

HISTORY

BY NOAH JAGWE

Entebbe, a major town in central Uganda, sits on a peninsula on Lake Victoria and is also the location of Entebbe airport. In the past, it was the administrative capital of Uganda, which is why many government ministries and the State House are located there.

HISTORY

But, did you know why it is called Entebbe? Although this place is famously spelt with double 'b', the correct spelling should be Entebe, with single 'b'. Entebe means a seat in Luganda and the municipality takes its name from a sacred seat said to belong to an ancestor of the Mamba (lung fish) clan of Buganda.

The exact location of this seat is popularly known as *Entebe za Mugula*, (Mugula's seats). It is a rocky cultural site next to Lake Victoria with a cave extending into the cliff. Clan history says this is where Mugula the Mamba clan, used to meet his subjects and where he sat to issue commands to them. Mugula was a leader of a sub-clan (Kakobozza) and was known as *Omukulu wessiga lya Mugula omunaba gwa Kayiba*.

It is a heritage site for the great-grandfathers of Mamba clan, who include ancestors Bukulubwadda, Kyekulungu and Sebyooto who sat there in the 1800s. It remains one of the oldest cultural sites in the municipality, but it is underrated, with just a few tourists visiting annually.

This cultural site is also known to Buganda kingdom as Buyira, depicting the splashing sight and sound that comes as a result of water backwash against the rocks.

Within the same area is another popular place called *Etambira*, which is said to be reserved only for Bukulubwadda. Legend has it that this ancestor find you in this place, the first question he will pose to you is, "zirya?" (do they eat?) referring to the vultures.

And if you gave an affirmative answer, that will be the end of you, because he would order you to go and be eaten by the vultures. Only people who answered the ancestor's question in the negative (*Tezirya* - they don't eat) would survive.

Somewhere ahead, you come across "kidaala," an open place, which is the entrance

Entebe Za Mugula: The site that gave us Entebbe

PHOTOGRAPHY BY NOAH JAGWE



A cave at 'Entebe za Mugula'

«ENTEBE MEANS A SEAT IN LUGANDA AND THE MUNICIPALITY TAKES ITS NAME FROM A SACRED SEAT SAID TO BELONG TO AN ANCESTOR OF THE MAMBA (LUNGFISH) CLAN OF BUGANDA»

through the rock to another opening at the back. It is also covered with water. There is also an area called *Ekyogo*, where the clan members stop over to cleanse themselves, before proceeding for cultural rites.

SIGNIFICANCE

The place is under the stewardship of Charles Musisi Serwanja Byekwaso Bazanye Namwanja, whose title is Omutaka Mugula, the 32nd to hold the title. He shares the place's history off his head, in a chronological order.

He says the first leader was Bukulubwadda, born of Lubala Mbubi, an ancestor of the Mamba (lung fish) clan.

Musisi passes his time playing the board game *omweswo* with some of his aides, as

he awaits those who come to tour or perform specific Kiganda rites. Musisi says this is a spiritual place for their traditions and not a place for evil spirits as many believe. He adds that it is taboo to slaughter animals at the site, unlike many culturally significant sites where people perform animal sacrifice rites.

The site had three rocks which have now been partly submerged by water. The rocks are named Namiryango, Namirembe and Kinene, who all children of Bukulubwadda. These are quite apparent when viewed from the front of Musisi's cave.

"When the dam in Jinja was being constructed, the water level on the lake rose and covered the places that used to accommodate our rocks," Musisi explains. He says whoever wants to reach those sites today has to use canoes that are readily available to take people there.

LOSING TO DEVELOPMENT

The site is now obscure, almost obstructed by developments in the area. The springing projects such as the Civil Aviation Authority expansion of Entebbe airport and National Animal Genetic Resource Centre, by far overshadow this place.

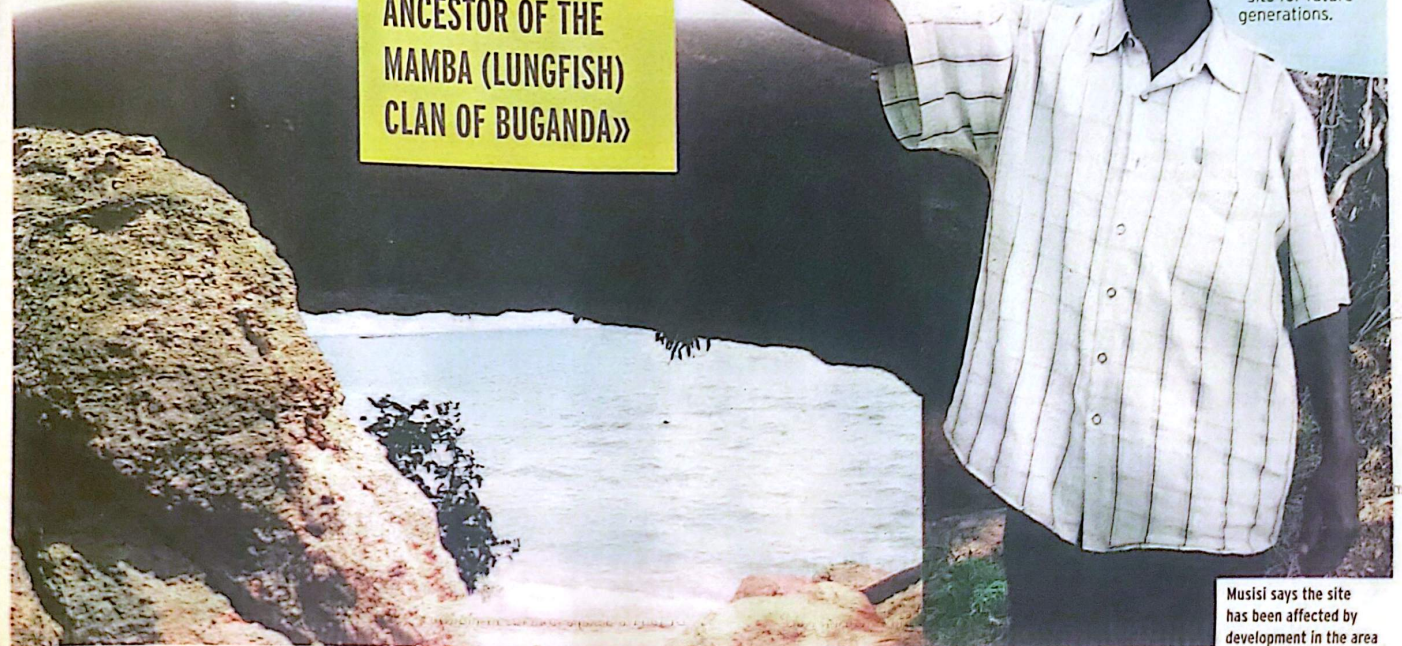
Economic growth in Entebbe has come at a high cost for this intangible heritage site, which has kept losing land to developers. Clan members say one of the sites lost is Bukaggwe, where the United Nations airbase sits today.

There is also a spot in Kigungu, where Merryland High School is located and Misoli-Kugunga. These areas were distributed among the six children of Bukulubwadda that included Kyaggwe Nnyago, Itaka, Kayiba, Nankya, Serugunda Luzibwa and Nakiwolo.

The Mamba clan leaders did not approve of the recent expansion plans for the airport, of which there is ongoing conflict.

According to Musisi, the place attracts a number of people both from within and outside Uganda. The visitor's book

testifies of tourists from as far as the UK, the US, Holland and France. The clan members would long to save such a site for future generations.



Musisi says the site has been affected by development in the area