Kasese's icon rests

On Sunday, April 26, Bruno Josphe Bwambale was called to rest with the angels. He was 82.

The current generation in Kasese may ask: but Bruno who? As someone who grew up in the 1970s and 80s, my answer to that inquiry is: Bruno Bwambale. In our time, Bwambale was so big that one didn't need to add any explainer. There was only one Bruno Bwambale. To get a better understanding of "what" Bruno Bwambale was in Kasese, here is some context.

In 1980, the Rwenzururu Kingdom was subtly responsible for the civil policing of the entire Kasese District and cast a heavy cloud on its political life. In the run up to the 1980 General Election, eight personalities expressed interest in running for Kasese's three parliamentary seats. They were Dr Henry Bwambale (DP, Kasese West); Amon Bazira (UPC, Kasese West); Peter Kato (DP, Kasese South); Adam Kisughu (UPC, Kasese North); Dr Crispus Kiyonga (UPM, Kasese North); Jerome Mbura-Muhindo (DP, Kasese North); Paddy Kabagambe (UPC, Kasese North) and Victor Muhindo (DP, Kasese North).

With such a wide field of (aspiring) candidature, Rwenzururu Kingdom stepped in and ordered thus: 1) all the people of Kasese should vote for UPC candidates of the kingdom's choice. 2) The three UPC candidates chosen by the kingdom were Amon Bazira (Kasese West), Bruno Bwambale (Kasese South) and Adam Kisughu (Kasese North).

For a man who had not even expressed interest in running for any constituency, Bwambale was chosen by the Rwenzururu Kingdom authorities. In Kasese, of the time, even a clearly biased Rwenzururu Kingdom could not ignore Bruno Bwambale. That's how large-

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Asuman Bisiika

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er-than-life Bwambale was to the socio-political and economic life of Kasese at that time.

But Bwambale being Bwambale (principled), he declined the overtures from the kingdom. He would not stand as a UPC candidate. After UPC won the elections, Bwambale was removed from his position of secretary manager (CEO) of Nyakatonzi Co-Operative Union. His replacement: a UPC Youth Winger called Yokas Bihande. The removal of Bwambale was a scandal. And need I say, Nyakatonzi Co-operative Union has never recovered from the brutal incident.

Bwambale was the secretary manager during the time the co-operative movement was central in the national socio-economic transformation project. As the CEO of Nyakatonzi (currently one of the two surviving unions in Uganda), Bwambale was partly responsible for the good health of Kasese's social economy, and need I say, even the current districts of Kitagwenda, Rubirizi and Bunyangabo where Nyakatonzi ran operations.

In his later years, he was more active in the Catholic Diocese of Kasese. It should be stated that Bwambale (and his friends Barozi,

Mainuka, and Alikangero are credited for petitioning Bishop Sarapio Magambo of Fort Port Diocese seeking the creation of Kasese Catholic Diocese. No wonder Bwambale was close to Kasese Diocese's first leader, Bishop Emeritus Egidio Nkaijanabo. In his memoirs, Bwambale claims it's Bishop Egidio who recruited him into supporting Liverpool FC of England.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Bwambale was always the go-to person in Kasese. He was involved in the beginning of almost all the secondary schools in Kasese. Notable of them was Saad Memorial Secondary School at Kiburara.

Bwambale was born on July 15, 1944, to Yowas Bwambale and Leya Bagheni in Mundingu Village in Bukonzo West. His father died when he was two years old. He grew up with his mother until he was adopted by a one Kibwana. He went to Katholhu Primary School and Kasanga Primary School, St Aloysius Junior School (in Bunyoro), St Michael's Junior School (in Fort Portal) and St Leo's College, Kyegobe.

When the Rwenzururu war intensified, it was deemed that a Mukonzo student would not be safe at St Leo's College. Bwambale and another Mukonzo student, Lazarus Muhindo, were smuggled to St Mary's College, Kisubi, (SMACK) in Buganda. After SMACK, he joined Bukalasa Cooperative College, where he graduated with a higher diploma.

One would not expect any opposition if one suggested that a road in Kasese Municipality be named after Bruno Bwambale. RIP Mzee Bruno.

The writer is the former executive director of the East African flagpost