

Sunday feature

THIS PAGE. To read is to fly: it is to soar to a point of vantage which gives a view over wide terrain of history, human variety, ideas, shared experience and the fruits of many inquiries. — A C Grayling, *Our Sunday Feature* explores places, uncovers issues and leaves you more informed.

CASH
COW

Shs10,000 Fun time. A boat ride ranges from as low as Shs5,000 to Shs10,000 during the weekdays, while during the weekends, because of demand, a boat ride starts from Shs10,000 per head.

Mulungu beach: Where drugs, sex and religion thrive

One in all. At the beach, you can have all sorts of nourishment for your soul, thirst, hunger, and addiction, all in one place.

BY HENRY LUBEGA
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On particular days, for a couple of hours, it is a church. On other days, its verandah is dotted with stalls of khat traders and their clients, and it provides shelter to those who are high and need a break. The compound is a part of the beach where the use of drugs, chewing khat and smoking, seem in competition with the consumption of all tribes of cheap liquor. Cheap sex is said to rule as the day fades for the nocturnal life. All this happens against the backdrop of the cool fresh breeze from Lake Victoria.

Welcome to Mulungu beach where fresh fish prepared in different ways, drugs, sex, witchcraft, tradition and religion thrive.

Time check is a few minutes past 9am on a Sunday morning. At Musa Mukasa Martyrdom church in Mulungu, service is in progress. From a far, the church can be mistaken for something other than a church. The walls are made of blue metallic rails with sliver iron sheets. Inside, the priest is conducting service to a congregation of less than 20 worshippers. There are many more people outside the church going about their business.

Musa Mukasa, owned by Church of Uganda, was constructed in memory of Musa Mukasa, who is said to have been the only person directly killed by Kabaka Mwanga for his faith. Musa

Mukasa was the first to die before the rest of the martyrs killed in Namugongo were sentenced to death.

Directly opposite the church in a distance, is an improvised wooden platform used by Buganda King Ronald Muwenda Mutebi II when he is flagging off the Buganda canoe regatta.

In the church compound, some of the revelers are having 'breakfast' chewing khat, others are setting up displays of all sorts of liquor in sachets on stools. The smell of marijuana wrecks the morning breeze from the lake. Located in Makindye Division in Kampala, the beach is less than 30 minutes' drive from Kampala just behind the Munyonyo Commonwealth Resort.

To some, it is known as *Omwalo Gwa Kabaka* (King's beach) because the beach is managed and controlled by Buganda Kingdom, whose representative oversees the place and it contributes to the kingdom's treasury.

A short distance away, two groups of young men in their early 20's or perhaps late teens, all seemingly high on some substance, are busy. One group is roasting a chunk of Nile perch, while the other group at the extreme end is boiling its share. On inquiry, the group roasting Nile perch claims it is part of their share from the previous night's adventure on the lake. Some of the boys roasting the Nile perch are sucking on a sachet of alcohol.

On the other end are two rows with more than 10 lockup shops. But these are not your everyday lockup shops. They are bars, restaurants or alcohol and soft drink depots. The lockups are used for storage and the patrons sit in the open or under umbrellas. Each lockup has its share of the open space where it can put plastic chairs and umbrellas. On the extreme end of the lockups are makeshift kitchens. Here is a hive of activities. Women of different ages are preparing for the day ahead. Some are peeling Irish potatoes, while others are preparing their ware and the young men are splitting firewood.

On another end, there are fish



Religious. A priest leads services at Musa Mukasa Martyrdom church at the beach.
PHOTOS BY HENRY LUBEGA

stalls, men in white overcoats and gumboots are frantically scrubbing the counters on which they display the fish in preparation for the arrival of the fishing boats.

As the day wears on, so does business. Some women who were initially in the kitchen area put on white aprons and white head gear just like chefs and move to the main entrance to the built area waiting for customers.

What the kiosk operators do with music, each trying to play the loudest, the girls in white aprons do to

each other to get customers. They escort you in a group to your preferred sitting area. You do not have to go to the kitchen to choose the size of fish. You are brought different sizes and your pick is what is cooked for you. There is a possibility of taking some fresh fish with you when you leave the place. Fishermen come at intervals with their catch throughout the day.

Not all customers prefer to sit the area where the kiosks stand, so a chair is availed to one at either Shs500 for a plastic chair or one is given a free

HOW IT CAME TO BE

The name. The name Mulungu is short for the Luganda phrase Okumulungula ensonga, loosely translated as settling issues. It was here that the former King of Buganda, Danieri Basammula-Ekkere Mwanga, wanted his

lake project to connect to Lake Victoria to ease his travel from the palace. Why this particular place? Just across from Mulungu on Lake Victoria is Bulingugwe Island, which was Mwanga's favourite hunting ground.



Origin. "After hunting on the island, Kabaka Mwanga distributed the kill among his men on this beach. It was here that they had to *Kumulungula ensonga zo'muyigo*, (issues of the hunting mission were settled here) hence the name Mulungu." **DAISY MUKASA, MULUKA (SUB-COUNTY) CHIEF**



CRIME AND SECURITY

Prevention.

Daisy Mukasa, the Muluka (sub-county) chief for Buganda Kingdom in charge of Mutuba Gumu Buziga, where the beach is, says the people loitering the beach as though they are idlers are in fact the place's crime preventers. "We don't need police to be here. We provide our own security, those people who appear high on booze and other substances would not tolerate thievir habits."

Rows of lockups on one side of the beach

chair in return for services for eats and drinks in a sitting area of their choosing. The kiosks work hand in hand with the people selling fish. The kiosk owner provides a sitting place and the drinks, while the former provides eats.

At M.M Oceanic kiosk, there is a beeline for *Akabelo*. The *Kabelo* is *katogo*/ mixture of fish boiled with matooke and Irish potatoes. Sometimes ghee is added, depending on the customer's preference. There is also fried fish accompanied with ei-

ther chips or fried sweet potatoes. The choice is yours to make, and of course there is plenty of booze.

With all the signs of alcohol and substance abuse being very visible, the beach management says their motto is "*Ekisibya omuyaye eba statement* (it's the idler's statement that lands him in jail), meaning they are security cautious despite the substance abuse.

Mukasa says the people loitering the beach as though they are idlers are in fact the place's crime preventers.

Hangout, Mulungu beach.

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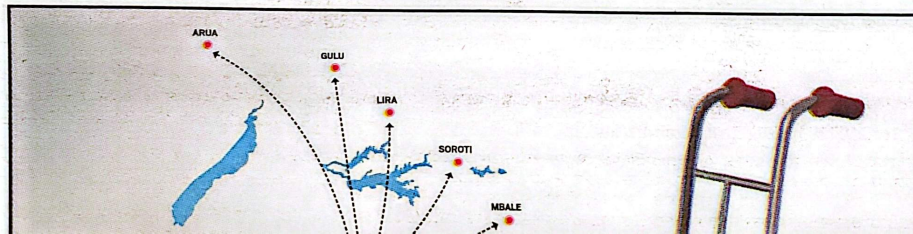
It's not all about eating, booze and drugs; there is some fun as well. A boat ride ranges from as low as Shs5,000 to Shs10,000 during the weekdays, while during the weekends, because of demand, a boat ride starts from Shs10,000 per head.

Isa Bukenya has been a boat man at the island for the past five years.

"On a good day, you can go home with a big smile and make the people at home happy but like any other business, there are some 'dry' days."

He does not only providing boat rides for merry making but also serious journeys. "I have travelled to Kenya a number of times from here. It takes me 12 hours and 100lts of fuel to and from Kenya," he explains.

At Mulungu, you can have all sorts of nourishment, your soul, thirst, hunger, and addiction, all in one place.



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